



How Do I Select A Psychologist?

By Dr. Anthony W. Tanona

Choosing a psychologist is an important decision, and one that should be made based on your individualized preferences. In many cases, your psychologist is someone with whom you or your child will be confiding in and processing difficult topics, so it is important that you find someone who makes you feel comfortable.

Many psychologists agree that an important factor in determining whether or not to work with a particular psychologist, once that psychologist's credentials and competence are established, is your level of personal comfort with that psychologist. Feeling comfortable and being able to process your concerns can improve the therapeutic relationship and help advance the process of therapy.

If you are considering therapy, some ways that you can find a provider are:

- Consult with your child's physician or other health professionals.
- Inquire at your child's school.
- Ask family/friends for a referral.
- Contact the American Psychological

Association (APA) or the Florida Psychological Association (FPA). Both organizations have a list of psychologists that are members in the respective organizations on their websites.

- Look at a list of providers that are contracted with your insurance company. You can then research the specific providers online, contact trusted individuals that may be familiar with them, or contact psychologists in your vicinity and set up consultations.

- Contact your area Community Mental Health Center.

- Consult with trusted individuals at your church or synagogue.

Once you begin therapy, continuing to feel comfortable with your therapist is important. As professionals, psychologists are held to an ethical standard that encompasses the relationships they have with their clients and an overall standard of care.

As humans, however, there are individual personality differences in each psychologist, therefore finding somebody that you feel comfortable with is important.

Many psychologists will offer you the opportunity to speak with them on the phone or have a free in-person consultation to help you feel comfortable with them. This can help you assess the "connection" while providing you with the opportunity to ask questions.

Some questions you may want to consider are:

- Are you a licensed psychologist? Verify the psychologist's license which can be found on the Florida Department of Health website.
- How many years of experience do you have?
- What are your specialty areas?
- I am having difficulties with my child's (behaviors, attention, mood, school performance, etc.) or I have been feeling (depressed, anxious, etc.). Do you have clinical experience working with people with these types of problems?
- What is your therapeutic orientation?
- What are your fees? Do you have a sliding-scale fee policy?
- Do you accept insurance and if so, which ones?
- Do you offer a free phone or in-person consultation session?
- What is your availability? Do you offer early morning, evening, or weekend appointments?

When choosing your psychologist, it will be important to factor in the content of their answers while also considering the level of comfort you feel with them.

The right match is important. Choosing a competent, caring psychologist with whom you feel comfortable will help determine if you develop a therapeutic relationship, progress in therapy, and improve you or your child's behavioral and/or emotional functioning.

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