



Adoptee

How important is it for an adoptee to receive mental health support from a therapist who is also an adoptee? Can someone without the lived experience offer effective help?

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Awareness

Adoptee



short answer

YES AND NO. AND IT'S YOUR CHOICE ABOUT
HOW MUCH IT MATTERS

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Hi Sky!

So I mentioned it's kind of a yes-no situation.

First, here's a directory of "adoption competent" therapists in each state [Grow Beyond Words Adoptee Therapist Directory]. I think most therapists offer virtual and in- person. Depending on licensure status, some can even do out of state, so you might have more to choose from depending on their situation. I've attached a sheet* that gives more detail about what someone might look for in a therapist who specializes in adoption.

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It kind of depends on what you're looking to address in therapy. When you call/talk with a therapist, they might ask you about any specific goals you have for a season of counseling.

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Because experiences related to adoption can sometimes touch many aspects of our daily lives, it's possible there are layers to your presenting concerns that overlap with adoption even if they feel a bit unrelated. And, we do want to be careful not to "blame" everything on adoption. It's finding a therapist who's willing to have that balanced approach that joins with you as you focus on a topic/goal, they don't completely say, "Hey that's because you're adopted!" but they also don't dismiss the possibility that adoption could be playing a role, they'd be willing to have the curiosity to at least ask, "Hmm let's take a look at that aspect of your story and at least just explore how it all fits together."

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Maybe it does connect, maybe not, but they're willing to check it out with you, not forcing it but not erasing it altogether. Sometimes, non-adoptees can provide all of that to some degree, but I imagine there might be some pieces that you just don't have to explain too much when you're talking with someone who's also adopted and has that shared experience. And how important is that to you right now?

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For some people it's a huge priority to have an adoptee counselor, for others they feel fine addressing their goals without looking too much into adoption at all (I personally worked with a counselor to help address my adult ADHD dx last year and that was my experience; sometimes trauma and ADHD "symptoms" do overlap, but I was mindful about that and included it in with other areas of support I was receiving). Most counselors will let you ask these kinds of questions during a phone call/intake, that way you get to see if it's a good fit. You might even ask, "How might you see adoption playing a role in my counseling journey, and/or how important would it be to include that in our work together?"

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I just saw a fellow adoptee share [on social media] that they met with 4 or 5 therapists before finally choosing who they wanted to work with. In a way you are interviewing them to get a sense of their overall vibe and tone. You might not find a 100% "match" but it's worth maybe talking to a few to see what sticks out and notice which parts of the interaction leave an impression with you, and what that means for your decision to move forward (or not).

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Ok! Those are kind of my main points in unpacking that "yes-no" answer. I hope it all makes sense? Please let me know if you have any questions about it! Thanks for reaching out!

Best!

Cam

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