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NATURAL HEALTH UK'S TOP ALTERNATIVE WELLBEING MAGAZINE

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HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT THERAPIST

In need of extra care? Julie McFadden from the The Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT), the UK's largest professional association for complementary therapists, offers some tips on finding a therapy and practitioner right for you



Complementary therapies such as massage, aromatherapy, reflexology and reiki are not only a great way to relax, they can help to address day-to-day niggles and complaints that you don't necessarily need to see a doctor for, such as muscular aches and pains, anxiety, digestive problems, headaches or disturbed sleep.

They can also help people to manage or live with more long-term or serious conditions, too, alongside standard

medical care. For example, we know from our annual survey that lots of FHT members support people who have joint problems (such as arthritis, rheumatism or fibromyalgia), mental health issues, or who have been affected by cancer. In these instances, complementary therapy obviously won't cure or treat the condition, but it can help a person to cope with the emotional impact of their diagnosis and to manage some of their symptoms.

WHICH THERAPY SHOULD I CHOOSE?

This largely comes down to personal choice and preference, so it's about finding a therapy that's right for you. However, there are certain therapies that might be more obvious choices or perhaps worth exploring first.

For example, if you are prone to lower back ache or tension headaches, then therapies such as massage, seated



time and just not keen on the idea of having a body treatment, then you might like to try reflexology – this helps to restore balance to the whole body, but the treatment itself focuses on just the feet.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR IN A THERAPIST?

First and foremost, they need to be appropriately qualified, insured and work to a strict code of conduct. As it can be difficult to check these sorts of details for yourself, look for a therapist who belongs to a professional association such as the FHT, who will have already checked the therapist's credentials. It will also mean that in the unlikely event that you're unhappy with the therapist or the treatments you receive, you have an organisation you can turn to in order to make a complaint.

We would also recommend checking to see if your therapist is listed on an accredited register. Accredited registers are independently approved by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care, as part of a government-backed

programme. It's not statutory regulation, like we have in place for doctors, nurses, and midwives, but it does help to give extra peace of mind when choosing a therapist.

Finally, make sure you feel comfortable with your therapist before you go for your first appointment. A good, professional practitioner will be happy to talk to you, and answer any questions you have, before you book your first treatment.

acupressure or Indian head massage might be useful, as these target the muscles and any tension that's built up in the neck, back and shoulder area.

If you're a keen runner or cyclist and you've got a minor niggle, or you've overdone it in the garden at the weekend, seeing someone qualified in sports massage or sports therapy might be a good choice.

If you have mobility issues or you're trying complementary therapies for the first

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK?

There are no black and white questions that you 'should' ask your therapist, but some people find the following helpful...

"Where do you work?"

Some therapists will work from their own home, or in a clinic, salon or similar. Others might work on a mobile basis and will be happy to visit you in your own home, which might be useful if you don't have transport, have mobility issues or children that can't be left.

"Do you have any experience treating someone with my needs?"

You might want to ask the therapist if they have any specialist training or experience working with people who have similar needs to your own. This might be useful to know if you have a certain condition, or you're pregnant.

"How much do you charge?"

The cost of a treatment can vary considerably according to where you live, the type of therapy you are having, the length of the treatment, whether you are booking just one treatment or making a block booking, and so on.

"What are your typical working hours?"

If you are looking to have appointments in the evening or at weekends, to fit around work or other commitments, it will be important to know if your therapist can accommodate this.

"What should I expect at my first treatment?"

Your first appointment is usually longer, because it will include a full consultation, so that your therapist can find out more about you, your lifestyle, your medical history and any current concerns. This will help them to decide if the therapy is right for you or if the treatments need to be modified in any way. If you have a medical condition, or you've recently had surgery, they may ask you to check with your doctor or consultant that it's OK to go ahead with the treatment.