

Assessment and
Treatment



Children, Youth,
and Young Adults

Parent/Guardian Counselling Information Sheet for Child & Adolescent Clients

Things to know about the counselling sessions:

- For children under age 6, counselling will have a substantial parental focus. It is unlikely that children under this age will have the developmental and cognitive capacity to implement concepts from therapy on their own. Counsellors will work with children to teach basic concepts and spend part of the session with parents making a plan for how to implement skills outside of therapy.
- The goal for our support is to engage in structured, goal oriented treatment where therapists and clients work collaboratively on established goals to address client needs. Therapy is not intended to be extensively long-term but rather to equip children and families with the tools and strategies they need to function independently going forward.
- Each counsellor has their own approach to therapy, it is important that you and your child feel you have a “good fit” with the counsellor. This means that you and your child feel comfortable and supported. If you don’t feel that way, we can work together to find a therapist that is a good fit for your family.

Insurance:

Your reasons for services are confidential; we will not share information with insurance. At Little Oaks Psychology we are able to provide direct billing for some insurance companies. Please speak with our intake clinician for more information (780-405-4209, ext 2). Asking your provider if you have coverage for psychological services, and if so, how much per person/ what % will be paid can be helpful.

How to help your child prepare for our work together (adapted from www.DrLizAngoff.com © Dr. Liz Angoff, 2020)

We’re looking forward to working with your family! Here are some ways to talk to your child about counselling.

Starting the Conversation

In a nutshell, the purpose of counselling is to “learn about your thoughts and emotions,” so that:

1. You can learn how to calm yourself
2. Parents know how to support you

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3. You know how to ask for what you need

Introducing the idea of counselling to your child may sound something like:

“I’ve noticed you’re working really hard at _____ this year, but it still seems pretty tough. I’ve been thinking that if we knew more about how to best support you, your teachers/family members and I could do a better job helping you. Last week, we met with a person who can help us find a way to make routines/talking/emotions easier for you and figure out what we can do differently.”

Describing the Process

At each follow up appointment, we will do different activities to help us better understand how your child thinks, feels and emotes themselves. We may do puzzles and games, chat about what they like to do, and try to figure out why things are hard and how to try and make that better.

For young children, it may be important to explain that counsellors are not medical doctors. We help them to learn about their brain and emotions. They are not sick, and there is nothing wrong with them – also, there will not be any needles!

Older children may need a reminder that this is a confidential process, focused on finding solutions. Their input is extremely important to figuring out what will be most helpful for them.

Explaining the process may sound something like:

“The psychologist will help you to figure out how you learn and communicate best. They will pay attention and encourage your strengths, and offer support for things that seem hard. Some meetings will be fun, some will be easy, and some will challenge you. Your job is just to do your best!”

Getting Their Input

Helping your child to articulate their own counselling questions will not only help their counsellor help them, but will get them more invested in the process itself. Kids may need a little time to mull it over and get their thoughts together, so don’t be afraid to ask a few times. This may sound something like:

“I would like to understand your thoughts and feelings more, to see if there is any way I can support you better. Is there anything you can think of about yourself that you may want to know more about? If you can’t think of anything right now, that’s ok. I’ll ask you again tomorrow and we can try to write down a list together. That will make sure that the work you do with the psychologist is as helpful as possible.”

What if my child doesn’t want counselling?

If you are worried your child will resist coming in for counselling, you are not alone! Here are some tips for setting it up for success.



Tip #1: Use your child's words to describe the problem

Many children resist participating in counselling because it feels like adults don't get it. For this reason, it can be helpful to think about how your child is describing the problem. For example, instead of "I feel angry," they may say, "I hate this" or "I don't care." By using their language, you are assuring them that we will help them solve their problem, not just ours. This might sound like:

- *I've noticed that you really hate cleaning up after yourself. I'm wondering if there's a way we could make chores/responsibilities more enjoyable for you.*
- *I've noticed that when we talk about things, you say you don't care. I know it can be hard to have discussions but I wonder if there's a way we can break out of that and chat so that we gain something positive from it.*
- *I've noticed you're getting in trouble a lot this year and it doesn't seem to make sense. I wonder if there's a way we can voice your frustrations and feelings in order to figure things out together.*
- *I heard you say that you do not like making friends, and I can see why this is hard and complicated. Let's see if there's a way to change that.*

Tip #2: Talk over ice cream

Some children may be worried they've done something wrong, or that there is something wrong with them. For this reason, it could help to talk with them in a place where it is obvious that there is nothing wrong and they are not in trouble. Having a bowl of ice cream, taking the dog for a walk, or playing catch are all good ways to have a conversation without it feeling too "serious".

Tip #3: Let them know it's not mandatory

If your child is having a really hard time, we will work together to figure it out. The first step is letting them know it's not mandatory. Keep in mind that we can get a lot of information about what might help your child in other ways, and if your child is resisting, counselling is not likely to be helpful. Besides, giving a child the choice often makes them more likely to participate because it:

- Shows them respect
- Establishes trust
- Gives them choice and control over the situation
- Gives space for the child to voice their concerns without a contingency
- Allows us as adults to figure out ways to address those concerns so they can be an active participant in the future



While your child may not agree on the problem that brought you in as a parent, we can often find something the child *does* want to work on, and that gives us a way to move forward.

At Little Oaks we pride ourselves on the work we do with children and their families, and for that reason our office, staff and services are very geared toward making them feel comfortable and heard. We are experienced in working with many different personalities and needs and will take the time to ensure you and your child can have positive discussions and experiences while you are with us.

Please connect with us if you have any questions in the meantime!

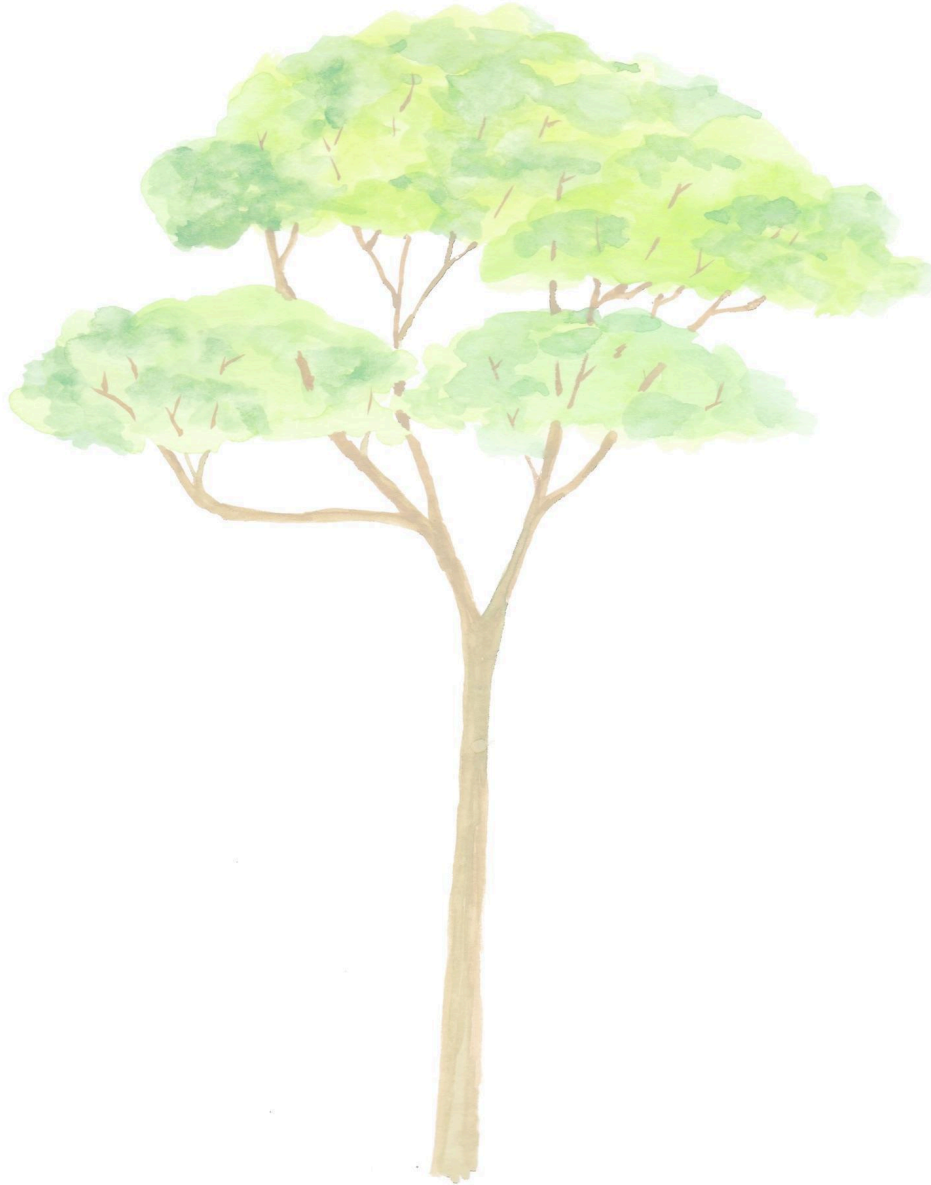
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