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counselling • coaching • wellbeing

## CONTACT

Cornerstone Counselling  
(South West) LLP  
28 South Street  
Wellington  
Somerset  
TA21 8NS



01823 765065



contact@cornerstonesw.co.uk



@cornerstonecsw

## BUSTING THE THERAPY MYTH

**BY CHRIS WALLWORK (MBACP)**

When you are deciding to explore the possibility of attending personal therapy, I wonder what fears/concerns/questions (call them what you will) you may have about what you are going to face when you walk in to the therapy room for the first time. Have you built up an image of how a therapist's room might look, what the therapist themselves would be like, and even dress like?

It's not uncommon to hear something similar to the following. "I had pictured a sparse room, with two confrontationally placed tatty chairs, a box of tissues on a desk, and some plastic cups full of water."

Is your imagined therapist male or female? When asking around in preparation for writing this article, I'm told that many people picture a therapist to be female, likely to have a penchant for wearing linen clothing and large jewelry, and a scarf – most definitely a scarf!

What do you think will motivate your therapist? Is it the fact that you will be paying by the hour to be there? Will they be clock watching? Will they even be listening? Maybe you wonder whether they will gauge their success on whether you cry or not during the sessions.

What is it important to look for in a therapist? Well, you would ideally be best placed to seek someone who is professionally



registered, that way you can have peace of mind that they had undertaken qualifications, training, and would be accountable to you and to a supervisor. You may not know that presently in the UK, anyone can call themselves a therapist or counsellor, but not everyone is qualified!

A therapist who is professionally registered will seek to offer the following. They will afford you time and space to unpack your own process, you will be listened to, you won't be judged, and you shouldn't feel like your therapist is clock watching. Hopefully you will end up looking forward to going to therapy because of the benefits it brings you!

Now, of course I don't know what your pre-judgements are in relation to therapy, and therapists – but I highly recommend putting them to one side and taking the plunge if you're looking for support. There may well be some therapists who fulfil the judgement criteria above, ultimately it doesn't matter one bit – provided your therapist is qualified and registered to a professional body, the rest is up to you!

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