

## What Makes a Great Therapist?

Once you decide to consult with a therapist, here is a checklist to ensure you get a good one – and the best ones are not always the most qualified. Theory is great. It's what you do it that counts.

### The Checklist:

#### Making An Appointment:

Make sure they are qualified, are a member of an associated Organization and have Insurance.

Know what you want to achieve from the session so you can tell the therapist.

Check your investment in the session so you know exactly what you are going to pay and what you are going to receive for that.

Check how you can pay. Is it cash or can you use your credit/EFTPOS card?

Can you claim any back on a Health Fund?

Do they have parking?

Do they focus on the Problem or the Solution?

Many seem to just want to talk about the problem. This never gets to finding a solution. Identify the problem and focus on the possible Solutions.

What can you expect from the session?

If you decide to make an appointment, repeat the date and time to the receptionist to ensure you have it correct.

Ask if you need to bring anything with you.

Ensure you arrive at least 10 minutes early for your first appointment, as you will have a form to fill out.

#### Throughout the Session:

On seeing the therapist, time is money so be clear and concise with:

What your problem is.

How long you have had it.

The ideal solution you are looking for.

If the therapist is not happy with your ideal solution, they will give you other suggestions as to what can help you in a better way.

Ask questions to get answers.

Ensure they do not tell you what you should be doing – unless it is a critical situation. I see many clients who have been told by a therapist that they should leave their partner because the partner has had an affair or their partner has moved out so the therapist says they won't be coming back. The therapist's role is not to tell you what to do, it is to give you options so you can make a decision that is best for you.

Listen to all possibilities with an open mind. A closed mind will keep you stuck where you are.

Ask what you can work on when you are at home.

**At the conclusion of the first session:**

Ask how long, approximately, it will take to be able to help you resolve your problem.

They should now have a good idea.

Ideally, you should start to feel better after the first session.

If they say you will need around 12 months plus of therapy, ask why? If they do not have a good reason, I suggest you look elsewhere.

Ensure they give you skills and strategies so you can help yourself.

If they only want to talk, it may take forever for you to find a solution.

Ask when the best time is to come back for your next session (if you need to).

Ideally this is 7 to 14 days – unless it is an emergency. I find if the time is less than 7 days, you have not had time to think about what we have covered. Longer than 14 days, you start to forget what was covered.

Can you call them between sessions?

This is important as you may have questions that need answering or a situation may arise where you require immediate help. Often, a five minute phone call can help you resolve the problem.

**In conclusion:**

Was the therapist and his/her receptionist:

Courteous?

Understanding?

Helpful?

Friendly?

Did the therapist:

Offer Solutions?

Offer Useful help?

Speak in a language you could understand? – as against psycho-babble

Show he/she cared?

Offer some support?

Did you receive value for money?

Be careful with the money!

While some therapists may appear to be expensive, they also may be cheaper in that they are able to achieve a result that best suits you.