



# 99 Ways to Spot a Great Grief Counselor

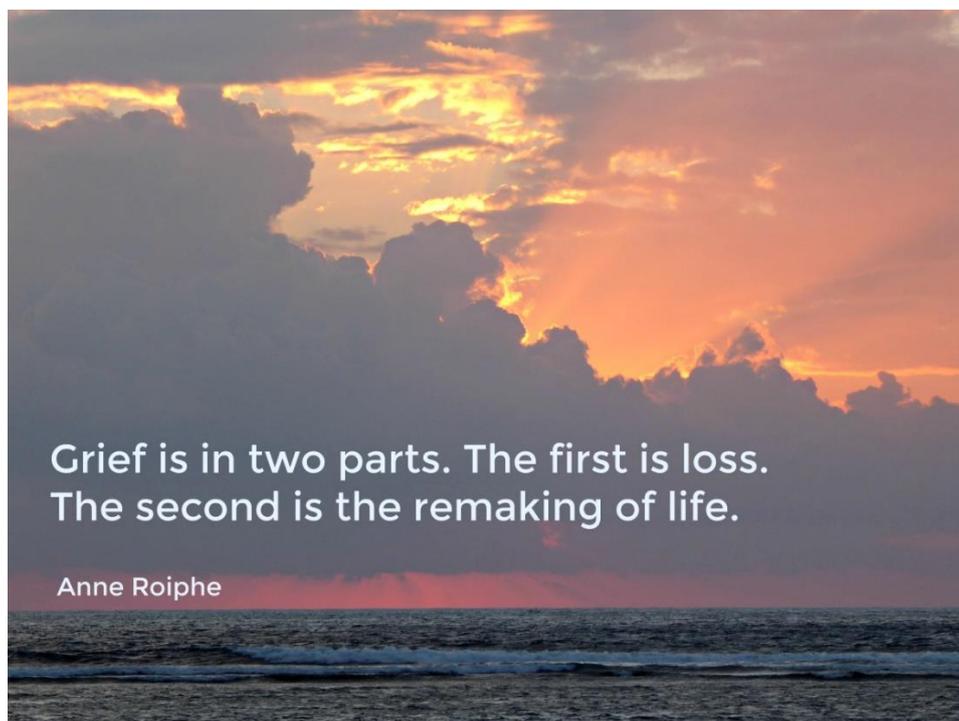
**How can you tell good therapy from bad? What are the hallmarks of a good grief counselor? How can you tell if you are getting value for your money?**

We have put together 99 different ways that you can tell if you are getting good grief support.

Don't be afraid of moving on if you don't feel right with your grief counselor. It is quite common to have personality clashes or misunderstandings - you can't get on with everyone. Or you might just have someone who has a lot of issues going on in their own life at the moment which is stopping them from doing their job properly. You might just have a really bad counselor. It does happen!

These pointers will help you decide if your grief counselor is right for you or not.

Wishing you comfort and strength in your grief journey. The Grief and Sympathy Team.



The "99 Ways" are divided into chapters dealing with the following:

What a Grief Counselor Can Do

What a Grief Counselor Can't Do

What Does Good Therapy Feel Like?

What is Bad Therapy?

Bad Therapy Red Flags

What Will a Good Grief Counselor Actually Do and Say?

Ask Yourself These Questions

Final Tips Before Starting Counseling

## What a Grief Counselor Can Do

A great counselor can help you:

1. understand what you are going through.
2. understand any confusing symptoms.
3. manage your emotions.
4. get over trauma.
5. learn tools and strategies to cope with grief.
6. learn to think differently.
7. create new habits.
8. communicate better with those around you.

## What a Grief Counselor Can't Do

9. A good counselor should make no promises or guarantees. You are half of the therapeutic team and need to take responsibility for your progress too. The therapist can't do it all for you.

10. A counselor can't make you feel better instantly, especially if your bereavement is recent. Research shows that you need time for the body and mind to calm down after the shock of bereavement, so getting counseling too soon may actually be counter-productive.

11. Grief counselors can't speed up the grieving process. Researchers believe that only about 10% of bereaved people go on to experience chronic grief symptoms over a long

period. So give yourself time and only seek help if you feel you are stuck in grief. Read our website to understand what feelings and symptoms are normal when you are grieving:

[What Are the Emotions of Grief?](#)

[What Are the Physical Symptoms of Grief?](#)

[Your Most Common Bereavement Questions?](#)

12. Counselors can't read your mind. If what they are doing is not working for you, make sure you tell them so they can try something different.

## What Does Good Therapy Feel Like?

13. Good therapy should give you hope.

14. You should have a good rapport with your therapist.

15. There should be trust and warmth between you.

16. A good therapist can create a healthy therapeutic alliance.

17. You should feel like you are working together as a team.

18. You should feel that your dignity and self-worth are respected.

19. A good counselor does not define you by your issues but treats you as a 'whole person'.

20. A good counselor makes you feel safe and secure.

21. A good counselor allows you to express your truth without fear.

22. A good counselor does not invade your personal space.

23. A therapist should always give you complete confidentiality.

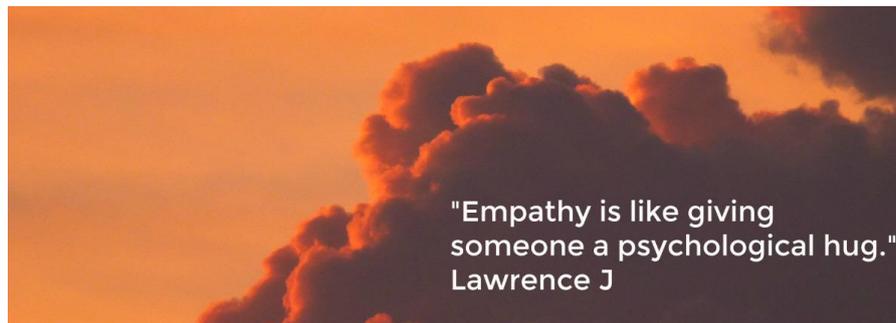
24. Therapy is different from friendship, you are there for a purpose.

25. Therapy should offer nourishment for your soul.

26. Therapy should help you to make the changes you want.

27. Good therapy is based in sound science but can be creative and flexible.

28. A therapy session should be about empathy and understanding.



29. A great therapist is patient and lets you work at your own speed.

30. An excellent counselor can see beyond the spoken word and get to the root of your problems.

31. They will have an ability to empower you to solve your own problems.

32. You should feel like you are being given attention and encouragement.

33. Sessions with a grief counselor should lead to a feeling of acceptance about your loss.

34. Good therapy can help you be more self-confident.

35. Good therapy should give you more resilience.

36. Good therapy makes you more independent.

37. Good therapy helps you make decisions.

38. Good therapy instills life competence.

39. Good therapy helps YOU solve problems.

40. Good therapy can include humor.

41. Good therapy encourages learning and action.

## What Is Bad Therapy?

42. There are underqualified people out there, so make sure that you check the qualifications of your therapist.

43. Even highly qualified counselors may just lack the empathy and connection that you need, so don't be afraid to move on if that is the case.

44. The therapist is not your friend and you shouldn't feel like you have to listen to their problems too.
45. A counselor should never be judgemental.
46. Interrupting the sessions by taking phone calls or allowing other distractions is a sign of bad therapy.
47. A counselor should never initiate touch, (even hugs) without consent. If you feel uncomfortable when your therapist touches you, let them know.
48. You should never feel ashamed or embarrassed in front of your therapist.
49. A therapist is not there just to solve your problems and tell you what to do. It's not just about getting advice, in fact the answers are usually within yourself.
50. A good grief counselor will not impose their ideas on you and they should always respect your culture or faith.
51. A grief counseling session is about you. It is by its nature one-sided. If your counselor is doing all the talking and telling you lots of things about them, have a think about what benefits you are getting.
52. Bad therapy can make you dependent on your therapist. If you feel you can't cope without them, or you become more dependent on them over time, it is best to find a new one.
53. Bad therapy may result from someone who is not an expert in your problem. Always ask for someone experienced in grief, and/or any other issues or symptoms you have.

## Bad Therapy Red Flags

The points above are really ones where a counselor just isn't very good and that can be bad enough. Below are some red flags which if you encounter them mean "Get out quick and don't come back".

54. Inappropriate remarks - anything racist, sexist or in any way demonstrating prejudice.
55. Violation of confidentiality
56. Anything verging on romantic or sexual behaviour.

57. Overstepping professional boundaries - for example being over friendly or personal.
58. Overcharging or financial dishonesty.
59. A counselor doesn't have to like you but they definitely should not abuse, belittle or patronize.

## What Will a Good Grief Counselor Actually Do and Say?

Counseling is a magical and mysterious process which goes on behind closed doors and can be very difficult to quantify, so no counselor is ever going to be the same, however, here are a few things which you can expect:

60. A therapist will ask you questions to find out your purpose and goals.
61. They should explain the way they work and the methods they use. (There are many different types of therapy and many are backed by science. Don't be afraid to ask for more information.) If you don't feel comfortable with any of their methods, say so.
62. If you are not sure what it is that is wrong, they will help you work it out.
63. They may ask if you are having any physical symptoms such as not sleeping or eating and help you to find solutions.
64. They may look at your past experiences to find solutions to today's problems.
65. A good therapist will want to understand not just what has happened to you, but what those things mean to you.
66. A good therapist will explore your feelings and reactions to events. They won't impose their own views on how events may have affected you.
67. A good counselor will be a good listener and will remember, understand and empathise with what you have said.
68. They may make suggestions about how you can improve your situation, or ask you how you think you might progress.
69. They will help YOU decide what to do next.
70. They may teach you some tools and strategies to help you sleep, be calmer or deal with stress.

71. They may give you homework to do such as things to think about, writing down thoughts or positive actions such as getting out and doing something you enjoy.

72. A good therapist will help you set goals and explain how long the therapy may take and how you will know when you are better.

[Read more about what to expect in counseling and whether or not you need it here.](#)

## Ask yourself these questions to see if you are comfortable and making progress.

73. Do I feel comfortable with this person?

74. Are they professional?

75. Have they explained and given references to the science behind the methods they use?

76. Do I trust them? (Go with your instinct here - if you don't feel at ease, then try someone else).

77. Are they really listening to me?

78. Do I feel like they understand me?

79. Do I feel like my counselor is telling me what to do all the time? (This is not good. You need to be the one in control - it is your life.)

80. Am I feeling forced to talk about things before I am ready? (You should feel free to work at your own pace).

81. Is what they say to me easy to understand?

82. Am I in control and making my own decisions?

83. Have I learned some new ways of coping?

84. Am I making progress? A good counselor should check with you to see how you are feeling and how you have progressed since last time.

85. Do I feel happier, calmer, less stressed, more able to cope?

86. Am I smiling and laughing more?

87. Am I able to treasure the memories of my loved one without becoming unbearably sad?

88. Am I getting pleasure out of life again?

## Final Tips Before Starting Counseling

89. Don't be afraid of giving counseling a try if you feel you need it.

90. Shop around and make sure you feel comfortable with someone before you get started.

91. Don't be afraid to have a chat and ask the counselor some questions to get a feel for them and their way of working before you commit to a session.

92. Ask about how they work.

93. Ask if they have experience with your issue.

94. Make sure you know what it is you are paying for.

95. Remember, you are the customer and this is your life.

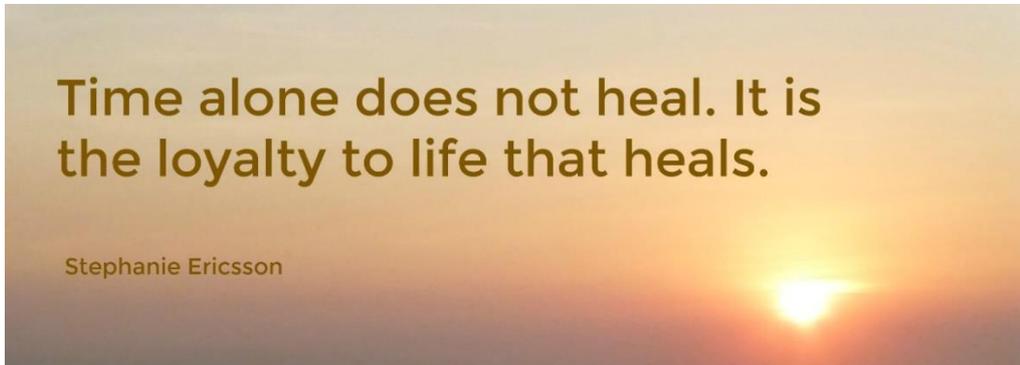
96. Have a think about what issues you'd like to address before you start.

97. Have a think about what you'd like to achieve before you start so you can monitor your progress.

98. Don't expect miracles overnight, but do go into it with a positive attitude and prepared to work at it.

99. Finally, don't be afraid to make your grief recovery and happiness a priority in your life. You deserve it!

[Read more about whether you need bereavement counseling here.](#)



**Time alone does not heal. It is  
the loyalty to life that heals.**

Stephanie Ericsson

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[www.griefandsympathy.com](http://www.griefandsympathy.com)