

# Psychological Counselling and Treatment for Children

This handout is prepared for parents/caregivers whose children have begun psychological counselling and treatment with a psychologist.

## What are the qualifications of a Psychologist at *childpsych*?

All psychologists complete 6 years of full time training in psychology. It is illegal to call yourself a psychologist in Queensland if you have not completed the training and become registered. At *childpsych* all our psychologists hold postgraduate (advanced) training in one or more areas of clinical, educational & developmental and counselling psychology. Postgraduate training is undertaken in psychology when the psychologist wishes to specialise in a particular area.

Training in psychology is one of the most rigorous professions covering internships, many hours of professional supervision and research. At *childpsych* all psychologists must demonstrate recent professional development.

## What is the psychological counselling approach taken at *childpsych*?

All psychologists are trained in what's called the scientist-practitioner approach. This means we take a scientific approach to treating children by: only using approaches that have research support for the child's problems, monitoring the child's progress in treatment and making adjustments to our approach.

Our main approach is child-friendly cognitive behaviour therapy. See below for more information.

We also believe VERY strongly in working with parents to give them the skills to manage their child's problems also. This ensures that should the problem come back, the parents will know how to handle it again. All the research suggests that this is the best approach to helping children. In our sessions we do not spend time exclusively with the child, but also will set aside time to talk with the parents.

We provide parents with a Psychology Management Plan which outlines all the sessions, what skills are being taught, what the homework assignments are and so on.

## What is child-friendly cognitive-behaviour therapy?

Child-friendly cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) has a lot of research support for being one of the most effective approaches for childhood problems such as anxiety, depression and behavioural problems. Selecting psychological approaches that has research support is called "evidence-based practice". Most people will be familiar with CBT's techniques such as "positive reinforcement", "time out" and "negative reinforcement".

CBT is about learning about yourself and learning SKILLS to manage your condition. Children's problematic behaviours are changed through controlling thoughts and behaviours so they learn new and better ways of thinking and behaving. This is developed in children in a way that is developmentally appropriate. For example, we may use a play therapy approach or paint and draw or read a story and then make a poster. Some older children prefer to just sit and talk and this is fine also.


## How do I know my child is getting better?

All children progress in therapy differently. You may have been referred to us by a friend whose child got better in a few weeks while your child seems to be progressing only slowly. This is often seen in treatment and does not mean something is wrong with your child or that treatment isn't working.

Children (and adults) tend to improve in therapy between sessions not when they're in sessions. This is because they get to think about their problems more clearly and get to practice the skills they have been taught. For some children progress is slow with improvements seen over months, rather than weeks. Improvements can also "spill" over into other areas. For example, your child may be treated for separation anxiety but you begin to notice he /she becomes more caring towards their siblings, less easily upset when in trouble and so on.

## Can you guarantee my child will get better?

Unfortunately we cannot, or any other self respecting psychologist, make this guarantee. This is because treatment of emotional and behavioural problems is complex and depends on a number of other factors such as parent involvement, the child's motivation and so on. However, we can assure you that the strategies used to assist you and your child are based on sound research that we call "evidence-based practice" and are considered the best approach to helping your child.

  
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PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE

