



Toolkit for Divorcing with Dignity

Tip Sheet 10: Finding an individual counselor

Finding the right counselor can be an overwhelming process. Counseling can be very effective in helping individuals identify their strengths, resolve conflicts to challenging problems, and manage stressful life transitions such as divorce. To help you decide on a counselor for yourself, ask the professionals you are considering the following questions:

1. What training and experience do you have related divorce? The counselor should have specific training in theories and approaches for working with individuals, but if it's important to you then ask if the counselor has experience with divorced clients. Certain situations such as a separation or divorce can benefit from working with a professional who is specially trained to address those issues. The counselor should be well-equipped to work with individuals experiencing anxiety, depression, interpersonal conflicts, and other struggles that might accompany a divorce.

2. What is your approach to counseling? There are several different approaches to individual counseling. Your counselor should be able to explain his or her theoretical approach to you in a language you can understand, without using complex, abstract theoretical terms.

3. How many sessions will there be? Your counselor may have a time frame in which they like to work with individuals. However, your needs and schedule may necessitate a shorter or longer program. It may not be possible to determine an exact time-line at the start of counseling, but once your counselor has a general sense of your goals for counseling, he or she should be able to offer a general time-line so you'll understand what time commitment will be involved.

4. What is the cost? The cost of counseling can vary widely. You will need to check with your health insurance company to see if counseling can be a covered service. Insurance companies typically cover a set amount of sessions per year, but feel free to call your insurance company to ask about benefits. If you can't afford a counselor's services or do not have insurance, ask if they can provide you with referrals to more affordable services in the community.

In addition to the questions above, it's also important to consider how well you "click" with the counselor. It's important to work with someone with whom you feel comfortable. The more positive you feel about the counselor, the safer you will feel in exploring challenging issues in your life.

