



FREE TO FEEL THERAPEUTIC SERVICES, PLLC

TALKING ABOUT THERAPY

Do I tell my child therapy in therapy?

Yes! Therapy can be an important way to take care of ourselves. If we aren't open with kids about therapy, it can make them think there is something BAD about therapy or that they go because there is something WRONG with them. We should be upfront with our kids and normalize therapy like going to the doctor, dentist, or gym to exercise (these are all things that keep us healthy).

Should I use words like “Therapy” and “Mental Health”?

Yes! Use the actual words that they will see and hear. Calling it something else can be confusing.

How do I explain therapy to my child?

This depends on their age, experience, and understanding. Generally:

- Therapy is a safe place for people to learn about and express (let out) feelings.
- Therapy teaches us healthy ways to understand and cope with situations and feelings.
- Therapy does not have a test and you can't do it wrong.
- Therapy is a place where grown ups learn how to help kids (family therapy and therapy with parents is SO IMPORANT!).
- Therapy is a place where we learn how to talk, listen, and understand each other.

How can I help my child get the most from therapy?

- Be involved! Ask questions! Be open to support for yourself as a person and a parent. Your child will learn a lot from your attitude about therapy.
- Do NOT use therapy as a punishment.
 - “If you don't behave, we are going to have to go therapy more!”
- Do NOT use therapy to recount everything your child did wrong this week.
 - “This was a hard week. First, they hit their teacher. Then, they ran out of the school building. When we got home, they trashed their room and pushed their little brother down the stairs!”
 - Communicate concerns with your child's therapist in an email or ask for some alone time with the therapist to discuss concern. You and the therapist can figure out the best ways to bring it up to the child without making them feel overwhelming guilt or shame.
- Be open and curious when your child talks about therapy.
- Do NOT tell your child what they MUST or SHOULD talk about with their therapist, but you can gently suggest that it might be something to consider (i.e. “I wonder if this is something you want to talk to Kelly about?”).
- Treat therapy like a place not just for them (i.e. they are the problem) but for the family (i.e. this is also where we can learn to help you) when appropriate.
- Agree to maintain their confidentiality when appropriate.