



SIMI PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP

Create Real Change

5 WAYS YOU CAN PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR THERAPY





SIMI PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP

Create Real Change

You may be looking into child counseling because your son or daughter has seemed down or worried, and you wonder where their happy spark went. Or, perhaps your child is struggling with behavioral issues at home, school, or both. As a parent, you may need some support to help your child with what they are going through.

Even when you are confident that your child could benefit from some guidance, talking to them about therapy can be difficult. Children struggling with emotional and behavioral issues often feel like something is wrong with them. They may worry that you think that too!

The truth is, seeking child or family therapy doesn't mean that there is something wrong with your child or that they need to be fixed. Working with a therapist is all about building confidence, forming connections, and allowing space for individual wants and needs. These are things all children—and even all people!—can benefit from.

Still, it's important to be careful and purposeful when broaching the subject of therapy with your child. The right approach can help them know it's a completely normal, healthy option.

That said, working to undo the common stigma that goes along with seeking help or therapy is tricky. Like most parents, you may not know the best way to go about it. That's why we at the Simi Psychological Group have put together this guide! We'll teach you what to expect and walk you through some effective ways to begin talking to your child about therapy.



Do you know what the therapy process looks like? Have you ever sought out counseling? If you haven't been through the process yourself, explaining it to your child can be especially tricky. But, even if you have been to therapy in the past, your child will probably have questions that you aren't sure how to answer. After all, there are many different types of therapy, and the type that is best for your child might be one you've never heard of!

Before opening up a conversation with your child, it's a good idea to make sure you have a solid sense of what they can expect from sessions. That way, they can turn to you with questions and receive the reassurance they're looking for. And, you can feel confident that you understand your role in your child's counseling experience.

As you research child therapy, look for answers to these questions:

1. **What does the process look like?**
2. **What's a typical first session?**
3. **What actually happens in therapy?**
4. **What are the different types of therapy?**
5. **Which types are most suitable for your child?**

For example, when researching therapy for children, you will probably come across the term "play therapy." Especially when working with younger children, most therapists use play to help young clients express themselves. Play can also serve as a means to get the child more comfortable, bridging the gap to methods of talk therapy. For either purpose, play can involve the use of toys, puppets, drawings, and games to help the child recognize, identify, and verbalize their thoughts and feelings in a safe, fun, familiar way.

Some therapists may involve the parents in the play, taking a family-based approach to help emphasize parental involvement in the child's growth. In fact, most therapists involve parents in the process to help foster meaningful, lasting growth and change in the child's life. Therapists differ, however, in the extent of parent/family involvement and the structure within the sessions. For example, some therapists meet with parents at the beginning or end of sessions, while others prefer to have parents in the sessions.

FIND A COMFORTABLE TIME & LOCATION TO BRING UP BEGINNING THERAPY

Even the most challenging conversations can feel a bit easier when all the people involved feel comfortable, rested, and secure. The topic of therapy can naturally be an emotional one, and it makes sense that your child might feel stressed or confused at first. That's why it's so important to **be thoughtful about the setting of your talk**.

Bring up starting therapy in a calm environment with limited distractions, allowing a space for your child to ask questions if they choose. Ensure that you have the time to have this discussion without needing to stop in the middle. And, make sure your child has time to process the information before taking on any other important responsibilities. That means that it's probably best to avoid bringing up therapy right before dropping them off at school or practice.

Also, avoid bringing up therapy when you feel your own heightened stress. For example, although therapy might pop to your mind when your child throws a tantrum, that's probably not the best moment to bring it up. You don't want your child to associate therapy with distress or scolding!

Most importantly, **make a plan and stick to it**. You can even write yourself a script. That way, you can model calm and ease throughout the conversation.



There is sometimes a negative stigma surrounding therapy. If your child doesn't know anyone who has gone through the process themselves, they might worry that seeking help means something bad. Or, they might think that their peers will find them weird.

Luckily, children are very capable of learning new things—in fact, they are often eager “students”! Before your child comes to their first session, you can help them understand therapy in a positive, productive light.

Take the time to talk about how therapy can be a helpful tool for their own growth, as well as the growth of the family. Explain that it's nice to have someone who can help you when you are going through a hard time, and that therapy is a safe space where they can learn to express themselves, listen to their emotions, and problem solve. **Make it clear that it's not about fixing something that's “wrong,” but helping them feel happier and more in control.** Let them know that you will also be involved in the process and that the whole family will be able to get to a better place.

When your child understands the real purpose of therapy, they are more likely to go in with an open mind. And, most importantly, they are more likely to benefit from the overall experience.



ASK YOUR CHILD HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT THERAPY



When you bring up the therapy topic, keep yourself open to your child's feelings. They may be completely open to the idea and be excited. It's also possible that they will be sad, angry, confused, or simply distressed. That's okay.

Instead of talking over them or punishing them for an outburst, validate their emotions – **what they're feeling is real!** – and reassure them. Give them time and space to ask questions or express worry. They will be much more receptive to the process if their voice is heard and considered from the very beginning.

In this first conversation, you can start modeling the understanding, empathetic relationship they will build with their therapist. **You want your child to understand that therapy is not a punishment.** This is an opportunity for them to express all their feelings, and then learn to process them in new, healthy ways.

TELL YOUR CHILD ABOUT THE THERAPIST THEY WILL BE SEEING



Before you talk to your child about therapy, it's a good idea to **have a specific therapist in mind**. That way, you can give your child some real information about the person they'll be working with.

It is often helpful to **go with your gut** when selecting a good fit for your child and family. Give yourself the time to read through different websites and look over therapist bios. If you feel a bit unsure, you can also call for a consultation prior to deciding to set up that first session.

Once you have a therapist in mind, you can talk to your child about the person who is going to help. You can even **show your child the therapist's website and picture**. This can help them understand that they will be working with a real, warm person—not a cold, stiff stranger.

SIMI PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP CAN HELP YOUR CHILD THRIVE

The therapists at Simi Psychological Group are dedicated to helping you and your family create real change in your lives. We make it our mission to empower your child to recognize which areas of their life need to change and to feel capable of making those changes.

We've created this guide because our first priority is helping your child feel safe and comfortable expressing their emotions, all while learning strategies to help them cope with negative emotions. Our therapists utilize play, games, and role plays to speak to your child in ways they can understand and connect with. For example, to help illustrate a concept, we might literally draw. And, we'll invite your child to express their emotions through art and play.

We very much value a family systems approach. Therapy for children is intended for both the child and their parents to develop the tools and skills necessary to set up their environments for success. So that you can best support your child, your therapist is committed to helping you build confidence as a parent. You will learn effective tools to guide your child through difficult experiences, such as challenging homework assignments, tantrums, anxiety, and social conflict. Through the use of Cognitive Behavioral techniques, coping skills, and emotional self-regulation, your child's therapist will help the entire family to address the needs of their own unique situation, to move forward with support, and to work together as a team to reach therapeutic goals.

No matter what your child is struggling with, your therapist will individually tailor their time to understand your family's unique situation. We will find individualized solutions, all geared toward helping you take hold of your lives and create real, lasting change in your household.

We believe that you can make a difference in your child's life. Opening up the therapy conversation is the first step.



SIMI PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP

Create Real Change

Contact Us Today To Get Started:

(805) 842-1994