



## **Working with the right therapist is important for recovery**

By Melanie Dallas, LPC

Think for a moment about your favorite teacher. It may have been in elementary school or maybe high school or college. It may have been one of your instructors in the armed forces or at a technical school. Regardless of how old you were or what type of class it was, a special teacher can have a big impact on what you learn, how long you retain that knowledge and how you use it in your daily life.

Now think of a time you hired someone for a service. Maybe you hired a painter to paint your house, or maybe it was a landscaper to plant some bushes. Perhaps you've hired a teenager in the neighborhood to wash your car. Did the person do a good job? Did the finished work meet your expectations? If so, you were probably happy and would recommend the person to others. But if not, you probably decided next time you need a similar job done, you will hire someone else.

You may be asking what your favorite teacher and someone you hired for an odd job might have to do with mental health. The answer is quite a bit – and for some pretty important reasons.

Although there are many components of mental health treatment, one component of almost every treatment and recovery plan is individual counseling, private one-to-one discussions with a licensed professional therapist. And counseling is not just for individuals with mental illness. Someone grieving the death of a loved one, a child whose parents are divorcing, or even the divorcing couple themselves may need counseling. Therapists can help people experiencing a variety of mental or emotional challenges, and many people seek counseling without having a mental illness.

At Highland Rivers Health, we employ four types of professional therapists: licensed professional counselors (LPC), licensed clinical social workers (LCSW), licensed master social workers (LMSW), and licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFT). All have earned degrees in these disciplines, and have passed Georgia's licensing exam. Our therapists and counselors are both male and female, of various ages, races and ethnicities, and have diverse backgrounds and experience. With such a diverse group of counselors, there is a good match for anyone that might need counseling.

And that's my point. Like a favorite teacher, a therapist both teaches and helps you learn. In therapy, you learn about yourself, sometimes private and painful things. A good counselor also teaches you important steps in recovery – coping strategies, triggers, symptom management, how to build a support network. So, if you ever need to see a counselor, for any reason, it's important

you feel comfortable with that person. Because when you do, you are much more likely to benefit from therapy.

The second point is this. Every therapist will do his or her best to help you, but sometimes an individual just doesn't 'click' with a particular counselor. This is perfectly acceptable. A therapist may be highly qualified and knowledgeable, but he or she works for you. And just like someone you might hire to do a job around your house, if you ever find you're not satisfied with a particular therapist, or feel like you are not making the progress you feel you should be making, it is your *right* to find a different therapist – and probably a good idea to do so.

Therapists know this too. In fact, no therapist takes it personally if you decide you would rather work with a different counselor. It's important to remember that recovery is a process and working with a therapist you feel good about is a critical part of the recovery process.