

***Not coping well with your IBD?
Want support, but don't know where to start?***

GUIDELINES TO FINDING THE RIGHT THERAPIST

- Whether you're newly diagnosed with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis (collectively known as Inflammatory Bowel Disease, or IBD) or have had it for many years, IBD patients often feel very alone in coping with their disease. As a result, many people experience depression, anxiety, relationship issues, guilt, shame, embarrassment, or lack motivation to live their lives fully. This is nothing to feel ashamed about!
- Talking to a professional can be very helpful to normalize your experience and assist you in feeling empowered.
- Some people feel too embarrassed about asking for help. Try to get past the stigma. The outcome is too important. It takes courage to make the phone call, but soon you will discover that talking helps.
- It's recommended that you find 2 -3 three individuals who work with people with IBD or chronic illness. You can usually get some names of therapists that specialize in IBD from your GI doctor or your local CCFA office. Call each of them and ask questions to get a feel about how they work and whether their personality "clicks" with you.
- One of the most important factors to success in therapy is if you and your therapist are a "good fit" – it's important that you experience an intuitive match, that your therapist understands your problems and you can trust him/her.
- Questions you can ask when interviewing counselors:
 - How long have you been in practice?
 - What are your credentials and professional training?
 - What areas do you specialize in?
 - What is your general orientation and belief about how your clients improve?
 - Do you have knowledge and experience working with people with IBD or chronic illnesses?
 - What can I expect while working with you?
 - What are your fees and policies, and do you accept insurance?
- Set up an appointment with the person you feel most comfortable with. During that initial session, ask yourself: Do I feel reasonably okay with this person? Is the therapist really listening to me? Is he or she asking enough questions, or are they doing most of the talking? Has your therapist asked what outcome you want from therapy? Does what your therapist says make sense?
- Depending on your situation, you may want to consider couples or family therapy if your issues are about how your IBD is affecting your relationships.
- If the therapy is for your child or adolescent, make sure that you find a therapist that specializes in working with that population. The same guidelines as above apply to your child – make sure that he/she feels comfortable and safe talking with the therapist. It may not be appropriate for you to see the same therapist as your child.
- Consider joining a CCFA support group in addition to individual therapy. Although the support group is not "therapy," and you will not experience the level of individual attention and depth that you will receive in counseling, it is a wonderful way to feel like you're not alone and have a community to support you.
- In general, psychotherapy can be critical to helping IBD patients and their families accept their disease, find effective ways to cope with the experience, feel empowered to live full and meaningful lives, and recognize that they do not have to feel like victims to their illness.
- TAKE THE RISK AND MAKE THE PHONE CALL!