

Kids and Therapy: Let's Talk

Get Started

Introduce your child to therapy

- We are seeking help and understanding
- We will learn together
- I am a partner in the process
- What will help child and family reach goals?
- Not punishment for negative behavior

Set goals for therapy

- Bring a list of concerns to first session
- Invite child to make list of concerns
- First session may be parent(s) only
- At first session talk about goals
 - Therapist may ask questions to learn about the problem
 - May help you see it a different way
 - Important that everyone agrees on goals
- Clear and easy to understand and can measure
- Agree on signs of progress
- Agree on timetable
- Plan check-in times
- Expect that you may have goals for yourself as well



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Your Role in Your Child's Therapy

After 2 – 3 sessions you want to understand

- What therapist thinks about the problem
- How therapist thinks they can help
- Kind of treatment therapist will use
- How often therapist will meet with child and family
- Your role
- Always ok to ask questions

Sometimes entire family participates

- Therapist may ask each member's view of problem
- May suggest changes in behavior that may help

Sometimes may work with child and parents together

Defiance, aggression, withdrawal are ways of coping with difficult emotions

- Recognize that children may copy negative coping style and relationship patterns from people who matter most
- Best when both partners in relationship involved in treatment
- Even if problem did not develop in parent-child relationship

Focused difficulties – fears, anxiety

- May be individual, cognitive behavior therapy
- Need adults to model how to manage distress
- Help practice new coping methods
- Encouragement to face fears
- Supportive adult to cheer them on, celebrate progress

You learn tools child is learning and serve as:

- Calm, supportive coach
- Enthusiastic supporter

Therapy may focus on parent's response to child's behavior

- Reflect on your understanding of behavior
- Consider what child may be communicating through behavior
- Reflect on your response to behavior

You may be asked to reflect on ways your childhood affects your thoughts, feelings and behaviors as a parent

- Reflect on your relationship history as a child
- Consider ways you may be responding to child as reminder of your history
- Consider ways you may be "triggered" into acting like one of your parents at their worst

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What to look for in a therapist:

- Uses evidence-based practice
- Respects cultural practices and beliefs
- Always family focused
- Inclusive – interested in learning about your child from others
 - Teacher
 - Non-custodial parent
 - Other important caregivers
- Has experience treating this difficulty

Question to ask the therapist:

- What is your experience treating this kind of problem?
- Do you expect us (parents) to be involved in sessions with child?
- Will you meet with us separately?
- Will you develop behavior plans to try at home?
- Will you ask us to help child practice new skills?
- Help us understand how therapy works and how it might be helpful for our particular child.

Keep in mind:

- Taking a child to therapy can be stressful
 - Anxious or uncomfortable is normal
- Expect to feel more comfortable over time
- Important to feel that therapist
 - Listens well
 - Understands your and child's concerns
 - Can offer guidance about how to help
- Important that child and parent(s) feel they can trust therapist
- Feel comfortable sharing thoughts and feelings

Studies suggest relationship between therapist and client is the most important contribution to success.