

"Your counselor, most of the time, will try not tell other people (including mom/dad/grandma/etc.) about what you do or talk about during play time.

Sometimes your counselor will have to tell other adults if they are really worried about you – it is so important that we know if you are not safe."

"There will be times when I get to talk to the counselor too! Even parents/families/caregivers have things that they want help with"

"You will get to do a lot of different and fun things with your counselor - like play with toys, games, paint or draw. Sometimes you might just talk."

"Feelings can be really big and confusing sometimes. Sometimes we all need help learning more about our feelings and choices. A counselor is someone who is really good at helping kids with their feelings."

"Your counseling time is not a secret. You can talk about what you've been doing to anyone if you want to, but you don't have to. If you feel like keeping it to yourself, that's OK."

"Sometimes you feel really sad/angry/etc. and it's hard for you to know what to do. Your counselor will help you and me learn new things to do to help you."

"Counseling is a safe place where you will play with a new friend and learn about feelings. This new friend is going to help us (*therapy is not just for the child, but the whole family!*) figure out some new ways to be together."



## "So you're going to see a counselor..."

Before your child's first session, spend some time talking with them about who a counselor is and why they will be seeing a counselor. Your explanation doesn't need to be complicated! Counseling should be seen as something positive and helpful. Depending on your child's age and developmental level, you can give more specifics.

When talking about seeing the counselor for the first time or even later when your child has been seeing the counselor, encourage and praise them for their hard work. Let them know you believe in them and their ability to cope.

Also, let your child know they have permission to be honest with the counselor. Many times, children hold back feelings as a way to "protect" parents or family. When parents ask children to keep "family secrets," problems don't get resolved - just avoided. Buried problems often lead to more mental health issues.

And most importantly, don't talk to your child only about "his or her problem." Too much focus on therapy or the behaviors, may lead your child to think that his/her "problem" is more important than anything else.

