



Sharmayne Arrington, LMHC
Willow Tree Therapy
615 N 2nd St Tacoma, WA 98403

Preparing for the First Visit

You may be concerned that your child will become upset when told of an upcoming visit with a therapist. Although this is sometimes the case, it's essential to be honest about the session and why your child (or family) will be going. The issue will come up during the session, and it's important for you to prepare your child before the day of your first appointment.

Explain to young kids that this type of visit to the doctor doesn't involve a physical exam or shots. You may also want to stress that this type of doctor talks and plays with kids and families to help them solve problems and feel better. Kids might feel reassured to learn that the therapist will be helping the parents and other family members too.

Older kids and teens may be reassured to hear that anything they say to the therapist is confidential and cannot be shared with anyone else, including parents or other doctors, without their permission — the exception is if they indicate that they're having thoughts of suicide or otherwise hurting themselves or others.

Giving kids this kind of information before the first appointment can help set the tone, prevent your child from feeling singled out or isolated, and provide reassurance that the family will be working together on the problem.

Providing Additional Support

While your child copes with emotional issues, be there to listen and care, and offer support without judgment. Patience is critical, too, as many young children are unable to verbalize their fears and emotions.

Try to set aside some time to discuss your child's worries or concerns and the opportunity for them to ask questions. They may need a little direction from you in this. To minimize distractions, turn off the TV and let voice mail answer your phone calls. This will let your child know that he or she is your first priority.

Other ways to communicate openly and problem-solve include:

- Talk openly and as frequently with your child as you can.
- Show love and affection to your child, especially during troubled times.
- Set a good example by taking care of your own physical and emotional needs.
- Enlist the support of your partner, immediate family members, your child's doctor, and teachers.
- Improve communication at home by having family meetings that end with a fun activity (e.g., playing a game, making ice-cream sundaes).
- Communicate frequently with the therapist.
- Be open to all types of feedback from your child and from the therapist.
- Respect the relationship between your child and the therapist. If you feel threatened by it, discuss this with the therapist (it's nothing to be embarrassed about).
- Enjoy favorite activities or hobbies with your child.

By recognizing problems and seeking help early on, you can help your child — and your entire family — move through the tough times toward happier, healthier times ahead.

Taken from "Taking Your Child to a Therapist" Via KidsHealth by: [D'Arcy Lyness, PhD](#) , October 2013