

Ask the Professionals



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DR. ELAYNE TANNER
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Q: A few months ago you discussed how to pick a therapist. One thing you said was to check credentials. I get that, but now I heard on Marketplace about "phony" degrees. How do I know if their credentials are real?

A: This is something that is actually becoming a serious concern. If someone presents a fake degree, how do you trust anything they say or do? Bachelor degrees have become commonplace and job markets are tight, so people want to make themselves sound good by saying they have a PhD. They do not have the education or grades to be accepted and succeed in accredited university programs and they do not want to put in the work and time necessary to get a real PhD from an accredited university. None-the-less, they feel they deserve the degree so they buy one. The certificate they receive will look official and have the name of an exotic sounding university. It may come with a transcript for courses they never took. Although most degrees come from diploma mills in Pakistan others are more local.

The Marketplace research found approximately 800 Canadians who are operating under bought degrees in every respected profession and position. The Marketplace investigators specifically investigated counselors treating serious mental health conditions such as childhood trauma, suicide, ADHD and PTSD. They found that although the counselling initially seemed reasonable, the inappropriate advice, boundary violations and dishonest billing and marketing practices put clients at great risk. For example, telling a couple who attend marriage counselling, to by dating other people or telling a sexual abuse survivor to confront the abuser, are both examples of bad and dangerous advice. And yes, these are just two examples that I have heard given in our community by unqualified counselors.

The question remains, if governing boards or employers do not catch these frauds, how can you? Begin by asking where the individual was trained. Look at a CV and note the names of Universities attended. If it is not a Canadian university that you are familiar with, your radar should go up. Even if the professional was educated in another country they will need Canadian accreditation. Look on-line and see if you can find the university named on the degree. Read into it. I saw one that clearly said this is not an accredited university. Forged degrees from real universities make the job even harder, but in any case a PhD for example, takes approximately 6-7 years full time work and involves extensive research. If the person did not spend that kind of time earning it, you should be suspicious. If you go to someone and get advice that seems bad you should be concerned. Go with your gut instinct. My full CV is posted on my web site. My certificates are on the wall in full view. You can call my professional College to confirm that I am a member in good standing. If someone is not as transparent, you must question what they are hiding.

"HELPING YOU HELP YOURSELF"

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Q: What information should I provide a Land Surveyor in order for them to survey my property?

A: The first question I ask a future client is the purpose of the survey. Are you building a new garage and need a topographical plan showing grades or are you building a fence and only need a few stakes set online? Are you selling and the purchasers are asking for a new boundary survey or is a conservation agency looking to check the floodline to approve the addition to your house? There are several different types of surveys depending on what you're hoping to achieve so I want to make sure I have a good idea what you need so that we don't do more work than is needed.

Once I know the purpose of the survey, my next question is how much information you already have on the property. Has it been recently surveyed? Do you have an old survey? The more information I can get on the property, the easier (and cheaper!) it is to prepare a new plan. Since we've been in business since 1953, we have thousands of old records in our files which help a lot!

Once I know what you need and what information I already have, I can send a proposal and we can get started!

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