

SOLACE FOR MOTHERS: Healing After a Traumatic Birth

Questions to Consider when Interviewing a Psychotherapist

The following is meant as a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and a potential psychotherapist. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions but, rather, by the way in which the therapist answers you will get a feel for his/her style of practice and how he/she may approach the issue of birth trauma. Keep in mind that many therapists may not have any previous experience treating birth trauma. Experience treating trauma in general, including clinical work supporting women who are recovering from rape or abuse, would be a good starting point.

Essential Questions to Ask:

What are your credentials and how long have you been a therapist?

Do you use a specific approach to therapy in your practice?

How long is a session? How often would we meet?

Do you charge by the hour or by the session? What is your standard fee? Are you covered by my insurance plan?

Have you had experience working with women who have had postpartum mood disorders?

Have you had experience working with clients with post traumatic stress disorder, or other trauma based issues?

Can you share your thoughts with me about traumatic responses following childbirth?

Do you use any therapeutic techniques in dealing with trauma? What is your training and experience with these techniques?

Have you had experience working with women who felt traumatized by their birth experience?

Do you feel that trauma from birth is different from postpartum depression? In what ways do you feel the symptoms differ?

Supplemental Questions to Ask

Do you feel that a woman could perceive her birth as traumatic, even when others may say it was a fairly typical experience?

Would you be open to working with me through expressive therapies, such as art or writing?

Do you recommend any specific complementary treatments such as chiropractic or massage?

Would you be open to reading materials that I bring in about birth trauma that I feel would be beneficial to our work?

Do you have any opinions about medications for treating trauma?

What is your policy on calls or emails between sessions? Are you available in an emergent situation?

Do you work with clients who practice self destructive behaviors, such as abusing alcohol or self injury?

Do you feel that we could work together and that you could help me with my issues?

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Remember that therapists are obligated to legal regulations of informed consent. The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy define informed consent in therapy as such:

Excerpt: "1.2 Marriage and family therapists obtain appropriate informed consent to therapy or related procedures as early as feasible in the therapeutic relationship, and use language that is reasonably understandable to clients. The content of informed consent may vary depending upon the client and treatment plan; however, informed consent generally necessitates that the client: (a) has the capacity to consent; (b) has been adequately informed of significant information concerning treatment processes and procedures; (c) has been adequately informed of potential risks and benefits of treatments for which generally recognized standards do not yet exist; (d) has freely and without undue influence expressed consent; and (e) has provided consent that is appropriately documented. When persons, due to age or mental status, are legally incapable of giving informed consent, marriage and family therapists obtain informed permission from a legally authorized person, if such substitute consent is legally permissible."

Source: http://www.aamft.org/resources/LRM_Plan/Ethics/ethicscode2001.asp

You are free to be fully involved in all decisions regarding your care. If you do not understand an assessment, diagnosis or treatment-related concern, it is the therapist's job to explain his or her thinking to you in such a way that you can understand. You should always be a full participant in your care, and never undertake treatment or a therapeutic technique which does not feel appropriate to you.

Healing from postpartum mood disorders and trauma following childbirth is very possible. With the right care team at your side, you can recover and thrive.