



KRISTINA KOSMAC

STICKSNSTONES

Supporting your Teen through Therapy

Don't expect too much on the first couple of sessions

Often Children can feel intimidated at the prospect of coming to therapy, and for good reason. Before a first meeting, therapists start as strangers.

The first few sessions are often “get-to-know-you” sessions, these sessions will begin slowly and allow your therapist to build an initial connection. Give your child time to build a rapport with their therapist, it is important to encourage your Child, working with Children often involves non-verbal approaches. Kristina incorporates her training in

- Part A – Child centred play therapy
- Sandplay and Expressive therapies
- Child Based CBT, and ACT approaches within her counselling
- Systems work

These approaches are not just playing, developmentally children 12 and under express themselves through play. Their emotions, their thoughts and their feelings.

Give Encouragement, even when it is not returned

Encouraging child to attend their appointments can be challenging. If you are struggling to get them to their sessions don't be afraid to share your concerns with your clinician. It will take time for your clinician to understand your child's reservations and create an environment that is approachable. A parent/ carer attitude towards coming to appointments has a large impact on whether a child engages. Parents/ carers play a critical role in shaping this process, and ultimately in determining the effectiveness of their involvement.

It is important to:

- Never speak negatively about the therapist, if a child discloses that they do not like what their therapist is doing, enquire more and be curious. Continue to remain encouraging, and remain curious if any challenges arise
- Understanding that there will be times when your teen may come out of therapy and experience a range of emotions, sometimes feeling upset, confused, challenged or overwhelmed. It is important for parents and carers to be able to hold these feelings and understand that these are a part the process. The children are often processing what has occurred within their therapy.
- Contact your therapist if you are struggling to hold the emotions that come up
- Understanding that your teen may go backwards before they go forward



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- Be aware of the limitation that a therapist has within her role. Bringing a child to see a clinician can often be anxiety provoking for carers/ parents.

Know what to share with your teen's therapist, and what not to

While intentions are often good, sharing every concern, or every issue you perceive your teen experiencing, can position therapy as overly problem focused. It's important (especially with teens) that they feel they can develop their own relationship with their clinician, one that's not overly coloured by a parental/ carers perspective. If a teenager knows their parent is constantly back channelling information to their therapist, they'll have a hard time ever trusting their clinician, and feeling like they have a truly confidential space. It is important to trust your clinician and understand that she will seek our input if needed.

Give Your Teen Ownership over the Therapy Process

As tempting as it may be to ask your teen questions about her or his appointments, please know, your teen will resist therapy if what she or he said to the counsellor gets back to you—whether it's coerced by a parent or leaked by the therapist. Confidentiality is a cornerstone for successful counselling. Some exceptions exist to confidentiality—ask your prospective therapist about these exceptions.

Offer kids a chance to fill you in about their therapeutic goals, but don't pry for information.

Parents might mistakenly think that their teen never wants to talk to them about their sessions. In my experience, this isn't always the case. Often, teens are interested in keeping their parents informed, but they won't respond well to questions that feel like prying.

Working with teens may involve parents. Carers becoming involved. Be open to this.

Often Kristina will see a child for 1 hour per week, ultimately therapy works best when parents and carers are involved and there is a willingness to follow up / affirm and encourage the strategies provided in sessions.

When a teen is ready and with her permission, Kristina integrates her sessions with children using a family therapy and systemic lenses. Often with your child's permission the therapist will call for a family session, or a parent / carers session, be willing to go! She is a skilled therapist whom is able to maintain a confidential space for the identified client, while also engaging parents in the change process to the extent necessary.

Parenting is hard work, supporting parents is a part of child work. Kristina incorporates her facilitator training and family systems work with her 30 years of experience of working in the community by including evidenced based parents' programs such as

- Tuning into Kids and Teens



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- Bringing up Great Kids
- PARKAS
- Psychoeducation
- Mindfulness

Kristina uses her Circle of security training with strategies that incorporate appropriate responses if children have experienced a significant event such as family violence, bullying, post separation, grief, sickness

Parents/carers play a critical role in shaping this process, and ultimately in determining the effectiveness of change with their child and their involvement.

Assessment

Kristina understands her limitations, she is also aware that it can be impossible to be an expert in everything. Kristina has developed the skills to formulate a thorough mental health assessment having worked in clinical mental health settings. Kristina understand that many behaviours can be linked to genetic and biological factors e.g. autism, anxiety, dyslexia . After assessment Kristina will have the ability to provide the best pathway for you child providing guidance and referral if needed to other professionals such as psychiatrists, clinical psychologists , paediatricians , speech therapist, occupational therapists and G.Ps. her priority is to provide the best holistic care for your child. Understanding that the care for your child may need to take on a systemic approach that entails other professionals.