Is Your Therapist Actually Helping You Change? Transcript

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Why Therapist Fit Matters

You know, choosing a therapist might be one of the most important health decisions you make. And yet, many people choose simply based on a headshot and a few buzzwords.

I'm Dr. Arun Podesta, functional integrative psychiatrist. On this channel, I explore how brain biology and health intersect, especially where psychiatry meets functional medicine, also addiction recovery.

Today, I want to help you think differently about how to actually find the right therapist for you, not just based on credentials or trendy terms. And if you've ever had therapy that didn't quite work, stay with me towards the latter half of this video because I'm going to share some specific practical steps to evaluate fit and find someone aligned with your needs.

Therapy sometimes kind of fails far more often than people admit, not because therapy itself is flawed, or because you are resistant, and usually not, because the therapist is unskilled.

Therapy as a Biological Process

Often therapy fails because, the fit is actually just off. You might have an excellent therapist, just not the right type for your goals, are not attuned to what your nervous system needs in this moment.

You may have experienced this. You understand your patterns. But anxiety, substance use, or unstable moods just didn't budge while doing therapy. And that doesn't mean that you failed.

It means the therapeutic environment wasn't the right biological fit for change. Here's the key mental shift. Therapy isn't just conversation, it's a biological process.

Yes, therapy is a biologic process, Your nervous system constantly scans for safety, for threat, long before you consciously decide whether you trust someone.

If it reads threat you go into a defense mode. Anxiety, shutdown, people pleasing, over explaining. You can sound engaged in therapy yet never truly integrate the change, even if you want to.

For growth, the nervous system must feel regulated enough to let the brain's reflective learning part, that prefrontal cortex, come back online. Only then can emotional material reorganize instead of looping.

Attunement and Matching the Right Approach

Two people can see equally trained therapists and have totally different results. Take one example. Someone with a trauma history starts insight-oriented therapy maybe too early before they're actually physiologically stabilized from their trauma.

And they understand their story better, but their body becomes even more unstable. That's not incompetence. It's simply a mismatch. Or let's say someone with addiction starts unstructured exploratory therapy, and deep conversations may happen, but the behavior doesn't shift.

Again, mismatch, not failure. That's where attunement matters. Not just being nice or endlessly validating. Attunment means that the therapist tracks your state, notes when you start flooding, slows down, or pushes when can handle it more.

It's real-time biological calibration. And when attunement is present, you leave sessions clearer, not drained. Even

after hard topics, there's a sense of coherence that's felt.

Without that, therapy can become either too intellectual or too destabilizing. Now, credentials and training absolutely matter. I value evidence-based practice and continuing education deeply.

How to Evaluate a Therapist

But technical skills don't automatically mean relational fit. The right therapist for you depends on what you are working through. For trauma, someone who understands pacing and stabilization.

Prediction, structure, accountability, and biological insight into cravings. mood disorders what about willingness to integrate talk therapy with medication awareness high functioning analytical clients perhaps someone who challenges without shaming fit isn't about liking their personality it's about whether the relationship supports regulation and learning if this framework helps hit like to subscribe and comment with your questions about therapy, addiction, or integrative psychiatry.

It really helps these insights reach others who need them. Now let's talk about how to practically evaluate a therapist. Step one, clarify your goals.

Feeling better? That might be too general. Define what you want to change, specifically panic, sleep, substance use, relationship, focus. That clarity narrows which therapeutic methodology might make sense.

Step two, interview your therapist. You are allowed to ask questions before committing. Ask about training, certainly what training and model guides your work.

How do you measure progress? Do you use structural interventions and homework? do consult peers and coordinate care when needed? A confident ethical therapist will welcome those questions and that shows you care about your outcomes, not just rapport.

Step three, watch your body's response. After the first one or two sessions, notice your buddy more than just your mind. Do you feel hurried or do you fell respected?

Could you disagree comfortably? Did you leave a bit more organized or more scattered? You don't need instant transformation, but there's a difference between discomfort from growth and discomfort form threat.

And your nervous system knows that difference even when your brain can't feel it. Step four, review the fit time and time again. Therapy fit isn't permanent.

You might need one kind of therapist early in recovery and another later for deeper work.

Reclaiming Agency in Therapy

Staying out of guilt or fear isn t productive, but quitting at the first stretch impulse isn and challenged enough to grow, that balances that sweet spot.

The real takeaway? Many people enter therapy asking, is this therapist qualified? A more useful question is, does this relationship create the biological condition for change, for neural reorganization, safety, attunement, accountability, and alignment?

Those are the drivers of sustainable change. And when you understand that, you reclaim agency. You stop assuming credentials equal fit. you stop blaming yourself for stalled progress. You become an informed participant in your own healing.

This isn't a replacement for a clinical evaluation. It's simply education to help you choose wisely and confidently. If you want to go deeper into this framework, understanding your nervous system, medication interactions, addiction

and trauma recovery, subscribe to my channel and stay tuned for more.

Dr. Arwen Podesta, thanks so much for being here and approaching your mental health with curiosity and discernment. I'll see you in the next video.