

Questions to ask a therapist

Many counsellors/therapists offer a free consult, either by phone or face to face. This is not a therapy session, but an opportunity for you and the counsellor to connect and see if you are a good fit.

The following is information you may want to gather through on-line research and in a consult with a counsellor/therapist.

- **Registered/Accredited/Certified:** Organisations the Counsellor is registered or accredited with. If you are covered by private health insurance this information will be needed by the Insurance Company as different companies have different policies about which Counsellors they cover.
- **Code(s) of Ethics:** The professional association or registered college's Code of Ethics to which the Counsellor adheres to.
- **Qualifications:** The qualifications the Counsellor has achieved. The year the Counsellor achieved their qualification gives some indication of the depth of experience offered. However, this may also be gained through other work and life experiences that have influenced the Counsellor's interest area and style of counselling.
- **Special interest/experience:** Specialised experience or training, e.g. relationships, youth, cancer, identity or depression on which the Counsellor primarily focuses. It may be a good idea to seek a practitioner who has specific experience that can meet your needs.
- **Theoretical approach:** The way in which the Counsellor approaches their Psychotherapy service. If the Counsellor refers to a particular model or theory of counselling feel free to ask what that means in relation to what you can expect in the therapy room. In general, theoretical approach is less important than the quality of the Counsellor. In some situations though, theoretical approach can be important.
- **Professional Development/Additional training:** Counsellors are expected to continue their professional development and training whilst they are practicing to maintain their professional credentials. Professional Development also gives you insight into the counsellor's interests. For example, counsellors may have training to work with couples, families, children, or trauma, anxiety or chronic pain.
- **How often and how many sessions:** A Counsellor may not be able to identify how often or how many sessions may be helpful before they have met you or identified your concerns. However you may feel you require a set amount of sessions (time-limited), or are sure you will require the Counsellor's services over a longer period of time (long-term face-to-face work). The Counsellor can discuss their thoughts about time-lines and number of sessions with you.
- **Languages:** Check if the Counsellor speaks a language that might work best for you.
- **Supervision:** You may want further information on Clinical Supervision your

Counsellor receives. Clinical Supervision can be helpful for clients as it is another, experienced Counsellor providing input and suggestions. However, some clients have concerns around confidentiality so feel free to ask questions.

- **Fees:** The counsellor charges for a session, which is normally 50 minutes to 1 hour. Feel free to ask the counsellor about reduced fees (concessions or sliding scale) and to whom they apply. Few practitioners can afford to work for nothing, so for free or low cost counselling you may need to look at agencies or organisations.
- **How do I feel with this Counsellor:** Counselling is an opportunity for you to talk about things you may find difficult or distressing. Do you feel cared for, supported, safe and not-judged by this person? It may take you a while to build up trust, but remember to check in with your intuition and how you feel.