

## **Tips for choosing a counsellor**

Choosing a counsellor/therapist can be difficult. Here are some questions you might like to ask. Be assertive if you feel uncomfortable.

Call the prospective therapist and interview them by phone. Compare their answers with your own views on how change will occur. Find a therapist who is a good fit.

Remember that changes result principally from the input and participation of the client.

Find out:

- What training and/or experience does the person have?
- What references have they got?
- What is their philosophy about therapy?
- What do you think of their diagnosis?
- How do they think change happens?
- How important do they consider collaboration to the process of therapy?
- How important is client participation?
- How long are the sessions?
- How many sessions do they average per client?
- Are they caring and empathic?
- Do they have a manner that you feel comfortable with?
- Do you feel confident about them as a person and as a practitioner?
- Do they listen to what you have to say?
- Do they ask you questions?

If you find you and the practitioner you have chosen to work with are not compatible you are free to choose another person or service. While it is important to give the relationship a chance to develop, find another therapist if:

- You do not like your therapist. If you think your therapist sees your problems or situation as hopeless.
- You are asking for something in therapy (such as feedback or suggestions) and you are not getting it or you are told more time or testing is required.
- You do not agree with the goals of the therapist or do not think they are your goals.
- You think that your therapist does not like you, understand you or appreciate your point of view.
- You do not get some positive results within three sessions.

[Source: Complementary and Alternative Therapies and Mental Health. c 2003 Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand.]

## **Useful books**

Zemek Todd (2004) *Shopping for a shrink: a simple guide to seeing a counsellor or therapist*. South Australia: Wakefield Press. [Includes NZ Key Association contact details]

Manthei R & Miller J (2000) *Good counselling: a guide for clients*. New Zealand: Pearson Education.

### **Useful Websites**

Q & A about Counselling for Young People ~ Youth Law  
[http://www.youthlaw.co.nz/default.aspx? z=39#\\_Toc47515299](http://www.youthlaw.co.nz/default.aspx? z=39#_Toc47515299)