



Published on *Go Ask Alice!* (<https://goaskalice.columbia.edu>)

[Home](#) > [Disappointed with therapist?](#)

---

## Disappointed with therapist? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice...

All year I have been wondering about my stress level and what I perceive as unusually heavy mood swings. I'm sure I'm not the only first-year on campus who has noticed new changes in her or his psyche as of "the first year at college." I had a hard time doing it, but I finally decided to see a therapist about my psychological condition, the development of which continues to this moment. I am experiencing some amount of sexual frustration, and I have managed to find my way into plenty of stressful situations all year.

Alice, I'm disappointed. My "health services" therapist is not listening to me (i.e. remembering things that we have discussed in past sessions), and I am feeling only worse. I feel lost. I'm an actor, and I have been in theatre since seventh grade. My mind is always in the theatre, and I feel as though my acting pervades my life. I have lost myself in a sea of specifically self-engineered "parts" which I "play" in differing situations which call out for differing personae. I feel as though hardly anyone really knows me, and I feel like an idiot for identifying with this pseudo-artistic complaint.

I want to make films, but first I have some major issues to work out, and health services is not helping me. I feel intimidated by my therapist, and I feel unable to change therapists within the university system. I want a therapist that I feel will see through the guise that I think I put up automatically. I'm sorry to be cliché, but I need some help finding myself. Meanwhile, my stress level and periodic depression is keeping me from being alert in class (I'm perpetually tired) and pulling me behind in my studies. I have lost the will to work, and I want to find it again. Sorry that it's so long.

Signed,  
Loose ends

### **Answer**

Dear Loose ends,

Seeking help is a tremendous first step, and evaluating the quality of your therapist is an excellent (and even recommended) way to ensure that you're getting the most out of your

sessions. A therapist who forgets your concerns and doesn't seem to listen can be frustrating and impede the progress you're trying to make with your mental and emotional health. Working with a therapist who understands and connects with you doesn't always happen on the first try, but hopefully, by reflecting on your past experiences, setting expectations for future counseling, and learning more about how to find a good therapist, your needs will be met.

No matter which therapist you end up choosing, there are a few questions you may want to ask them to assess your fit <sup>[2]</sup> including how they approach their practice. If you're considering whether to call it quits with your current counselor, it may be helpful to reflect on why you feel that way. Though it may take several sessions to experience overall improvement, do you feel some relief or hope during a single therapy session? How well does the therapist listen and respond reflectively and intuitively? Do they offer to set goals with you and evaluate your progress? Ultimately, you know yourself the best and if your sessions aren't going the way you'd like, it's perfectly okay to discuss any disappointments, frustrations, and adjustments you'd like to make directly with your therapist. By sharing this information, it may help your counselor tailor the sessions to meet your needs. It may also be helpful for your counselor to know that you have a tendency to put up disguises — that way you have an opportunity to be straightforward but also allows your counselor to better understand your situation.

There's no need to feel stuck with the same therapist if it's not working out — it's well within your rights as a patient to request a transfer at any time. You may start by looking at any staff biographies your school has available. If you'd like to provide feedback on your current therapist, you could contact the director of your school's counseling center, a school dean, or an administrative office — it's up to you to choose which feels the most comfortable and appropriate for your experience. If you would rather see an external provider, your school's counseling service may be able to provide a referral or you can do an Internet search. Organizations such as The Actor's Fund <sup>[3]</sup> may be of interest — they offer mental health services and support for people in the entertainment industry like yourself. If cost is a barrier to seeking a different therapist who's a better fit, take a peek at the Finding Low-Cost Counseling <sup>[4]</sup>.

As you mentioned, it's not uncommon for first-year students to feel isolated and stressed. It'll take time to make friends and establish a support network, and it's also helpful to keep in mind that how your first year goes most likely won't color the rest of your college experience. To keep your stress in check, here are some strategies you could try on your own to get started:

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating a balanced diet
- Exercising regularly
- Using time management strategies
- Practicing healthy coping strategies
- Practicing meditation

You also indicated that you're feeling a bit sexually frustrated. You may try going the solo route with masturbation. Not only is it convenient because you don't need a partner, but it could also be a healthy way to relieve some of your other stress.

Millions of people seek therapy to better understand their own thoughts, goals, and behaviors so that they may make informed decisions about their lives. It takes time to establish a supportive

and productive relationship with a therapist, and it may not happen with the first professional you meet. If you decide to look for another therapist, know that doing so is okay and generally encouraged amongst mental health professionals. In any case, taking the time to find a therapist with whom you feel comfortable is essential for productive therapy sessions, and you deserve it.

Take care,

Alice!

Category:

[Emotional Health](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

[Blues & Depression](#) <sup>[6]</sup>

[Communication Concerns](#) <sup>[7]</sup>

[Counseling](#) <sup>[8]</sup>

[Stress & Anxiety](#) <sup>[9]</sup>

[Especially for Columbians](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

## Related questions

[Concerned about confidential counseling](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

[Depressed and shy: Finding the courage to get help](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

[Types of therapists](#) <sup>[13]</sup>

## Resources

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CPS\) \(Morningside\)](#) <sup>[14]</sup>

[Mental Health Services \(CUIMC\)](#) <sup>[15]</sup>

[Nightline \(Morningside/Barnard\)](#) <sup>[16]</sup>

Published date:

Apr 01, 1994

Last reviewed on:

Jul 21, 2017

## Footer menu

- ▼ [Contact Alice!](#)
  - [Content Use](#)
  - [Media Inquiries](#)
  - [Comments & Corrections](#)
- ▼ [Syndication & Licensing](#)
  - [Licensing Q&As](#)
  - [Get Alice! on Your Website](#)
  - [Full Site Syndication](#)
  - [Link to Go Ask Alice!](#)

**Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.**

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

---

**Source URL:** <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/disappointed-therapist-0>

**Links**

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/disappointed-therapist-0>
- [2] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/how-to-find-therapist>
- [3] <http://www.actorsfund.org/services-and-programs/mental-health>
- [4] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/finding-low-cost-counseling-0>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/emotional-health>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/blues-depression>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/communication-concerns>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/counseling>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/stress-anxiety>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/especially-columbians>
- [11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/concerned-about-confidential-counseling-0>
- [12] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/depressed-and-shy-finding-courage-get-help-0>
- [13] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/types-therapists-1>
- [14] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/counseling-and-psychological-services-cps-morningside>
- [15] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/mental-health-services-cuimc>
- [16] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/nightline-morningsidebarnard>