



## How to Find a Therapist Online: Steps Before You Commit

I'll admit I did not handle things well the first time I searched for a therapist. I punched in my zip code on my family's mental health care provider website and picked from the first page of results. That was my search.

Because I didn't take the necessary steps, I wasted time and money going from therapist to therapist before finding a good fit. I didn't know about online therapy, which would've helped me because I didn't have my own car and couldn't rely on the limited public transportation in my hometown. Even after I found the right therapist, I moved across the country and had to start the process again (another hassle online therapy would've circumvented).

If you want an online therapist and a bet-



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ter search experience than I had, follow these steps.

I might as well have been doing this.

## Know What and Who You Want in an Online Therapy Experience

Knowing what you want means asking yourself questions and using the answers to narrow your search. Here are some important issues to consider:

### **Knowing What You Want to Work on With Your Therapist**

Clients usually don't receive a diagnosis until their first session, but there are ways of forming ideas beforehand. Try researching your symptoms or the issues you are struggling with. If it seems like depression, you might want a therapist who specializes in treating it. Or maybe it's a big life event such as a divorce, move, job change or death in the family. There are therapists who specialize in helping people cope with these changes.

### **Length and Frequency of Sessions**

Most therapy sessions run for around an hour, but maybe you want less time than that, maybe more. There are also clients who meet more than once a week or, on the other side of the spectrum, only once a month. Then there are apps that allow people to text a therapist whenever they like and charge a cheaper weekly or monthly fee rather than per session.

Think about how severe the issues are. You won't need to consider schedule as much, though. That's one of the benefits of online therapy: sessions can be shorter and after normal work hours.

### **How Much Online Therapy Costs**

Therapy tends to cost between \$75 and \$150 per session, but it can be as cost-effective as \$20 per week. Using an online therapy network will be toward the lower price point. When you factor it into your budget, think of it as another monthly bill such as electricity or Internet.

### **Using Health Insurance for Online Therapy (Or Not)**

You don't need to use health insurance to receive quality psychotherapy. In fact, circumventing it is more cost-effective on average. Most of the therapy networks with low price points do not use health insurance. Dur-

ing your search, think about whether health insurance actually affects the quality of therapy.

### **Picking Your Therapist's Gender**

Having a gender preference is not a problem, and most therapy networks or therapist search engines will allow you to filter by gender. Matching agents in therapy networks will ask you about gender preferences as well. Nonetheless, don't assume a therapist of the same gender will be a better fit.

### **The Most Common Forms of Psychotherapy**

Another way of finding the best therapist for you is knowing what kinds of therapy you are open to. Here are some common forms:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy [CBT]: CBT helps you become aware of inaccurate or negative thinking so you can view challenging situations more clearly and respond to them in a more effective way.
- Interpersonal Therapy [IPT]: improves depressive symptoms by focusing on interpersonal relationships and their communication and relational patterns
- Psychodynamic Therapy: focuses on unconscious factors and encourages the patient to freely associate with the therapist only guiding

### **Are You Into Video Chatting Only, Or Do You Want Text and Phone Options?**

Because of incomplete perceptions and popular shows such as "Web Therapy," video chatting such as Skype sessions primarily comes to mind when people hear "online therapy." But it's much more than that. Online therapy includes texting and voice messaging with therapists using an app or normal phone service. Both unaffiliated therapists and therapist networks usually allow you a combination of these mediums. There are, however, thousands of clients who only text. Studies have proven the efficacy of purely text-based therapy such as this one by the Journal of Affective Disorders.

### **Networks Will Give You Communities with Forums**

Online therapy networks offer forums for people who want to anonymously chat with other clients in addition to their therapist. This format has worked well for thousands of clients and is popular on sites such as AskApril, a site for relationship advice.

Relationship Advice Forum  
Moderators: Admin1, April Masini

New Topic \* Search this forum... 6501 topics

| TOPICS  | REPLIES | VIEWS | LAST POST                                    |
|---|---------|-------|--|
| Feeling Hurt<br>by tooshert1979 » Tue Oct 27, 2015 5:42 pm  | 0       | 1     | by tooshert1979<br>Tue Oct 27, 2015 5:42 pm  |
| Betrayed, hurting and need advice<br>by Pinkangel » Mon Oct 26, 2015 11:54 pm                                 | 3       | 26    | by April Masini<br>Tue Oct 27, 2015 9:25 pm  |
| CRUSHING AND IN NEED OF HELP<br>by OoAngel » Tue Oct 27, 2015 12:45 am  | 1       | 12    | by April Masini<br>Tue Oct 27, 2015 2:25 am  |
| am i the problem?<br>by bullet92 » Mon Oct 19, 2015 7:33 pm   | 11      | 1047  | by April Masini<br>Mon Oct 26, 2015 10:23 pm |
| feeling of jealousy<br>by bullet92 » Mon Oct 26, 2015 4:14 am   | 3       | 28    | by April Masini<br>Mon Oct 26, 2015 10:20 pm |
| Do I trust her and believe her?<br>by kacousy70 » Mon Oct 26, 2015 12:21 am                                   | 6       | 369   | by April Masini<br>Mon Oct 26, 2015 4:27 pm  |
| Serious boyfriend chooses friends for the holidays over me<br>by ladyasking4advice » Mon Oct 26, 2015 2:23 am | 1       | 477   | by April Masini<br>Mon Oct 26, 2015 3:19 am  |
| so unhappy<br>by MollyJones » Sun Oct 25, 2015 1:09 pm  | 3       | 916   | by April Masini<br>Mon Oct 26, 2015 2:19 am  |

Here's a screenshot of the forum on Masini's site.

“The forum structure allows for others with similar experiences or points of view to weigh in, also anonymously,” said relationship expert and site founder April Masini. “This offers a group therapy allowance, without the formality of a group or the restrictions of regions you can’t drive to.”

If you want a community to be part of your online therapy experience, joining a network with features similar to AskApril is the best choice for you. Therapy networks such as Talkspace have a forum feature where clients can interact with each other anonymously and raise questions for therapists to answer similar to how Masini operates.

talkspace sign in

free therapist-led forums

141 forums 159,120 users 3,863,670 posts

Get a \$25 coupon for your first purchase, that's a free week! Redeem

**Relationship is complicated - some advice**  
by therapist Laura Alderi-Howell, LCSW  
4282 people

I have an almost 18 year old dating an almost 17 year old. She is a very moody girl that argues with him constantly over anything, lots of jealousy issues too. My son is possibly Aspergers, he...  
about 19 hours ago [read more](#)

**Parenthood Challenges - Support And Advice**  
by therapist Christy Paul, LMHC  
1379 people

My sister has changed drastically since starting college far from home. A very shy girl once, now hangs out with people who binge drink, smoke pot and are sexually active and deviant. She's...  
9 days ago [read more](#)

You'll notice similarities between our forum and the one on AskApril.

## Start by Asking Friends and Family for Recom-

## Recommendations

A friend or family member recommending a therapist is the luckiest thing that can happen to you. It saves tons of time. You might not know anyone in therapy, though, or perhaps they are not willing to talk about it. If that's the case...

## Start Your Search by Casting a Wide Net

The key to any search is casting a wide net and sifting through for the best catches. Here are some ways you can find tons of options for online therapists before you filter:

- use therapy databases such as Psychology Today, Psych Central or GoodTherapy, then see if your favorite therapists see clients online

The screenshot shows the Psychology Today Therapists search results page. The search criteria are set to New York - NY, New York County, 10009. The results are sorted by Price, A-Z, and Gender. Two therapists are listed:

| Therapist Name | Professional Title                   | Phone Number   | Location                 |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Alice Sigel    | Clinical Social Work/Therapist, LCSW | (646) 798-2239 | New York, New York 10009 |
| Mary Caldwell  | Clinical Social Work/Therapist, LCSW | (917) 243-9078 | New York, New York 10009 |

Each therapist profile includes a photo, a bio, and a 'View Profile' button. The search results also include a 'Refine Your Search' sidebar with categories like Issues, Insurance, and Sexuality.

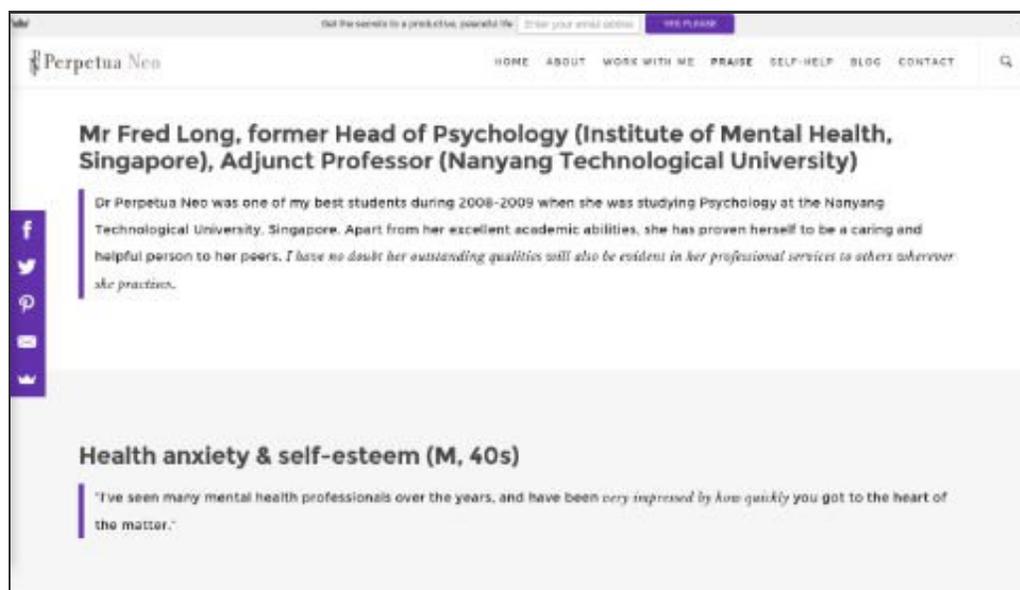
Here are the results I got when I punched my zip code into Psychology Today's database.

- try an online therapy network with a search engine or matching agent who does the search work for you
- use your insurance company if you decided on relying on insurance
- if you go to school, check their mental health resources
- it's OK to have simple Google searches be part of your process

## Then Filter by Who You Think Would be the Best Fit

This part is kind of like online dating. The question is: “Which person do I want to build a therapeutic relationship with?” The therapist’s ideals, credentials and character should be close to what you’re looking for. There are a few places where potential clients can learn more about a therapist and determine goodness of fit:

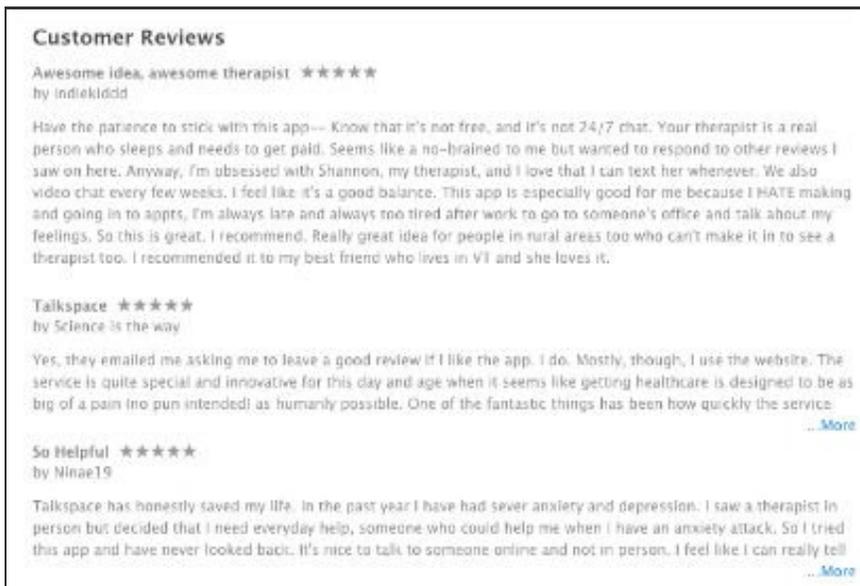
- The aforementioned directories such as GoodTherapy, Psych Central and Psychology Today have therapist profiles.
- If you use an online therapy network with a matching agent, the agent can provide information on therapists and help you determine goodness of fit. Online therapy networks without a matching agent will function similar to in-person therapist directories and often re-display the information found on these directories.
- Many therapists have personal websites with “About” or testimonials sections and blogs that show what they care about most. Even after a matching agent suggests an online therapist, you can do additional research by perusing his or her personal website or general online presence.



Therapists keep testimonials anonymous when clients request confidentially. It's best when they list at least one person who identifies him or herself the way Dr. Neo does.

- With online therapy networks that provide their service as an app,

there will be hundreds of reviews you can look at on iTunes or Google Play. Some reviews mention stellar therapists you can request via the network's matching agent or search engine.



Notice how the first reviewer praises his therapist, Shannon.

- Have you read a great article on mental health lately, one where you felt the writer understood you and spoke to your concerns? Check to see if a therapist wrote it. Online therapy networks have therapists who write great blog posts. Other therapists such as Dr. Perpetua Neo blog about mental health on The Huffington Post and similar publications. Neo told Talkspace readers should check whether a therapist is an author if they enjoy content on any popular mental health blog or publication.

The process is subjective and there is a lot of intuition involved, but there are some red flags for those who want to filter further:

- The best therapists don't need to sell themselves so much. Their websites shouldn't feel like a series of ads.
- Therapists should be willing to prove their credentials upon request.

## Try the Therapist Equivalent of Meeting for Coffee Before Going on the First Date

Before officially starting sessions, consider chatting with your therapist

over the phone or online. It's an effective way to feel certain he or she is the right fit. It's similar to how people who are considering dating one another will meet for "coffee" before going out to dinner.



If you're using a therapy network, this is an opportunity to test the platform and decide whether you like the user experience. Some therapy networks offer a matching agent who does all the search and compatibility work for you, meaning you can skip coffee and go to dinner. This system also makes it easier to change therapists if things don't work out.

## Settling Down

It's better to diligently search once rather than committing to the wrong person and searching again. Follow these steps to find a therapist you can commit to for a long time and build a happier life with.



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