

Suicide Prevention at Lake Tahoe: Can therapy improve your life?

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Lisa Stekert
Suicide Prevention



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TAHOE-TRUCKEE — So you've decided you need some support, but how do you go about finding the right person to help you? Therapy can be an effective treatment for mental and emotional problems. In order to get the most benefit, it is important to find the right therapist to help you make changes for the better in your life. A good therapist makes you feel cared for and helps you feel stronger and more self-aware.

THERAPY AND COUNSELING CAN HELP

It feels good to be listened to. Talking with family and friends about your problems is helpful, but sometimes we need the help of others that aren't so close to our situation. Therapists are trained to listen and help you get to the root of your problem. They also can help you make positive changes in your life and provide expert guidance and an outside perspective. You don't need to be diagnosed with a mental health problem to benefit from therapy. Many people turn to therapy during challenging times such as divorce or for everyday concerns with relationships, job stress, or self-doubt.

THE RIGHT THERAPIST FOR YOU

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The connection between you and your therapist is essential. The process may take some time and work but it's well worth the effort. You want someone you can trust and feel comfortable with talking about challenging topics and intimate details of your life; someone who will be a partner in your recovery. Take time to shop around and ask questions when interviewing a potential therapist. Even if a therapist looks good on paper; trust your gut if the connection doesn't feel right. A good therapist will respect your choice and should never pressure you.

EXPERIENCE

Experience and area of focus are important. Look for a therapist who is experienced in treating the problem you have. Therapists often have an area of focus such as depression, trauma, or eating disorders. An experienced therapist has seen the problem you are facing many times so they have an expanded overview, which gives them more insight and ideas to help you.

TYPE OF THERAPIST AND LICENSING

Common types of mental health professionals are:

Psychologist – holds a masters or doctoral degree and is licensed in clinical psychology.

Social Worker – Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) has a master's degree in social work (MSW) and additional clinical training.

Marriage and Family – Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) has a master's degree in marriage and family therapy and clinical experience.

Psychiatrist – A psychiatrist is a physician (MD or DO) who holds a doctoral degree and specializes in mental health. Psychiatrists are also licensed to prescribe medication.

Within a couple of sessions you should be able to tell if you and your therapist are a good fit. It is important that you have a shared understanding of what issue you are working on and are clear about what you hope to achieve from therapy. With good rapport, you and your therapist can develop goals together. Your therapist can't do the work for you; you must be an active participant. Growth can be slow and difficult; you won't be renewed overnight. However, you may notice positive changes in your life, such as your outlook changing or improved connection with family and friends.

For more information about the Tahoe Truckee Suicide Prevention Coalition, visit <http://www.tahoelifeline.org> ↗

Lisa Stekert is the coordinator for the Tahoe Truckee Suicide Prevention Coalition and Outreach Coordinator for the Tahoe Truckee Prevention Task Force. Contact her at lstekert@tfhd.com ↗ or by calling 530.550.6733.

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