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## How a Counselor or Therapist Can Help Your Child and Family

Emotional and behavioral issues are often “part of the package” when you have a child with learning or attention problems. When your child’s low self-esteem, lack of social skills, or discipline issues start to interfere with your family’s everyday life, it may be time to call in a professional counselor or therapist to provide help. Below are some basic questions you might have about engaging a therapist, followed by information and suggestions.

### What are some ways that a professional counselor or therapist might help our family?

It’s hard to watch your child struggle unsuccessfully with difficult feelings or behaviors. A good therapist is skilled at helping your child identify and address feelings and behaviors that are keeping her from doing well at home or in school. In addition to addressing immediate issues, a good therapist can also offer your family some broad, long-term benefits, such as:

- Having someone who knows your family who you can turn to in the future, whenever your child or family needs help to address a problem
- Having a caring, objective adult who can provide information about topics that have become too sensitive or difficult to talk about in the family, such as medication, behavioral interventions discipline or sibling issues
- Hearing your child’s competencies, strengths, and gifts described by an objective “outsider” who has worked with lots of kids and families
- Being recognized by another adult for your own strengths and competencies as a parent
- Providing you a regular break from attending to your child’s needs.

### How do I find a good therapist?

Your choices and access to therapists may depend on the size and location of your community, your health (or behavioral health) insurance coverage, and your financial resources. One of the best ways to look for a skilled, experienced therapist is to get recommendations from people you know and trust. For example, the psychologist who sees your child at school may also work with children in private practice. Or he may know of other therapists who have a history of working successfully with children with learning and/or attention problems and their families. A pediatrician, or a prescribing physician for a child taking medications, are other sources of recommendations.

Therapists may have any of several types of college degrees and licenses, including:

- **Clinical psychologist (Ph. D. or Psy. D.), Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), or Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT):** Provide non-medical diagnoses and therapeutic treatment of emotional and behavioral problems;
- **Child psychiatrist (M.D.):** Specializes in the assessment and treatment of emotional and behavioral issues; is a medical doctor who can prescribe medication.

