Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy

A Brief Guide for Adolescents

the therapeutic consultants

What is Psychotherapy?

Child and adolescent psychotherapists have a long training in understanding the things that children and adolescents struggle with, such as:

- Managing anxiety
- Difficulties with friends and relationships
- Stress over exams
- Depression
- Self-harm
- OCD
- Eating issues
- Trying to understand your sexuality and identity
- Low self-confidence
- Sleeping difficulties

Psychotherapists know that adolescence is a difficult time. Many young people feel lonely, even with lots of friends. Many feel misunderstood by the people around them. Many feel feelings that they don't understand or don't know why they feel that way. A psychotherapist's job is to help you make sense of these feelings.

A psychotherapist doesn't 'fix' things or tell you what to do. Their job is to think with you about what you are struggling with. You can use their training and their understanding of people, relationships and how minds work, to figure things out in your life.

Therapy can become a really important part of your life. It is a very unusual thing to have someone who takes the time to really know and understand, and accept, exactly how your mind works.

How does it work?

The psychotherapist would meet with you at the same time in the same place each week for 50 minutes. In your sessions you might want to talk, or draw, or be quiet. It is up to you and the therapist will go at your pace.

You don't have to know how to explain things or know what to say, you don't even have to talk about the problems. You can talk about whatever you want, what interests you, friends, the music you like. In this way your therapists can get to know and understand you. Your therapist will try to understand what you are going through and how it affects your relationships and your moods.

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How do I make a start?

Depending on your age, your parents may have already met with your therapist to make sure it is someone that you can trust. If you would like to be at this meeting you can. If you are old enough you might want to have this meeting yourself and make your own decision about whether this is the right therapist for you.

Therapists usually start with an initial period of 3-5 sessions to see how you feel about the way they work and to try to understand a bit about the issues you are facing. After this time they will think with you about whether you want to carry on. Again, depending on your age they may then need to speak to your parents to make sure they are also happy for you to continue. If you want to be at this meeting you can. If not then your therapist will discuss with you exactly what is going to be said so that you know they aren't going to disclose anything confidential.

Your sessions

It is often really helpful to young people just to have the space to talk and think with another person who is really able to listen and understand. However, there are times when it can also feel worse before it gets better. If you are thinking about things that you have tried not to think about for a long time, then sometimes it can be really difficult. You can let your therapist know if this is the case. Sometimes it is possible to come more often while things are difficult. Sometimes the difficult bits pass quite quickly.

Confidentiality

It is up to you to decide if you want to talk about your sessions to your family or friends. Your therapist will keep them private.

Psychotherapists have a duty to keep your sessions confidential unless you or someone else is in danger. If you're worried about your privacy please do talk to your therapist about it, they will be really honest in their answers.

The only other issue that might need to be discussed with your parents is your attendance. If your parents are paying for therapy and you are missing a lot of sessions, the therapist might be obliged to let your parents know. They will never do this without having discussed this with you first. Unless you aren't attending at all, in which case they can't discuss it with you!

Afterward

Hopefully you will feel a lot better. Things may have changed at home and at school or college because you can understand and manage your feelings and situations better.

Researchers have shown that psychotherapy not only helps during the time of the sessions, but that it continues to have an impact long after therapy stops. This is because it helps by increasing understanding, self-awareness and awareness of relationships between yourself and the people in your life so you are better equipped to manage not just the issue that you come with but also other issues as they come up throughout life.

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