

— A FREE SOUNDHEART GUIDE

Before the First Conversation.

A guide to choosing relationship support, with any provider. Five minutes to read.

1. What kind of help fits
2. Questions to ask a provider
3. Confidentiality and privacy
4. Format and logistics
5. Fees and payment
6. Safety comes first
7. What a good first conversation feels like
8. Questions to ask yourself

Asking for help with a relationship is a vulnerable step. The right support fits your situation, your location, your budget, and your safety. This guide helps you ask the questions that matter before you commit, with any provider, including us.

1. What kind of help fits

Not all relationship support is the same. Knowing the difference protects you.

- **Licensed counseling or therapy** is clinical care from a licensed professional. It can address anxiety, trauma, depression, and relationship distress. The counselor must be licensed in the state where you are physically located during each session.
- **Coaching** is non-clinical skills practice. It can be useful anywhere, but it is not treatment for a mental health condition.
- **Intensives** concentrate several days of focused work for a relationship at a turning point.
- **Retreats, workshops, and education** teach ideas and practices in a group or self-paced format. They are not therapy.

If you are not sure, ask the provider directly. “Is this counseling, coaching, or education?” A good provider answers plainly.

2. Questions to ask a provider

- ☐ Are you licensed, and in which states? Can I look up your license?
- ☐ Can you see me where I live, or where I will be during sessions?
- ☐ What experience do you have with situations like mine?
- ☐ What is your approach, and what does a typical session look like?
- ☐ How will we know if it is working?
- ☐ Do you work in my language, and with people from my culture or faith?
- ☐ Who else might I work with, and what are their qualifications?

3. Confidentiality and privacy

- ☐ What stays confidential, and what are the legal limits? Every provider should explain this before you begin.
- ☐ How do you handle what one partner tells you privately in couples work?
- ☐ Which video and messaging tools do you use, and are they secure?
- ☐ How should I contact you between sessions, and what should I not send by text or email?
- ☐ How are my records stored, and how can I request them?

4. Format and logistics

- ☐ In person, video, or both? Where do in-person sessions happen?
- ☐ How long is each session, and how often do we meet?
- ☐ Is there a waitlist? How soon could we start?
- ☐ For couples, do we always meet together, or sometimes separately?
- ☐ What happens if I need to cancel or reschedule?

5. Fees and payment

- ☐ What is the fee per session or program, and when is it charged?
- ☐ Do you take insurance, or are you private pay?
- ☐ If you are out of network, can you provide paperwork I can submit to my insurer for possible reimbursement?
- ☐ What is your cancellation policy?

In the U.S., if you are not using insurance for clinical services, you have the right to a written Good Faith Estimate of expected charges. [Read SoundHeart's notice.](#)

6. Safety comes first

Couples and family work assume that everyone can speak honestly without fear. That is not always true.

- If there is violence, threats, or coercive control in your relationship, joint sessions may not be safe. Start with an individual consultation instead.
- If a family member is still causing harm, repair is never owed. Distance can be the right response.
- A responsible provider screens for safety and tells you if a format is not right for you.

In the U.S., the National Domestic Violence Hotline is available at 1-800-799-7233 or by texting START to 88788. In a crisis, call or text 988, or dial 911 in an emergency. Outside the U.S., call your local emergency number.

7. What a good first conversation feels like

- You feel listened to, not sold to.
- You understand what the provider offers, and what they don't.
- They ask about safety, your goals, and where you are located.
- They are clear about fees and next steps.

- If they are not the right fit, they say so and point you somewhere better.

It is fine to speak with more than one provider before you decide. Fit matters.

8. Questions to ask yourself

- ☐ What do I hope will be different six months from now?
- ☐ What have I already tried, and what happened?
- ☐ Am I seeking help for me, for us, or to change someone else?
- ☐ What would make it easier to be honest in the room?
- ☐ What can I realistically commit in time and money?

Ready when you are.

If SoundHeart may be a fit, a consultation is the easiest way to find out. If not, we will tell you plainly.

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