



Tips for Victims/Survivors of Sexual Violence Looking for a Mental Health Professional

Experiencing sexual violence can often cause or worsen mental health concerns. Addressing your mental health through therapy after sexual violence can be helpful in coping and healing. Therapy may also help with handling some mental health issues often associated with surviving sexual violence, such as depression, anxiety, and symptoms associated with post-traumatic distress.

Caring for your mental health needs through therapy can also seem like a big task, especially when dealing with the aftermath of sexual violence. To make this process easier, use this sheet as a guide to finding a therapist who fits your needs. Remember that you, along with all victims/survivors, have unique needs that may or may not be met by working with a therapist. Take the path that is best for you.

If you choose to try therapy, here are some ways to find the right therapist for you:

- 1. Seek a therapist who has experience working on the issues you would like addressed, including, but not limited to, sexual violence.**

Therapists can have expertise in certain issue areas. It is important to find a therapist who will be able to meet your specific needs and have knowledge about things you have experienced.

- 2. Call your local anti-sexual violence advocacy agency and learn whether they can refer you to a therapist in your community.**

To find an agency near you, visit rapehelpmn.org.

3. Ask the potential therapist questions before deciding whether they can provide the care you need.

Here are some examples of questions to ask:

- What types of therapy do you use? Can you explain it to me?
- What is your specialty?
- Can you tell me about your experience working with people who have experienced trauma? Do you change your approach with these clients?
- What is your confidentiality policy?
- What types of insurance do you accept?
- Tell me how you decided to become a mental health professional.

4. Look for a therapist you trust and with whom you feel comfortable sharing information.

It can be challenging and take time to find the right therapist for you. Remember you should always feel safe, listened to, and respected during your sessions. You do not need to settle on a therapist. Find someone who is best for you.

5. You can choose to end care with your therapist if you do not feel comfortable with them or if you feel your needs are not being met.

To recognize possible signs that this is not the right therapist for you, ask yourself these questions throughout your therapy experience:

- Do you feel uncomfortable?
- Do you feel shamed or judged?
- Do you feel like you are not making progress or focusing on your needs?
- Do you feel sessions are focused on your therapist's emotions or needs?