



Partners in Healing: Separating Therapy Myths from Reality

Seeking therapy for the child you are parenting is, in many ways, seeking support for your entire family. For families caring for children who have experienced trauma, therapy is not a last resort—it is often an essential part of healing.

Sometimes, myths and stereotypes about therapy create hesitation. This tip sheet addresses common misconceptions while highlighting the powerful role trauma-informed therapy can play in helping children and families heal.

Myths

#1 Seeking therapy is a sign of weakness. On the contrary, seeking therapy is a sign of strength, insight, and commitment.

It takes courage to acknowledge that love alone may not address the impact of childhood trauma. While safety and stability are foundational, trauma can shape how a child's brain and nervous system respond to stress, relationships, and perceived threats.

Children who have experienced trauma may:

- React strongly to small stressors
- Struggle with emotional regulation
- Experience triggers connected to past loss or fear
- Carry grief, shame, or insecurity behind their behaviors

These responses are not character flaws. They are often survival adaptations.

Seeking trauma-informed therapy communicates to your child: "Your experience matters. Your feelings matter. And we are committed to helping you heal."

#2 My child is in therapy, not me. They need to get better, not me. The truth is, therapy is most effective when families heal together.

It can be tempting to think of therapy as something that happens between your child and the therapist.



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But trauma healing does not happen in isolation.

Caregivers are essential partners. You help healing move forward when you:

- Observe and share patterns and triggers with the therapist
- Reinforce coping skills and regulation strategies between sessions
- Model healthy emotional expression and repair
- Create consistency, predictability, and safety at home

When one member of a family is struggling, the entire system feels the impact. Healing is not about assigning blame. It is about strengthening connections and building new relational patterns together.

Therapy equips families with insight and tools to process trauma in a safe environment.

Families provide the daily opportunities to practice those tools and turn them into lasting change.

Your presence, guidance, and consistency at home create the conditions where healing can take root.

This is not about fixing a child. It is about partnering in healing.

#3 The therapist is going to “fix” the child. When behaviors feel exhausting or overwhelming, it is completely natural to hope that a professional can step in and make things better quickly. You may find yourself thinking, “We just need someone who knows what they’re doing to fix this.”

But trauma recovery is not a quick fix. No magic wand erases early experiences.

A therapist’s role is not to “fix” your child. Their role is to:

- Help uncover what behaviors are communicating
- Identify trauma triggers and underlying needs
- Teach emotional regulation and coping skills
- Support grief and trauma processing
- Strengthen attachment and relational safety
- Equip caregivers with practical tools to use at home

Your role as a caregiver is powerful. You help move healing forward when you:

- Practice and reinforce coping strategies learned in sessions
- Create predictable routines and emotional safety
- Respond to behaviors with curiosity instead of shame
- Repair after conflict and model healthy regulation
- Communicate regularly with the therapist about patterns you are seeing

The real transformation does not happen in a one-hour session each week. It happens during bedtime struggles, school transitions, hard conversations, and moments of reconnection after a tough day.

You may first notice small shifts:

- A meltdown that is shorter
- A child seeking comfort instead of withdrawing
- Faster recovery after disappointment
- More willingness to talk about feelings

Little progress is meaningful progress. Healing from trauma is a marathon, not a sprint. You are not waiting for someone else to fix your child. You are part of the healing team—and your consistent presence is one of the most powerful interventions.

#4 The therapist will always blame the parents.

Many caregivers carry this fear quietly. Especially when parenting children with trauma histories, it can feel vulnerable to invite someone into your family's story.

Trauma-informed therapy does not focus on fault. It focuses on understanding.

Professionals trained in trauma recognize:

- Trauma can affect brain development and stress responses.
- Survival behaviors develop for a reason
- That some mental health conditions have biological components

A skilled therapist works alongside caregivers, offering education, support, and practical strategies—not criticism.

You are not on trial. You are part of the healing team.

#5 The child I am parenting is too young to benefit from therapy. Young children may not have the words to describe their inner world—but they still experience the effects of trauma.

Instead of relying solely on conversation, therapists use developmentally appropriate approaches such as play, drawing, storytelling, and movement. Through these methods, children can express emotions, process experiences, and practice regulation in ways that feel safe.

Early intervention can be especially powerful. Supporting regulation and attachment now can prevent patterns from becoming more deeply rooted later.

#6 The therapist knows more about the child I am parenting than I do. You are the expert when it comes to your family. Therapy works best when clinical expertise and caregiver insight come together.

You see your child in every setting—in stress and in calm, in school struggles and bedtime routines. Your observations help the therapist understand the full picture.

The therapist brings training and therapeutic tools. You bring lived experience and daily connection.

Both are essential. And if the relationship with a therapist does not feel collaborative or respectful, it is okay to seek a better fit. A strong therapeutic relationship is one of the greatest predictors of positive outcomes.

“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

Final Thoughts

Therapy is not a magic wand, and it is not a quick fix. Healing from childhood trauma takes time, consistency, and commitment. There may be setbacks along the way, but small steps forward are still meaningful progress.

Seeking therapy does not mean something is wrong with your child—or with you. It means you recognize that early experiences matter and that healing deserves intentional support.

With trauma-informed care and engaged caregivers, children can build new patterns of safety, trust, and connection. Families can grow stronger. Relationships can deepen.

There is hope. Children can — and do — heal, and your willingness to seek support is one of the most powerful steps on that journey.

If you would like assistance identifying trauma-informed therapists in your area, we maintain regional lists of recommended individuals and practices shared by families and professionals. While these lists are not comprehensive or formal referrals, they may serve as a helpful starting point. Please get in touch with us at 1-800-762-8063 for more information.

Resources

Tip Sheet

- [The Wider Scope of Therapy](#)

From the [Resource Library](#)

- [Resources for Trauma-Informed Care Awareness Day](#)
- *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 & Helen Rodwell

Learn in [the 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](#)
- [Mental Health for Youth in Out-of-Home Care](#)
- [An Introduction to Trauma's Influence on the Brain, Body, and Behaviors](#)
- [Mental Health 101: An Introduction to the National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) Wisconsin](#)
- [About Wisconsin Wayfinder Children's Resource Network](#)
- [Building Strong Relationships with Felt Safety](#)

Additional Resources

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