

Tips for making a first appointment with a new counselor:

There are many ways to make contact with a potential counselor. In general, most therapists will list their preferred way of communication on their website. Here are suggestions to assist if you plan to call or email a new counselor:

Via Phone: Most counselors will not answer their phone, as they are often in session with clients. That means potential clients have to leave a message. If you decide to do that, just your name, phone number, and a very brief description of your situation is appropriate. For example:

“Hi Dr. Rose, my name is Robin Jones, and I was referred to you by the health clinic at Reed College. I am interested in starting counseling. Could you please call me back at 555-0000 at your earliest convenience? The best time to reach me is (give a few time options within the next 24-48 hours) .

Via Email: Check the counselor’s website for information on setting up an appointment. Many counselors have a space on their website where you can message them your information and a brief description of what you are looking for. If the website does not have that option, try using their email (with the understanding that email does not guarantee your privacy as it’s less secure than voicemail.) Whether you use an online scheduler or general email, the counselor will want to know the following:

Name, phone number, best times to reach you, insurance type, brief description of what you are looking for.

“ Hi Dr. Rose, my name is Robin Jones. I am looking to start counseling and was given your name by the Reed College health clinic. I have (blank) insurance. Can we schedule a time to discuss my interest in counseling, confirm that you can accept my insurance and see if our schedules will match for weekly counseling ? I can be reached at 555-0000; the best times to reach me are (give a few options over the next 3 days - excluding weekends). “

Make sure your voicemail is set up and working (ie your voicemail box is not full).

Regardless of how you contact the counselor, expect a phone call or email back within 24-72 hours (during the week). If you do not hear back within a week, more than likely the counselor is not accepting new patients and has not had the time to return your call/email inquiry.

During your phone conversation, here are some additional questions you might want to ask them:

- What type of treatments do you use? How effective are they in dealing with situations similar to mine? How do you know if treatment is working, and what do you do when it doesn't work?
- I am looking for counseling because (I am feeling stressed, I feel sad, I lost a person close to me, I feel disoriented), and I'm having trouble (at work, at home, in social situations, sleeping). What has been your experience treating this kind of problem?
- What are your cancellation and rescheduling policies?
- Will you verify my health insurance coverage? Or do I need to do that myself?