

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: I'm thinking of taking my daughter to a counselor. How should I go about this action?

ANSWER: When your child exhibits persistent and/or unusual emotional or behavioral problems, it is often wise to seek professional help. **GO WITH YOUR GUT!** If you believe your child may need professional help, do not hesitate to find out.

Sadly, many people often spend more time and effort in selecting a new car than they do in seeking professional counseling help. When seeking a professional counselor*, consider the following:

1. Consult with your child's pediatrician.
2. Talk to your insurance representative. Professional counseling usually requires a referral from your primary care physician. You may have to select a counselor from a preapproved list. If you are willing to pay out of pocket, expect \$80 to \$120 per session.
3. Most insurance plans allow for 8 to 16 sessions at 80 to 100%.
4. Consider your faith. Talk to your child's pediatrician and your insurance representative about a Christian counselor. (Not someone who is a counselor who happens to be a Christian, but a Christian who actively involves his faith in his counseling model of therapy.)
5. Ask for a no cost initial interview to see if the counselor is a good match for your child.
6. Solicit observations and facts from your child's teacher, childcare provider, church youth leader, and coaches to gather as much information as you can about how your child acts in different surroundings.

Once you are granted an interview, obtain answers to the following questions:

1. Ask for a "disclosure statement" and read it carefully. You should be given the opportunity to ask questions. This statement should include information about the counselor's educational background, licensure, the number of years the counselor has practiced, and the model of psychotherapy that will be used.
2. Ask about the fee structure and how payments will be made.
3. Ask in what areas the counselor specializes. If you don't hear the areas you are interest in, find someone else.
4. Ask how the family will be involved in this therapy. (In non-organic disorders, a child's behavior is always a function of the family dynamic. Working with a child in isolation is to ignore the relational component of mental disorders. Even with purely organic mental disorders there is tremendous overlap into the emotional, social and spiritual realms of life.)
5. Ask what types of evaluation will be used.

As a Christian, hopefully you want a counselor who is more than just a behaviorist who is only concerned with changing a behavior. Make certain your child is comfortable with the counselor. Counseling can be frightening and exhausting for anyone, especially a child. Have an ongoing dialogue with your child about how things are going. Pray hard about your part in this process. You can terminate counseling, which is not court-ordered, at any time. You can file any grievances against your counselor with the Colorado State Grievance Board.

*Note: The terms “counselor”, “psychotherapist”, and “therapist” are often interchanged. Psychotherapist and psychotherapy have legal definitions according to C.R.S 12-43-701(9). Psychotherapists include: school psychologists, clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists, certified drug and alcohol counselors, clinical psychologists, professional counselors, licensed or unlicensed. Religious counseling (spiritual counseling and/or mentoring) and psychotherapy may overlap, legally. In deciding whether or not psychotherapy has occurred, 16 factors are analyzed by the State Grievance Board.

“The purposes of a man’s heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.” Pr. 20:5

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