

## Uncovering Myths About Therapy

Seeking therapy for the child you are parenting is essentially seeking therapy for your whole family. For some, it may be confusing—especially when so many myths and stereotypes exist about therapy.

The messages we receive about therapy from television and in the media are not usually accurate. When children have been exposed to trauma, they will need access to trauma-informed supportive resources and support services. Access to such resources and services is an essential component of a child's healing and recovery journey.

This tip sheet will uncover the various myths associated with therapy. If you have reservations about seeking treatment for your family, this information will help you make informed

decisions and provide you with realistic expectations regarding the potential short- and long-term benefits.

### Myths

**Seeking therapy is a sign of weakness.** On the contrary, it takes courage and strength for a parent to identify when their family needs the help of a counselor and take the steps to see that they get it. It is easy to assume that because a child you are parenting is essentially a

member of your loving family, their past traumatic experiences are simply in the past. However, children who have experienced trauma may continue to experience known or unknown trauma triggers that can instantaneously bring up complicated feelings of grief, loss, and complex trauma insecurities.

- Past experiences can be part of shaping the person that your child is becoming.
- Seeking trauma-informed therapeutic supports, resources, and assistance are

not signs of weakness but rather are signs of courage and strength.



**My child is in therapy, not me. They need to get better, not me.**

When a child you are parenting or caring for is in therapy, you, as a parent or a caregiver, play a

vital and instrumental role in helping them receive trauma-informed support and resources to effectively heal from their past trauma histories.

- Be actively involved with and engaged in the ongoing treatment plan. A counselor may need to check in with you at the beginning of a session, the end, or both. Your input and feedback are important. The counselor may even want you and your family to participate in a therapeutic session together.

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- Everyone in your family experiences disruption and uncertainties when one person is experiencing a challenging time, and the whole family will need to help empower positive changes.

**The counselor is going to “fix” the child.** The role of the counselor is to help your family identify the issues and then guide you to discover the means necessary to make changes.

- Therapy is hard work; everyone in your family needs to be part of the healing process.
- The counselor will not tell you how to fix all the problems but will hopefully guide your child and your family to healing and empowering positive changes.
- Having a positive attitude and open mind will enhance the process.
- Make sure that everyone communicates about their progress regarding their established goals.
- Provide feedback to the counselor when you feel the goals aren't being achieved.
- Be open to receiving feedback from the counselor about making recommended changes that can be beneficial to achieving more positive results.
- Celebrate small successes. Big changes may take several months or longer to become evident. Still, small improvements along the way will encourage your family to continue to be dedicated to all of the hard work you are doing.
- Be patient and gracious with yourself and your family. After all, change takes time, and therapy is a marathon, not a sprint.
- The changes and work do not happen in a one-hour-a-week session. The real work, and therefore the real changes, happen at home in your family.

**The counselor will always blame the parents.**

- Mental illness is sometimes rooted in biology. Environmental factors can trigger it, but it represents a physiological change.
- Counselors know that past hurts and traumatic situations will impact the present and potentially the future.
- Children who have been victims of trauma or neglect may experience chemical changes in the brain.

**The child I am parenting is too young to benefit from therapy.** There are several types of therapy. Based on the child's age, specific area of concern, and the counselor's training, one style (or a combination) can be used.

For example, playing with a child during a therapy session may be used for young children or children with difficulty sharing with a counselor. Children under age 6 have yet to reach the developmental level that allows them to connect emotional words to the actual feelings they represent. Therefore, simply asking a child how they feel about something will only sometimes yield the appropriate results. Playing or drawing with the child may allow them to open up or act out their feelings, giving the counselor an opportunity to gather helpful insights and feedback.

**The counselor knows more about the child I am parenting than I do.** You are the expert when it comes to your family. Your knowledge and understanding will play a huge role in the counselor's understanding of your family.

- Be involved by forming a positive relationship with the counselor.
- Ask for help when you need it. If your child needs psychiatric referrals for medication or if you need help

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communicating with the school, reach out to the counselor for their advice.

- Share your input! You see the behaviors and the changes in your home on a consistent and continual basis. Report updates to the counselor. Remember, they only see your child for an hour in a controlled setting.
- Not every counselor will be a great match. Find a counselor that works best for you and your family.
- It's okay to choose a new counselor if you are not creating a positive connection with your current one.

*“Being included in what was happening with my son’s therapy gave me the tools to participate in helping him get better.”*

—Wisconsin adoptive parent of three children diagnosed with RAD

Keep in mind that therapy is not a magic bullet. There is no magic wand to wave over your family that will heal children and return families to a calmer state. Therapy is an ongoing commitment to hard work. Being consistent, patient, and willing to engage in the process helps ensure improvement.

There is hope. Effective therapy can improve relationships, communication, and connections between family members. Children can and do recover from traumatic events, and you have a vital role in their journey of healing and recovery.

If you would like more information or a referral for a counselor who works with children and families with trauma histories, please get in touch with us at 1-800- 762-8063.



## Resources

From the [Resource Library](#)

- *In Their Own Words: Reflections on Parenting Children with Mental Health Issues*, by Linda Grillo, Dee Meaney, and Christine Rich
- *Parenting with Theraplay—Understanding Attachment and How to Nurture a Closer Relationship with Your Child*, by Vivien Norris and Helen Rodwell

Tip Sheet

- [The Wider Scope of Therapy](#)

Training From [Champion Classrooms](#)

- [Taking Time to Help and Heal: Child Development Through a New Lens](#)
- [Utilizing Creative Arts in Treatment When Difficult Behaviors Arise](#)
- [Creating Felt Safety](#)
- [Youth and Mental Health](#)
- [An Introduction to Trauma's Influence on the Brain, Body, and Behavior](#)

Additional WiFCC Resource

- [Resources for Trauma-Informed Care Awareness Day](#)

Additional Resources

- [Child Trauma Academy](#)
- [Child Trauma Institute](#)
- [Find Your Local NAMI](#)