

Guidelines in Seeking a Gender Therapist

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- The therapist must have training in gender issues. This means that he or she has studied transgenderism through courses or research, and is affiliated with transgender organizations. The best referrals will come from the experiences of other trans people. This can be a difficult obstacle, since there is little training available. Many people with advanced degrees have little knowledge in this area, and some people who are very knowledgeable are "self-taught." If the therapist admits to a lack of concrete knowledge, they must be willing to read and study, as well as be under the supervision of someone trained in gender issues.
- You must feel comfortable with the therapist. This is something only you will know, and may have little to do with the therapists' skill. This is about "connection," and in order to trust and make use of your time, nothing is more important than an authentic relationship.
- The therapist can hold a number of different degrees including a Masters degree in Social Work, Counseling Psychology, or an approved medical degree in Nursing, or Clinical Psychiatry. However, he or she should be trained in a wide range of practice skills including individual and family therapy, psychopharmacology, psychodynamic and developmental processes, mental illnesses, addictions, and trauma recovery. Ideally, the person should be eclectic in their treatment approaches, and treat each client as a unique person, without fitting them into a predetermined treatment modality.
- The therapist should be aware of issues of sexual and gender identity, and the impact of political and social forces in the construction of identity. A clinical and medical knowledge is not enough; a socio-political understanding of gender, ethnicity and class are essential skills.
- Services should be financially reasonable and confidential.
- Before beginning a therapeutic relationship, interview the therapist and inquire as to their degrees, qualifications, and belief systems regarding gender as well as more general psychotherapeutic issues. Remember that you are the consumer. If you are not satisfied with the therapists' expertise, or style, find another more compatible therapist. Therapy can be a healing and empowering experience, so do your homework to find the right person to work with.