

Psychotherapy: Questions and Answers

What is psychotherapy?

This type of therapy helps a person work through their mental health problems. They do this by talking with a therapist or mental health professional. It is also known as counseling.

Psychotherapy helps a child and family learn:

- About their illness, moods, feelings, thoughts and behaviors.
- How to take control of their lives.
- Healthy coping skills.

What happens at the first visit?

A therapist will ask the parent and child many questions. This will help find out what kind of psychotherapy the child needs. During this visit you should tell the therapist as much as you can about your child and family. This will help the therapist understand your child's strengths and problems. The therapist can then set up a good treatment plan. Be sure to ask any questions you have about your child's therapy at any time.

What is a treatment plan?

A treatment plan is a written set of goals you, your child and the therapist make during the first few visits. These goals help your child learn and practice new skills and behaviors. The therapy visit is one time to work on goals. You and your child will also work on goals at home and in school. A treatment plan and goals often change during treatment. Changes will depend on your child's needs and what's going on in your family.

How often will we see our therapist?

The schedule is based on the treatment plan. It will depend on your child's and family's needs. You will agree on a schedule for visits. Therapy visits can happen as often as weekly. Often there are more visits in the beginning. This is when you will plan and work on new goals. Visits may become less often as goals are met.

How long does therapy last?

The length of therapy depends upon each child and family's needs. Most sessions last 45 minutes to 1 hour, but this can vary. Meeting goals and adjusting the treatment plan are ongoing jobs in therapy. A therapist will take as much time as needed to help you and your child – it's not a race. Talk to your therapist about how long your child's therapy may last.

What is the parent(s)/guardians' role in therapy?

You play a very important role! The therapist will talk about what will happen at each visit. Information from you and your child is important. Tell the therapist about you and your child's progress. Share your concerns, questions, and fears. You are the best advocate for your child. You must also help your child work on the treatment plan and goals between visits.

What if there is a problem in between therapy visits?

Call your therapist if you have concerns between visits. Our answering service is available at all times.

If you child is a danger to themselves or others, call 9-1-1.

How does the therapist know when my child is done with therapy?

When the treatment plan goals are met, your child will likely be done with therapy. The therapist will then talk to you and your child about ending therapy. Everyone should agree that ending therapy is the best thing to do.

What happens when therapy is done?

The therapist's plan at the end of therapy is called a discharge plan. It will:

- List goals to keep working on.
- List a safety and emergency plan.
- List resources your child might need after therapy.
- Talk about what to do if problems come back.

You can call anytime if you feel it is best for your child to return to therapy.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.