



HOW DO I CHOOSE A THERAPIST TO WORK THROUGH MY TRAUMA?

Choosing a therapist to work through trauma is a very important decision. The following information is provided to assist you with choosing a therapist for your individual needs.

For additional information regarding therapeutic approaches for trauma, please see separate handouts “Specialized Therapy for Trauma” and “Alternative Interventions”

Where Do I Get Information About Therapy and My Therapist?

You can ask the person who referred you, ask the person you talk to when you call to schedule, or talk to the therapist directly at your first visit. It is important that you feel like you have enough information to decide whether you want to continue to see the therapist after your first visit, so you should ask any questions you may have.

The following are things you need to know about a prospective therapist:

- **Licensure***. Each state has established requirements for professionals practicing mental health treatment. The therapist should be licensed or certified by a state regulation board or supervised by another mental health professional who is licensed or certified. Information about a therapist’s license is available publicly, either on the internet or by calling the licensing board. See information at the end of this handout about licensing boards.
- **Training and Qualifications**. Ask about the types of therapy used and experience working with individuals with trauma. Some clinicians will be certified in specialized types of therapy or trauma treatment methods. Ask about the certification or training requirements completed. Also ask about his or her experience using the type of treatment that he or she recommends for you.
- **Fees**. This may be uncomfortable to ask about, but it is important information and a good therapist will be willing to discuss this with you. You will want to know the cost of the sessions; whether the therapist bills insurance or victim assistance directly; the cost of any co-pays; whether there is a sliding fee scale; cancellation policies; and the billing process.
- **Expectations for Treatment**. You will want to know a few things about the course of your treatment. Ask questions about how often the therapist will see you, how long sessions will be, how long treatment may be expected to last, and whether there is someone available after hours or if an emergency arises. You will also want to know the limitations on confidentiality.

What Will Happen in Therapy?

A therapist will spend the first few sessions assessing the extent and causes of the concerns you have. He or she will ask specific questions about what is causing you distress and about when and where this occurs most often. As the assessment continues, you and your therapist will agree on goals for the changes that you hope to make.

During the first session you may also want to discuss the therapist’s approach to treating you, your goals for treatment, possible timetables, and potential side effects and barriers to the goals. In the first few sessions you are finding out whether this particular therapist is likely to be helpful to you and if you feel comfortable and confident with him or her.

How Do I Know if Therapy is Helpful?

Once you have selected a therapist and agreed upon the initial goals, the therapist will discuss one or more approaches for working together. In trauma treatment there may be “homework” for you to do. As you continue, you and your therapist should routinely assess your progress. Depending on how well this is going, your therapist may suggest modifying or changing the treatment approach. Some questions for you to consider as therapy proceeds may include:

- Has the therapist given you a choice of therapy approaches?
- Are you being treated with a recommended approach for trauma? (see separate handout)
- Do you understand what the therapist is asking you to do?
- Do these instructions seem relevant to your objectives?
- Do you believe that following these instructions is likely to help you make significant progress?
- Has the therapist explained possible side effects of therapy?

What Should I Do if I Don't Think I'm Making Progress?

- **Talk with your Therapist.** Trauma treatment is likely to be uncomfortable at times. People can feel angry or frustrated during their therapy. If this happens, discuss these concerns and questions with the therapist. He or she should be open to hearing them and discussing them with you.
- **Consider getting a second opinion.** Many people feel that it is never acceptable to change therapists once you have begun working together. However, good therapists realize that they might not be the best fit for everyone. If you do not feel that you are improving, and if, after discussing this with your therapist, it does not appear likely that you will be able to create a path to improvement together, consider consulting with another therapist.

Mental Health Professional Licensure*

In Nevada, providing mental health therapy requires one of the professional licenses listed in the table below.

Each of these professions has separate clinical licensure requirements and scopes of practice. Generally, an advanced degree in mental health or a related field, supervised clinical practice and a passing score on a licensing exam are required for licensure. Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners require a nursing degree and Psychiatrists have medical degrees and licenses as well as board certification in psychiatry.

Additional information and licensure status can be found for each profession through their respective licensing boards.

<u>Profession</u>	<u>Regulatory Board</u>	<u>Link</u>
Psychologists	State of Nevada Board of Psychological Examiners	http://psyexam.nv.gov/
Social Workers	Nevada State Board of Examiners for Social Workers	http://socwork.nv.gov/
Marriage and Family Therapists; Professional Counselors	Nevada State Board of Examiners for Marriage and Family Therapists & Clinical Professional Counselors	http://marriage.nv.gov/
Drug and Alcohol Counselors	Nevada State Board of Examiners for Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Counselors	http://alcohol.nv.gov/
Nurse Practitioners	Nevada State Board of Nursing	http://nevadanursingboard.org/
Psychiatrists	American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.	https://www.abpn.com/

*Each state has its own regulations for licensure to practice mental health treatment. The requirements for Nevada are described in this document.