

# BRINGING YOUR CHILD TO THERAPY: TIPS FOR PARENTS

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## HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR THE FIRST SESSION

Parents who seek therapy for their children often ask how to explain therapy to their children. I hope the following samples are helpful if this is something you are struggling with. Please choose/adapt the one you feel is most appropriate to your child's age and circumstances:

*We're going to see (name of therapist). Her job is to help kids (with their feelings) (feel better about school) (whose mom/dad has died) (who have been sexually abused) (whose mom and dad aren't living together anymore) etc. I've met her and she's really nice. You can talk to her about anything. You'll be doing some talking and some playing with her.*

*I know you've been through a difficult time lately... We're going to see (name of therapist). Her job is to help kids with their problems and worries. She helps kids by talking and playing with them.*

*Our family has been through a difficult time lately... We're going to meet with (name of therapist). Her job is to help families (get along better) (cope better with...).*

## IMPORTANT DO'S AND DON'TS

**DO'S** (Depending on the situation or the age of your child, some of the following may not apply)

- Tell your child that therapy is not “a test” or “an exam”.
- Tell your child that therapy will usually last about 45 minutes and may happen every week or every other week.
- Bring your child to therapy as scheduled and on time—children feel more secure and do better in therapy when they have consistent appointments.

## DON'TS

- Tell your child that she is going to therapy because she is bad or the problem.
- Tell her to listen to the “therapist” whatever she's asked to do.
- Give your child any pressure about being good in session.
- Tell your child how much the session costs or that it is expensive.
- Talk about concerns regarding your child to me in front of your child as this usually makes children feel uncomfortable. If you would like to discuss a concern please call prior to the session.

## OTHER DO'S AND DON'T'S BETWEEN SESSIONS

- Try not to force your child to come to sessions. If there is a problem bringing your child to sessions, please call me to consult.

- Do not give consequences or any punishments if your child refuses to come to sessions.
- Try not to bribe your child to go to sessions, e.g., *if you go to therapy, I will take you for ice cream afterwards.*
- If your child shows you a drawing after her sessions, try not to say any judgment comments such as, *“It’s a beautiful picture” “How come the person has no hands?”*
- After the session, don’t ask your child if she had fun or a good time—it’s “therapy”.

### **IMPORTANT REMINDERS FOR EACH SESSION**

- Please call me the day prior to the session if there are significant updates so I am kept informed and can plan accordingly.
- It’s best for your child to wear play clothes and “dress for mess”
- Please wait until your appointment time to enter the office and wait quietly in the reception area.
- Ensure your child has a healthy snack prior to the session. Please do not send you child into the session with any food or drinks.
- Please do not send your child to session with toys from home. The focus should be on the toys/materials/activities in the playroom as they have been specifically designed for therapeutic value.
- Take your child to the bathroom before the session.