

How to Find the Right Mental Health Trauma Specialist?

1. First, decide if you want to use your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), insurance, and or pay privately for services.
2. Many people want privacy and don't want anyone to know he or she is seeking mental health treatment. HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Privacy Act) protects you. Any mental health provider should know how to help you do that; however if you use your insurance, your records are more vulnerable.
3. If you're comfortable, ask for referrals from people you trust.
4. Decide if you want to do individual treatment or group treatment.
5. Check out the provider on-line if they have a website.
6. If you feel comfortable talking with the person on the phone, schedule an initial appointment, but still pay attention to how you feel with the mental health provider. Not everyone likes chocolate ice cream, but that doesn't mean chocolate ice cream is bad.
7. If you don't feel comfortable with the first person you meet, try again because you're worth it.
8. Remember you don't have to tell the mental health provider everything on the phone or even the first few times you meet them. It is the mental health provider's job to know how to help you feel comfortable.
9. Allow at least 3 sessions to establish a relationship with the mental health professional.
10. Make sure you set goals and objectives with the therapist.

Potential Questions to Ask a Mental Health Provider

1. Are you licensed in the state where you practice?
2. How long have you been in practice?
3. What is your degree? The degree does not mean the provider knows trauma and especially with fire fighters, law enforcement, or EMS personnel.
4. Understanding credentials of mental health professionals.
5. Master's level:
 - a. Licensed professional counselor (LPC),
 - b. Licensed clinical social worker (LCSW),
 - c. Licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT)
6. Doctoral level:
 - a. Licensed psychologist – Ph.D., Psy.D., Ed.D.
 - b. Psychiatrist

7. What kind of training do you have to treat trauma?
8. How many trauma survivors have you treated?
9. Have you ever treated fire fighters and/or emergency personnel?
10. What kind of trauma therapy do you use?
11. What do you charge?
12. How often do you see clients? Weekly? Bi-weekly? Monthly?
13. How do you handle emergencies?

Resources to learn about getting help and PTSD

1. <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/finding-a-therapist.asp>
2. http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/understanding_ptsd/booklet.pdf
3. <http://firefighterveteran.com/ptsd-paper.html>

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