the therapist's beliefs regarding who God is, relationship with Him, moral values, and the sense of right and wrong.

If the counselor's beliefs conflict significantly with yours, you may feel you are being challenged to compromise what is important to you. While the therapy process often includes restructuring erroneous ideas about God and His universe, that exchange of lies for the truth of Scripture is very different from being pressured to discard biblical principles.

In talking about religious beliefs, it is good to make sure that you reach an agreement about the use of Scripture and prayer in a counseling session. By getting the therapist's perspective in the first session, you can avoid many frustrating moments of expecting something that never happens.

To build a foundation for developing trust that leads to the smoothest path for recovery, it is important to be open and honest about your hopes and expectations for the recovery process and completion of recovery goals. This openness can lead to establishing a deep, lasting trust that results in long-term healing.

• **Professional Credentials.** Credentials—academic degrees, licenses, professional memberships, past experience—can be important. But they are not everything.

When seeking help to resolve your problems, it may be more important that you work with a person who has the specific skill to help you, than whether he or she has a certain set of credentials.

For example, if you are trying to come to terms with a recent HIV-positive diagnosis, someone who recently attended a four-day seminar on that topic will probably be in a better place to help you than someone who has never worked with HIV/AIDS issues—no matter what each individual's education level happens to be.

Keep in mind the fact that your recovery is the goal. One practical consideration is that different states have different licensing and educational requirements for the provision of counseling or therapy services. For your protection, it is wise to check out the licensing laws in your state as you begin to seek help.

'God is the healer. The world's best therapist cannot help you, outside of the power of God.'

When Does It End?

There is no hard and fast rule for when therapy has run its course and it is time to terminate counseling.

From the positive side, it depends on whether you've reached the goals you laid out in advance. Some counselors will offer short-term therapy of a certain number of sessions, and then work with you to evaluate at the end of the period. Have you achieved what you want? Have other, more deeply-rooted problems surfaced that you need to address? What is the best course of action from here? You may decide to terminate, or to commit yourself to another round of sessions.

Another reason to stop with your current therapist may involve negative experiences related to his or her professionalism, power, and/or relationship with you as a client. (See the sidebar on *Client/Patient Guidelines.*)

While such negative experiences do sometimes happen, don't let one therapist's problems sidetrack you from the healing you want.

Conclusion

The recovery process can be the very best thing that ever happens to you, or the most frustrating. Many qualified lay and professional counselors can help facilitate God's healing in your life. But never forget the truth: God is the healer. The world's best therapist cannot help you, outside of the power of God.

A therapist is a facilitator, a provider of insight—not the source of healing. The right therapist can be a gracious gift from God. But it all starts with recognition of your need, and then finding the right help.

Pray about your search. God knows what you need. He is willing to direct your path. He wants each of us to be free and whole, more than we can ever imagine.

We have seen God work in mighty ways in so many lives, including our own, through therapy. He is waiting to do mighty thing in you, too. ◆

Sexual Exploitation

Most counselors follow a professional code of ethics.. Unfortunately, not all do. One of the most serious violations is the sexual exploitation of clients by therapists.

Sexual exploitation occurs when the counselor is involved with the client in any sexual manner. This may include: kissing, romancing, dating, sexual touching, sexual intercourse, and/or ending therapy in order to become romantically or sexually involved.

Because of the helping relationship, many clients may be attracted to their counselors. It is *never* all right for the counselor to respond in a sexual way.

Material excerpted with permission from the brochure, "It's Never O.K.," published by Minnesota Program for Victims of Sexual Assault.

Client/Patient Guidelines for Evaluating Therapy/Counseling Experiences

	OK Attitudes & Behaviors	NOT OK Attitudes/Behaviors
Professionalism (Therapist's credentials and office practice)	• office practices rgarding fees and appointments are clear and professional • training and experience are readily shared • therapist skill is devoted to your concerns • maintains confidentiality	• avoiding or refusing information about credentials/licensing • using alcohol or illegal drugs during sessions • indulging in an erotic relationship with you during therapy * *discontinue the relationship* * *consider ending therapy* * *consider a new therapist*
Power (Use of therapist's authority and knowledge)	• lets you learn how to deal with your life your way • promotes any and all sources of positive change • supports/encourages your self-confidence and ability to choose your own life path	• degrading, humiliating, intimidating, shaming, or pressuring you: personally/emotionally or socially AND physically/sexually for the purpose of sexual exploitation * *discontinue the relationship* * *terminate therapy* * *consider another therapist*
Relationship (Quality and use of therapist's and client's feelings)	• treats you with respect, care, and dignity • willingly, professionally discusses your feelings for each other • demonstrates how feelings can be safely discussed and under-	• using inapporpriate erotic comments • touching you sexually • having any sexual contact with you, in or out of the office, with or without your consent * *end the relationship* * *terminate therapy* * *see another therapist* * *consider reporting this behavior*

Material excerpted with permission from the brochure, "Making Therapy Work for You," published by the Wisconsin Task Force on Sexual Misconduct.