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FROM THE DESK OF DR JENN HARDY

A quarterly-ish newsletter



Before we begin...

In my previous two newsletters, I've talked about trauma recovery, supporting a loved one who has experienced trauma, self-care in the midst of a busy life, and the logistics of finding a therapist. I've posted these earlier newsletters on my website in the 'Writing Projects' section. Feel free to check them out! Even as I was writing about finding a therapist in my first newsletter, I knew I was leaving out a lot of nuance in favor of giving you an outline of the nuts and bolts. This time around, I'm going to be diving into more nuance, less nuts and bolts.

A couple of caveats are worth mentioning before we get started. I'm a psychologist in Tennessee. I'm not sure how much of my advice will apply outside of the United States, or even in different regions of the US. For example, it's pretty common in the Knoxville region (where I live) to have therapists who are in-network with multiple insurances. I am 100% insurance based. That said, other parts of the country (particularly those with high costs of living) may show a different picture. There are so many therapists on Instagram now. I would encourage you to check out the websites and newsletters of therapists in your area for more specific, local advice.

As with any advice you receive, take what is helpful and leave the rest.

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A brief overview of therapy types

I found myself cringing as I wrote that title. Why? Because there are SO MANY different theoretical orientations and styles. It will be impossible to cover them all here. Check out the links at the end for more.

When figuring out a style, therapists have to ask themselves some pretty huge questions:

1. Where do problems come from?
2. How does change happen?
3. What should the goals of therapy be?

Take a second and think through your answers to these questions. Your thoughts will help guide you to a therapist who thinks similarly about problems, change, and the work ahead.

1. Cognitive, Cognitive-Behavioral, Behavioral (CBT): These approaches focus on your thoughts, behaviors, or some combination of the two. They believe problems arise because of faulty thinking patterns (that create problematic behaviors and emotions). The focus is on changing thoughts in the present, too much discussion of the past is viewed as a distraction. Homework is common. This approach is often more structured, working through treatment protocols. There are many different iterations you can Google to learn more (e.g., EFT, ACT).

2. Psychodynamic, Attachment-based: In contrast to CBT, these therapists (myself included) believe childhood shapes our view of ourselves and our world. Interpersonal patterns develop early in life and continue, even when our environment shifts. Homework is common but less structured. Emotions are key, as is discussion of the past.

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3. EMDR: Originally developed for treatment of PTSD, this approach stimulates both sides of the brain to help "rewire" and heal from trauma

4. Feminist, Multicultural: Therapists coming from these approaches recognized that our culture influences the way that we view ourselves and the ways we are treated by others. Oftentimes, these are blended with other approaches (e.g., I'm a feminist, psychodynamic therapist.).

5. Couples/Family Therapy: True systems therapists view the couple/family as their client, not one person. Look for someone with significant training working with couples.

6. Dialectical Behavior Therapy: A newer, exciting development. You learn skills to help you communicate more effectively, build mindfulness, and better regulate your emotions.

Resources:

[More on CBT](#)

[More on Psychodynamic Therapy](#)

[More on EMDR](#)

[More on Feminist/Multicultural](#)

[More on Couples/Family Therapy](#)

[More on DBT](#)



Finding Low Cost Therapy



Whatever option you choose, a real money saver is to make the most of the sessions you do have. Come prepared to talk and do the work. Finish your homework between appointments. Prioritize good sleep and regular physical movement.

1. EAP: Call your insurance to find out about your EAP benefits. If you have them, you will get a certain number of free sessions. It stinks to switch therapists after a few sessions, so go into it knowing that these appointments are focused more on goal setting and skill development rather than deeper restorative work.

2. Community Mental Health Centers: These are especially valuable resources for uninsured individuals. I used to work at Cherokee Health Systems (a CMHC in my area) and am grateful to the wonderful people I worked with there. Google the term alongside your city to find the ones in your area. In Tennessee, uninsured, low income individuals are given SafetyNet insurance which provides mental health treatment at no cost through a CMHC. Turnover of providers is high, so go into it like you would an EAP provider. Focus on skill development, problem-solving, and connecting to other resources locally.

3. University Counseling Centers: If you are a student, start here for services included as a part of your tuition. If you are not, call them for help finding the various campus clinics where therapy grad students see clients (also free, or very reduced cost).

4. Early Career Therapists: When you are searching standard channels (like Psychologytoday.com), focus on therapists who have a supervisor. They are often willing to use a sliding scale or simply have a reduced rate that is much cheaper than licensed therapists. Psychotherapy research is pretty consistent that years of experience as a therapist do not predict better treatment outcomes. Read that again. Why is that? I think outcome is more about the relationship you form with your therapist as well as the work you do as a client.

5. Group Therapy: Pool your resources with others and use the power of group to get relationship feedback and support.

6. Pro bono: Therapists have an ethical mandate to have some portion of their professional work to be pro bono (no cost). Google "pro bono" alongside your city. Here is a great one in Baltimore where a central agency verifies your income and matches you with a therapist. Go Teamwork!

<https://probonomd.org>

Questions to ask a potential therapist:

1. What is your availability? (A great therapist isn't a good fit if your schedule doesn't overlap.)
2. Do you take my insurance? If not, can you refer me to someone with a similar style who does?
3. How do you typically work with someone who has _____? Aim for a couple word description of your main concern (e.g., anxiety, difficulty transitioning to retirement, perfectionism, etc.).
4. About how long will we work together? How do we know when we are finished?
5. How can I prepare for my first appointment?
6. What are you like in appointments? What is your style/theoretical orientation? (Some people prefer an active, opinionated therapist whereas others would want a more unstructured, neutral one).
7. What is your crisis policy? Are you available after hours if I am having a mental health emergency?
8. How important is homework?