

"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 your play time.

The only time your counselor will have to tell other adults something you share is if you are not safe; a big part of their job is to make sure you're not getting hurt"

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

"You will get to do a lot of different things with your counselor - like play with toys, games, paint or draw.

Sometimes you might talk and sometimes you might not.

You get to make choices about what you do during your time"

"Feelings can be really big and confusing. Sometimes we all need help learning more about our feelings and how to handle them. A counselor is someone who is really good at helping kids make sense of their thoughts and 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"

"You get to have your very own special play time with someone who loves to play and who loves helping kids figure out how to feel their best"

"Counseling is a safe place where you will play with a new friend and learn about yourself and your 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..."

A few ideas for introducing your child to play therapy

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/her/their problem." Too much focus on therapy or the behaviors, may lead your child to think that his/her/their "problem" is more important than anything else.