

# Choosing and Working with a Spiritual Director

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These guidelines have been adapted from  
resources offered by The Retreat Association

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Different factors matter to different people. Here are some general possibilities:

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Some people have concerns about their Director's own preparation; others see this as a matter for the Director:

Do you especially want your Director to be a woman or a man? A lay person, a priest/minister, or a member of a religious order? (If particular characteristics such as these matter to you, can you say why?)

Would you like your Director to be a member of the same faith denomination?

Do you mind whether your Director is older or younger than yourself?

To what extent would you like conversation to feel formal or informal?

Is it important to you that your Director is grounded in a particular tradition or would you like someone with an eclectic approach?

Do you hope for a Director who shares an interest in something important to you in your prayer life (e.g. music, poetry, painting, clay)?

Would you prefer your Director to be someone whom you will not meet in any other context?

Would you like a Director who makes a clear distinction between spiritual direction and counselling/psychotherapy, or one who sees overlaps between them?

Do you want your Director to have any specific training in spiritual direction (e.g. in the Ignatian tradition)?

Is it important to you that your Director be practised in a particular personality indicator (Myers-Briggs or the Enneagram)?

Are you concerned about whether your Director makes an annual retreat?

Do you want to know whether your Director has her or his own spiritual director?

Do you want to know whether your Director has access to supervision?

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## Practicalities

As well as questions about the nature of the relationship, there are practical factors which may affect your decision.

How often do you hope to meet (e.g. monthly, every two months, every three months, by arrangement)?

Are you able to travel to meet the Director, or do you need to be visited at home? How far are you willing to travel?

Might it be important (e.g. because of recurrent illness) that the relationship could be conducted by correspondence at some stage?

Would this relationship affect, or be affected by, any other one-to-one meetings you are having (e.g. counselling, therapy)?

How do you view the question of payment? Many Directors welcome a contribution in recognition of their time and the costs of their own training and supervision. (If you are in employment and are invited to make a donation, a possible guideline is whatever you yourself would earn in an hour.)

You may already have someone in mind, or know someone who can suggest possible Directors. Locally, there may be a diocesan spirituality adviser or retreat house warden who can help: alternatively the Retreat Association (Tel: 01494 569056) can tell you of someone in your area who knows people who offer this ministry.

When you have a potential director in mind, are you able to discuss your choice with someone who has experience of this person?

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## The first meeting

The first meeting will be exploratory – a chance for you to get to know one another, to compare what you hope for with what the Director can offer.

Your Director may suggest that you meet a few times and then review the relationship together. Throughout, do say honestly what you think and feel about your meetings.

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## Preparing for a meeting

Your meetings will be most fruitful if you prepare for them. Pray that the Holy Spirit will illuminate your reflection.

Looking back over the time since the last meeting, what has been going on in your life? How have you been feeling? What have been your prevailing moods during this period?

Have there been moments when you have been particularly aware of God's presence or activity in your life? How did you feel at those times? Have there been any surprises?

What are your current preoccupations? In your heart, what do you most hope for?

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## Reviewing the relationship

For the relationship to be fruitful, there must be commitment and it may take time for you to get to know each other and for confidence to grow. Nevertheless, it is good from time to time to reflect on the relationship.

How do you feel as you prepare for a meeting?

How do you feel during meetings? Are you confident that what you say is heard?

Do you feel accepted and respected or insecure and judged?

Do you feel supported or alone? Do you feel accompanied or pressured?

Can you say what you want to say? Are you able to be completely honest, or are you aware of reserve?

Are any periods of silence comfortable or uncomfortable?

Is humour a part of your meetings? Do you feel at ease?

Do you feel challenged? If so, how do you respond to this?

When guidance has been offered or an activity suggested, was this helpful? Did you feel free to follow it or to lay it aside?

Do you think that the relationship still has something to offer? How might you help it to continue fruitful?

Do you feel that the relationship may have become stuck? Might it be time for a change? Is this something you feel called to talk over with your Director?