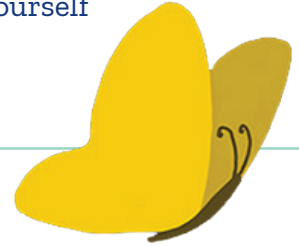


Supporting Your Child Before Therapy Starts

As a parent, one of the first steps on your child's mental health journey can be scheduling a diagnostic assessment or initial therapy appointment when you notice they are struggling. Sometimes, you may be waiting weeks or even months before your child can get in to see the professional. Below is a list of five areas you can use to support your child and yourself during that gap or in between appointment dates.



Start preparing for the appointment

- Fill out any available documentation beforehand.
- Make a list of things you want to talk about with the therapist/professional.
- Create a binder to collect family information, documentation, resources, and educational pieces.
- Ask yourself and your child the miracle question, "If you woke up and your life was exactly the way you wanted it, what would be different?" Use that to help define therapeutic goals for your child and your family.

Cultivate communication

- Ask your child if they have concerns or questions about therapy. Help them understand what to expect.
- Make a plan for when things go south – if this happens, then we'll do this.
- Play 20 questions to practice engaging in conversations.
- Practice asking feelings questions versus yes/no questions. Try our Feelings Tic-Tac-Toe or Dice Game to start these conversations.
- Play a board game together – creating a space for fun and connection.

Take care of yourself

- Join a support group.
- Connect with other parents with similar challenges.
- Look into therapy for yourself.

Respect boundaries

- Explain to your child what you will discuss with their therapist and what remains between the therapist and the child.
- Carve out a private space in the home if you are doing telehealth.
- Don't eavesdrop on your child if they are having a private session.

Create a calm environment at home

- Go for a nature walk with your child.
- Establish consistent routines.

