



Holistic Mental Health Services

Wendy Hawkins, LCSW

10 questions to ask during a new therapist consultation

Thinking about therapy? Great!! Here are questions to get you thinking when considering who to entrust your mental health journey with.

I personally and professionally believe that the mental health provider and client relationship is one of extreme importance. This is a relationship that needs to be developed and nurtured. The client rather an individual person, a couple or a family needs to feel one hundred percent comfortable for the therapeutic process to be successful. One of my ongoing practices is to meet with all possible clients for a complimentary 30-minute consultation. But what exactly is a consultation and what should it include? Consultations are pretty informal. This allows the potential client to meet with the potential therapist allowing each of them to get to know the other. To see if they're a good fit. No real therapy will take place during this meeting, but it gives both parties an opportunity to ask questions. Hopefully, this process empowers you as the client to feel more comfortable and at ease to begin your healing journey with someone you feel is relatable and competent to meet your therapeutic needs. Some questions to ask include:

1. *What are your credentials and how long have you been in practice?*

- Licensed social worker (LCSW, LGSW, LMSW, LCSW-C, LISW, LSW)
- Marriage and family therapist (MFT, LMFT, LCMFT, MA)
- Pastoral Counseling (MA, CCPT, CpastC, NCPC, NCCA)
- Psychologist master level (MA, MS, LBPC, LCPC)
- Psychologist doctorate level (PhD, PsyD or EdD)
- Psychiatrist (MD)

Each of these professionals has a different learning model that was used as they obtained their education and training. Ask questions to clarify what they studied and how that impacts how they practice.

2. *What are your primary philosophies used for your treatment modalities?*

3. *What are your thoughts on religion and mental health?*

4. *What is talk therapy within your practice?*

5. *What evidence-based interventions do you use?*

6. *How are my treatment goals developed?*

7. *Do I have to begin or continue taking my medication for therapy?*

8. *How do you take care of yourself as a therapist?*

9. *Have you experienced therapy as a client?*

10. *What makes you relatable to me as a client?*

You're in control of your mental health journey!

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Considering that the bulk of mental health professionals are female, heterosexual and white, it's important for those who do not fall into these categories to feel safe, valued and heard. Here are some additional questions regarding inclusion. Of course this is not an exhaustive list but hopefully will get your mind thinking!

- 1. What are your views on social justice?**
- 2. Do you consider yourself to be politically progressive or more conservative?**
- 3. Have you worked with a BIPOC previously?**
- 4. Are you aware of your privilege and how do you manage it?**
- 5. Do you believe that racism continues to exist within our society?**
- 6. What are your thoughts on systemic oppression?**
- 7. How would you feel if I began to talk about racism or how I feel angry towards white people and how they treat me and other people of color?**
- 8. What is your gender identity?**
- 9. What is your sexual identity?**
- 10. Have you ever worked with a queer or trans person before?**
- 11. Do you think being gay is a choice?**
- 12. Do you understand issues currently facing the LGBTQ community?**
- 13. Are you LGBTQ affirming and competent?**

After the consultation, I always suggest that the person(s) sit with and marinate on the conversation. If they have additional questions after the consultation to please email me so I can answer them. After consideration of our consultation, if they feel they want to move forward I ask them to reach out and connect with me so I can get the intake forms to them as well as scheduling the first appointment. I never want them to feel awkward or pressured into moving forward so I always give them the power to move forward.

Remember that you are employing this person to assist you with your mental health journey!! Take time to get to know who that person might be!! It is important that you feel respected and heard. Asking these questions as well as any others empowers you to make the best decision possible.

good luck!

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