

How to Choose a Holistic Practitioner

by Dr. Glenn B. Gero, N.D., D.Sc., M.H., M.E.S., C.L.C.

The following considerations are offered as a guide to help you find a practitioner with whom you are comfortable. Optimum health is more likely to be present when you work with someone who is supportive of your efforts to be in charge of your life. Some of the criteria may not apply to all situations.

How do YOU respond to this practitioner's office and staff? This environment reveals his/her attitudes and beliefs. Do you feel comfortable and cared for when you call or visit the office? Does the ambiance enhance that comfort? Does the staff further your sense of well being? Are educational handouts available in the office or waiting room? Is your appointment time honored or do you have to wait?

Does this practitioner have health professional relationships with others? How did you hear about this practitioner? A personal referral is often more powerful than a professional referral. What do friends and other professionals say about this person? How does he/she feel about second opinions or your interest in alternative health care therapies/treatments? What technical certifications, professional organizations or hospital affiliations does this practitioner have?

Do you feel like a valued person working as a partner with this practitioner? Healing is enhanced by a healthy relationship between patient/client and practitioner. Do you feel this practitioner is there for you? Do you feel trust and confidence? Does he/she seem to care about you, take your medical history personally and show an interest in your family, lifestyle and diet? Are you told about various treatment options? Do each of you recognize that you need the other? Is the practitioner accessible? Are you able to discuss the financial aspects of your care openly and comfortably? Positive answers to these questions are evidence of your rightful place as a co-creator of this healing partnership.

Is your personal dignity respected? Any examination or interaction should be respectful of your personal dignity.

Does this practitioner honor your anxieties and fears? Is this practitioner sensitive enough to place him/herself in your position regarding fears and anxieties about an illness or proposed treatment?

What is the state of this practitioner's health? Does he/she appear to have a healthy lifestyle? Signs of overweight, overwork, smoking or drinking may indicate that he/she does not take care of him/herself. You will probably do best with a team member who is just as committed to good health as you are. The Biblical statement, "Physician, heal thyself," is paramount in a health-filled relationship.

Are you allowed time between diagnosis and treatment? Does this practitioner allow you the time to collect the educational and personal resources that you need to make a well-informed decision?

Are you treated as if this is an important, ongoing relationship? Are you notified of test results within a reasonable period of time? Are follow-up visits scheduled after treatment? Is there discussion of future health goals and not just the immediate matter at hand?

Do you feel unconditionally accepted by this practitioner? Unconditional acceptance allows you to get well in your unique way. Do you feel that you are accepted no matter what develops, no matter what decisions you make? Can the practitioner approach your care with an open mind, rather than with a predetermined treatment plan? Would the practitioner offer to a member of his/her own family the same carefully chosen advice that he/she has offered to you?

Would you send the person most dear to you to this practitioner? Do you have such a strong feeling of caring, confidence and trust in this practitioner that you would send to him/her, with no misgivings, the person who is dearest to you? If so, then you have found that special person to be on your health team.