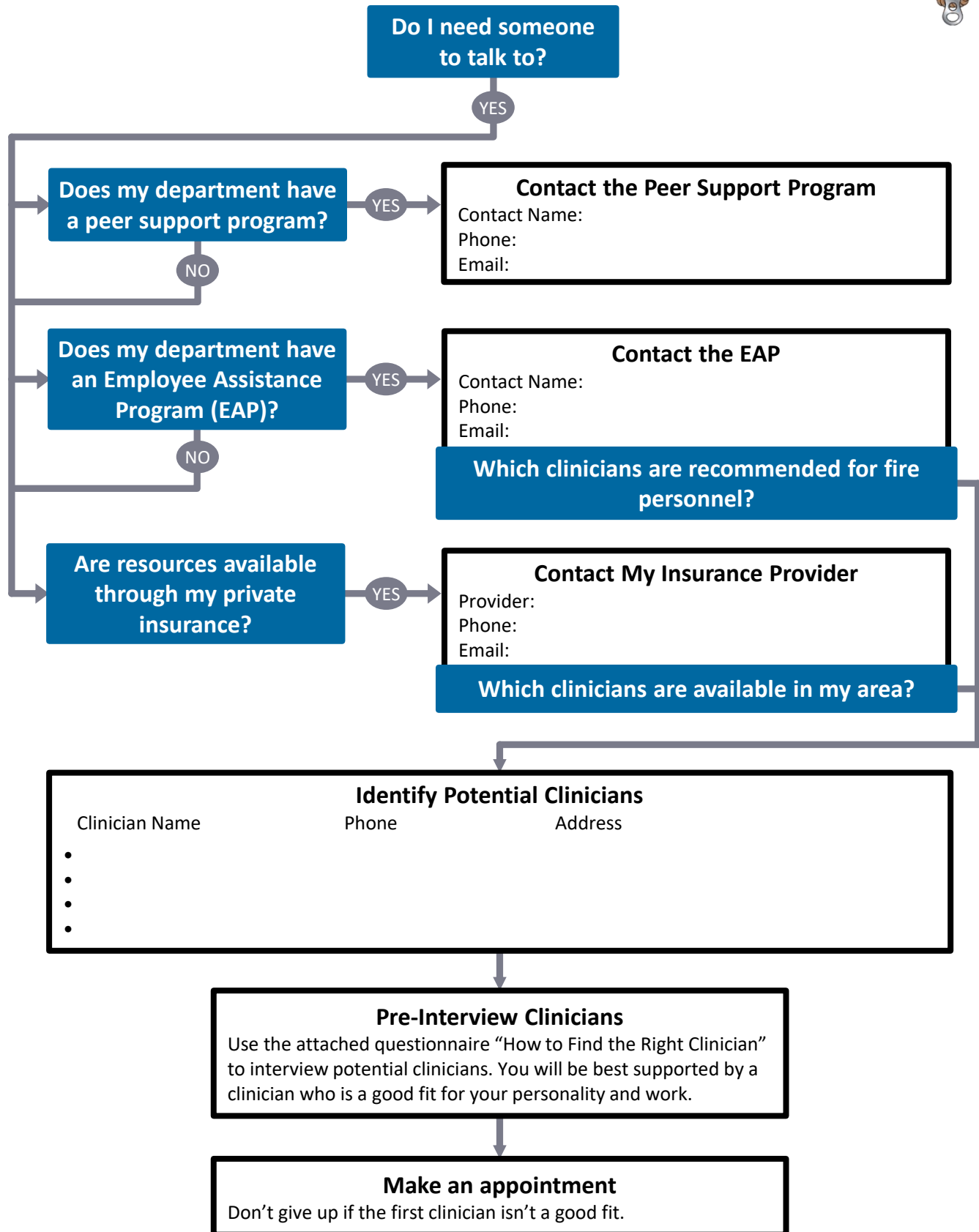




## Worksheet: Finding Help

Pre-plan your response to symptoms of compassion fatigue, PTSD, or other issues.





## How to Find the Right Clinician

For firefighters and other first responders, it can be challenging to find the right clinician, but it's not impossible. As a firefighter you will likely be most comfortable working with someone who gets the job to at least some degree and who won't be easily horrified by stories of intense or graphic emergency situations.

For these reasons it's recommended that you interview potential clinicians prior to seeing them. Use these suggested questions to determine who might be a good match:

### **1. Do you have experience working with firefighter, police, or military personnel? How long have you worked with them?**

Clinicians who have worked with first responders or military personnel is a bonus, but not a must. It's most important that their personality is compatible with the culture and that they have a willingness to learn.

### **2. Would you be willing to participate in ride outs or station visits to learn more about fire culture?**

Previous experience with fire culture is not a must. If a clinician seems to have the right personality for working with firefighters, be open to providing learning opportunities for them.

### **3. What is your experience working directly with PTSD, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse issues? What treatment interventions do you use? Are you trained in EMDR? Do you give homework assignments?**

Traditional talk therapy does work well, but alternative treatments are necessary when working with PTSD in first responders. Treatments proven to be effective in short term therapy include:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

The use of homework between sessions suggests the clinician makes the most of session time and appropriately holds clients accountable for their own recovery.

### **4. Do you offer appointments within 3 days or an on-call clinician?**

If you or a coworker are in crisis, finding a clinician to talk to right away can be critical.

However, if a clinician is not immediately available, remember that help can be found in any emergency room. Don't wait or say "forget it" because it doesn't work out right away. You can always call the national suicide hotline 24 hours a day: 1-800-273-8255.

### **5. Do you prescribe medication? If not, do you work closely with a doctor who does?**

Being able to prescribe medication isn't a must—most clinicians don't, but they need to know where to refer you if medication is needed.