

Explaining Therapy To Children

Parents and caregivers who seek counseling help for their children often ask how to explain therapy to their children. I hope the following tips may be able to help you and your child get ready for session.

Do

Tell your child that he/she will come to see someone to help him/her:

Feel better (about school, friends, etc.)

Feel less (sad, angry, scared...)

Get along better

Tell your child he/she will come to a room and it may have some toys to play with while they talk

Tell your child that this time is not a test or an exam. He/she is not expected to do anything but to talk and listen

Explain that sometimes the therapist may talk to Mommy or Daddy before or after they talk to them. This is to help the therapist find out how to help you

Tell your child that this time will usually last between 30 and 45 mins

Tell your child the therapist will try not to tell other people about what you do or talk about during your time together

Tell your child that the therapist is not a doctor or a nurse and will not give them shots or medication

Tell your child he/she can decide if therapy is something they want to talk about outside of session. He/she can tell whomever they want but they don't have to tell anymore if they don't want to

Don't

Don't tell your child that he/she is bad

Don't tell your child that he/she is the problem

Don't tell your child that he/she is sick or that they are visiting the doctor

Don't tell your child that someone will watch what they do and then give advice

Don't tell your child to listen to the therapist whatever he/she is asked to do

Don't tell him/her to behave in session

After the session, don't ask your child "Did you behave?", "Did you help with cleaning up", etc.

Don't give your child any pressure to talk about his/her problems, etc.

Don't tell your child how much the session costs or that it is expensive, etc. this may increase children's worries or anxieties about their "performance" in session. This may also lead to the child feeling guilty or blamed.

After session, try to avoid asking, "how did you like it?" Sometimes, it's hard for children to articulate their experience in therapy and are sometimes afraid to upset parents. It is better for you to talk to your therapist about your child's progress.