



Going to a Psychologist, Psychiatrist, or Therapist

If you have a broken arm or a bad cold, you go to the doctor for help and to feel better, right? Well, sometimes kids and adults have problems that can't be seen as easily as a broken bone or a runny nose. When people have problems or trouble with emotions, sometimes they see a therapist to get help.

Therapists are experts in the ways people think, feel, and act. They help kids understand feelings, take care of problems, and cope with difficult situations. A therapist's job is to help kids do better and feel better. Therapists do their work mainly by listening to and talking with kids.

Different types of therapists help kids — some are called psychologists (say: sy-KOL-uh-jists) or psychiatrists (say: sy-KY-uh-trists), and some are counselors or social workers.

What Do Therapists Help With?

Therapists help kids with many kinds of things — from small problems to big ones. It all depends on what a kid needs help with.

Many kids need help dealing with strong or difficult feelings. Here are some of the kinds of problems that kids can have:

- dealing with so much shyness that they don't feel comfortable enough to talk to friends or teachers
- feeling so worried, stressed, or afraid that they can't sleep, have fun, or enjoy school
- going through a lot of sadness, depression, or grief
- having trouble because of too much anger

Therapists can help kids understand any kind of difficult emotion and learn positive ways to react so they can enjoy life more.

Therapists also help kids who are going through difficult family situations — such as divorce, the death of someone close, or a serious health problem. Therapists help kids heal if they have been through things like abuse, violence, or a disaster. When a therapist listens and understands what you're going through, it can help you cope, feel supported, and more confident about better times ahead.

For kids who need it, therapists can teach how to get along better with people — like classmates, brothers or sisters, or parents. Or how to be a better sport when they lose. Or how to wait their turn, play fair, or listen better (so they get in trouble less often!).

For those who need it, therapists can coach kids to get better at learning, paying attention in class, homework, or improving grades. They also can coach kids who need help sticking with a plan for healthy eating, exercise, and getting enough sleep. If you need help quitting a habit that's bad for them, a therapist can help.

Whatever problem a kid is having — you name it! — a therapist can help them learn the skills to solve it, do better, and feel better.

What Happens in a Therapist's Office?

During an appointment, you won't be examined on a table like you are at a typical doctor visit. There are no needles or shots. You'll sit in a comfortable chair and have a conversation. The therapist will welcome you and be friendly, and try to make you feel at ease.

On your first visit, your parent might come in with you and be part of the conversation. A parent can help explain your situation and what you need help with. On future visits, your parent can wait for you in the therapist's waiting room while you talk with your therapist alone.

Your therapist may ask you questions or have you complete some questionnaires, solve some puzzles, or draw pictures. These things help your therapist know more about how you feel, think, and learn.

While you talk over your problems, you might play with toys or games together. Therapists know that playing can help kids feel more comfortable so they can talk more easily.

Your therapist will want to hear about the good things in your life, too, such as what you are good at and what you enjoy. Part of a therapist's job is help kids notice their strengths and feel proud of what they're already doing well.

During appointments, your therapist might teach you lessons about feelings or how to help yourself relax. A therapist also can help you learn to get along with people better. And a therapist will show you how to practice things you want to improve.

Your therapist might help you to set goals for yourself. He or she also might ask you to keep a notebook that you can use to describe your feelings. Bringing this notebook to your appointments can help you track your progress.

You might have appointments with your therapist every week for a while. Each appointment might be about 45 minutes or an hour long. As things get better for you, you might see your therapist less often, until your work together is finished.

Getting Help Is Smart

Problems come up in every kid's life. Sometimes, you can work out a problem on your own or with the help of a parent, teacher, or your school guidance counselor.

If you more need help or a problem seems too big to handle, seeing a doctor or therapist is the right thing to do. Whenever you have a problem, it's smart to take charge and work it out.



Talking About Your Feelings

Sometimes the toughest thing about feelings is sharing them with others. Sharing your feelings helps you when your feelings are good and when they aren't so good. Sharing also helps you to get closer to people you care about and who care about you.

Focusing on Your Feelings

You can't tell your friends what's inside your backpack if you don't know what's in there yourself. Feelings (which lots of people also call "emotions") are the same way. Before you can share them with anyone, you have to figure out what feelings you have.

Making a list of your feelings can help. You can do this in your head or by writing it out on a piece of paper or even by drawing pictures. Is something bothering you? Does it make you sad or angry? Do you feel this emotion only once in a while or do you feel it a lot of the time?

When you're trying to figure out your feelings, it might help to remember something that happened and think about how it made you feel. Then you can say, "I feel sad when my friend doesn't play with me" or "I feel angry when my brother always wins at baseball." This can help you figure out your own feelings. It also gives the person you're talking with more information about what's bothering you.

Why Talk About Your Feelings?

The way a person feels inside is important. It can be really hard not to tell anyone that you're feeling sad, worried, or upset. Then, it's just you and these bad feelings. If you keep feelings locked inside, it can even make you feel sick!

But if you talk with someone who cares for you, like your mom or dad, you will almost always start to feel better. Now you're not all alone with your problems or worries. It doesn't mean your problems and worries magically disappear, but at least someone else knows what's bothering you and can help you find solutions.

Your mom and dad want to know if you have problems because they love you and they want to know what's happening in your life. But what if a kid doesn't want to talk with mom or dad? Then find another trusted adult, like a relative or a counselor at school. Maybe this person can help you talk with your mom and dad about your problem or concern.

How to Talk About Your Feelings

Once you know who you can talk with, you'll want to pick a time and place to talk. Does it need to be private, or can you talk with your brother and sister in the room? If you think you'll have trouble saying what's on your mind, write it down on a piece of paper.

If the person doesn't understand what you mean right away, try explaining it a different way or give an example of what's concerning you. Is there something you think could be done to make things better? If so, say it.

Some kids — just like some adults — are more private than others. That means some people will feel more shy about sharing their feelings. A kid doesn't have to share every feeling he or she has, but it is important to share feelings when a kid needs help. You don't have to solve every problem

on your own. Sometimes you need help. And if you do, talking about your feelings can be the first step toward getting it.



The Story on Stress

Have you ever felt sick to your stomach during a test? Have you had days when you were so loaded down with homework that you had trouble sleeping? Have you ever been so worried about something that you ended up with a terrible headache?

If so, then you know what it's like to feel stress. You've probably heard people say, "Wow, I'm really stressed out" or "This is making me totally stressed." Maybe you hear adults say those kinds of things all the time. But kids have lots of things going on in their lives that can cause stress, too.

What Is Stress?

Stress is what you feel when you are worried or uncomfortable about something. This worry in your mind can make your body feel bad. You may feel angry, frustrated, scared, or afraid — which can give you a stomachache or a headache.

When you're stressed you may not feel like sleeping or eating, or you might sleep or eat too much. You also may feel cranky or have trouble paying attention at school and remembering things at home.

What Causes Stress?

Plenty of things can cause stress in a kid's life, and there are such things as good stress and bad stress. Good or normal stress might show up when you're called on in class or when you have to give a report. Have you ever gotten butterflies in your stomach or sweaty hands? Those can be signs of good stress — the kind of stress that can help you to get things done. For example, you may do a better job on your book report if the anxiety inspires you to prepare well before you have to read it to the class.

But bad stress can happen if the stressful feelings keep going over time. You may not feel well if your parents are fighting, if a family member is sick, if

you're having problems at school, or if you're going through anything else that makes you upset every day. That kind of stress isn't going to help you, and it can actually make you sick.

Once you recognize that you're feeling stressed, there are several things you can do. You can try talking about what's bothering you with an adult you trust, like a parent or teacher. Bring up what's been on your mind and how it makes you feel. An adult may have ideas about how to solve whatever is worrying you or making you uncomfortable.

Are You Too Busy?

If you're feeling tired and stressed because you have too much going on, like lots of after-school activities, you might feel better if you drop something, even if it's just for a semester or so. Sometimes lots of activities — even if they're all fun — can make you feel stressed by keeping you busy all the time. On the other hand, if problems at home are bugging you, some (but not too many!) after-school activities may actually help you relax and feel better.

Getting enough sleep and eating healthy food are two great ways to help handle stress.

You also can use relaxation exercises to get rid of stress. The easiest one to do is to inhale (breathe in) slowly and deeply through your nose, and then exhale (breathe out) slowly through your mouth. Do this two to four times, but don't take in too much air too quickly because it can make you feel lightheaded and dizzy.

You can do exercises like this anytime, without anyone noticing. You can even do breathing exercises in class if you're nervous before a test.

Finding a Balance

The best way to keep stress away is to have a balanced life. That means making good decisions about how to spend your time. If you're only dealing with school stuff and have no time to play, you can get stressed. Make sure you keep your SELF in mind: Sleep, Exercise, Leisure (something fun), and Food.

If you take care of yourself and get enough sleep and food, and if you exercise and leave time for fun stuff, you'll probably be less stressed out!

Five Steps for Fighting Stress



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Everybody gets stressed from time to time. Different people feel stress in different ways. Some ways of dealing with stress — like screaming, hitting someone, or punching a wall — don't solve much. But other ways, like talking to someone you trust, can start you on the road to solving your problem or at least feeling better.

Try taking these five steps the next time you are stressed:

1. **Get support.** When you need help, reach out to the people who care about you. Talk to a trusted adult, such as a parent, other relative, a school counselor, or a coach. And don't forget about your friends. They might be worried about the same test or have had similar problems, such as dealing with a divorce or the death of a beloved pet.
2. **Don't freak out!** It's easy to let your feelings go wild when you're upset. Notice your feelings, and name them — for example, "I am so angry!" And say or think about why you feel that way. Then, find a way to calm down and get past the upset feelings and find a way to express them. Do breathing exercises, listen to music, write in a journal, play with a pet, go for a walk or a bike ride, or do whatever helps you shift to a better mood.
3. **Don't take it out on yourself.** Sometimes when kids are stressed and upset they take it out on themselves. Oh, dear, that's not a good idea. Remember that there are always people to help you. Don't take it out on yourself. Be kind to yourself and ask for the helping hand or pat on the back that you need — and deserve — to get you through the tough situation you're facing.
4. **Try to solve the problem.** After you're calm and you have support from adults and friends, it's time to get down to business. You need to figure out what the problem is. Even if you can't solve all of it, maybe you can begin by solving a piece of it.
5. **Be positive — most stress is temporary.** It may not seem like it when you're in the middle a stressful situation, but stress does go

away, often when you figure out the problem and start working on solving it.

These five steps aren't magic — and you might have to do some steps more than once, but they do work. And if you can stay positive as you make your way through a tough time, you'll help yourself feel better even faster. Ah . . . it feels so good when the stress is gone!

Source: <http://kidshealth.org/>