

QUESTIONS TO ASK A THERAPIST

(adapted from Bettinger, M. (2001) It's Your Hour: a guide to queer-affirmative psychotherapy Alyson Books)

You may find it helpful asking some of the following questions of your prospective therapist. We've marked some especially important one's with an *.

The therapist may not always answer the question, but you will get a sense of how they respond to you, even if you don't get a direct answer.

Attitude Toward Queerness

- Do you believe in love between two people of the same sex?
- Do you believe that sexual orientation can be changed by therapy?
- What's your view on Sex Addiction?
- Do you believe an openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person can live a spiritually rich and satisfying life?
- Do you know of any happy and successful long-term same sex couples?
- Do you have close personal friends or family members who identify as LGBTQ+?

Training

- How much time did your initial training devote to working with LGBTQ people?
- Have you undergone any specific additional training to work with gender, sex and relationship diverse clients?
- How long was that training and what qualifications have you been awarded?
- * Is your supervisor trained and experienced in working with LGBTQ clients?

Experience

- How long have you been practising counselling or psychotherapy?
- If I need a referral for hormones are you qualified to write a referral letter?
- Are you experienced in working with members of the Kink community
- Are you experienced working around Consensual Non-Monogamy?
- Do you think it's possible to do Chemsex safely?
- What jobs or careers have you had besides being a therapist?
- What non-professional experiences have you had to qualify you for the work you are now doing?

Credentials

- Are you a member of any professional organisations? Which ones?
- Are you Accredited or Registered by any professional therapy associations?
- Have any complaints been filed against you with any professional ethics organisation?

Professional Orientation

- How do you describe your professional orientation to therapy?
- Which of the major schools of psychotherapy are the most attractive to you?

Competence

- Have you treated other people with problems similar to mine?
- How do you determine how often we should meet?
- Can you prescribe medications if I need them?
- If not, do you work with a physician or a psychiatrist who can evaluate me and prescribe medication?
- Are you willing to consult with other mental health or medical professionals with whom I have worked?

Business practices

- What is your fee? Is there a sliding scale? If there is a sliding scale, how does it work?
- When and how do I pay you?
- How much notice do I need to give for cancellations?
- Are you able to accept medical insurance?

What is your email/telephone availability?

- Do you encourage or discourage email/telephone contact between meetings?

Personal

- Do you personally identify as queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning?
- Do you identify as being clean and sober? If so, are you in recovery?
- Do you attend any 12-step groups?
- * How do you manage meeting clients outside of the therapy room, in social settings, online or at Queer community events?
- Have you had personal experience as a client in psychotherapy?

Comfort and Chemistry (questions to ask yourself after the initial meeting)

- Did you feel respected by the therapist? Did you feel they were treating you as an equal? Did you feel comfortable talking to this therapist?
- Did you feel understood? Did the therapist understand your reason for being there? Did you feel liked by the therapist?
- Did you like the therapist? Did you like their values?
- Did you agree with them?
- Did you have an initial feeling of trust in the therapist?
- Did the therapist appear to be sensitive to your feelings?
- Were you able to say what you wanted to say? Were you able to be yourself? Did you feel a need to hide anything? Were you honest?
- Did the therapist convey a feeling of personal warmth?
- Did the therapist seem to have a sense of humour? Were they overly serious?
- Did you get a feeling this person was wise? Knowledgeable?
- Were they able to go past theories and understand the nature of the world?

Comfort and Chemistry continued ...

- Did they convey an interest in you and your reasons for being in his or her office?
- Did the therapist make eye contact with you? Was that comfortable for you?
- Did you get any feedback from the therapist? Was it helpful? Insightful? Did you come away with any greater understanding of yourself than you had before the first meeting?
- Did you disagree with the therapist at any point? How did that go? Was the therapist defensive? Could they disagree with you in a comfortable manner?
- Do you look forward to talking with the therapist again?