Kristen Baird-Goldman, LMFT, ADHD-CCSP, CIMHP
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist #90662 + ADHD Specialist

Questions to Ask a Potential Therapist or Doctor About ADHD

Questions for a Therapist

1. Training & Experience

- **"What training or continuing education have you had specifically in ADHD?"**
- **"How much of your current or past caseload has been clients with ADHD?"**
- **"Do you work more often with children or adults with ADHD?"**
  (Adult ADHD expertise is very different.)

2. Understanding of ADHD (Red Flags & Green Flags)

- **"How do you conceptualize ADHD—what do you see as the core challenges?"**
  - Good answer mentions **executive dysfunction**, emotional regulation, motivation, time blindness.
  - Red flag: "It's mostly a focus problem" or "just lack of discipline."
- **"How do you distinguish ADHD from anxiety, depression, or trauma?"**
  - Strong clinicians recognize **overlap and frequent co-occurrence**, not either/or thinking.

3. Treatment Approach

- **"What therapy approaches do you use for ADHD?"**
  - Look for: **CBT for ADHD**, **skills-based work**, **behavioral strategies**, **compassion-focused approaches**.
  - Red flag: Only insight-oriented talk therapy with no structure.
- **"How do you adapt therapy for ADHD clients who struggle with consistency, memory, or follow-through?"**
  - Good answers include written summaries, reminders, flexibility, external supports.
- **"How do you handle emotional dysregulation, shame, or rejection sensitivity?"**
  - This shows whether they understand ADHD beyond productivity.

4. Practical Support

- **"Do you help with concrete skills like planning, routines, or task initiation?"**
- **"How do you help clients who 'know what to do' but can't make themselves do it?"**
  - A knowledgeable therapist won't frame this as resistance or lack of motivation.

5. Medication Collaboration

- **"How do you collaborate with prescribers around ADHD medication?"**
  - They should be open, not dismissive or anti-medication by default.

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Questions for a Doctor / Psychiatrist / Prescriber

1. ADHD Expertise
- **"How often do you diagnose and treat ADHD in adults?"**
- **"What guidelines or frameworks do you use for adult ADHD?"**

2. Assessment & Diagnosis
- **"How do you assess ADHD beyond questionnaires?"**
  - Good answers include **clinical interviews**, **developmental history**, **functional impairment**, not just a checklist.
- **"How do you differentiate ADHD from anxiety, depression, or burnout?"**
  - Strong clinicians acknowledge **masking** and **compensating high achievers**

3. Medication Knowledge
- **"How do you decide which ADHD medication to try first?"**
- **"How do you titrate doses, and what does follow-up usually look like?"**
  - Look for thoughtful, gradual, collaborative approaches.
- **"How do you handle side effects or partial responses?"**
  - Red flag: rigid or dismissive answers.
- **"What's your view on stimulant vs. non-stimulant medications?"**
  - They should understand **both**, not fear stimulants or push one option blindly.

4. Comorbidities & Complexity
- **"How do you approach ADHD when someone also has anxiety, depression, or trauma?"**
- **"How do you handle sleep issues or emotional dysregulation related to ADHD?"**

5. Ongoing Care
- **"What does long-term ADHD management look like in your practice?"**
- **"How often do you reassess treatment effectiveness?"**

Questions That Reveal Attitude (Very Important)
Ask one or two of these to gauge how safe and understood you'll feel:
- **"What do you find most challenging about working with ADHD clients?"**
- **"What do you enjoy or find meaningful about this work?"**
- **"How do you respond when a patient struggles to follow a plan?"**

Good providers answer with **curiosity, flexibility, and compassion**, not judgment.

Major Red Flags 🚩
- "Everyone has ADHD these days"
- "You just need better habits"
- "If you really wanted to, you'd do it"
- Refusal to discuss medication *or* pushing medication without discussion
- Lack of structure or accommodations in therapy

Green Flags ✅
- Talks about **executive function**, **dopamine**, **nervous system regulation**
- Normalizes inconsistency and shame
- Adjusts systems *to the brain*, not the other way around
- Collaborative, curious, and non-judgmental

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