



BrighterWay

A HOW-TO GUIDE

Navigate Mental Health Care

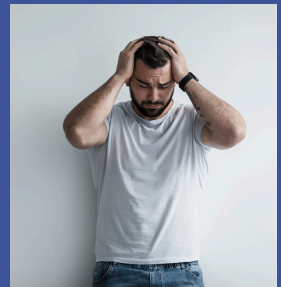
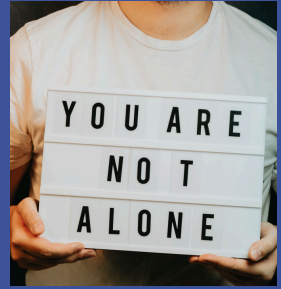


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INTRODUCTION

Welcome

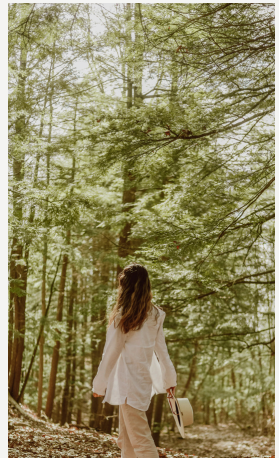
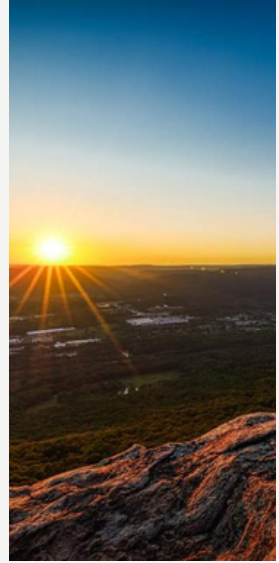
Brighter Way, a 501c.3 nonprofit based in Chattanooga, TN, was founded by individuals familiar with the impact of mental illness and chronic pain, aiming to offer support where needed.

In today's fast-paced world, prioritizing your mental health is more important than ever before if you wish to live a fulfilling life. However, the process of accessing and understanding mental health care is often overwhelming and confusing.

Whether you are seeking therapy for the first time or considering making changes to your current treatment plan, this guide is designed to provide you with the knowledge and tools you need to navigate the complexities of mental health care with confidence. From understanding the plethora of types of therapy to finding the right provider and knowing when it is time to make a change, this guide is here to support you.

The truth is that mental health care, in its many forms, can be valuable for everyone, regardless of whether you have an officially recognized mental illness. Just as any other organ in the body, the brain requires attention from time to time. Mental health care can help you handle the various challenges that life presents, leading to a more stable and fulfilling life.

At Brighter Way, we understand the importance of mental health advocacy and encourage you to take control of your mental well-being. With our guide, you will gain valuable insights from a diverse group of individuals including first responders, licensed professional counselors, and those who have personally been affected by mental illness, enabling you to make informed decisions that align with your needs and goals.



CHAPTER ONE

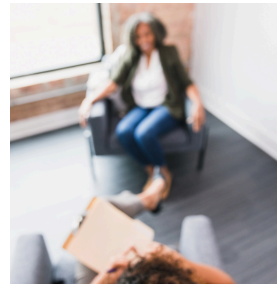
Understanding HIPAA

What is HIPAA?

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a legislation designed to safeguard the confidentiality of your medical records, including mental health care. This implies that no aspect of your healthcare information can be disclosed via any means, be it email, text messages, phone conversations, or any other form of communication. Non-compliance with HIPAA can lead to both civil and criminal consequences, including fines of up to \$250,000 and imprisonment for up to 10 years for criminal violations. For further insights into HIPAA, you can visit the website of the [US Department of Health and Human Services](#).

If you suspect a breach of HIPAA Rules, it is important to note that anyone has the right to file a complaint. If you believe that your own or someone else's health information privacy rights have been violated, you can find information about the complaint filing process by visiting the [Filing a HIPAA Complaint](#) webpage.

While mental health professionals are obligated to maintain the confidentiality of what you share during therapy, they are also legally obligated to report any information that poses a life-threatening risk, such as plans to harm others or engage in destructive activities like building destruction. You can review a provider's specific code of ethics on their certification board's website for more details.



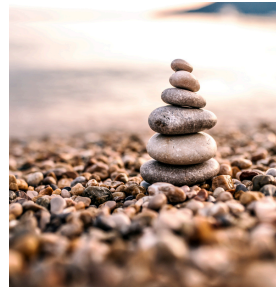
CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING HIPAA

Recognizing Ethical Concerns in Therapy

In your journey to better mental health, it's important to be aware of ethical red flags that may arise during the therapeutic process. Here are some key indicators to be cautious of.

- **Client Confidentiality:** If your therapist discusses other clients' personal stories in your sessions, it's a breach of confidentiality and an ethical violation.
- **Over-Sharing Personal Information:** If you find yourself knowing too much about your therapist's personal life, it can be a concern. Therapists should maintain professional boundaries.
- **Value Alignment and Coercion:** Beware of therapists who push their values or beliefs onto you. You should never feel pressured to conform, especially concerning matters related to faith or religion.
- **Inappropriate Behavior:** Any form of flirtation, physical touch, or personal advances is entirely inappropriate in a therapeutic setting and must be reported.
- **Non-Therapeutic Communication:** Engaging in non-essential communication outside of sessions, such as texting, meeting for coffee, or socializing on social media, is often considered unprofessional.
- **Pre-Existing Social Ties:** If there's an existing social connection, like being friends with the therapist's family member, it can create conflicts of interest and should be avoided.

Maintaining ethical boundaries is crucial in the therapeutic relationship to ensure your well-being is the top priority. If you encounter any of these red flags, it's essential to address them with your therapist or seek guidance from relevant authorities.



CHAPTER TWO

Credentials & Licensures

When navigating mental health care, individuals often encounter a range of services, including Assessment, Therapy, and Medication Management. When choosing a mental health provider, it's crucial to consider their qualifications and expertise. The following descriptions provide insight into these services, while subsequent pages explore the credentials and quality of care offered by different mental health professionals.

Remember, licensure requirements can differ from one state to another.

Assessment

Mental health assessment is the first step in understanding and addressing your mental health concerns. It involves a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a trained mental health professional, such as a psychologist. During an assessment, your mental health history, current symptoms, personal circumstances, and any relevant medical or social factors are explored. Assessments may include interviews, questionnaires, psychological testing, and discussions about the your goals and concerns. The primary goal of assessment is to gain insight into the nature and severity of your mental health issues, which then informs treatment planning and recommendations for appropriate interventions.

Therapy

Therapy, also known as counseling or psychotherapy, is a collaborative process between you and a trained mental health professional, offering support for emotional, behavioral, or psychological difficulties.

Therapy sessions provide a safe and confidential environment for you to explore your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and to develop coping strategies and solutions for managing your challenges. Therapeutic approaches vary widely depending on your needs and preferences, as well as the therapist's training and expertise. Therapy can be conducted individually, in groups, with couples, or with families, and may focus on addressing specific issues such as depression, anxiety, trauma, relationship problems, or life transitions.

Medication Management

Medication management involves the prescription, monitoring, and adjustment of psychiatric medications by a psychiatrist or other qualified healthcare provider. It aims to optimize treatment outcomes, alleviate symptoms, and improve overall functioning through regular evaluation of medication effectiveness, potential side effects, and necessary dosage adjustments. This process should be integrated with other forms of therapy and support to provide comprehensive mental health care.

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Assessment

Psychologist	
Definition	<p>Psychologists are essential figures in the field of mental health care. They hold the expertise and licensure to conduct psychological testing and assessments, a crucial step in understanding and diagnosing various conditions. These dedicated professionals possess the unique ability to dig deep into the intricacies of how an individual thinks, feels, and behaves.</p>
Expertise	<p>Psychological testing can provide insight into various aspects of an individual's life, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellectual Skills: Assessing cognitive abilities and intellectual strengths. • Cognitive Function: Identifying reasoning and thinking patterns, including strengths and weaknesses. • Career Preferences: Exploring vocational interests and helping individuals align their career choices. • Personality Traits: Understanding the nuances of an individual's personality and characteristics.
Requirements	<p>Psychologists typically hold one of two doctoral degrees in psychology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Psychology • Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) <p>In Tennessee, psychologists are licensed by state licensure boards. The path to becoming a licensed psychologist in this state involves the completion of supervised experience hours and psychology licensing exams. See the complete list of requirements online at TN Department of Health.</p>

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Therapy

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)

<p>Definition</p>	<p>In Tennessee, an LPC is authorized to aid individuals, groups, organizations, or the general public by applying therapeutic techniques derived from specific training programs. Their primary goal is to assist in personal, social, career, or educational development.</p>
<p>Expertise</p>	<p>LPCs are licensed to provide general counseling services for non-DSM disorders, which may encompass issues such as marital conflicts, parent-child difficulties, child and adolescent behavioral concerns, adult behavioral challenges, family dynamics, interpersonal issues, phase-of-life difficulties, life circumstances, occupational problems, and uncomplicated bereavement. LPCs do not have the authority to treat mental, emotional, or adjustment disorders outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).</p> <p>LPCs can practice independently, but if they encounter a situation where a diagnosis is necessary, they should refer the individual to an LPC/MHSP or another licensed professional capable of addressing mental health disorders.</p>
<p>Requirements</p>	<p>In addition to holding a master's degree, LPCs must acquire an approved supervisor, complete professional experience hours, and pass the necessary examinations</p> <p>See the complete list of requirements online at TN Department of Health.</p>

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Therapy

Licensed Professional Counselor - Mental Health Service Provider (LPC-MHSP)

<p>Definition</p>	<p>In Tennessee, LPC-MHSPs are authorized to prevent, diagnose, and treat mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders, including those interfering with mental health, in addition to addressing non-DSM disorders as outlined in the LPC scope of practice.</p>
<p>Expertise</p>	<p>LPC-MHSPs are equipped to make diagnoses through techniques they have been trained to employ, such as clinical interviews, observation, and documentation of behavior that aligns with DSM criteria. However, they do not have the authority to prescribe medications or employ psychological and clinical tests designed for diagnosing abnormal or pathological behavior.</p> <p>LPC-MHSPs are eligible to practice independently.</p>
<p>Requirements</p>	<p>In addition to holding a master's degree, LPC-MHSPs must acquire an approved supervisor, complete professional experience hours, and pass the necessary examinations.</p> <p>They must also complete hours related to diagnosing, treating, appraising, and assessing mental disorders.</p> <p>See the complete list of requirements online at TN Department of Health.</p>

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Therapy

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)	
Definition	<p>Marriage and family therapists are trained in psychotherapy and family systems. As explained by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, “A family's patterns of behavior influences the individual and therefore may need to be a part of the treatment plan. In marriage and family therapy, the unit of treatment isn't just the person - even if only a single person is interviewed - it is the set of relationships in which the person is embedded.”</p>
Expertise	<p>A licensed marriage and family therapist specializes in providing therapy and support to individuals, couples, and families facing a wide range of challenges such as: relationship issues, family dynamics, mental illness, grief and loss, child-parent problems, life transitions, stress management, and self-improvement.</p> <p>LMFTs are not authorized to conduct psychological testing for diagnosing mental illnesses or prescribe medications in Tennessee.</p>
Requirements	<p>In addition to obtaining a master's or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy or a related field from an accredited program, LMFTs must fulfill several requirements. These include completing a supervised practicum/internship, passing LMFT examinations administered by Board Staff, and accumulating a specific amount of professional experience, which involves supervised practice overseen by an approved AAMFT supervisor.</p> <p>See the complete list of requirements online at TN Department of Health.</p>

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Therapy

Licensed Clinical Alcohol & Drug Abuse Counselor (LCADAC)

Definition	Licensed clinical alcohol and drug abuse counselors play a crucial role in the addiction treatment field, offering specialized expertise and guidance to individuals and families seeking to overcome substance use disorders and achieve long-term recovery.
Expertise	LCADACs assist individuals struggling with substance abuse and addiction by conducting assessments, developing tailored treatment plans, and providing counseling. They offer support for relapse prevention, co-occurring disorders, and harm reduction strategies, and they can help clients access appropriate treatment programs. Additionally, LCADACs provide education, family counseling, and ongoing advocacy to promote long-term recovery and sobriety.
Requirements	<p>For Level 1 licensure, LCADACs must meet specific criteria, including accumulating clinically supervised counseling experience contact hours and completing formal classroom training in A&D-related subjects covering the eight domains. They are also required to work under supervision and are not permitted to operate in private practice settings. For Level 2 Licensure requirements, individuals should refer to the TN Department of Health for further guidance.</p> <p>See the complete list of requirements online at TN Department of Health.</p>

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Therapy & Case Management

Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	
Definition	<p>Clinical social workers offer counseling services and are extensively trained in case management and advocacy, including tasks such as inpatient discharge planning, placement services, and other support services for promoting well-being. They also engage in the legislative process governing case management and advocacy. Their training typically includes counseling techniques, legal aspects, best practices, and resource navigation for clients.</p>
Expertise	<p>LCSWs can be found practicing in various fields, including geriatric social work, child welfare, developmental disabilities, healthcare, justice and corrections, mental health, substance abuse, occupational and employee assistance, and public welfare. They help elderly patients with life transitions, support vulnerable youth populations, assist individuals with developmental disabilities, provide mental health services, and address substance abuse issues. LCSWs also work in schools, offering assistance with bullying, educational access, and abuse problems, making a positive impact in various settings.</p>
Requirements	<p>In Tennessee, candidates pursuing LCSW licensure are required to possess a master's degree in social work and have accrued a substantial amount of clinical social work experience, including supervised hours. They must also successfully pass the ASWB Clinical exam and submit an application for licensure through the Tennessee Board of Social Workers.</p> <p>See the complete list of requirements online at TN Department of Health.</p>

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Medication Management

Prescribing medication for mental health concerns involves more than just understanding pharmacology. It centers on building a strong relationship and empowering you with the understanding and resources necessary to manage and enhance your mental well-being. Medications can *sometimes* serve as tools in addressing mental health conditions, but their improper use can result in considerable harm.

As it is explained in the Journal of Paramedic Practice, “When discussing antidepressant use and the concomitant use of non-pharmacological measures, a useful analogy is that of being at the bottom of a hole. For some, it is possible to adopt positive coping strategies and lifestyle changes which fill the hole in, while others require medication to lift them out of the hole so they have the strength and emotional resilience required to make those changes and adopt those strategies. However, if medication is used to lift the patient out of the hole, it remains necessary for the individual to make those changes; failing to do so is likely to result in the patient finding themselves back in the hole.”

Understanding Medication vs. Brain Focused Therapies

Traditional antidepressants mainly work on brain chemicals to ease symptoms, but they often fall short in treating the root cause of mental health issues. They may not fix the brain's underlying circuitry problems, and some people don't respond well to these medications. Additionally, long-term use can lead to needing more than one medication just to manage symptoms, without actually addressing the real issues in the brain.

On the other hand, brain focused treatments like Ketamine Infusion Therapy and Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation can trigger changes in the brain's neural structure and function, helping to address the root causes of mental health conditions. But it's not a standalone solution either. Follow-up therapy with a counselor or therapist is crucial. It helps maximize the benefits of brain changes, particularly the neuroplasticity induced by these treatments, by teaching positive coping skills and empowering you to self-manage your mental health on a daily basis. This combination of brain focused therapies and therapy can lead to better long-term outcomes in managing your mental health.

As previously noted, medications are occasionally required. The following healthcare practitioners are authorized to prescribe medications and may also conduct assessments, make diagnoses, and offer therapy services.

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Medication Management

Psychiatrist	
Definition	<p>Psychiatrists are physicians who have graduated from medical school and have undergone extensive specialized training, typically consisting of at least four years of residency and often followed by fellowship programs, specifically focused on the medical treatment of mental disorders.</p> <p>Their scope of practice encompasses the ability to diagnose, treat, prescribe medication, and monitor individuals with mental health conditions. While some psychiatrists have training in psychotherapy, it is relatively less common for them to emphasize this treatment approach.</p>
Expertise	<p>When you consult with a psychiatrist, they will evaluate your symptoms and establish a diagnosis tailored to your unique concerns. Following a diagnosis, psychiatrists may recommend interventions such as antidepressants. You might also explore alternatives such as Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation or other neuroregenerative therapies designed to address the root cause of your mental illness as opposed to masking symptoms.</p>
Requirements	<p>Psychiatrists are required to possess a Doctor of Medicine (MD) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) degree and have completed residency training focused on psychiatry. Additionally, they must hold licensure as physicians in the state where they practice and may pursue recognition as a Board Certified Psychiatrist through the Board of Neurology and Psychiatry.</p> <p>See the complete list of requirements online at TN Department of Health.</p>

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Medication Management

Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP)	
Definition	<p>Psychiatric or mental health nurse practitioners offer care to individuals, families, or groups struggling with mental health issues. They are qualified to perform evaluations, make diagnoses, and provide therapy for mental health conditions and substance use disorders.</p>
Expertise	<p>Collaboratively, a PMHNP will formulate, execute, and assess a care plan, which may encompass medications, psychotherapy, crisis intervention, as well as case management and consultation.</p> <p>In some instances, you may encounter Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurses. These individuals are a subset of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), specializing in the care of individuals with mental health disorders.</p>
Requirements	<p>It is essential to research your state's specific regulations concerning prescribing and monitoring medications, as these requirements can vary. Additionally, the degree of supervision required by a licensed psychiatrist can differ from state to state.</p> <p>Educational Qualifications: PMHNPs must hold either a Master of Science (MS) or a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in nursing, with a specialized focus on psychiatry.</p> <p>Licensing and Professional Credentials: To practice, they must be licensed as nurses in the state where they operate. Examples of recognized credentials include, but are not limited to, NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examination) and PMHNP-BC (Board Certification in psychiatric nursing, accredited by the American Academy of Nurses Credentialing Center).</p>

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Medication Management

Primary Care Physician (PCP)

<p>Definition</p>	<p>Primary care physicians and pediatricians have the authority to prescribe medication, yet the American Psychological Association (APA) advocates for a collaborative healthcare approach. In this model, primary care and mental health professionals collaborate to devise tailored treatment strategies for patients.</p>
<p>Expertise</p>	<p>It's important to note that primary care physicians lack training in psychology, which means they may not possess the necessary knowledge to determine the appropriateness of antidepressants as a treatment option.</p>
<p>Requirements</p>	<p>Primary care physicians must meet specific educational criteria, which includes holding either a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) degree. In addition to their educational qualifications, they are required to obtain licensure as physicians in the state where they practice.</p>

CHAPTER TWO: CREDENTIALS AND LICENSURES

Other Professions

Clinical Pastoral Counseling (CPT)

<p>Definition</p>	<p>Combining counseling with theological expertise, pastoral counseling offers an integrated therapeutic approach. Pastoral counselors are licensed mental health professionals with religious or theological training.</p>
<p>Expertise</p>	<p>CPT practitioners may offer clinical pastoral therapy to the public for a fee, going beyond their role as clergy. They diagnose and treat emotional, behavioral, or relational issues, considering psychodynamics, interpersonal dynamics, and spiritual aspects. CPTs blend insights from pastoral care traditions with contemporary psychotherapy methods.</p>
<p>Requirements</p>	<p>In Tennessee, Clinical Pastoral Counselors must meet stringent criteria, including extensive graduate education, clinical pastoral education, and supervised therapy hours. They must also pass examinations and a state-specific jurisprudence exam.</p>

Life Coaching

<p>Definition</p>	<p>Life coaches are professionals committed to aiding individuals in achieving personal and professional goals by providing goal-oriented advice and support. Their techniques draw from sports coaching, personal training, and business consulting. Unlike therapy, which focuses on mental health and emotional healing by addressing past traumas and challenges, life coaching prioritizes setting and attaining goals, with an emphasis on the present and future. While therapists explore the "why" behind current challenges, life coaches guide individuals towards their desired destination.</p>
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**You are not
alone on this
journey.**

CHAPTER THREE

How To Find a Mental Health Provider

“I just need help. It’s all so confusing.”

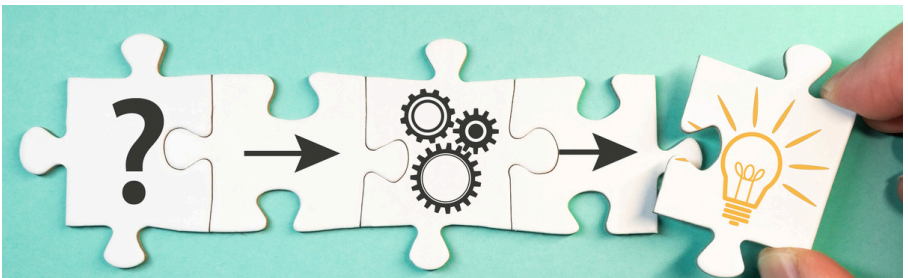
We hear you. If you are feeling overwhelmed by the complexities of the mental health care system and the different types of professionals and treatment options available, take a deep breath. This process may demand time and effort, but it's vital to have someone who will support and champion your well-being. Below, you'll find practical advice to initiate your search.

Check with your insurance company.

First, check if your insurance covers mental health services. If it does, ask for a list of in-network professionals from your insurance provider.

If you don't have insurance, here are ways to make mental health care more affordable:

- Look for professionals with sliding scale fees, which adjust based on your financial situation.
- Ask your provider for a superbill, so you can seek reimbursement from your insurance company if they cover out-of-network services.
- Some professionals accept payment from Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) or Healthcare Spending Accounts (HSA).
- Depending on your treatment, inquire if they offer financing options like CareCredit.



CHAPTER THREE: HOW TO FIND A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

Understand insurance and payment terms:

- **In-Network Providers:** Insurance companies have special agreements with selected providers, who are part of your plan's network. Visiting these providers often means discounted services. Note: While the practice may be in-network, ensure that your specific provider is as well.
- **Out-of-Network Providers:** Some plans may not cover out-of-network visits at all, while others may provide partial coverage, with a higher cost to you compared to in-network visits.
- **Superbills:** A detailed invoice or itemized list of services provided by a healthcare provider to a patient. Superbills are particularly valuable in situations where healthcare providers do not directly bill insurance companies or when patients need to seek reimbursement from their insurance carriers.
- **Sliding Scale:** A pricing structure used by healthcare professionals to determine the cost of a service or fee based on an individual's income or ability to pay.
- **FSA and HSA:** These savings accounts let you set aside money on a pre-tax basis to pay for qualified medical expenses.
- **CareCredit:** A credit card that offers flexible financing options to help you pay for a wide range of health and wellness costs.

Look up online directories.

Mental health professionals can be found through online directories. Some popular directories include:

- **Online Directories:** Comprehensive online directories such as Psychology Today, Zencare, and Therapist.com feature profiles of various mental health professionals. You can search by location, specialty, insurance, and more. Profiles often provide details about their approach, fees, and contact information, allowing you to make informed decisions about potential providers.
- **Personal Websites:** Many mental health professionals have their own websites. You can search online using specific terms, like "Therapist near me" or "Counselor for anxiety in [your city]," to find their websites.
- **Online Therapy Platforms:** Platforms like BetterHelp, Talkspace, or Amwell offer online therapy services and have directories of licensed therapists. These platforms can be a convenient option for accessing mental health support from the comfort of your home.

You have the strength within you...

CHAPTER THREE: HOW TO FIND A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

Ask for recommendations.

When searching for a mental health provider, start by seeking recommendations:

- **People You Trust:** Talk to friends, family, or co-workers who may have experience with mental health providers. They can provide valuable insights and referrals based on their own experiences. If you have a friend, family member, or acquaintance who is a mental health professional, you might ask them if they would be willing to help you find one.
- **Graduate Schools:** Many graduate schools have students who offer affordable counseling or even free sessions. Keep in mind that these individuals may not yet be fully licensed professionals, but they can still provide valuable support.
- **Local Nonprofits:** Check out local nonprofit organizations like Bernard and Associates, NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), or MHA (Mental Health America). They often have resources and recommendations for finding mental health services.
- **College Campus Counseling Centers:** If you're a college student, your campus may have counseling centers that provide free or low-cost services to enrolled students.
- **State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs:** Investigate state programs that offer vocational rehabilitation services, as they may have information on mental health providers.
- **Employer:** Ask your employer about your EAP (Employee Assistance Program) that can provide confidential mental health care.
- **K-12 Schools:** Your school may provide on-site mental health care or refer you to third party organizations such as Thriving Campus for a list of providers.

By seeking recommendations from trusted individuals and exploring these resources, you can find suitable mental health providers to address your needs and preferences.

Be your own advocate.

Regardless of the recommendations you receive, always conduct your own research to ensure you receive the quality of care you deserve. Being your own healthcare advocate empowers you to make informed decisions about your mental well-being.

...to overcome any challenges that come your way.

CHAPTER FOUR

How to Choose a Mental Health Provider

“What if I make the wrong choice?”

Life is a series of choices, each with its own set of consequences. From the moment we wake up in the morning to the time we go to bed at night, we are faced with decisions - big and small, trivial and significant. Some decisions may seem straightforward, while others may weigh heavily on our minds, causing us to deliberate endlessly.

It's completely normal to have concerns about finding the “right” provider. The worry about investing time and resources in someone who may not be the best fit can be stressful. However, remember that this is a journey towards better mental health, and it's okay to take steps even if they don't always lead to the perfect outcome.

Every mental health provider brings unique qualifications, approaches, and areas of expertise to the table. There is not a universally “right” or “wrong” choice when it comes to selecting a provider. Instead, it is about finding the best possible fit based on your unique needs, preferences, and goals. As you navigate your decision-making process, it's important to consider a range of factors that can contribute to finding the best match for you.

Quality Matters

The field of mental health encompasses various specialties, each with its unique requirements, as detailed in Credentials & Licensure. Within each field, a spectrum of quality exists among providers.

To ensure you receive high-quality care, consider the following:

- Did the provider undergo comprehensive training or a brief certification course?
- Have they received supervision during their practice?
- Do they engage in ongoing training?
- Verify their credentials on licensing board websites.
- In a physical office setting, providers typically display their credentials. If you're working with an online therapist, you can request to see their license information via your preferred communication method.

CHAPTER FOUR: HOW TO CHOOSE A MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER

Here are associations that offer links to license information for specific behavioral science fields:

- **Psychology:** [Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards \(ASPPB\)](#)
- **Social work:** [Association of Social Work Boards \(ASWB\)](#)
- **Professional counseling:** [American Counseling Association \(ACA\)](#)
- **Substance use counseling:** [Association for Addiction Professionals \(NAADAC\)](#)
- **Marriage and family therapy:** [Association of Marital & Family Therapy Regulatory Boards \(AMFTRB\)](#)
- **Psychiatry:** [Federation of State Medical Boards \(FSMB\)](#)

The Right Fit

In addition to quality, it's vital to find a mental health provider who is a good fit for your unique needs. Consider the following factors:

- **Specialization:** Seek a provider who specializes in the type of support you require, whether it's a specific therapy or a particular condition. For instance, if you're dealing with anxiety, consider a therapist specializing in anxiety disorders. If you're addressing trauma, an EMDR specialist may be suitable.
- **Diversity and Demographics:** You may feel more comfortable with a provider who shares your gender or race. If you work in a specific profession (e.g., law enforcement, first responders, medical, or military), you might consider a provider with experience in that area.
- **Meeting Setting:** Decide if you prefer in-person or online sessions. In-person meetings offer a personal touch and avoid potential technical issues, and they require consideration of commuting and provider availability. Online therapy allows for convenience and is ideal if you have mobility or transportation challenges.

Most therapists or counselors will request to schedule a free initial phone consultation to chat and see if you feel you are a good fit. Sample questions for this phone call might include:

- What insurance plans do they accept? If they don't take insurance, do they offer a sliding scale or discounts? (Check their website first.)
- What should you expect in the first session, such as assessments or treatment plans?
- Tell them briefly about your situation. Can they address your specific challenges?
- What are their credentials, licenses, and any specialized training they possess?
- What factors might cause them to hesitate and reconsider pursuing your therapeutic approach with me?
- Do they lean on a specific approach?

In the process of finding the right therapist, each step you take brings you closer to the support you need. Keep moving forward, and know that your well-being is worth the effort.

CHAPTER FOUR: HOW TO CHOOSE A MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER

When to Seek a New Therapist

**Autonomy: Are You in the Driver's Seat?**

Are you in control of the course of your own life and mental health journey? A good therapist lets you take charge. They should involve you in making decisions about your care, helping you build skills that go beyond just the therapy room.

**Progress: Is It Moving the Needle for You?**

Take a step back and assess if your therapist is actually helping you reach your goals. A solid therapist equips you with tools, teaches you useful skills, and gives you strategies to use in your day-to-day life. They should consistently work towards helping you independently manage your mental health.

Therapy is a two-way street. It works best when you are willing to express what you want and what you feel. While your therapist can guide you toward your goals, the pace of your progress is uniquely yours. It's good to show up to sessions with a list of things you want to talk about with your therapist.

If you feel that the chosen therapeutic approach isn't effective, communicate your desire to explore a different approach. Whatever it is, you are allowed to bring up these topics with your therapist.

**Engagement: Is It All About You?**

Effective engagement means being wholly present and attentive to your needs. It can be discouraging if your therapist doesn't support your goals or displays signs of disinterest, such as yawning, distraction, tardiness, or inattentiveness. Your therapist should acknowledge and align with your goals despite not sharing personal interests.

**Trust: Do They Have Your Back?**

A good therapist meets you right where you are; there's no pressure to perform or show up in a certain way. While they might not always see eye to eye with your choices, the key is acceptance and respect. A dependable therapist shows understanding, empathy, and acceptance, fostering an environment where you feel comfortable sharing your deepest feelings, thoughts, and memories.

**Advocacy: Your Voice Matters**

Take charge of your well-being by voicing your questions, needs, concerns, and preferences. Educate yourself on your condition, treatments, and terminology. Remember, your healthcare provider can recommend credible resources like books and podcasts. If you ever feel lost in jargon, don't hesitate to ask for clear explanations. This journey is yours, and understanding each step is your right.

CHAPTER FIVE

Types of Therapeutic Intervention



Couples & Family

Focuses on improving the relationships and dynamics within couples and families.



Brain Focused

Works on the neurons, or brain cells, to optimize communication and restore brain activity to more normal levels.



Experiential

Focuses on helping individuals explore and understand their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors through direct experiences.



Integrative

Utilizes effective techniques from various therapeutic approaches and carefully aligning them based on a wide range of diagnostic factors.



Talk

Uncovers and addresses the sources of emotional distress while equipping you with effective coping strategies to manage its impact on your life.

CHAPTER FIVE: TYPES OF THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION



The American Psychological Association describes an intervention as “any action intended to interfere with and stop or modify a process, as in treatment undertaken to halt, manage, or alter the course of the pathological process of a disease or disorder.” Identifying the most suitable intervention requires a thorough assessment of the patients’ capability, motivation, and behavior goals, as well as the skills and certified approaches of the therapist. As a result, many therapists will integrate the strengths of multiple approaches rather than adhering to a single one.

Nonetheless, keep the following considerations in mind when selecting the right therapist:

- **Familiarize Yourself with Their Approach:** Gain clarity on what their therapeutic approach entails and how it aligns with your needs and goals.
- **Compatibility:** Determine who the therapist typically works best with, as it's important to find a provider whose expertise matches your unique circumstances.
- **Advocate for Information:** Don't hesitate to seek information if it's not readily provided to you. You have the right to understand the therapeutic approach being used.

We've grouped various therapeutic interventions into five categories: Talk Therapy, Integrative, Brain Focused, Experiential, and Couples and Family Therapy. Remember, effective implementation of research-based therapeutic approaches requires thorough training. Inquire about your mental health professional's qualifications.

For a more robust and detailed list of therapeutic interventions, visit our [website](#).

Talk Therapy

Traditional talk therapy is a collaborative approach between an individual and a mental health professional. Its primary aim is to uncover and address the sources of emotional distress while equipping you with effective coping strategies to manage its impact on your life. Talk therapy approaches could include:

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** According to Psychology Today, CBT is a “form of psychotherapy that focuses on modifying dysfunctional emotions, behaviors, and thoughts by interrogating and uprooting negative or irrational beliefs. Considered a “solutions-oriented” form of talk therapy, CBT rests on the idea that thoughts and perceptions influence behavior.”

CHAPTER FIVE: TYPES OF THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION

- **Person-Centered Therapy:** This approach supports an individual's ability to make rational choices and reach their full potential while emphasizing care and respect for others.
- **Psychodynamic Therapy:** The ultimate goal is to help clients gain insight into their unconscious processes and how these processes affect their current behavior.
- **Trauma-Focused Therapy:** This type of therapy is specifically tailored to address the emotional and psychological impact of trauma and assist individuals in processing and healing from traumatic experiences.

Integrative Therapy

Integrative therapy customizes treatment to each patient and their unique circumstances. Therapists achieve this by utilizing effective techniques from various therapeutic approaches and carefully aligning them based on a wide range of diagnostic factors, including the patient's stage of change, level of reactivity, cultural background, preferences, and coping style.

Brain Focused Therapy

Brain stimulation therapies work directly on the neurons, or brain cells, to optimize communication and restore brain activity to more normal levels. As the brain communicates more effectively, the patient begins to feel their environment correctly and the stimulation in the world around them starts to elicit a more appropriate emotional and physical response.

A treatment plan involving brain focused therapy requires careful consideration of a person's needs and medical condition, overseen by a specialized healthcare provider.

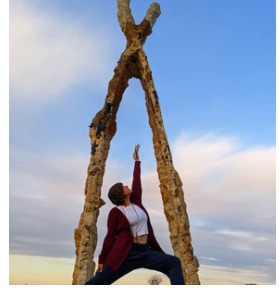
It's important for patients to maintain talk therapy and other treatments alongside brain-focused therapy for optimal progress. Discontinuing treatment should only occur under direct guidance from a healthcare provider. Brain Focused Therapy treatments might include:

- **Neurofeedback:** A brain training technique involving the application of electrodes to the scalp to provide real-time feedback on brain activity. Through the use of auditory or visual rewards individuals are guided in training their brain to optimize its functioning and enhance efficiency.
- **Ketamine Infusion Therapy:** A treatment that involves the intravenous administration of ketamine, an anesthetic, in a controlled medical setting to address the root cause of mood disorders. It acts by offering a reset for the brain's communication networks affected by stress and trauma, thereby optimizing the way the brain communicates with itself and the body. Please contact Brighter Way to learn about the best-practice standards you should look for in a clinic.
- **Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS):** This treatment employs a sequence of rapid, repetitive magnetic pulses to activate specific neurons within the brain. These pulses generate an electric current in the brain, prompting targeted nerve cells to become active, enhancing communication and returning brain function to its normal state.
- **Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT):** A treatment that induces controlled seizures through electric currents to the brain, often used for severe depression or other mental illnesses, despite potential serious long-term side effects.

CHAPTER FIVE: TYPES OF THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION

Experiential Therapy

Experiential therapy, often eclectic as well, is an approach to psychotherapy that focuses on helping individuals explore and understand their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors through direct experiences. Instead of relying solely on traditional talk-based methods, experiential therapy encourages clients to engage in activities, interactions, and experiences that can reveal underlying emotions, patterns, and issues.



- **Art Therapy:** The use of art and creative expression to address psychological and emotional issues, often used in psychotherapy.
- **Music Therapy:** The use of music and musical activities to promote emotional, mental, and physical healing and well-being.
- **Yoga Therapy:** A therapeutic application of yoga that combines physical postures, breathwork, and mindfulness techniques to address specific health concerns and promote overall wellness.
- **Equine Therapy:** A form of animal-assisted therapy that utilizes experiences with horses to improve emotional and behavioral outcomes. Because horses live in herds and are prey to larger animals in the wild, they're highly sensitive to the emotions and behavior of others, including humans. A licensed equine therapy program is led by a mental health professional who guides participants in reflecting on their relationship with the horse, and includes the assistance of a facilitator specialized in working with horses.
- **Dance Therapy:** According to the American Dance Therapy Association, it is a psychotherapeutic approach that utilizes movement to enhance emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration for the purpose of improving overall well-being. It emphasizes the significance of nonverbal communication, viewing movement as a language that plays a vital role in assessing and intervening in the therapeutic process.

There are other researched activities or exercises that a provider might recommend such as a rage room. Non-traditional treatments can be helpful, but it is important to remember that they are not all proven effective and certified therapeutic interventions.

CHAPTER FIVE: TYPES OF THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION

Couples & Family Therapy

Couples therapy and family therapy are forms of psychotherapy that focus on improving the relationships and dynamics within couples and families. These therapies involve working with multiple individuals at once, as opposed to individual therapy, which focuses on one person.

- **Couples Therapy:** Common concerns addressed in couples therapy include communication problems, conflicts, infidelity, intimacy issues, and other challenges that can strain a relationship.
- **Family Therapy:** Family therapists typically help identify and address dysfunctional patterns, interpersonal conflicts, and poor communication.

For in-depth information about each of these therapeutic interventions and their sub-types, visit the [Psychology Today](#) website. Simply click on the specific therapy type of your interest, and it will direct you to a page where you can learn more about when and how that particular therapy is typically applied.

Mental health professionals regularly introduce innovative therapeutic techniques. To explore additional therapeutic options not covered in this guide, it is advisable to engage in a discussion with your therapist about any potentially novel approaches.

Here are 7 approaches to Couples and Family Therapy:

- Emotionally Focused Therapy
- Family Systems Therapy
- Imago Relationship Therapy
- Marriage and Family Therapy
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy
- Structural Family Therapy
- The Gottman Method



Be gentle with yourself.



Resources

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

24/7 Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Crisis Hotline 423-755-2700

National Domestic Violence Hotline: Text “START” to 88788

National Domestic Violence Hotline: Call 1-800-799-7233

National Deaf Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-855-812-1001 (Email/Video)

LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

The Trevor Project: Call 1-866-488-7386

The Trevor Project: Text “START” to 678678

Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860 (Available 10am - 4am EST)

LGBT National Hotline: 1-888-843-4564

LGBT National Youth Talkline: 1-800-246-7743

LGBT Senior Hotline: 1-888-234-7243

MENTAL HEALTH

24-Hr TN Dept of Mental Health Crisis line: 855-274-7471

NAMI

Call 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

Email them at helpline@nami.org

Text “HelpLine” to 62640

Available Monday Through Friday, 10am - 10pm EST

Resources

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

Call the National Helpline: 1-800-662-4357

SUICIDE & LIFELINE CRISIS

24/7 Suicide & Lifeline Crisis Line

Dial or Text 988

Visit www.988lifeline.org to chat

VETERANS

Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1)

Veterans Chat: send a text message to 838255

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Accessia Health

PAN Foundation

HealthWell Foundation

The Assistance Fund

SEXUAL ABUSE OR ASSAULT

RAINN (The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network)

Call: 1-800-656-4673

Chat on their website: www.rainn.org

CONCLUSION

Your Journey Ahead

We sincerely hope that this guide on navigating mental health care has equipped you with essential insights into the intricacies of the system, ranging from understanding HIPAA regulations to exploring various therapy options. With a deeper understanding of credentials, licensures, and factors to consider when selecting a mental health provider, we hope you now feel better prepared to make informed decisions about your mental well-being.

It is important to recognize that seeking help is not a sign of weakness but rather a courageous step toward healing and growth. You deserve compassion, support, and effective treatment. Whether you are battling with overwhelming stress, confronting depression, or wrestling with anxiety, we assure you that there are professionals ready to accompany you on your journey toward healing.

Should you encounter setbacks or challenges along the way, we encourage you to remain committed. It is perfectly acceptable to reassess and seek a new mental health provider if your current one is not the right fit. Your mental health journey is uniquely yours, and finding the right support system is key.

As you continue your pursuit of mental wellness, we urge you to leverage the resources available to you. Whether it is through therapy, support groups, online communities, or helplines, remember that you are not alone in this journey.

Above all, please remember that prioritizing your mental health is an ongoing process, and seeking help is a brave and valuable choice. Keep moving forward, keep absorbing knowledge, and keep placing your well-being first. Your mental health is priceless. You deserve the support and care necessary to live a brighter tomorrow.





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