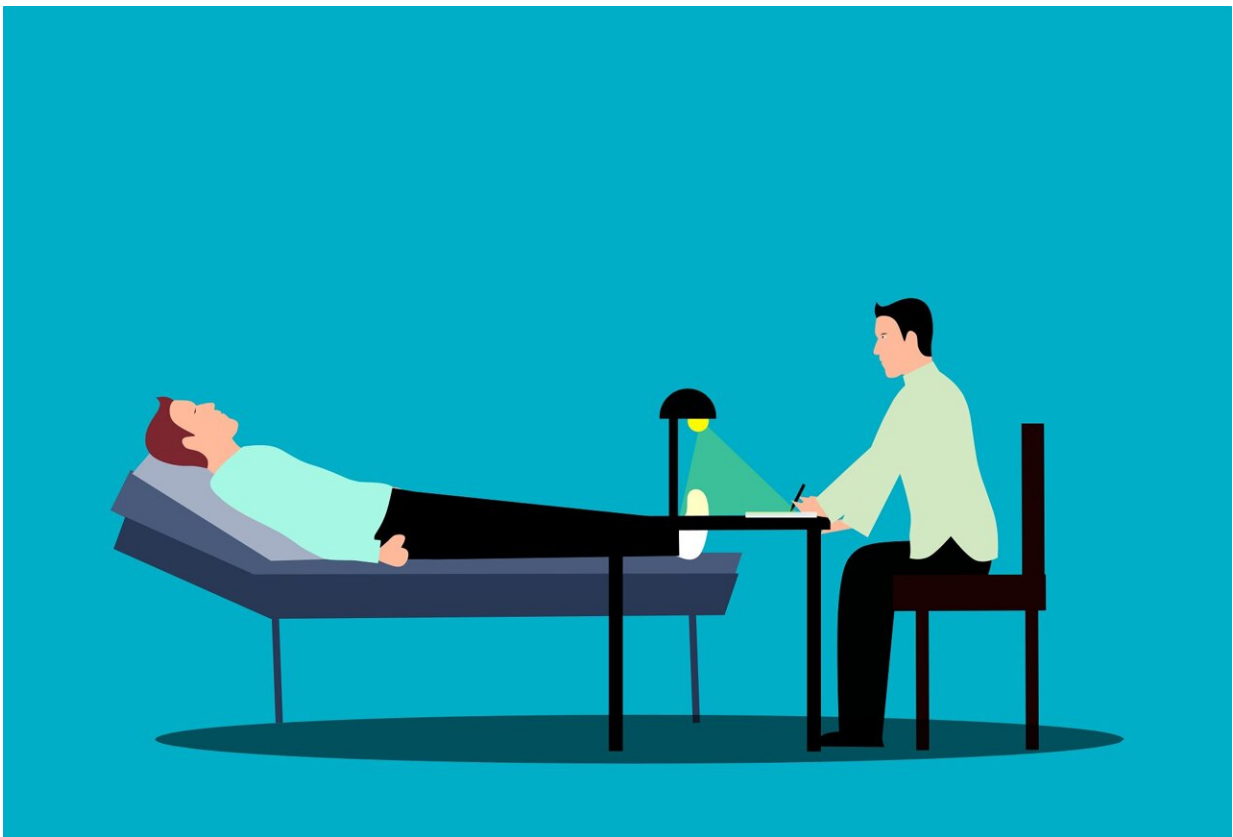


# Tips from three mental health providers about making sure your therapist is the best match

August 5 2022, by Abraham Gutman

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What makes a good relationship between a patient and a mental health provider? It starts with a good match.

Providers have [different styles](#), skills and experience. At the same time, patients have different needs—from ability to pay, communication style, and sensitivities around identity and culture that require a competent [therapist](#).

We asked three Philadelphia-area [mental health providers](#) for tips on how to pick a therapist.

## **Shop around**

"Treat your mental health like gold," said Charlotte Andrews, a licensed psychotherapist with a clinic in Elkins Park.

Andrews recommends interviewing multiple therapists before deciding who you felt most comfortable with. Think about who you believe is going to provide you with what you require for your mental health.

"You do not have to settle for any therapist just because they are available," Andrews said.

Yes, therapists have long wait lists these days, and many people feel they need to take an appointment with whomever has an opening. "But you don't want to settle," she said.

## **Treat the first visit like a blind date**

Some people are very focused on finding a therapist with a particular degree, but it's more important to find a therapist with whom you feel you can establish a relationship. Do you feel like you want to talk more with this person? Do you feel safe? Do you feel like they're listening to you? Is there an initial connection?

"That's almost like a blind date," said Jennifer Reid, is a psychiatrist practicing in Philadelphia. She is also the host of the podcast The Reflective Doc.

## Study your mental health benefits

Medicaid, Medicare and most private health plans are required to cover [mental health services](#), but benefits and out-of-pocket costs may vary. Many mental health providers do not accept [health insurance](#), or may be out of your plan's network.

In many instances, you will be responsible for paying the fee upfront. If the provider does accept insurance, you may then be able to seek reimbursement from your insurer.

Make sure you understand what your costs are going to be before the appointment, said Jessica Joseph, a licensed [clinical psychologist](#) in Philadelphia and a member of the Philadelphia Treatment Not Trauma Coalition, a group of local mental health professionals advocating for non-police response to mental health crises.

"If you have questions about your [mental health](#) benefits, ask a therapist to explain it to you," Joseph said. "Oftentimes, we're pretty good at doing that."

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