



SOUTHWEST COUNSELING AND MINDFULNESS CENTER

5 STEPS FOR HOW TO CHOOSE A COUNSELOR – Hill Country Weekly Feb. 2015

1. The absolutely first thing you want to do when choosing a Counselor / Therapist is to recognize that going to counseling is about YOU. You have probably already done a lot of work on your own to get to the point of seeking help. That work might include such things as thinking, worrying, reading self-help books, observing others, praying, and journaling, talking, second guessing, giving up or trying harder. That work has all been directed towards finding ways to deal with what is going on, or has gone on, in your life. You want a counselor who respects that work and helps you move forward.
2. The second most important thing you should keep in mind is that you will want to choose a counselor with whom you feel comfortable. You will need to make a list of candidates so you can have options. Ask people you know and trust for suggestions. Your Doctor is an excellent starting place. You may feel comfortable with asking a friend or family member if they know of someone who has been helpful. Word-of-mouth referrals are valuable resources for you as well as the counselor.
3. Do your research. Check out the counselors on your list on the Internet. Most counselors have a website or can be found on one of the 'find a therapist' sites. In fact, you may discover additional candidate choices for consideration on these multiple – subscriber services. Each will have a narrative about the counselor, their training, Insurances accepted (or not), fees, and if they specialize in particular issues or therapies. Some Counselors even include notification that they are not presently accepting new clients, but remember Counselors are just like everyone else and the information may be out dated, so you might want to go ahead and call if they sound like they would be a particularly good match for you. You can also verify license status with the Texas State Department of Health Services at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/license.shtm>.
4. Make the Calls. You may have to leave a message. It is not unreasonable to assume the counselor you are calling is in session at the time you call and will return your call as soon as they can. Nor is it unreasonable to expect a professional to respond to emails or texts within 24 hours. Keep going down your list and contacting possible candidates.
5. Make the Appointment. This initial contact is where you get to give a brief explanation about why you are looking for counseling as well as an opportunity for you to gather additional information about the counselor. Do not be afraid to ask questions, they won't be.

Choosing to go to counseling is really about change. That takes courage. Choosing a counselor is part of that change. Be brave and remember that you have choices and the right to ask questions. Besides, you can always change counselors if you choose.