PTSD CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE
www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline

How Do I Find a Good Therapist?

While there are a lot of therapists offering their services, finding someone you like takes dedicated effort, especially if you have never seen a therapist before. Many professions offer therapy. In addition to psychology, some of these include psychiatry, social work, and counseling.

Here are some of the more important issues you should consider:

- Is the therapist licensed? Each state is responsible for making sure therapists are competent to provide their services. Only those with proper training receive a license.
- If you have health insurance, will it cover the therapy from this provider?
- Are there limits to the number of sessions covered by your insurance?

Two websites for locating psychologists include the Psychologist Locator on the website of the American Psychological Association (locator.apa.org) and the National Register (findapsychologist.org). Your state psychological association may be another source of potential names. Another way to find a therapist is to ask friends or your physician to suggest someone they trust.

While it is not too difficult to find the name of a therapist, it may take more time to find a therapist that you consider to be "good." Here are some helpful hints:

- Call the therapist on the phone and find out if the therapist is familiar with evidence based treatment for your concerns and if your therapist uses evidence based treatment in their practice. These are treatments that have been tested scientifically and shown to be effective. Evidence based treatment (e.g. for depression, anxiety, panic attacks, bedwetting for children, obsessive compulsive behavior) is based on published research of controlled studies meeting acceptable criteria.
- Ask whether the therapist has had experience in dealing with your concerns. Some therapists specialize in working with children or families, adults or older adults. Some may have lots of experience with the problems that concern you. Find out, if possible, how much experience they have had.
- Find out in advance what the fees will cost you, the charge for missed sessions and, if possible, how long therapy might take.
- Find out where the therapist is located and what hours are available for your treatment and if the therapist will see you in an emergency. Is the therapist located in a clinic, community mental health center, medical school, independent practice or other setting?
- Find out what kind of therapy your potential therapist is likely to provide (for example, long term versus short term, individual or group therapy, what theoretical orientation) and see if that fits your expectations.
- Remember that choosing a therapist is a very personal matter. There is no one therapist that is good for everyone. It is important that you feel a sense of trust and that this therapist can help you.

After you have gathered all of this information (or as much as you have been able to obtain), give yourself a little time to think about all this. You may want to set up initial appointments with 1-2 potential therapists and see how comfortable you are with them. Take the time to find the right therapist for you.