

How Parents & Caregivers Can Support Their Child In Therapy

Your child may begin mental health services because they feel anxiety, anger, mood swings, sadness, difficulty concentrating, emotional outbursts, or something else that interrupts their daily life.

No matter the initial reason for starting, **therapy is focused on building new skills to handle stress when times get tough**. Whether therapy services take place at school, at a clinic in the community, or over video call, **parents and caregivers have an important role in supporting the process**.

“We look at it like it’s a weakness if you’re talking to someone. It’s not.”

PARENT

THERAPY REQUIRES CONNECTION

For therapy to be successful, the therapist needs to be someone you and your child feel comfortable with. Having a safe and trusted relationship with a therapist means that your child can build a strong connection with the professional and can **be open about their experiences, mood, and behaviors**. This honesty allows your family and the therapist to identify and practice coping skills for stressful times.

Every therapist is different, and the first one you meet may not be right for your family. If the relationship isn't feeling good with your child's current therapist, ask if there is another professional who can support them.

For therapy to be effective, your child needs to feel safe to open up. This can take time, just like the start of any new relationship.

“Therapy isn’t a quick fix.”
SCHOOL-BASED THERAPIST

THE TRUTH ABOUT THERAPY

MYTHS	TRUTHS
Therapy is just talking.	Therapy teaches skills to handle the challenges that come with life.
Therapists tell people what to do.	Therapists hold quiet space for people to explore their feelings and ask questions to encourage deeper thinking .
We don't need to share our business with anyone else.	Holding onto past experiences and big emotions can make it harder to enjoy everyday life. The purpose of sharing “your business” is to process the tough stuff and move forward . Therapy is a judgement-free zone. Everything said in therapy is confidential and only shared if someone is at risk of being hurt.
Therapy will fix my child! They won't feel sad, anxious, or angry anymore!	Therapy isn't magic! Certain experiences will still make us feel upset, but by practicing skills as a family and having a safe place to share the challenges, therapy can help us learn how to better navigate stress.
I'm the parent – I should be in my child's therapy session, too.	Parents have a right to know what's happening in therapy, but sitting in the room during therapy may influence how open your child is about their moods or behaviors. While regular meetings with the therapist are encouraged, parents do not actively participate in their child's therapy appointments . If you want to participate in therapy with your child, explore Family Therapy services together.

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COMMUNICATION IS KEY

As a parent or caregiver, it's essential to keep communication open between you and your child's therapist. You know your child best, so when you notice changes in your child's mood or behaviors, that is important information to share. Sharing new family stressors (like the loss of a loved one, housing changes, etc.) also provide helpful context for your child's therapist. The therapist will respect confidentiality and will not share with anyone else without your permission unless the safety of your family is of concern. Even if you think the details or life updates aren't worth sharing, the therapist can help more when they know what's going on outside of appointments.

When in doubt, share it out! This helps your therapist best support your child.

"I stay connected because I want to make sure my child's needs are understood and met."

PARENT

PRACTICE NEW SKILLS TOGETHER

After a few months of therapy, your child will have learned new coping skills to calm down when they are feeling upset. Some common techniques include focused breathing, grounding practices like counting, or activities like journaling or safe body movement. **These are skills, and to get good at something takes practice!** At home, parents and caregivers can offer time to practice the life skills your child is learning.

Kids notice the actions of trusted adults in their lives, so families can help by practicing the same skills to calm themselves. When you get upset, in that challenging moment, try to use the same skill your child is learning in therapy so they can see a loved one using that skill in real life. Even if they don't say it out loud, **watching loved ones using techniques to regulate their mood will help your child see how coping skills can be used in daily life.**

"Support what your child is learning in therapy at home. Practicing outside of the session is where the work gets done."

SCHOOL-BASED THERAPIST



When your child is calm is a great time to practice their coping skills.



SUPPORT YOUR CHILD BY LISTENING WITH EMPATHY

Below are quotes from teenagers on how they want to be supported by their loved ones.

"It's not a choice to feel anxious or depressed."

TEEN

"Just listen. Advice can be too much sometimes."

TEEN

"Crying isn't overreacting. Feelings are valid and deserve to be heard."

TEEN

"We are trying our best. Please try your best too."

TEEN

"My role is to walk alongside her on the hard days and the good days so she knows she is never alone and that her future is full of hope."

PARENT



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