




Ep. 218: What to Look for In a Therapist

Here are some questions to consider when looking for a therapist for your child or family who is trauma-informed and grounded in attachment and relational neuroscience.


✓ 1. Questions About Their General Approach

These questions help gauge the therapist's overarching framework and whether they prioritize relationships, safety, and connection.


- **How would you describe your overall therapeutic approach when working with children and families?**

 *Look for language around relationship, connection, regulation, and safety, rather than just compliance or behavior modification.*

- **How do you understand and explain challenging behaviors in children?**

 *A therapist grounded in attachment and relational neuroscience will frame behaviors through the lens of nervous system regulation, safety, and survival strategies, not just defiance or manipulation.*

- **What role do you see parents and caregivers playing in the therapeutic process?**

 *Trauma-informed therapists will emphasize the importance of parent involvement and see caregivers as essential co-regulators, not bystanders.*


2. Questions to Assess Attachment and Relational Neuroscience Knowledge

These questions will help you determine if the therapist incorporates attachment theory and the science of connection into their work.


- **What trainings or studies have you completed in interpersonal neurobiology, relational neuroscience, trauma, or attachment theory?**

 *Look for approaches like:*


- **How do you consider a child's attachment history when developing a treatment plan?**

 *Look for responses that include assessing early relational experiences, attunement patterns, and attachment styles.*

- **How do you help children strengthen their capacity for connection and co-regulation?**

 *The therapist should mention relationship-based interventions, nervous system regulation, or co-regulation rather than focusing solely on individual coping skills.*


- **How do you view the role of rupture and repair in relationships?**

 *Therapists informed by relational neuroscience will value the repair process and see relational misattunements as opportunities for healing.*


3. Questions About Trauma-Informed Care

These questions help you assess whether the therapist prioritizes safety, regulation, and a strengths-based lens in their trauma work.


- **How do you create a sense of safety for children in therapy?**

 *A trauma-informed therapist will talk about creating predictability, attunement, and emotional safety—not just physical safety.*

- **What is your approach when a child becomes dysregulated or shuts down in session?**

 *Look for responses about meeting the child's nervous system needs through regulation and connection, not using consequences or behavior charts.*


- **How do you handle a child's resistance or withdrawal from therapy?**

 *Trauma-informed therapists will respond with curiosity and compassion, recognizing withdrawal as a protective response, not a defiance problem.*


4. Questions About Their View on Family and Systems

Attachment and relational neuroscience-based therapists recognize that children's challenges cannot be separated from their environment and relationships.

- **How do you involve the family in the therapeutic process?**

 *Look for answers that include family sessions, regular parent check-ins, or coaching, rather than working with the child in isolation.*

- **How do you collaborate with other professionals (e.g., teachers, pediatricians, or occupational therapists)?**

 *Trauma-informed therapists often take a collaborative, team-based approach to support the child holistically.*

Red Flags to Watch For

- **Behavior modification focus:** Heavy emphasis on rewards, consequences, or compliance strategies without addressing underlying regulation or safety.
- **Blaming parents or pathologizing the child:** Suggesting that parental failure or the child's inherent flaws are the primary problem.
- **Minimal parent involvement:** A therapist who works in isolation with the child and does not value parent collaboration.
- **Rigid or one-size-fits-all approaches:** Over-reliance on standardized protocols without considering the child's attachment history or individual nervous system needs.

 **Key Takeaway**

When interviewing a therapist, listen for language that reflects:

- Safety, regulation, and connection as therapeutic priorities.
- A deep understanding of the nervous system and attachment-based healing.
- An emphasis on relationship-based interventions, not just behavioral techniques.

By asking these questions, parents can better assess whether a therapist is grounded in attachment theory, relational neuroscience, and trauma-informed principles—ensuring they find the right support for their child.