

HOW DO I FIND A THERAPIST?

So, you're thinking of starting therapy. That's great! But you may be wondering how to begin. Finding a therapist can be intimidating, but there are plenty of resources out there to help you.

ASK AROUND

- Ask your friends and family if they can recommend local agencies – just make sure that they fit into your health insurance plan if you have one.
- Ask your doctor for a referral to a therapist – doctors also often know about assistance programs that can help you pay for therapy.



SEARCHING FOR OTHER PLACES TO LOOK

Health Plans

If you are enrolled in a health insurance plan, your insurance provider can help you find a therapist.

- Many insurance company websites have online search tools.
- You can also call the member services or behavioral health and substance abuse number on the back of your insurance card for help.
- Your insurance company can guide you to which providers are in your network. A therapist's availability to take on new clients is always changing; therefore, the online search tool on your insurance company's website may not be up to date. It's always best to call a therapist that you are interested in seeing to determine if they are accepting new clients.

MIT MyLife Services

[MIT MyLife Services](#) provides confidential consultations and counseling (four free sessions per issue) on issues related to personal and emotional well-being to benefits-eligible faculty, staff, postdocs, and their adult household members. MyLife Services is available by phone, email, or live chat, 24 hours a day every day, for any work-life need. They can assist with most work-life concerns, including mental health concerns, stress management, emotional health, child care resources and referral, legal advice (including a 30-minute free legal consultation), financial services, and caregiving searches, along with many other topics. When you call, MyLife Services experts will speak to you about your need and connect you with a counselor that can help you.

- Website: <https://hr.mit.edu/worklife/mylifeservices>
- Online contact form: www.mitmylifeservices.com/contactus
- Phone: 844-405-5433
- Live Chat (9am-5pm): www.mitmylifeservices.com

Search Engines

- Look for a therapist who is familiar with the issues you are experiencing.
 - Often, therapists have special areas of focus, such as depression; experienced therapists have seen the problems you're facing several times, which broadens their view and gives them more insight.
- [Psychology Today's](#) therapist finder has features to help you:
 - Filter your search results by gender, sexuality, faith, areas of expertise, and more.
 - Learn more about potential providers and their practices by reading their profiles.
 - Look for keywords and issues with which you identify.
- [InnoPsych's](#) therapist finder can help you find a therapist of color and filter results by specialty area, service type, ethnicity, and more.
- [Therapy Matcher](#) and [William James College INTERFACE Referral Service](#) are free client-therapist matchmaking services for individuals in Massachusetts.

Virtual Services

- If you have Blue Cross Blue Shield for insurance, they offer a network of telehealth providers for minor medical conditions and behavioral/mental health needs, with easy access via your computer or mobile device through [WellConnection](#).
- [Dana Group Associates](#) offers a variety of mental wellness resources, including both teletherapy and in-person options. Appointments can be made directly on [their website](#).
- [BetterHelp](#), [TalkSpace](#), and [Cerebral](#) are online mental health subscription services that provide ongoing access to virtual care and professional therapy for a monthly rate.
*Note: BetterHelp **does not** accept insurance; however, TalkSpace and Cerebral **do** accept most insurance providers.*
- [7 Cups](#) is a website that provides online therapy and free support to people experiencing emotional distress by connecting them with trained listeners. 7 Cups has a free 24/7 online chat, a free 24/7 Q&A community support board, and optional confidential professional therapy. *Note: Many 7 Cups services are free, but therapy with a licensed therapist is **not** covered by insurance.*
- [HeyPeers](#) is a video and chatroom app that allows people to join support discussion groups with others who are on similar life journeys.
*Note: HeyPeers **does not** accept insurance. However, those eligible for MyLife Services can receive 10 HeyPeers Certified group meetings for free.*

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING A THERAPIST

When you're looking for a therapist, be sure to consider the various types of practitioners:

- **Psychologists** have a doctoral degree in psychology (PhD or PsyD) and are licensed in clinical psychology.
- **Licensed Certified Social Workers (LCSW)** have a master's degree in social work (MSW) along with additional clinical training.
- **Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers (LICSW)** have a master's degree in social work (MSW) and have completed 3,500 hours of clinical work subsequent to earning their LCSW. LICSW clinicians can independently operate their own private practice.
- **Marriage and Family Therapists (MFT)** have a master's degree and clinical experience in marriage and family therapy.
- **Mental Health Counselors (LMHC)** have a master's degree in mental health counseling (or related field) and supervised clinical experience.
- **Psychiatrists** are physicians (MD or DO) who specialize in mental health; because they are medical doctors, psychiatrists can prescribe medication.
- **Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners (PMHNP or NP)** have a graduate degree in nursing with a specialization in psychiatric conditions; they are qualified to prescribe psychiatric medication.

Most therapists don't limit themselves to one specific type of therapy; rather, they blend different styles to best fit the situation at hand. Outside of individual therapy, there are also the following options:

- **Family therapy** involves treating more than one member of the family at the same time to help the family resolve conflicts and improve interaction; it is often based on the premise that families are a system.
- **Group therapy** is facilitated by a professional therapist and involves a group of peers working on the same problem – such as anxiety, depression, or substance abuse. It can be a valuable place to practice social dynamics in a safe environment and find inspiration and ideas from peers who are struggling with the same issues.
- **Couples therapy** involves two people in a committed relationship, and assists with learning how to work through differences, communicate better, and problem-solve relationship challenges.

What's most important in a therapist or counselor is a sense of connection, safety, and support. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does it seem like the therapist truly cares about you and your problems?
- Do you feel as if the therapist understands you?
- Does the therapist accept you for who you are?
- Would you feel comfortable revealing personal information to this individual?
- Do you feel as if you can be honest and open with this therapist? That you don't have to hide or pretend you're someone that you're not?
- Is the therapist a good listener? Do they listen without interrupting, criticizing, or judging? Pick up on your feelings and what you're really saying? Make you feel heard?

MAKING AN APPOINTMENT

After making a list of potential therapists, start making some phone calls.

- Let the receptionist know you are a new client and make sure they are covered under your insurance.
- Ask whether the therapist has had experience in dealing with your concerns.
- Find out where the therapist is located and the hours available for your treatment. Is the therapist located in a clinic, community mental health center, medical school, independent practice, or another setting?
- Find out what kind of therapy your potential therapist is likely to provide (ex. long-term vs. short-term, individual vs. group, in-person vs. telehealth) and consider if it fits your expectations.
- If they offer to put you on a waiting list, say yes – even if you end up finding someone else who can see you right away, it can't hurt to have a backup plan.

WHILE YOU WAIT...

- In the meantime, you can use short-term mental health resources to tide you over.
- If you're in crisis, you have a few 24/7 options. You may call 988 to be connected to the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, or text "MHA" to 741-741 to talk to a trained counselor from the Crisis Text Line.

REMINDERS

Trust your gut instincts! A therapist may look great on paper, but if the connection doesn't feel right, you can always change therapists. A good therapist will respect this choice and should never pressure you or make you feel guilty.