



How to Choose the Right Therapist: A Due Diligence Checklist

I. Training & Competence (Not Just Credentials)

1. What specific training do you have for my condition?

- Have you completed formal training in the gold-standard treatments?
 - OCD → ERP
 - Trauma → EMDR, CPT, or Prolonged Exposure
 - BPD → Intensive DBT
 - Eating Disorders → Specialized ED training
 - Addiction → Structured relapse prevention models

2. How many clients with this condition have you treated?

3. How do you differentiate similar diagnoses?

(Example: depression vs. bipolar; OCD vs. generalized anxiety.)

II. Treatment Structure & Outcomes

4. How will you assess and track progress?

- Do you use formal measures?
- How do you (we) know if therapy is working?

5. What would a treatment plan look like for me?

- What are the goals?
- What is the estimated timeline?

6. What happens if I'm not improving?

- Do you consult?
- Do you refer?
- Do you adjust the model?

7. Will I be expected to practice skills between sessions?

8. Is therapy meant to be time-limited, or open-ended?

This helps you to assess if the clinician has a specialization or is a generalist



III. Practical & Philosophical Fit

9. What approach do you use? Can you describe it (clearly)?

If a therapist cannot explain their model in simple terms, this is a warning sign

10. What populations do you specialize in?

11. How do you integrate spirituality, if at all?

12. What is your cancellation policy and communication boundary?

13. What do you expect from clients in this process?

Red Flags to Pay Attention To

1. No Clear Plan or Measurement

- You're unsure what you're working toward.
- There is no diagnosis or working formulation.
- Goals are vague ("feel better," "process more").
- Progress is not being tracked in any structured way.
- Months pass without noticeable functional change.

Good therapy should have direction. If you cannot explain the plan, that's helpful information to make an informed decision. Maybe therapy isn't the answer; it could mean leaning into community involvement, faith, or life coaching.

2. Therapy Reinforces Dependence Instead of Independence

- The therapist discourages second opinions.
- There is resistance to discussing discharge or graduation.
- You feel more fragile over time, not more capable.
- Sessions revolve around validation without skill-building. Lots of crying, no resolution.
- You're told that ongoing therapy is necessary indefinitely without a clear rationale.

Effective therapy builds autonomy. It should expand your life, not organize it around treatment.