

Supporting Your Child's Journey In Therapy

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When a child or adolescent is diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disorder, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or a Learning Disability (LD), counselling is often incorporated into their treatment plan. Counselling can help your child manage their symptoms, develop coping strategies, and enhance their overall well-being. Growth, however, does not occur in isolation. Your child, their therapist, teachers, doctors, and you all play a role. When you view your child's counselling as a collaborative endeavour, you lay the foundation for greater understanding, progress, and long-term success. This article aims to empower you to actively participate in and support your child's therapeutic journey.

Understanding the Diagnosis and Treatment Plan

Understanding your child's diagnosis is an essential first step. Take time to learn about your child's diagnosis and what it means for their daily life. ADHD and LDs can affect attention, memory, impulse control, and how your child processes information. The better you understand their challenges, the better you can support and advocate for them.

- **Find Reliable Sources:** Start by seeking reliable information and resources to better understand your child's diagnosis. Read books and articles written by experts in the field of ADHD and LDs. Visit websites from reputable organizations like [CADDAC](#) (Centre

for ADHD Awareness Canada) or [Understood.org](https://www.understood.org) that offer evidence-based articles, guides, and practical tools.

- **Consult Professionals:** Speak with your child's doctor or therapist to discuss their specific diagnosis, symptoms, and treatment options. Furthermore, connect with their teachers to understand how the diagnosis impacts your child's learning and behaviour in the classroom. Remember: don't hesitate to ask for personalized resources that address your child's unique needs.
- **Attend Groups:** There are various workshops, webinars, and support groups designed for parents navigating similar challenges. In addition to gathering information, these opportunities can connect you with a community of other parents for support.

Take a Collaborative Approach

When supporting a child with ADHD or an LD, collaboration is a valuable asset and ingredient for success.

- **Integrating Skills into the Home:** Collaboration strengthens the connection between the therapy room and your family's routines. Find out what skills or tools your child is learning during counselling and find opportunities at home to allow your child to practice. By applying the skills at home, your child will be able to practice in a space they feel secure in. This also will increase the frequency of use, which can increase their sense of competency and the likelihood of successfully integrating those skills into their lives.
- **Open Communication:** Communicate regularly with your child's therapist and share your observations from home. Are certain strategies proving effective? Are new

challenges emerging? Your insights offer valuable context that can help shape the direction of therapy. Additionally, be open to the therapist's feedback and recommendations. This collaborative, responsive approach increases the likelihood that your child's needs will be fully addressed and supported.

- **Consistency Across Domains:** Collaboration does not end between you and the therapist. Work with doctors and teachers to ensure all are on the same page on how to support your child best. This can also help provide your child with a consistent, coordinated approach across various areas of life. When strategies are applied regularly across settings, such as home and school, children are better able to understand and adapt to expectations.
- **Involve Your Child:** Make sure your child feels involved in the process. Use age-appropriate language to explain why you are implementing a particular strategy and ask for their thoughts or ideas. Children are more likely to engage in the process and feel empowered to make changes if they feel respected and heard. For example, if the therapist suggests a visual schedule to help your child transition between activities, make it with your child. Let your child pick out colours or stickers to personalize it, turning it into something they are excited to use.

Fostering a Growth Mindset

A *growth mindset* refers to viewing challenges as opportunities for growth and that one's abilities can be developed through effort and perseverance. By fostering this mindset in your

child, you communicate that their abilities are not fixed but can be improved with hard work and dedication.

Here is how you can cultivate a growth mindset in your child:

- **Focus on Effort, Not Just Results:** Praise the effort and persistence your child shows, not just their achievements. This encourages them to keep trying, even when tasks feel difficult.
- **Reframe Setbacks:** Help your child view mistakes as part of the learning process and opportunities for growth. When they encounter challenges, explain that failures can lead to valuable insights and improvements.
- **Model a Growth Mindset:** Kids often mirror how we handle our own challenges. Show them that it is okay to struggle and make mistakes. If you say things like *“I don’t have it all figured out yet”* or *“That didn’t go as planned, but I’ll try a different approach next time,”* you are demonstrating that learning from challenges is an opportunity for growth.
- **Encourage Positive Self-Talk:** Teach your child to use positive affirmations, such as *“I can do this”* or *“I’ll keep going, even if it’s tough.”* This helps them develop self-confidence and resilience.

Practice Self-Care

When a child begins therapy, it can be easy to place all focus on *their* progress and healing. However, a crucial, yet often overlooked component of successful outcomes for children is the well-being of their parents. When you’re feeling balanced and recharged, it’s easier to stay patient, consistent, and understanding, even during tough moments. Additionally, by practicing

self-care, you're showing your child how important it is to manage stress and find healthy ways to maintain balance in life. Therefore, as a parent, make time for hobbies, lean on your support system when needed, and prioritize your well-being. Sometimes, this may include reaching out for therapy resources for yourself.

Final Thoughts

It is important to remember that therapy is not a quick fix. Some weeks will bring visible breakthroughs, while others might feel like setbacks. Progress is not a straightforward path, and that's normal. However, by following these guidelines and working closely with your child's therapist, fostering a positive and supportive environment, and making time to care for yourself, you can provide the support and encouragement to help them on their journey.

Additional Readings

[Learning Disabilities & Differences: What Parents Need To Know](#)

[Parenting a Child with ADHD](#)

[Parent Self-Care](#)

Smart But Scattered by Peg Dawson, EdD & Richard Guare, PhD

Thinking Differently by David Flink

Mindful Parenting for ADHD by Mark Bertin, MD

Resources

[Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada](#)

[Understood.org](#)

[ADHD Resources - CanLEARN Society](#)

[Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta](#)

[How To ADHD](#)

[Children's Mental Health Learning Series](#)