



FAQs for Seeking Therapy as a South Asian

I am ready to look for a mental health provider. How do I get started?

One of the first questions you can ask yourself is what type of provider and what type of services you are looking for. There are many different types of mental health providers, and that alone can be overwhelming when beginning the search. [NAMI has an excellent resource that breaks down the types of providers and their licenses in detail.](#)

What is important to know that there are two broad categories of providers: those that prescribe and manage medication, and those that provide talk therapy in different forms. Within each broad category, providers have differences in experience, education, and specialization that impact the way that they work. It can feel complicated to figure out what these differences will mean for you, and one way to combat this can be to start with figuring out where you are and what you are looking for:

Where can I find a mental health provider?

Ask your health insurance company for a list of covered providers. Many insurance companies make a list of providers they cover available on the internet.

Seek a referral or recommendation from your primary care provider.

Ask trusted friends, family or clergy.

Check to see whether your company's employee assistance program (EAP) or student health center offers mental health services, or ask for a referral.

Contact a local or national mental health organization by phone or on the internet, such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

Search the internet for professional associations that have directories of mental health providers, such as the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association or the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies.

Check phone book listings or search the internet under categories such as community service numbers, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists or social service organizations.

What factors should I consider when selecting a mental health provider?

(See this [Mayo Clinic Resource](#) for more details on this)

Your concern or condition.

Most mental health providers treat a range of conditions, but one with a specialized focus may be more suited to your needs. For example, if you have an eating disorder, you may need to see a psychologist who specializes in that area. If you are having marital problems, you may want to consult a licensed marriage and family mental health professional. In general, the more severe your symptoms or complex your diagnosis, the more expertise and training you need to look for in a mental health provider.

Whether you need medications, counseling or both.

Some mental health providers are not licensed to prescribe medications. So your choice may depend, in part, on your concern and the severity of your symptoms. You may need to see more than one mental health provider. For example, you may need to see a psychiatrist to manage your medications and a psychologist or another mental health provider for counseling.

Your health insurance coverage.

Your insurance policy may have a list of specific mental health providers who are covered or may only cover certain types of mental health providers. Check ahead of time with your insurance company, Medicare or Medicaid to find out what types of mental health services are covered and what your benefit limits are. You may also want to look into other logistics such as office hours, length of session, etc.

Treatment Approach and philosophy.

[There are many different forms and approaches to therapy that you can find at this Psychcentral resource.](#) Many providers describe themselves as integrative or eclectic as well, and will offer some information about their style on their website, that you can read to build a sense of what resonates with you, your experience, and what you are looking for. Do not hesitate to ask lots of questions. Finding the right match is crucial to establishing a good relationship and getting the most out of your treatment.

If you find yourself feeling confused by these questions, remember that many providers offer free consultations. Ethical practice for all of these providers encourages them to practice within the bounds of their expertise, so a good provider will help you understand what you are looking for, and make referrals where appropriate. Rapport is important when seeking mental health services,

so be open to continuing your search until you are able to find someone who you feel understands you and can show how they hope to help you get where you would like to. Feel encouraged to ask a lot of questions, and to assess if you will be able to establish a warm relationship with your provider, as that is the key to getting the most out of your treatment.

How much will therapy cost? What should I budget for?

I am South Asian, do I need to go to a South Asian mental health professional?

It can be difficult to predict the cost of therapy because the length of treatment is uncertain. Some mental health professionals focus on “brief-therapy” interventions which require approximately 10 weekly sessions. However, most therapeutic relationships last longer than that. Most clients attend therapy on a weekly basis, although some attend more or less frequently. In addition to these variations, the cost of therapy can range from \$20-\$200 per session. So how does one prepare and budget for therapy? There are two main questions to ask yourself:

1) What financial assistance can I get from my insurance company? Will my insurance cover psychological treatment, and do they require a certain diagnosis? If so, who will be able to access my records and view these diagnoses?

2) How much am I willing to invest in order to heal and grow? Looking at my finances, what are the cutbacks that I am willing to make in order to invest in my personal development? What can I realistically afford on a monthly/weekly basis?

From a therapeutic perspective, what you *need* is a qualified mental health professional who you feel comfortable with. If, in general, you are only comfortable speaking to South Asians (or a more specific subset) that you trust to understand your experience, then you may want to start by finding a South Asian mental health professional.

However, if you feel comfortable with people of various faiths and backgrounds, then your mental health professional’s identity may not be a pre-requisite for therapy. Keep in mind that most mental health professionals are trained to be open and sensitive to the client’s cultural and religious beliefs. Whether you choose a South Asian or non-South Asian mental health professional, it’s always important that your mental health professional asks about your identity/religious/spiritual beliefs in a non-judgmental manner.

Have questions? Ready to connect?

MannMukti

MannMukti (“mental liberation”) is a storytelling platform that enables South Asians to normalize and discuss mental health. To encourage healthy, open dialogue of mental health issues in an effort to remove stigma, improve awareness and promote self-care.

website: mannmukti.org
facebook: @mannmukti
instagram: @mannmukti

Division on South Asian Americans (DoSAA)

The Division of South Asian Americans (DoSAA) strives to be a driving force in a community action among South Asian mental health providers and those interested in South Asian mental health.

website: aapaonline.org/divisions/division-on-south-asian-americans/
facebook: @dosaaonline
instagram: @dosaaonline

MannMukti and DoSAA wish you the best of luck in finding a professional - we hope your experience has a very positive impact on your mental health!