



Finding Your Mental Health Professional

bright link | THE EMPOWERED PATIENT GUIDES

WHO AM I LOOKING FOR?

It's important to “click” with your therapist. You should feel at ease talking about yourself and asking questions about what makes him or her a good fit for you.

STEP 1—GET A FEW RECOMMENDATIONS

Put together a list of 2–3 therapists based on referrals.

- Talk to your doctor, a genetic counselor (find one at www.nsgc.org) or a support organization that can help identify someone who specifically treats patients coping with cancer genetics.
- Don't be afraid to describe the sort of therapist you're looking for. You may specify a therapist with experience in a certain demographics, such as age, sex, race, sexual orientation or religious background, if any of those are important to you.

STEP 2—PICK UP THE PHONE

Call one of your recommended therapists to make an initial appointment and gather some key information:

- Where are you located?
- Is the therapist accepting new patients? When is his or her earliest availability?
- How much will this cost me? Do you accept my insurance? If not, or if I'm uninsured, do you offer a sliding-scale fee based on income?
- How familiar is the therapist with cancer genetics? Has he or she had any other patients who are young women at high risk for breast and/or ovarian cancer?

STEP 3—GO MEET HIM OR HER

Go to your initial appointment armed with questions. Describe the concerns and problems that led you to seek help, and find out:

- What kind of treatment program do you recommend for me? Has it been proven effective for patients who have medical histories similar to mine? What are the benefits? Obstacles?
- How much therapy do you recommend?
- Are you willing to coordinate my treatment with my healthcare team—like my OB/GYN, surgeon, and/or primary care physician?
- Will you tailor my treatment to me? How will you ensure my therapy fits my unique situation?

STEP 4—STOP AND THINK

After your visit, take some time to evaluate how it went. Ask yourself:

- Did you feel open and at ease?
- Was the therapist welcoming and responsive to your questions?
- Were you comfortable with the way he or she described their ability to help you?
- Did she seem informative about cancer genetics?

If you can answer “yes” to all these questions, then go ahead and schedule an appointment to start your treatment.

But if you don’t feel the right sense of connection after your first meeting, try someone else on your referral list--finding the perfect fit is worth the effort.

THERAPY TO THINK ABOUT

Consider looking for a therapist with additional certification and training in Behavioral Medicine, Health Psychology or Psycho-Oncology—often that means they specialize in treating people with medical illnesses or those who are at high risk due to genetics.

If you’re facing the emotional and psychological issues associated with being at high risk, group therapy or professionally led peer support groups are another great avenue to explore and can be extremely helpful for some women. Bright Pink offers one-on-one peer support through its one-of-a-kind PinkPal program and non-traditional group support through Outreach Groups nationwide. To learn more about these support programs and to get involved, you can visit Bright Pink online.

NOTES

This guide was authored in collaboration with Dina Roth Port, author of the book *Previvors: Facing the Breast Cancer Gene and Making Life-Changing Decisions*.

BRIGHT PINK is a national non-profit on a mission to save women’s lives from breast and ovarian cancer by empowering them to live proactively at a young age. For more information or to get involved, visit BrightPink.org.

