Kinship Connection

April/May/June 2012

Seeing A Therapist

By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin - ARW/FCARC

You know you need some help. You are really suffering. Intense painful feelings won't go away. You feel awful and don't know how to change it. You know you are acting in a way that makes you feel worse and bothers other people. But you don't know how to change how you act or how to feel better. Talking to a therapist may be what you want. You may really need to see someone to help you work out some things.

Or you might feel just the opposite - that a therapist is the last person you want to see, but the adults in your life "make" you go. Their intentions are good - they know that working with a therapist can help kids feel better, work out tough issues and learn ways to handle problems. They think you may be able to get some help in therapy.

Lots of kids are embarrassed about seeing a therapist. Some don't want anyone to know. Others think it's boring. Some are uncomfortable sitting in a therapist's office. Or some may want help and feel the therapist doesn't understand at all.

Therapy isn't always comfortable. Therapy is a process to help you know yourself and learn how to handle your problems in ways that work. It requires hard work, honesty and facing difficult emotions like fear, anger and sadness. Working out problems in therapy isn't easy and takes time.

It's hard to know what to expect when you first see a therapist and how to get the most out of therapy. Here are some myths about therapy and some truths that may help you get a good perspective working with a therapist.

Myth #1
Seeing a therapist means I am crazy. Teens - and others - see therapists to help them work through difficult times, feel less sad or just plain vent. It's a safe place to focus on yourself and learn to deal with problems. It doesn't mean you're crazy. It means that you are facing some tough stuff in your life, just like most kids in foster care have faced.

Myth #2
Being in therapy is a sign of weakness. It takes courage to change things about yourself and to work through personal issues that may be making you miserable.

Facing yourself and changing what you don't like isn't easy. If you've been in the system, you may have faced some difficult times - some things that - no one should have to face. This takes a lot of strength.

Myth #3
You can fix yourself alone. Sometimes a therapist will see you alone. But often he or she will have your foster parents or other family members included in part of your sessions. In most situation, you will still have confidential conversations with your therapist, but your parents (or foster parents) may sometimes be called in, too.

We don't live alone, and your family needs to know how they can help you and make the changes they need to make. Those who are living with you need to understand you, support you and learn how to best care for you, whether you are one month or 18 years. As the song says, "we get by with a little help from our friends."

Myth #4
The counselor magically changes you. A counselor is there to help you look at what is hard in your life and help you work on goals that you want to work on. He or she may be able to help you make some changes that will help you become happier and make your life easier. Meeting with a therapist isn't magic, but it's a change to get a glimpse of yourself and what you can do to make your life better. It's hard work - not the counselor - that makes your life better. Remember that. You make the change.

Myth #5
Therapists are all the same. You should probably go to a therapist more than once before you decide whether you can relate to that person or not. If you can't relate, discuss it with the therapist - a good one will want to discuss it. Tell your worker or foster parent that you just don't relate, but be prepared to have some good reason. You might have to try a few before you find the right one.

Greta Anderson, a former youth in care, says "I didn't understand why therapy was so important until after I met my 5th therapist. She listened, offered support, but most important of all, she became personally invested in my well-being and I trusted her."

Greta goes on to say, "I knew that even when I moved around and had to be tough, in her office once every two weeks, I could just cry and tell her how scared I really was. Everyone deserves a place like that."

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Relative Caregivers Support/Education Group

Help Us Help You!
Bring ideas to provide topics for discussions that will be informational as well as beneficial to you and your families.

Starting in May, the Relative Caregiver Support Group will be held on the Third Tuesday of the month except in July

May 15, 2012
June 19, 2012
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Refreshments will be available

Parents Place
1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI
262-549-5575

Free Childcare - Call Parents Place to reserve your spot!

Please RSVP To Janis or Libby
Janis Ramos 262-896-8069
Libby Sinclair 262-548-7277

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Greta is currently in college and hopes to go to grad school to become an art therapist.

Myth #6
The rest of the world doesn't have any problems. This is not true. Until the world is better educated about mental health, this myth will continue. Bodies get sick: people get colds, flu and some get terrible diseases like diabetes or cancer. But there are very few people who don't ever have an illness.

It's the same with the mind. When you look around at school and others seem to have happy perfect lives, it's just not so. Most people suffer different mental illnesses during their lifetimes. Studies indicate that 8 out of 10 people will have a least one episode of major mental illness during their lifetime. Some experts think the number is higher than that.

Some mental illnesses are like dealing with colds and others are like dealing with HIV or diabetes. The brain works because of biological and chemical processes, just like the body. Some people suffer from depression, anorexia, or have a bipolar disorder.

Maybe you are anxious or depressed. It's hard to get through, but some people get over it even without any help. For a long lasting or more difficult mental illness, you need help to get better. Know that there is help out there. Our bodies sometimes need a physician and our minds sometimes need a therapist.

Myth #7
It is your fault if you have a mental illness. If you have been in the foster care system, it's likely you have had some trauma in your young life. Mental illness has many causes, some of which are biological, situational and/or chemical. Sometimes even poor nutrition or poor prenatal care can cause a mental illness to surface.

For some people, mental illnesses are caused by genes that have been passed down in a family. This does not mean that, for example, you will be a schizophrenic if one of your parents is. But you may be more prone to it than others who don't have many people in their family who suffer from schizophrenia.

Until there is a cure for the various illnesses, learning to deal with it with therapy, prescription drugs and support is the way to lead the best life you can.

Myth #8
Therapy is just talking. It's true that a lot of therapists talk and listen, but some therapists specialize in art, music, writing, or groups as important ways to work on issues. If you were in play therapy when you were younger, you know there are lots of ways that therapists work with children. If you are ever not comfortable with therapy, tell your caseworker and foster parent.

Don't Quit!
Sometimes when hard emotions are coming out in therapy, you might want to quit. Think hard before you give up on therapy. When it's hard to deal with some things you are talking about in therapy, it might be exactly those times when you are working out a lot of stuff inside. Try to hang in there. If you do decide to take a break from therapy, that's okay, too. Maybe you'll want to go back in a year...or 10 or 20 years.

No matter how easy other people's lives may seem, everyone has problems. For some, mental health problems will not be a major obstacle. Even then, therapy may really help, along with hard work and persistence to get through bad times.

If you are faced with chronic problems, you'll need hard work, courage, and lots of support. Therapy is often one of the best ways to work through the really tough times in life.

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Parent or GRANDPARENT?

This is the first article we will be featuring that is written by a relative caregiver about their experience. You are encouraged to tell us your story so that we may share it with others. It is through our shared experience that we can support and encourage one another. Please send articles/ inquiries to Janis Ramos at jramos@waukeshacounty.gov or call (262) 896-8069.

Where to begin...never in a hundred years would I have expected to be a parent for the second round. When our children grew up and moved out and on, my husband and I were excited about the opportunity to be able to enjoy our freedom. When circumstances arose and the grandchildren were not in a safe environment, we stepped in to help. At first we were under the impression they would be with us for no longer than 6 months. SURPRISE! My husband and I have had guardianship of our 3 grandchildren since May 2007, going on 5 years. The children were 6 months, 1 1/2, and 6 years old when they joined us.

We love them dearly but also long for the day when we can just be Grammie and Grandpa. We often go back and forth on issues of what's best for the children, but also what's best in keeping strong relationships with their parents. We include both parents in all family events - it is their decision if they are able to tolerate each other during the event for the sake of the children or not. We have never run into a situation they could not attend at the same time. I feel it's the needs of the children that come first. I also believe the children watching how their parents interact with each other and get along is very important. We also have to deal with the "new" boyfriend or girlfriend. We are fortunate to have good relations with the children's mom and dad, or should I say THEY are fortunate to have a good relationship with us! This is where we can go back and forth and back and forth. We also struggle with what's best for US at the time...what do we need; time alone with each other, quiet time, time with our adult friends, and can we have those feelings without feeling selfish? We struggle with the children's emotions going from extreme joy when mommy or daddy call, to sobbing as quickly as they hang up because they cannot see them right at that moment.

We have conversations about not letting the grandbabies go with a parent until they get their "act together" and work towards reuniting with the kids, but feel like that is punishing the little ones and it is not their fault for the situation their parents put them in. Are the parents actually going to get it together or are they comfortable with the way things are? At this point, 5 years later, you wonder. We have friends who have had their guardianship over turned after 10 years. We look forward to the day the children can be reunited with a parent but who knows when and if that will happen.

Local Workshops and Training

Parents Place Programs
262-549-5575
www.ppacinc.org

Prices for some classes may apply. Call 262-549-5575 to register. Free pre-registered childcare is available while attending most classes.
Space is limited.

Love and Logic ®
(Choose one Session)
Mondays, June 4 - 25
5:30 - 7:30 PM

Mondays, August 6 - 27
5:30 - 7:30 PM

Parenting: the Early Years/Born Learning
Tuesdays, April 17, 24 and May 1, 7
5:30 - 7:00 PM

Wednesday Workshops - Making a Change/Goal Setting
Wednesday, April 18, 2012
5:30 - 7:00 PM

Parenting During Crisis
Monday, May 14
5:30 - 7:00 PM

Uncontrolled Child
Tuesdays, May 15 - June 5
6:00 - 7:30 PM

Understanding & Accepting My Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder
Wednesday, May 16
6:00 - 7:30 PM

Anger in Relationships
Wednesdays, June 13 - 27
5:30 - 7:30 PM

Kids Managing Anger
(Parent and Child Class)
Tuesdays, June 12 - 26
5:30 - 7:00 PM

Growing Creative and Happy Kids
(Choose any or all sessions below)
Monday, June 25
1:00 - 3:00 PM

Monday, July 23
1:00 - 3:00 PM

Monday, August 27
1:00 - 3:00 PM

Trauma Informed Care & Parenting

June 14, 2012 from 10:00 AM to Noon
~or~
June 21, 2012 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM
Dr. Mary Hess
Learn how and why trauma affects children's behavior and offer suggestions on how to help them calm themselves and process their reactions.

Retzer Nature Center
S14 W28167 Madison St., Waukesha, WI

Please RSVP to Janis or Shari
Janis Ramos 262-896-8069
Shari Rather 262-548-7267

Car Seat Recycle Day

CAR SEAT RECYCLE DAY: 4/28/12, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Town of Brookfield Fire Department

Is your child's car seat or booster seat:

- Over 6 years old?
- From a garage sale or thrift store?
- Involved in a car crash?
- Not being used and needs recycling?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, please help us get these car seats out of use to ensure more children are traveling safely in our communities. Bring your old car seats to Car Seat Recycle Day, sponsored by Safe Kids Wisconsin and its partners. The seats will be dismantled and materials recycled where possible.

Safe Kids Wisconsin is sponsoring **Car Seat Recycle Day** on Saturday, April 28, 2012 from 9:00 AM- 11:00 AM. This event will be held at the Town of Brookfield Fire Department. Please feel free to pass along this information to your day care families, friends, neighbors or other interested parties.

April 28, 2012
Town of Brookfield Fire Department
645 Janacek, Rd., Brookfield, WI
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

For more information statewide visit www.safekidswi.org or for local information call (414) 390-2178

Waukesha County Car Seat Fitting Stations

Town of Brookfield Police Department
262-796-3798

Lake Country Fire Department
262-363-6436

Village of Mukwonago Police Department
262-363-6436

Muskego Police Department
262-679-4130

New Berlin Police Department
262-780-8106

Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital
262-928-2745

City of Pewaukee Fire Department
262-522-2500

*Please contact *Safe Kids Wisconsin* at 414-390-2178 or www.safekidswi.org for upcoming car seat installations and safety check events.

Reminder…
If any of your information including your address, phone number, cell phone number, or e-mail address has changed, please call or e-mail:
Linda Finn at lfinn@waukeshacounty.gov, (262)548-7254
Deb Fosberg at dfosberg@waukeshacounty.gov, (262)548-7256
Libby Sinclair at esinclair@waukeshacounty.gov, (262) 548-7277
Janis Ramos at jramos@waukeshacounty.gov, (262) 896-8069

Calendar of Important Dates/Events

April 3, 2012..... Relative Caregivers Support/ Education Group
April 8, 2012..... Easter
April 22, 2012..... Earth Day
May 1, 2012 ..... May Day
May 5, 2012 ..... Cinco de Mayo
May 13, 2012 ..... Mother's Day
May 15, 2012 ..... Relative Caregivers Support/ Education Group
May 19, 2012 ..... Armed Forces Day
May 28, 2012 ..... Memorial Day - Waukesha County Closed
June 14, 2012 ..... Flag Day
June 16, 2012 ..... Relative Caregiver Event
June 17, 2012 ..... Father's Day
June 19, 2012 ..... Relative Caregivers Support/ Education Group
June 20, 2012 ..... Summer begins

A Message from Lisa

Lisa Roberts, Manager of the Children & Family Division

I had the wonderful opportunity the other evening to attend a presentation by a Nationally recognized author and pediatrician, Meg Meeker, on "Raising Strong Daughters in a Complicated Culture". It is really tough being a parent these days! I believe the more we can arm ourselves with further education, ideas and support, the better equipped we are to do this demanding job! I have two daughters myself, ages 13 and 9, so I was very excited to hear what Dr. Meeker had to say. I was not disappointed and walked away with some powerful messages and tools I'd like to share with you. Dr. Meg started by talking about the pressure we put on ourselves to be the "perfect" mother, the "perfect" father, the "perfect" parent and really challenged us to consider what that really means…giving our kids the most and best opportunities (running from activity to activity everyday in hopes of having the next All Star athlete, chess player, actor, singer, fill in the blank)? Being responsible for making our kids happy ("since when did that become a parent's responsibility…I don't recall that being my mom's job!")? Always telling our children how fantastic they are at everything so they end up with wonderful self esteem (rather than being honest and realizing they can't be great at everything but helping them learn what their own unique talents and abilities are)? Dr. Meg really encouraged all of us to slow down the frenetic pace and make "face to face" time with our kids a priority. Spend time really **enjoying** our kids and listening as we give them time to tell us who they are. Time where we are not focused on accomplishments, compliance, conformity or message (lecture) giving. Face to face time with our kids regularly, without distraction of electronics, work, others, etc. She challenged everyone in the room to create an "electronic free" evening a week in their homes, no t.v., no cell phones, no video games, no movies, and therefore, no distractions. Dr. Meg acknowledged that anyone can raise "high achievers" … there's a formula out there for that. But she challenged us to balance the time and attention we give to accomplishments, compliance, performance with time spent on character development. Kids determine who they are from the messages they get from us…make sure those messages are ones you want them to hear! Lastly, Dr. Meg stressed the importance of both parents or both mother and father "figures" in every child's life. She quoted research that reported the best predictor of a girl's self esteem in the future was the amount of positive, healthy affection by her father or male father figure. Dads are tremendously important to our girls' healthy development! At first glance, many of these ideas may seem simplistic. But when you consider actually implementing them into your daily life, they become much more complex and complicated. I encourage you to think about how these ideas could enhance your sons and daughters future and I wish you the best of luck implementing them. I would love to hear your thoughts as well as your successes or challenges. Always feel free to email me at lroberts@waukeshacounty.gov.

Lastly, I would like to take a moment to introduce you to Rebecca Hollister, the new Permanency Services Supervisor for Waukesha County. Rebecca comes to us from Milwaukee with over 12 years of Child Protective Services experience in multiple different capacities. Rebecca has been a case worker, CPS supervisor, trainer, worker mentor and program implementation administrator. Rebecca's wealth of knowledge and experience is a great asset to Waukesha. She is a strong advocate for kids, parents and foster parents alike. Rebecca has a thorough knowledge of Chapter 48 law as well as CPS standards and will be a tremendous support to her staff. Please help me welcome her to Waukesha!

Relative Caregiver Support Group

July 10, 2012
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Trauma Informed Care
Janice O'Rourke, LSW
Specializes in working with trauma survivors. She will present on multiple trauma resolution protocols including: Eye-movement, Holographic Memory Resolution, and Emotional Freedom Technique.

Parents Place
1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI
262-549-5575

Free Childcare - Call Parents Place to reserve your spot!

Please RSVP To Janis or Libby
Janis Ramos 262-896-8069
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Very Special Thanks to Maureen Erb for designing and producing our newsletter.