

A Brief Guide to Child Psychotherapy

By: Catherine McCarthy, LICSW
Aspire Health Alliance



When talking to parents, I often hear them say “Is that normal behavior for a kid?” How can a parent determine if a child’s behavior is typical or if it is problematic and the child is in need of an evaluation?

There are some basic guidelines to follow when asking yourself this question. It is important to determine if there have been any major changes in your child’s behavior, functioning in school or at home. Children can display signs of emotional struggles in a variety of ways. Some children withdraw, strive to be perfect and some have physical complaints such as tummy aches. Some children avoid previously enjoyed activities or have trouble separating from parents. If you notice these behaviors occurring most days of the week for a month or more, it may be beneficial to have your child evaluated.

The first therapy appointment is an evaluation. The therapist will meet with the child and the child’s parents. Every therapist has their own unique style. Some therapists invite the parents to be part of the whole session and other therapists will do part of the session with the child and part of the session with the parents. When the therapist calls you for the initial appointment, you can let them know what you prefer and together you can establish the relationship in which you feel most comfortable.

During the first session a full history of your family and of your child will be completed. Together you and your child’s therapist will determine the need for ongoing therapy and how often your child will be seen. In collaboration with your child’s therapist, goals will be established. At this point your level of involvement with therapy will be determined. This will depend on your child’s presenting problem, age and the goals of treatment.

During the following meetings the therapist and your child will continue working on the mutual agreed upon goals.

If you would like additional information concerning the process of child therapy please call Aspire Health Alliance (617) 847-1950.