

# Learning About Counseling for Your Teen



## What is counseling for teens?

If your teen is in counseling, it means they're getting mental health treatment from a trained counselor. Teens go to counseling for help with issues in life. These may be things like stress, anxiety, or grief. Teens also go for help with certain health conditions. For example, they may go for depression, an eating disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Or they may go because they want to stop vaping or using drugs.

Teens see their counselor on a regular basis. They may meet weekly, every few weeks, or monthly. How long they're in counseling is different for each teen. But it may be for several months or longer.

There are different types of counseling. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is one type. CBT focuses on changing certain thoughts and behaviors. Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) is another type. DBT teaches healthy ways to manage feelings.

## How can you support your teen?

Here are some ways you can support your teen while they are in counseling.

- Try not to ask your teen questions about what they say in counseling.

Tell your teen that you understand that counseling is a private place for them to talk. But it's okay to check in with your teen sometimes to see how counseling is going.

- Communicate with your teen's counselor, as needed.

If you're worried about your teen's behaviors or emotions, let the counselor know.

- Expect the counselor to protect your teen's privacy.

But if your teen is younger than 18 and talks about hurting themselves or someone else, or about being hurt by others, the counselor must tell you.

- Take part in your teen's counseling, if asked.

It's common for family members to join a few counseling sessions. You can gain tools to help you

better support your teen at home.

- Be patient.

It may take time for your teen to build trust with their counselor. Changing thought patterns and habits also takes time.

- Be positive.

Being hopeful and supportive may help your teen get more out of counseling.

- Find a counselor for yourself.

You can ask your doctor for a referral.

- Ask your teen's counselor about parenting classes.

You can learn skills that may help you and your teen. For example, you could learn how to manage your emotions around your teen.

- Watch your teen for signs that they are thinking about hurting themselves.

If your teen talks about feeling hopeless, being a burden to others, or having thoughts of suicide, tell their counselor right away. The counselor may help your teen build a safety plan. It may include healthy ways to cope, safe places to go, and a list of people who can help.

#### **Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

If your teen talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME** to **741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to **988lifeline.org** for more information or to chat online.

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