



Uncovering Myths about Therapy

Seeking therapy for your child is really seeking therapy for your whole family. For some, it may be confusing—especially when there are so many myths and stereotypes out there about therapy.

The messages that we receive about what therapy is like on television and in the media are not always accurate. Or you may not know how to find a mental health provider who understands the unique dynamics of a family created through adoption.

In this tip sheet, you will find myths about therapy uncovered. If you have reservations about seeking therapy for your family, this information will help you make informed decisions and give you realistic expectations about therapy.

Myths

Seeking therapy is a sign of weakness.

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. Many children that find forever families through adoption have been through things that are hard to think about. It is easy to assume that because your child is now a part of your loving family that those past experiences are simply in the past.

- Past experiences can be part of shaping the person that your child is becoming.
- Acknowledging changes need to be made and seeking outside help is not a sign of weakness.

My child is in therapy, not me. He needs to get better, not me.

When your child is in therapy you, as a parent, play a vital role.

- You need to monitor, and help with, your child's progress. A counselor may want to check in with you at the beginning of a session, the end, or both.
- The counselor may even want your family to participate in a session together.
- Your child exists within your family. Everyone in the family experiences the disruption when one person is having a hard time, and the whole family will need to help facilitate changes.

The counselor is going to “fix” the child. The role of the counselor is to help your family identify what the issues are and then help them arrive at the means necessary to make changes.



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West Allis, WI 53214
800-762-8063
info@coalitionforecf.org

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- Therapy is hard work and your child and family are the ones who will need to participate.
- The counselor is not going to tell you how to fix all the problems, but will hopefully guide your child and your family to change.
- A positive attitude will enhance the process. Enter into the process with an open mind.
- Identify goals. You will be able to see when changes are occurring. Make sure that everyone has the same goals. Talk to the counselor when you feel the goals aren't being achieved.
- Celebrate small successes. Big change may take several months or longer to become evident, but small improvements along the way will encourage your family to continue to be dedicated to the work you are doing. 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 the family with you.

The counselor will always blame the parents. This is not the case!

- Mental illness is rooted in biology.
- It can be triggered by environmental factors, but it represents a physiological change.
- Children that have been victims of trauma or neglect at a young age may experience chemical changes in the brain.

My child is too young to benefit from therapy. There are many types of therapy. Based on your child's age, specific area of

concern and the training of the counselor, one type (or a combination) will be used.

For example, playing with a child during a therapy session may be used for young children, or children who have difficulty sharing with a counselor. Children under age 6 have not yet reached the developmental level which allows them to be able to connect emotion words to the actual feelings they represent.

Therefore, simply asking a child how he/she feels about something will not always yield the appropriate results. Playing or drawing with the child may create an opportunity for

him/her to open up or act out their feelings allowing the counselor to gather insight into the thoughts and feelings of your child.

The counselor knows more about my child.

You are the expert when it comes to your child and your family.

Your knowledge and understanding will play a huge role in the counselor's understanding of your family.

- Form a relationship with the counselor.
- Be involved.
- Ask for help when you need it. If your child needs psychiatric referrals for medication or needs help communicating to the school get your counselor's advice.
- Give input! You are with your child everyday. You see the behaviors and the changes in your home. Report back to the counselor. Remember, he or she only sees your child for an hour at a time in a controlled setting.
- Find a counselor that works for your family. Not every counselor will be a great match. Don't be afraid to move on to a new

"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

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counselor if you are not connecting with your current one.

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 a commitment to hard work. Being consistent, patient and willing to engage in the process of therapy helps ensure improvement.

If you would like more information or a referral for a counselor who works with adoptive families, please contact us at 1-800-762-8063.



Resources

From the [Lending 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 & Helen Rodwell

Tip Sheet

- [The Wider Scope of Therapy](#)

Additional Resources

- [Child Trauma Academy](#)
- [Child Trauma Institute](#)



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