

[I now haven't lived in the Bay Area for over 3 years so these suggestions are very out of date].

Some of these recommendations have been ported over to the [EA mental health navigator website](#), so try not to double count :)

NB this is mainly San Francisco and Berkeley/Oakland based, rather than South Bay/San Jose end but I'd be very happy to add a South Bay/San Jose section if anybody has suggestions.

Also take a look at psychiatrist for additional recommendations:

<https://psychiat-list.slatestarcodex.com/>

- My psychiatrist/therapist, Tom Morrissey
 - [Dr. Morrissey is in the process of closing down his practice so I think he's probably not accepting new patients.]
 - In general, I usually recommend that people see a psychologist/therapist/social worker for talk therapy instead of a psychiatrist. But my psychiatrist does weekly talk therapy and, in my opinion, is very good but not amazing. He's smart, thoughtful, pretty insightful, takes me seriously, is open to learning. He also really respects patient autonomy w/r/t meds (doesn't push them at all but also happy to prescribe if you think they'd be useful) which, in my limited experience, is rare. <http://tommorrisseymd.com/bio>. He has an office in SF and one in Berkeley. In my experience, he's probably slightly too much of a listener and isn't quite aggressive enough about pushing back at me for my taste but he's not at either pole of that spectrum.
 - I've talked to two other friends about their experience seeing him.
 - One of them had a very good experience, especially with talking through big life choices.
 - One of them did not like him. I think they found that Dr. Morrissey thought they were focusing on the wrong problems and resisted spending time on the problems they wanted to focus on.
- My friend recently recommended [Ann Larie Valentine](#) as a therapist.
 - I've now gotten a second positive review of her
- An acquaintance who I find to be particularly thoughtful about therapy absolutely loves their psychologist, [Beth Gadomski](#), for individual therapy as well as couples therapy.
 - Note that she describes herself as Poly-aware, Kink-aware, Trans-friendly as well as serving other special populations
- Another friend recommends [Judith Schiller](#) as a psychologist. "She's abrupt and kinda mean, but seems good at her job."
- When I was originally looking for someone, I had a consultation with [Kevin Orzech](#). I really liked him over the phone and he was incredibly generous with his time, but the timing didn't work out.

- For women's therapy and couple's counseling, a friend I trust recommended [Sige Weisman](#) incredibly strongly. "My friend and her partner worked out problems they'd been struggling with for months in one 75 minute session.
- Acquaintances of mine thought [Tal Harari](#) was great for couples therapy after three sessions
- A friend of mine sees [Adam Cohen](#) for couples therapy. He and his partner, who are both very picky about these sorts of things, say Cohen is one of the best therapists they've ever seen. He also does individual therapy.

An effective altruist/rationalist looking for help with anxiety + some other specific issues says:

- Is getting a lot out of seeing Dr. [Judith Sachs](#)
- Had a good initial consultation with Dr. Rebecca Coury but didn't choose her b/c she doesn't see people for longer than a ~12 session CBT program
 - I couldn't Google so may be a misspelling
- Struggled to communicate with Dr. [Richard Barth](#) during an initial consultation

Rebecca and Judith were the best ones, I think highly of both. Rebecca is by-the-book CBT (the kind that has actual homework), very competent, sets you up with medical applications to communicate with her that are secure/private, generally seemed quite intelligent. The reason I didn't pick her is she is interested in solving very concrete problems, of the sort where you have a set number of sessions (e.g. 12) and at the end have learned to deal with the problem, and is not interested in generally seeing someone in a much longer term way. Is somewhat aware of EA.

Both Judith and Richard say they use CBT, but neither give you homework, so I believe it isn't real CBT. I read a comment by David Chapman on SSC about sometimes having a hard time with people where there's an intelligence gap, which I didn't expect to be a problem for me, but in fact I found talking to Dr Barth very laborious and had a hard time communicating my thoughts. Also he talked a lot in our first session, which seemed not quite what I wanted. I didn't follow up for a second session.

I picked Judith Sachs, she's very thoughtful and I'm generally getting a lot out of talking with her. She's the one I most felt I was actually getting insights out of talking with in the short and medium term. I think I get out mostly as good as I put in, which is the main factor, but of all of them I think I definitely will get the most out of Judith, and it's going well.

None are on any insurance I think, and they're quite pricey (\$210-240 / session) (but some healthcare plans will give 50% off for off-network providers).

Psychiatrists that some EAs/rationalists have had good experience with

- Cara Hoepner. (I know several people who have had a very good experience with her)
- Kelsey Schraufnagel
- Joanne Chang

Therapists recommended by a friend who's involved with effective altruism

"For those looking for a smart therapist/psychiatrist in the bay area, I have two recommendations: Carlos Greaves in Stanford, and George K Lerner in SF. They are both pretty pricey, but if you have the money or your insurance covers it, I highly recommend them. Not sure if Carlos Greaves is currently taking clients, but George Lerner should be. Here's a paraphrased conversation I had with Lerner:

Me: "Should I take my ADD medication on the weekends?"

Lerner: "I have existential worries about the meds."

Me: "What do you mean?"

Lerner: "Well many people report that time feels like it's moving faster on stimulants. So maybe you're just experiencing less of life. Which could be worth it depending on how much you care about productivity, but might mean that you want to slow down your internal clock on vacations."

Whether or not he's right, it's clear to me that he's pretty smart. I have been similar impressed with Carlos Greaves.

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Of course intelligence isn't the only important quality in a therapist. I found Carlos Greaves to be attentive and caring. I only saw Lerner for ADD medication, but [anonymized] happens to know him and describes him as a great talk therapist as well.

Contact information

I

George Lerner: e-mail george@lernerpsychiatry.com or call 415-227-4953

Carlos Greaves: call 650-321-3730"

An EA recommends a therapist who practices in California and Colorado with tele-health:

[Ann LeFevre](#)

"She practices in California and Colorado with tele-health. She bases [her work on the CBT techniques](#). I am very enthusiastic about her because I believe her techniques would work really

well with many EAs who are looking for a therapist, notably because she uses "evidenced-based" techniques. She has a PhD, is very smart and kind, and result-oriented. She actually uses spreadsheets and follow up on CBT techniques, focuses on evidence-based treatments. I had several therapists, and I believe she's really excellent and got me good results. She takes most insurances.

If you're interested in talking to her, please mention that you're interested in Effective Altruism and Rationality."

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- The following are therapists I called to try to set up initial appointments with. I thought they at least seemed ok based on their websites and any reviews I could find at the time:
 - George Pfirrmann
 - Someone I know (who is relatively picky about therapists) had a good experience with him.
 - "Not full of himself, but smart and thoughtful"
 - "Willing to do the boring thing so long as it works"
 - "But smart enough to actually show the connection between my situation & the standard technique he's using"
 - Does CBT but "not a CBT-bot"
 - Rich Delman.
 - Someone I know saw him briefly and had a mediocre experience. "He seemed to care more about having a conversation than identifying & fixing problems."
 - Ilene Holtzberg
 - Murray Levine

A friend recently had a good initial conversation with [Milam Freitag](#), who had been recommended to them. More on Freitag below.

Here's a super helpful list of my friend's thoughts on therapists that they have seen or spoke to on the phone. Note that some of these are just idiosyncratic initial impressions after one quick phone call. They are an EA/rationalist and had a preference for someone w/ experience treating OCD.

[Patrick Gannon](#)

I had one appointment and a Skype call with him. Seemed smart and interested in actually solving problems, perhaps in unorthodox ways. Big on EMDR, which I didn't know about before. Also don't know if it is any good. Practice is about helping people who are otherwise highly successful be even more successful. Followed up some when I decided to not do his thing. Recommended by psychiatrist who was highly recommended by friend. Likable.

- Trauma is a speciality

Michael Tompkins

I had one appointment with him. He seems to have a bunch of academic and professional success and to have written a key book, and be recommended by peers. Likable. Weird views on consciousness. Maybe a bit inattentive. Struck me as a bit more by the book than some of the others, which I guess makes sense since he wrote the book.

- \$300
- OCD is a speciality

Milam Frietag

Phone call. Seemed smart, agentically interested in solving problems rather than following appropriate steps or whatever. Kind. Says too many obvious things, like 'anxiety can be difficult', but impatience with this might be a problem specific to me. He is willing to look into people's insurance for them. He told me to go and see someone cheaper. This all seemed very friendly.

- OCD speciality
- Free consultation

Melinda White

I think I had about nine appointments, and we got almost nowhere. I was confused by this. She seems relatively reasonable and smart in conversation, but says too many truisms, wants you to fill out too many forms about whether you are still anxious and depressed and so forth, and moves too slowly. Easy to talk to, likable. Does CBT. I wouldn't be shocked if she worked well for someone else.

- Specializes in OCD, anxiety, depression, panic
- \$175 for 50m

Kim Pratt

Did one phone call. Seemed smart, reasonable, straightforward. Though wouldn't give quantitative answers—e.g. To how long treatment is likely to take—because things depend on other things. She was not confident she would be able to entirely solve problems, which seems realistic. Told me to trust my gut on who to see, rather than e.g. telling me how much it matters to see someone who specializes in your problem. Reasonably likable and easy to talk to. Confident enough in herself but not overbearing. Attentive, seems to think about the things I say and give insightful responses. Seemed nice. Left call with at least one interesting insight.

- 'CBT-lite'
- OCD not a speciality
- Charges

- 45-50 minute session, in-person: \$120
- 25-30 minute session, in-person: \$65
- 45-50 minute session, via phone: \$100
- 25-30 minute session, via phone: \$50

Paul Silverman

I talked to him on the phone. He seemed clear and straightforward. Kind of animated and distant, like he was putting on a performance, or teaching a class. He said he doesn't care about the past—science says insights about what caused problems are less useful than just trying to fix them now. Says you should use gut to choose therapist.

- Specializes in anxiety, not OCD
- Does CBTf
- Free 20m consultation

Kelley Gin

Very quiet, and not emotionally responsive in conversation. This didn't work well with my own style. He would look at me and I would feel like I should say something, so I would a few times, then I wouldn't be able to tell if he was happy with me saying things because he didn't respond much, which made me nervous.

- OCD speciality
- Anthem insurance! (and I think others. Insurance seems to be rare) Would have cost me \$5 to see him apparently.
- If no insurance, \$170 'usual-and-customary' hourly rate

Connie Linas

Had an appointment with her. She seemed less smart or attentive than most of the other people, but basically fine and friendly. Low confidence on these judgments. OCD specialty

- \$135 (Cheap for CBT apparently)
- No insurance

More therapists I tried to talk to, but did not

People who said no

- Tom Morrissey
- Amy Jenks
- Deborah Efron

People who didn't respond

- George Pfirrmann

Less but somewhat promising therapists I didn't try

- Wright institute (I think very cheap CBT, carried out by students)
- Sharon F Smith
- SFBACCT
- Kevin Orzech (seems not OCD or CBT)
- Murray Levine (too far, hard to learn about online)
- Ann Larie Valentine (seems not OCD or CBT)
- Rich Delman (hard to learn about online)
- Ilene Holtzberg (hard to learn about online)
- Dr Milhem ('doesn't look like we would get on' - not sure what I meant by this)
- JayTalkoff (no mention of CBT)
- Ken Martin (sounds good, but old, which I idiosyncratically disprefer)
- Dr Kopman (no mention of CBT)
- Diana Fuery (psychoanalysis, hard to learn about online)
- Jay Farina (not online, in SF)

Especially bad sounding therapists

The 'Bay Area Anxiety' center looks dodgy. The same people have lots of different websites calling themselves different centers. Maybe that is usual, not sure. Key therapist had licence revoked for ill conduct. Can't find reviews of them.

Here's a bigger list of people that at least seemed worth writing down when I was looking for therapists. Not sure how vetted it is:

- <http://www.drmlhem.com/about.htm>
- Paul Silverman <http://www.sfcounseling.net/specialties/cbt/>
- http://kenmartintherapy.com/wordpress_560854477/ (from Ireland. went to Columbia. old. "waiting to retire)
- <http://www.jaytalkoffphd.com/philosoaphy-and-approach.html>
- <http://www.kimpratt.com/faqs.html>
- <http://drkopman.com/index.html>

My friend's parents, who are psychiatrists, gave me the following referrals:
Diana Fuery, Ph.D.; Jay Farina, MSW; Robin Keller, Ph.D.

Good luck!