



Choosing a good therapist

Professional treatment for an Eating Disorder is usually long term and usually takes several months, at a minimum. It is vital to have the right treatment. In most cases (as a minimum) this is with a:

1. therapist who has expertise in treating Eating Disorders
2. medical expert such a General Practitioner (GP), Psychiatrist or Paediatrician.

The Butterfly Foundation (www.thebutterflyfoundation) has a list of clinicians with expertise in eating disorders in Australia.

Choosing a therapist is a bit like choosing a car or hairdresser. Think about what things are important to you. Is it their level of expertise, is pricing an issue, how about age and or gender? Given eating disorders treatment is highly specialised you may not find someone who “ticks-all-the-boxes”, so search until you find what is the best fit for you.

10 questions to ask when choosing a treatment team

Before deciding on a therapist it can be useful to phone a few therapists to ask how they operate. Some questions people find helpful include:

1. What problems do they treat? (is disordered eating mentioned?);
2. What is their experience with Eating Disorders?;
3. What therapeutic approach do they employ? (is this evidence based?);
4. How frequently would sessions be?;
5. What is their location and availability throughout the week? (parking, public transport? Weekend or after-hours appointments?);
6. Are they available for emergency consultations, or over the telephone or email between sessions?;
7. How much are sessions? (rebates under medicare? Health insurance?)
8. How long is the therapy likely to take? (note that it is highly unlikely it will be less than 3 months or 12 sessions- so be wary of someone who promises this)
9. Will home activities will be required between sessions?
10. What if I have to cancel a session? (cancelation fees?)

Who to chose, who to chose?

In terms of deciding whether to proceed with the therapist, trust your instincts! Their answers to your question are important- the therapeutic process can take some time so it must be sustainable. It is equally important that you get a feel for their manner and whether you feel you can talk to them. If you don't feel comfortable with the particular therapist, resist booking an appointment by saying something like “thank you for talking to me and for giving me so much information. It will really assist me in making decision about the most appropriate therapist for me. I will contact you within the next few days if I decide to proceed with treatment with you”. Remember you are a consumer who is paying for treatment- you need to spend your money on something that sounds right for you.



If you don't like someone, consider whether it is you (or the eating disorder) that doesn't like them?

What to expect when treatment commences?

Once you do commence treatment it often takes a number of sessions before you feel comfortable- so give it some time. If you don't the approach is working you may want to discuss it with your therapist. Ultimately, don't be afraid to move on.

Note: Every persons recovery is different. Sufferers tend to have different pathways into wellness. Some people take time off school or work to focus on recovery, others might not. Some might have consulted numerous therapists; others might have just seen one. Some people may have made a very active decision towards recovery; others might have found it happening gradually. There is no right or wrong way to recover from an Eating Disorder. There is no timeframe for recovery either. It is common for Sufferers to fluctuate in their motivation and "progress". Sufferers ordinarily require professional treatment to recover from an Eating Disorder.

Also, ask and be honest with yourself about what your goals in recovery are. Recovery is a long term process and can take months or years. Complete recovery includes:

1. The resumption and maintenance of a normal body weight (and the associated resumption of normal body functions).
2. The resolution of problematic thinking.
3. The resolution of problematic behaviour.

ⁱ Is there scientific research to suggest evidence that it works? Evidence based approaches for eating disorders include Maudsley Family Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy (IPT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT)