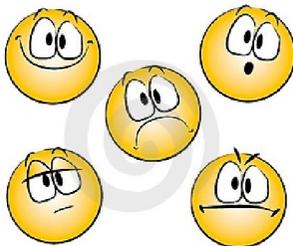


Here are some brief answers to these questions:

What happens in the counselling session with children?

Counselling is predominantly a talking therapy, but with children and young people the counsellor may use a number of creative techniques including play, artwork, stories or other mediums. The choice depends on the developmental level and interests of the child or young person and the preferences of the counsellor. Young children often have difficulty expressing their concerns because they haven't yet developed the thinking skills or appropriate vocabulary to do this. In such cases, therapeutic play provides a valuable approach to counselling; using toys or art materials etc. to enable children to express their thoughts and feelings. The counsellor in turn can use the play themes as a means of communicating to the child that they have an understanding of what is happening in their lives and to introduce alternative behaviors and attitudes for them to explore. Older children, while sometimes choose play, may prefer to express themselves through art, talking, therapeutic games or activities.



What should parents or carers tell their children about coming to counselling?

We believe it is helpful for parents or carers to give their children a simple explanation of their perception of the presenting problem, in a gentle, non-blaming manner and to suggest that after going to counselling for a while children often feel better about themselves and other people. The counsellor can be described as a person whose job it is to help children with their difficult feelings and that they may provide toys, stories and art materials for children to use to help them to do this when they come for their sessions.

Unfortunately, some children and young people have a mistaken impression of counselling or therapy; thinking it will be like going for a 'medical or psychiatric examination' or that they will be questioned or analyzed by their counsellor. This mistaken impression can cause a great deal of unnecessary fear and anxiety for all concerned and should be avoided. Therefore any reassurance or support the parents or carers can offer their children is very helpful.

What role can parents or carers play in therapy?

Generally, we would talk to parents or carers before starting to work with children because this can give us a good perspective on the world of the child.

Adults should be aware that in order to have trusting relationships with children, counsellors do not disclose specific details of what is said or done in sessions, unless the child gives them permission to do so. However, the counsellor may consult with parents or carers about overviews of their work and different ways to understand their child or suggest alternative strategies to use. It is helpful for parents or carers to encourage children to be open and honest with their counsellor and to support the confidentiality of the sessions. In keeping with this, after the session, although parents or carers may show an interest in their child's counselling experience, they should not question their child about what was said or done in during their session.

In most cases, children are anxious about their first counselling session because they don't know the counsellor or what to expect. Children can be comforted somewhat, if a familiar adult accompanies them to this session and stays with them in the room, until they are feel more relaxed and ready to stay on their own.

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Counselling Children and Young People; How Parents and Carers Can Help.

Some Common Questions Answered:

The thought of bringing children to counselling can raise anxieties for parents or carers and their children. Some questions that are frequently asked by parents and carers faced with their first counselling experience are:

- **What happens in the counselling session with children?**
- **What should parents or carers tell their children about coming to counselling?**
- **What role can parents or carers play in therapy?**