

1. Qualifications and ethics

Look for:

- Proper training
 - Clinical/counselling psychologist, psychiatrist, or counsellor with at least a **master's** in a relevant field.
- Registration/membership
 - On a recognised register or professional body (e.g., HK or UK/Aus professional associations).
- Clear boundaries
 - Explains confidentiality and its limits, fees, cancellation policy, and how records are kept.

If someone is vague about training, not registered anywhere, or over-promises (“I can cure you in 4 sessions”), that’s a red flag.

2. Fit and relationship

In the first 1–3 sessions, notice:

- Do you feel **safe** enough to be honest (even if still a bit anxious)?
- Do they listen more than they talk, and reflect that they’ve understood you?
- Do you feel respected – not judged, minimised, or pushed too fast?

Research consistently shows that the **therapeutic relationship** predicts outcome more than the brand of therapy. If, after 3–4 sessions, you still feel dread, shame, or a sense of not being understood, it’s usually fine to switch.

3. Experience and approach

Match their experience and style to what you want help with:

- Experience
 - Have they worked with people like you (e.g., high-pressure finance roles, trauma, burnout, depression/anxiety)?
- Modality
 - CBT/ACT: skills and structure, good for symptoms and behaviour change.
 - Psychodynamic / schema: patterns, childhood, deeper relational work.

- Trauma-focused approaches (EMDR, trauma-focused CBT) if you have trauma.

A good therapist can explain **how they work** and why that might help you, in plain language, and adapt it over time rather than rigidly sticking to one script.

4. Practical/cultural factors

Consider:

- Language and cultural understanding – can you talk in the language you think/feel in, and do they “get” finance / HK / expat culture enough not to misread you?
- Logistics – location, online vs. in-person, fees that are sustainable for you.
- Responsiveness – do they reply to enquiries reasonably and clearly?

5. Signs to avoid

Be cautious if they:

- Gossip about other clients or people you know
- Push their own beliefs or solutions, dismissing your perspective
- Promise guaranteed outcomes or very rapid “fixes. Psychotherapist, Therapist, Psychologist, Counselor”
- Blur boundaries (social contact, business offers, oversharing about their life)

You’re allowed to “interview” them. A simple opener is:

“I work in a high-pressure finance environment and have a history of depression/burnout – can you tell me about your experience working with that, and how you’d typically approach it?”