

ISSUES FOR THE CLIENT TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A PSYCHOLOGIST/PSYCHOTHERAPIST

Here is a list of topics or questions you may wish to raise when attending your first (assessment) session:

- ◆ Check that your psychologist/psychotherapist has relevant qualifications and experience in the field of counselling/psychotherapy.
- ◆ Ask about the type of approach the psychologist/psychotherapist uses, and how it relates to your problem.
- ◆ Ask whether the psychologist/psychotherapist is in supervision (most professional bodies consider this mandatory; see footnote).
- ◆ Ask whether the psychologist/psychotherapist is a member of a professional body and abides by a code of ethics.
- ◆ Discuss your goals/expectations of counselling.
- ◆ Ask about the fees and discuss the frequency and estimated duration of counselling.
- ◆ Arrange regular review sessions with your counsellor to evaluate your progress.
- ◆ Do not enter into a long term counselling contract unless you are satisfied that this is necessary and beneficial to you.
- ◆ If you do not have a chance to discuss the above points during your first session, discuss them at the next possible opportunity.

General Issues

- ◆ Counsellor self-disclosure can sometimes be therapeutically useful. However, if the sessions are dominated by the counsellor discussing his/her own problems at length, raise the issue in the counselling session.
- ◆ If at any time you feel discounted, undermined or manipulated within the sessions, discuss this with the psychologist/psychotherapist. It is easier to resolve issues as and when they arise.
- ◆ Do not accept significant gifts from your psychologist/psychotherapist. However, this does not apply to relevant therapeutic material.
- ◆ Do not accept social invitations from your psychologist/psychotherapist. For example, dining in a restaurant or going for a drink. However this does not apply to relevant therapeutic assignments such as being accompanied by your psychologist/psychotherapist into a situation to overcome a phobia.
- ◆ If your psychologist/psychotherapist proposes a change in a venue for the counselling sessions without good reason, do not agree. For example, from a centre to the psychologist/psychotherapist's home.

- ◆ Research has shown that it is not beneficial for clients to have sexual contact with their psychologist/psychotherapist. Professional bodies in the field of counselling and psychotherapy consider that it is unethical for psychologist/psychotherapist or therapist to engage in sexual activity with current clients.
- ◆ If you have any doubts about the counselling you are receiving then discuss them with your psychologist/psychotherapist. If you are still uncertain, seek advice, perhaps from a friend, your doctor, your local Citizens Advice Bureau, the professional body your psychologist/psychotherapist belongs to.

Footnote: Counselling supervision is a formal arrangement where counsellors discuss their counselling in a confidential setting on a regular basis with one or more professional counsellors.