



How to Find the Best Therapist for You...

Some Things to Consider Before Contacting a Therapist...

1) Do I need a specialist?

- a) It is really helpful to work with someone who really understands eating disorders. Many people struggling with an eating disorder report that it's been most helpful for them to talk to someone who really "gets" their struggle and who knows helpful treatment modalities in this area.

(At MEDA, we have lists available of specialists according to location and insurance.)

2) How Do I Find A Therapist That Takes My Insurance?

- a) MEDA can typically provide you with names of therapists that specialize in eating disorders who accept your insurance. You can also contact your insurance company to ask for a list of eating disorder specialists.
- b) In addition, if there are few or no eating disorder specialists under your insurance in your area, you can ask your insurance company for something called a single case agreement (which would allow you to see someone outside of your insurance plan).

3) How Important Is Location?

- a) It is sometimes difficult to find a therapist directly in your area. However, MEDA recommends you invest the time and effort to see someone you connect with, even if the location is a bit out of the way. (Also, see 2b on other ways around insurance issues and location.)

4) What type of therapist should I be looking for?

- a) If you have had a therapist in the past, think of what worked well for you and what didn't. Where are you now vs. where you were then? What do you feel you need most now? Someone to listen to you more? Someone to help with coping skills (to help challenge behaviors, eating disordered thoughts, ways to be more assertive, etc)? Both?
- b) If you have never seen a therapist, what are things about your eating concerns you'd like to understand better?
- c) If you have seen a therapist in the past and are further along in your recovery, then you may want to think of what your "next chapter" of work will be and how someone could support you in that.

Contacting Therapists: What To Look For:

- 1) It sometimes helps to ask:
 - a) How long have you worked with people struggling with eating disorders?
 - b) In what capacity have you worked with people with eating disorders?
 - c) What modality or modalities do you use? Can you explain these specifically?
 - d) What is your philosophy on whether someone can recover from an eating disorder?
 - e) Why do you think someone may develop an eating disorder? (Here you'd want to make sure the person doesn't seem "blaming" of the person with the eating disorder.)
 - f) How might you begin treatment with someone?
 - g) Do you have experience with the type of eating disorder I struggle with?

- 2) Remember that when you are first meeting with a therapist, the first 2-3 sessions are a chance to see if it's a good fit for you and for the therapist. While it's important to not immediately make judgments after only one session, if after the second or third session it's not feeling like the "right fit" it's more than ok to continue looking.

- 3) Again, MEDA can help to find someone who specializes in eating disorders in your area.

When Leaving a Message:

- 1) Leave your name and phone number
- 2) Ask for a call back
- 3) Ask if they have any openings
- 4) Convey what times would be best for you to meet
- 5) Provide your insurance information
- 6) Mention that you'd like to talk over the phone before scheduling an appointment
- 7) Convey the best times to reach you

A possible phone script:

"Hi, this is _____. I'm calling to see if you have any openings in your practice currently. I'm available (insert dates and times) and I have _____ insurance. The best times to reach me are (insert dates) at (insert phone #). If you do have availability, I'd like to ask a few questions over the phone before scheduling an appointment. I look forward to hearing from you!"

If you do not hear back from the provider for 48 hours, please contact MEDA. We are happy to help you find additional resources.

If you have any further questions on the above, feel free to contact MEDA at 617 558 1881 or email info@medainc.org.



Credentials for Practicing Psychotherapy

With all of the different types of mental health providers, it can get confusing. You should understand the difference in titles before seeking help from anyone so that you can know whether that person is qualified to assist you. While it is important to know a provider's credentials, it is also important to consider how safe and respected you feel with that provider and if there is a good "fit."

LICSW: Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker

LICSWs have a Master's Degree in Social Work and are licensed by the state to practice therapy as a private practitioner. LICSWs are required to complete several years of clinical training under supervision. These practitioners can diagnose, offer counseling, and practice a range of different therapeutic approaches. They may have additional certifications based on their specific area of interest or experience. They cannot prescribe medications but may work with a psychiatrist who does medication management. An individual with an MSW or LCSW can practice psychotherapy, though not privately, and is supervised by an LICSW. Typically MSWs are working toward licensure.

LMHC: Licensed Mental Health Clinician/Counselor

LMHCs have a Master's Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and are licensed by the state to practice therapy as a private practitioner. LMHCs are required to complete several years of clinical training under supervision. These practitioners can diagnose, offer counseling, and practice a range of different therapeutic approaches. They may have additional certifications based on their specific area of interest or experience. They cannot prescribe medications, but may work with a psychiatrist who does medication management. An individual with an MHC can practice psychotherapy, though not privately, and is supervised by an LMHC or LICSW, Ph.D, or Psy.D. Typically an MHCs are working toward licensure. Some LMHCs specialize in art, dance, or music therapy and are called "Expressive Therapists."

Ph.D/Psy.D: Clinical Psychologists

Clinical Psychologists have a Doctor of Philosophy (Typically, in Clinical Psychology) or a Doctor of Psychology and are licensed by the state they practice in to practice therapy as a private practitioner. Psychologists typically have 1500 hours of postdoctoral experience doing psychotherapy under supervision. They have passed the required multifaceted psychologist's examination.

MD: Doctor of Medicine or Psychiatrist

Psychiatrists are licensed medical doctors. They have completed a medical internship and psychiatric residency and are licensed to prescribe medication. They may practice psychotherapy, and may or may not have additional training in psychotherapy beyond their medical training. Psychotherapists may refer clients to psychiatrists for evaluation and treatment to confirm or rule out the possibility of medical issues, or to determine if medication might be helpful to the client.

APRN: Advanced Practice Registered Nurse

APRNs are Registered Nurses who have completed advanced post-graduate education in nursing and have advanced education, knowledge, skills, and scope of practice. Individuals are licensed as APRNs who practice psychotherapy as Nurse Practitioners and Clinical Nurse Specialists in Psychiatric/Mental Health. A Clinical Nurse Specialist is an advanced practice registered nurse who provides a full range of services from psychotherapy to supervision and consultation. Clinical Nurse Specialists are nationally certified by the American Nurses Credentialing Center and are authorized to practice by the State Board of Nursing. In 36 states APRNs can prescribe medication.



Credentials for Nutritional Counseling

The term “nutritionist” is a general term that applies to all those who work in the field of nutrition in some capacity. A nutritionist is someone who has studied nutrition and may have a graduate degree (M.S. or Ph.D.) in nutrition from an accredited college. Registered Dietitians are considered to be nutritionists, but not all nutritionists are Registered Dietitians. Both are considered to be healthcare professionals but the two titles shouldn't be used interchangeably.

RD: Registered dietitian

RDs have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and are trained in all aspects of food and nutrition including medical nutrition therapy. Dietitians spend 1,200 hours in a dietetic internship through an accredited program. About half of RDs work in hospitals, clinics, doctors' offices and extended-care facilities or nursing homes. They are credentialed by the Commission on Dietetic Registration of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

CNS: Certified nutrition specialist

CNS's must have a master's degree or a doctorate in nutrition or a doctorate in clinical health care from a regionally accredited university as well as 1,000 hours of supervised experience. They must pass a four-hour board exam on medical nutrition therapy. Often work in clinics, private practice or community settings. They are credentialed by the Certification Board for Nutrition Specialists.

CCN: Certified clinical nutritionist

A CCN degree requires a bachelor's degree, a 900-hour internship and 56 hours of online, post-graduate study in clinical nutrition or a master's degree in human nutrition from select universities. They approach diet on an individual basis rather than following standard recommendations and often work in clinics and private practice. They are credentialed by the Clinical Nutrition Certification Board.

HN: Holistic nutritionist

HN's Must have a degree from an approved holistic nutrition program and 500 hours of professional experience in the field. Practitioners don't necessarily follow the government food pyramid guidelines or those promoted by health associations. They do not practice medical nutrition therapy or diagnose disease. They are certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board, a division of the National Association of Nutrition Professionals.

CHC: Certified health coach

A Health Coach is a wellness authority and supportive mentor who motivates individuals to cultivate positive health choices. Health Coaches educate and support clients to achieve their health goals through lifestyle and behavior adjustments.