

# Finding a Therapist: Where To Look and What To Ask

This is intended to be a reference to guide you through the decision-making process when selecting a therapist. It is *not* a checklist. The tips are not necessarily listed in order of importance. All questions may not be applicable in all situations nor for every person. You must decide which questions, if any, are appropriate for you and your situation.

Remember—you are interviewing the therapist as much as he/she is interviewing you. A therapist's amount and type of experience do not necessarily relate to his/her effectiveness. You can decide whether or not you want to work with the person. And once you begin work, you can decide to look elsewhere if you believe you and the therapist are not a good match.

## What to look for in a therapist

- A human being. Someone who treats you with respect.

## Where to look

- telephone book/Yellow Pages, friends, physicians, clergy, social workers, employee assistance program counselors, community mental health center

Questions to ask the professional (ask open-ended questions, not questions that can be answered just with yes or no.):

- What problems are you comfortable dealing with? Experience with dissociative disorders? (especially important if looking for therapist for child)
- How did you become involved in this field?
- What is your experience and education?
- Do you have a treatment plan for working with dissociative disorders?
- What is your philosophy of therapy? (problem or symptom oriented?) If MPD, is integration the stated goal?
- How do you view the client/therapist relationship?
- What do you expect from your clients?
- What are your boundaries, e.g., touching
- How will you indicate that a change in therapist is needed and how will we work through it?
- What is your feeling about/procedure for using hypnosis?
- What safety measures have you taken?
- How is hospitalization handled (purpose, admission process, therapist contact, etc.)
- What are your thoughts/beliefs about medication?
- What are your feelings about abreactive work?
- How do you provide support for the family?
- To whom will information be released and why/when?
- "Nuts 'n Bolts" questions:
  - accessibility—phones calls outside office hours
  - fees
  - payment—what is required, i.e. accept partial payments, only full payment, which insurance accepted and how filed
  - frequency of visits
  - provide long-term therapy
  - Gender—may be important for some persons
  - Geography—how far away is therapist's office and will it be difficult to get there regularly?
  - policy on missed appointments

Questions therapist should ask you (may not happen in first visit):

- What are my goals for therapy?
- Have my other therapy experiences been helpful? Not? Share what worked for me and what didn't.