

Finding A Therapist

Sometimes, when we are grieving, we need help beyond family and the usual supports. Certain issues, such as consuming guilt or anger, might require professional help. However, most people don't know how to go about finding a qualified grief counselor or therapist.

The best source for finding a good therapist is a recommendation from friends or members of a bereavement support group. They might be able to suggest a counselor who has been helpful to them. Also, your minister, priest, or funeral director may be able to suggest a therapist. Some funeral homes are now offering free follow-up care and bereavement counseling as a part of their services. But, be sure to check the qualifications of the counselor.

Before making an appointment with a particular therapist, talk to him or her on the telephone. Most are willing to talk to a prospective client for 5 to 10 minutes without charge.

The therapist should have a degree in the helping professions, such as a masters in social work (MSW) or counseling (MA) or a doctorate in psychology (Ph.D). Ask about training and educational background, especially about his or her knowledge and expertise in grief and loss.

Ask about the counselor's style of therapy. For grievers, the most helpful is a therapist who will participate in your concerns and offer suggestions for coping.

Ask about the fee. Is it based on a flat rate or a scale. Is insurance payment accepted?

Is the counselor friendly and willing to answer your questions on the telephone, or is he or she defensive?

Does this person seem like someone with whom you can share your thoughts and feelings?

Think about whether you would find it easier to work with a male or female therapist. Do you want someone with a particular religious orientation or specific cultural background? These are all important issues in choosing a therapist or counselor.

If, after one or two sessions, you decide this is not the right therapist for you, don't hesitate to look for someone else. Trust your own instincts. Remember, you are a consumer. A therapist who makes you feel reasonably comfortable will probably be the most effective in helping you.

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