

## Getting it together

# 3 questions to ask a counselor

Kick the tires and slam the doors. That's how you shop for a used car. Everyone knows that. But how do you shop for a professional counselor?

It's not the sort of thing that you expect to need. So when you do, you're likely to be unprepared as a wise shopper. But, just as you wouldn't buy a hazardous pick-up car, there is a great need to be careful in your selection of a counselor. In fact, the range of services is so varied in the psychotherapy and counseling fields that even a little consumer care can go a long way toward ensuring a successful experience.

The best way to do this is to select from a list of potential counselors. Preferably, this list would be based on the suggestions of someone who has had direct experience with the professionals; but this is often not possible. The next best source of professional names would be one of the several blind lists that are available in the Yellow Pages, from professional associations and from family physicians.

**HOW DO YOU SELECT FROM SUCH A LIST?** Call each counseling profession and ask some crucial questions. Three questions that should give you a lot of useful information.

First, ask about your potential counselor's training and experience. A logical question, but you'd be surprised at how few have asked it.

The most competent counselors have

earned the highest degree in their profession and have been counseling for at least five years. These are also the most expensive. This is not to say that any highly trained and experienced counselor is guaranteed to be your best choice. But, if you're looking for the best, then this should be a minimum requirement.

This is also not to say that you won't find competent counselors with less training or experience. But, when this minimum requirement has not been met, extra precautions are a must. Be sure, for example, that your counselor's work with you is being closely supervised by a competent professional.

Your second questions should be: Do you specialize in the kind of problem I think I have? His answer should be based to a small degree on his academic training, but mainly this is a question of actual experience.

These days, you're apt to find professionals whose experience qualifies them to specialize in marriage problems, vocational problems, sexual problems, psychiatric disorders, personal growth and many other problem areas.

In determining a counselor's areas of special competence, it's important to be sure she's not just expressing a willingness to work with your problem. Most counselors are willing to try their hand at any problem you have. But it's definitely an advantage if this

By  
**BOB TRENZ,**  
Ph.D.



is not the first time the counselor has seen somebody like you.

**FINALLY, ASK** the most complicated question of all: What kind of approach do you use? Most don't ask this question because they don't feel sophisticated enough to evaluate the answer. But you can learn some extremely important facts when you discuss this one with your potential counselor.

For starters, don't settle for an answer like: "I'm Freudian," or "I use T.A." From a counseling consumer's point of view, you should be interested in whether he considers himself a short-term or a long-term counselor. This can range from the shortest term approach of an average

of five visits to the longest term approach averaging six years.

You need to know whether he will be directive and active or passive and free-association-oriented. If you want one of these and get the other, you'll be very dissatisfied. And you should be interested whether his approach is to explore the deep and complicated roots of your present problem or if he will want to focus on making a better adjustment to your current circumstances.

**UNFORTUNATELY,** there are no clear standards to help you evaluate which of these approaches is best. The best way to judge the responses is to think about answers you would personally prefer and choose the counselor who matches your taste.

Picking a counselor for a personal problem is no time for shyness. Almost all professionals will welcome your attempt to make a good selection. They know that they will do their best and most satisfying work when a good match is made between counselor and client.

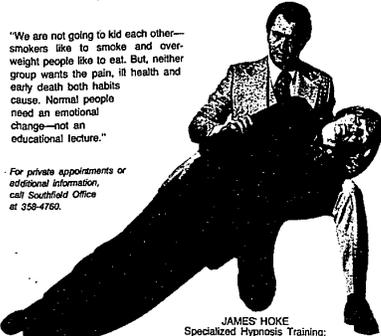
Bob Trenz is a marriage counselor and psychologist in Rochester. Comments for Dr. Trenz may be sent to P.O. Box 64, Rochester 43063.

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Hoke is a clinical hypnotist; not a Michigan certified psychologist.

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Wednesdays 6:30 & 7:30 p.m.  
Stop Smoking: Saturdays 11:00 a.m.

### PONTIAC MALL—Community Room—

Telephone at Elm, Lake Rd. June 2 (Friday)  
Weight Control 9:30 a.m.  
Stop Smoking 11:30 a.m.

### OAKLAND MALL—Community Room—

Troy 175 at 14 Mile Every Saturday  
Weight Control 1:00 p.m.  
Stop Smoking 3:00 p.m.

DOE TO PUBLIC REQUEST, WEDNESDAY EVENING SESSIONS WILL BEGIN JUNE 21  
Stop Smoking 8:00  
Weight Control 7:30  
No Reservations Necessary for Mall Clinic Sessions

## Volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau, a program of the Volunteer Action Center of United Community Services, has weekly listings of agencies needing volunteer services. Further information about these and over 200 other agencies may be obtained by calling the bureau, 642-7272. Any non-profit agencies needing volunteer assistance may also call the bureau.

**RESIDENTS' ADVOCATE**—A strong personality and an ability to present problems clearly are needed by the volunteer interested in this job

with Citizens for Better Care in Pontiac. Duties include visiting a particular nursing home two hours a week and bring problems to the attention of the staff and administration. The goal is to obtain satisfactory results for patients who are unable to speak for themselves.

**MUSICIAN**—Volunteers are needed on weekday afternoons to entertain residents at Bedford Villa Nursing Home in Southfield. Teens or adults who can play musical instruments are welcome here.

## Ileitis meeting scheduled

The Michigan Chapter of the National Foundation for Ileitis and Colitis, Inc., will sponsor an open meeting at 8 p.m., Tuesday, June 6, in Oakwood Hospital, Dearborn. Dr. Arthur Klass of the Wayne State University school of medicine and Dr.

Earl James Robertson II of the department of pharmacy at Harper-Grace Hospital will discuss medications. Oakwood Hospital is located at 18101 Oakwood, 1 1/2 blocks west of the Southfield expressway.

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