

Questions to Ask When Considering Treatment Options

Eating disorders are serious health conditions that can be both physically and emotionally destructive. It is important that people with eating disorders seek professional help. If not identified or treated in their early stages, eating disorders can become chronic, debilitating, and even life-threatening conditions. Early diagnosis and intervention significantly enhance recovery.

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There are many differing approaches to the treatment of eating disorders. No one approach is considered superior for everyone, so it is important to find the option that is most effective for your needs. The following is a list of questions you might want to ask when contacting eating-disorder support services. These questions apply to an individual therapist, treatment facility, other eating-disorder support services, or any combination of treatment options.

1. What is your experience treating eating disorders, and how long has this been an area of specialty?
2. Would you please tell me a little about your professional training and credentials in the area of eating disorders? Do you belong to the Academy for Eating Disorders (AED)*?
*AED is a professional group that offers its members ongoing educational training. This doesn't prove that individuals are up-to-date, but it does increase the chances that they are.
3. What is your treatment style? Please note that there are many different types of treatment styles available. Different approaches to treatment may be more or less appropriate for you depending on your individual situation and needs.
4. Do you or your facility have a quality improvement program in place, or regularly assess the outcome of the treatment provided?
5. Are you familiar with either the APA Guidelines or Britain's NICE Criteria for the treatment of eating disorders?

6. What kind of evaluation process will be used in recommending a treatment plan?
7. What kind of medical information do you need? Will I need a medical evaluation before entering the program?
8. Do you have appointment times available? Do you offer after-work or early morning appointments? How long do the appointments last? How often will we meet?
9. How long will the treatment process take? When will we know it's time to stop treatment?
10. Which, if any, insurance plans do you participate in? Will you bill my carrier directly (if your visits are covered)? What is your fee structure if I don't have insurance coverage, or should lose it during treatment? Do you have a sliding fee scale? It is important for you to research your insurance coverage policy and what treatment alternatives are available in order for you and your treatment provider to design a treatment plan that suits your coverage.
11. Ask the facility to send informational brochures, treatment plans, treatment prices, etc. The more information the facility is able to send in writing, the better informed you will be.

With a careful search, the provider you select will be helpful. If the first time you meet with him or her feels awkward, don't be discouraged. The first few appointments with any treatment provider are often challenging. It takes time to build up trust in someone with whom you are sharing highly personal information. If you continue to feel that you need a different therapeutic environment, you may need to consider other providers.