



**JACKIE DOTSON**

*Practical Counseling for your busy life*

## How to Choose a Counselor

If you are thinking of starting counseling, the most important step you can take is to choose the right counselor. In counseling, the right fit is everything when it comes to helping you achieve your goals. **So what should you be looking for anyway?**

### Making The Connection

**The first question you should ask yourself**, “do I feel comfortable talking to this person?” “Do we ‘click’?” It is normal to feel nervous when seeing a counselor for the first time. Keeping this in mind, do you feel listened to by this person? Do you feel as if he/she is making it easier for you to open up? If so, you are on the right track. Also keep in mind that in counseling, as you learn, stretch and grow, there will be periods of time when you do feel uncomfortable because you are trying on new skills and behaviors. The important thing is that you feel supported and appropriately challenged during these times.

### Qualifications

**Evaluate your counselor’s credentials** by checking online with the Department of Consumer Affairs to verify if your counselor has an active license in California. There are several different credentials that are licensed to practice counseling in California. These include: licensed clinical social workers (LCSW), licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFT), and licensed psychologists (PhD/PsyD). Is one better or more qualified than the other? Not necessarily. The best, most qualified counselor is one who you “click” with, who is able to help you with your unique concerns and issues.

### Make the Location Convenient

**Location is very important.** Is the counselor’s office convenient to your home or office? You may be willing to travel if you find your counselor to be a perfect fit. However, you also may find yourself less committed to the process if you have to travel far. A good indicator is if you find yourself tempted to cancel your appointment because you don’t feel like driving in that day.

### What’s Not Okay

While we’ve discussed elements that go into finding the right counselor, it is also important to know what should never be a part of counseling. A counselor should never try to change your religious or political beliefs, for example. Your counselor should never try to be friends with you outside of the counseling relationship or talk about their problems in your session. Lastly, professional counseling should never include sex. It’s not just unethical, it is against the law.

### Moving to Action - Next Steps

Would you be willing to explore, by picking up the phone or sending me an email? This way we can talk about whether counseling for you is a good fit with me. If so, you may call me at (916) 454-1021 or [click here](#) to send me an email.