

Searching for a Counselor: Finding a Match

Finding the right counselor often involves some trial and error. This is a normal process. Think of it like shopping for a perfect pair of shoes. You can try on some shoes (have an initial conversation with a counselor), see how they feel (perhaps go to an intake session or two), choose a good fit (a counselor you feel comfortable with and supported by), and then actually wear the shoes (attend sessions). If it does not feel like a good fit, you do not have to continue seeing that counselor. The relationship between a client and counselor, or the "therapeutic alliance," is one of the biggest factors in whether therapy will benefit you. Rapport is needed to build the therapeutic alliance, and both matter with your counselor.

Often the search for the right fit can feel discouraging. To try to make this process smoother for you, we have created a list of considerations that may help you narrow down your search. Please note that finding the right counselor can take time, so *if you are in immediate crisis or feel unsafe, you should call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.*

Things to Consider:

- **Why You are Seeking Counseling**
 - What are you struggling with/what is making you seek therapy now?
 - What are you wanting to address in therapy?
 - What are your goals for therapy?
- **Preferences**
 - Do you want in person, virtual, or are you comfortable with either?
 - Do you prefer to work with a woman or man?
 - Do you need your counselor to be trained in providing trauma-informed care?
 - How do you feel helped or supported by others?
 - Do you need your therapist to specialize in any specific areas or fields?
 - Do you have any other requirements you prefer in a counselor?
 - Do you want your faith to be a factor in your counseling?
- **Paying for Counseling**
 - Do you plan to use insurance or private pay?
 - If insurance, who is your carrier?
 - If private pay, what is your budget?

Types and Styles of Counseling

During your search for a counselor, you may see counselors that list what types of therapy they practice or specialize in. There are many different types of counseling, and you do not need to know which type you prefer prior to beginning counseling. You may have to try out different types to find out what works best for you. To assist in your search, we have provided a short description of some of the most common types of therapy. Please note that there are several other types and styles of counseling not on this list.

Type	Description
CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)	Helps individuals identify and change negative thought patterns and behaviors to improve emotional well-being and daily functioning.
DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy)	Teaches skills for managing intense emotions, improving relationships, and coping with stress in healthy ways.
IFS (Internal Family Systems)	Helps individuals understand and heal different "parts" of themselves, promoting inner balance and self-compassion.
CPT (Cognitive Processing Therapy)	A structured therapy that helps individuals reframe and challenge unhelpful beliefs related to trauma.
EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)	Helps people heal from traumatic memories by using guided eye movements to reduce emotional distress.
Trauma-Focused Therapy	Designed to help individuals process and recover from traumatic experiences in a safe, supportive environment.
Play Therapy	Uses play to help children express feelings, process experiences, and develop healthy coping skills.
Family Therapy	Works with families to improve communication, resolve conflicts, and strengthen relationships.
Art Therapy	A creative approach that uses art-making to help individuals express emotions, reduce stress, and promote healing.

Types of Mental Health Professionals

When searching for a counselor, it is important to know the differences between counselors and other types of mental health professionals. Not all mental health professionals provide counseling – some focus primarily on medical support or psychological testing. In Texas, all of the professionals listed below can *diagnose* mental health conditions, but only psychiatrists can prescribe medication. To diagnose mental health conditions, psychologists use comprehensive psychological testing and behavioral analysis, whereas LPCs, LCSWs, and LMFTs use therapy assessments but do not perform specialized psychological testing.

Type of	Focus	Description
Psychiatrist (MD)	Diagnostic Testing, Medication, and Medical Treatment	A medical doctor who can diagnose mental health conditions, prescribe medication, and provide treatment.
Psychologist (PsyD, PhD)	Psychological Testing & Counseling	Trained in assessing and treating mental health through therapy and testing, but typically does not prescribe medication.
Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)	Counseling	Provides talk therapy to help individuals cope with life challenges, emotional struggles, and mental health concerns
Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	Counseling	Social worker trained in counseling and case management
Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)	Counseling	Specializes in working with couples and families to improve relationships and communication

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