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A Parents' Guide:

Counselling for Children & Young People



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An Introduction to Children and Young People's Counselling

At Mable Therapy, we understand that every child is unique and may, at times, face challenges that are difficult to navigate on their own. Children's counselling offers a supportive space for them to express their feelings, work through difficulties, and develop healthy coping strategies.

With the right support, children can overcome obstacles, build resilience, and thrive both emotionally and socially.

What Is Children's Counselling?

Children and young people's counselling **provides a safe, supportive environment** where they can explore their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Unlike adult therapy, which often focuses solely on talking, children's counselling can often be more interactive.

Counsellors might use creative techniques like drawing, storytelling or role-play to help children and young people communicate their feelings in a way that feels natural to them.

By creating this safe space, the therapist can build trust with the young person, making it easier for them to open up and share what's happening in their world. For some young people, they may prefer to 'just talk', and that's fine too.

The aim of counselling is to help children and young people understand their emotions, make sense of their experiences, and develop tools to manage any challenges they face.

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Why Might a Child or Young Person Need Counselling?

Children and young people, like adults, experience a range of emotions and sometimes struggle to make sense of these feelings.

While some might need counselling due to a significant life event such as the loss of a loved one, parents separating, or moving to a new school, others might need support with everyday challenges like making friends, dealing with school pressures, or managing overwhelming emotions.

Children and young people may benefit from counselling for a variety of reasons:

- **Anxiety or Worry:** Many children experience feelings of anxiety that can manifest as excessive worry about school, friendships, or other aspects of life.
- **Behavioural Issues:** Sometimes, a child may act out, become aggressive, or have difficulty following rules. These behaviours often signal an underlying issue that they're struggling to manage by themselves.
- **Low Self-Esteem:** Some children might feel unsure of themselves, leading to low confidence and reluctance to engage in activities.
- **Social Difficulties:** Struggles with making or keeping friends, social withdrawal, or difficulties in group settings can also be signs that a child might need additional support.
- **Trauma or Grief:** Children who have experienced significant losses or trauma may need extra support in processing their emotions and making sense of their experiences.

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What Are the Goals of Children's Counselling?

At its core, the goal of children and young people's counselling is to support them in becoming the best version of themselves by helping them understand and process their emotions in a healthy way.

By doing this, we aim to empower young people to develop skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.



Counselling is a journey that supports the young person and the family as a whole. It's a path towards better emotional well-being, stronger relationships, and a brighter future for your child.

Possible Goals for Children and Young People's Counselling

- **Emotional Expression and Understanding:** Helping them identify and express their emotions in a way that feels safe and appropriate.
- **Building Resilience:** Equipping them with coping strategies to manage challenges and bounce back from difficulties.
- **Improving Social Skills:** Helping them with how to interact with others, resolve conflicts, and build strong relationships.
- **Boosting Self-Esteem:** Encouraging them to believe in themselves, recognise their strengths, and develop a positive self-image.
- **Reducing Problematic Behaviours:** Addressing behavioural concerns and helping them find healthier ways to express their feelings.

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When to Consider Counselling for Your Child

As parents, it's natural to wonder when additional support, like counselling, might be the right step for your child. Every child has moments of emotional ups and downs, but sometimes they may need more help navigating their feelings or challenges.

Signs Your Child Might Need Counselling

Changes in behaviour can often be a clue that your child is struggling with something emotionally. You might notice your child withdrawing from activities they usually enjoy, displaying heightened anxiety, or becoming more irritable or tearful.

Other signs include sudden mood swings, trouble sleeping, or changes in appetite. Some children may express feelings of sadness or worry directly, while others may act out at school or home. If these behaviours persist or seem to be impacting their daily life, it might be time to consider counselling.

How to Approach the Topic with Your Child

Talking to your child about counselling can feel daunting, but approaching the subject with openness and care can help. Start by reassuring your child that everyone has feelings that can be hard to understand and that it's okay to ask for help.

You could explain that counselling is a safe, supportive space where they can talk to someone who will listen without judgment. Let them know it's not a punishment or something to fear but a way to help them feel better and more in control of their emotions.

Common Concerns About Starting Therapy

Many parents worry about how their child will react to therapy or whether it's the right decision. At Mable Therapy, we create a warm, engaging environment that helps children feel comfortable. It's normal for children to feel unsure at first, but over time, most begin to look forward to their sessions. With the right support, your child will be on their way to better emotional wellbeing.



We're here if you need us

If you're wondering whether counselling could help your child, we're here to guide you. Our expert therapists create a safe and engaging space for children to express themselves and build resilience.

Get in touch today to learn more or book a session.

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Common Mental Health Difficulties

Anxiety:

Anxiety is a normal response to stress, but for some children and young people, it can feel overwhelming and persistent, impacting their daily life. If you notice changes in behaviour or mood, or if anxiety prevents them from enjoying activities, seeking help early can make a big difference.

Depression:

Depression in children can look like irritability, withdrawal, or poor school performance, not just sadness. If you notice persistent changes in mood, behaviour, or interest in activities, it may be time to seek help. Mable's counselling can provide support, helping them navigate their emotions and regain balance in daily life.

Loss:

Loss can deeply affect children and young people, leading to sadness, anger, or confusion. If they struggle with grief, showing signs like persistent sadness, withdrawal, or difficulty focusing, counselling can provide vital support. Early help encourages healthy coping strategies and creates a safe space to express their feelings and heal.

Trauma:

Trauma can significantly affect children's emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing, often resulting from experiences like abuse or loss. Signs include persistent anxiety, withdrawal, and difficulties in relationships. Seeking counselling can help children and young people process trauma, develop coping strategies, and create a supportive environment for healing and recovery.

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Self-harm:

Self-harm is when individuals intentionally injure themselves to cope with emotional pain. It often signals deeper issues like anxiety or depression. If a young person is self-harming, seeking support from a GP or counsellor is crucial for developing healthier coping strategies and addressing the underlying emotions. Early intervention is vital.

Suicidal thoughts:

Suicidal thoughts in children and young people often arise from overwhelming emotional pain and feelings of hopelessness. Open dialogue about mental health is essential for encouraging them to share their feelings. Immediate support is crucial if suicidal thoughts are expressed, including consulting a GP.

Counselling sessions would focus on building trusting relationships, and ensuring they feel heard and safe while developing coping strategies. Counselling should not be used as a crisis service; for immediate concerns, call emergency services.

Anger:

Anger is a natural emotion, but for some children and young people, it can become overwhelming and difficult to manage. It may manifest as irritability or outbursts, impacting relationships and school performance. Understanding the root causes and learning healthy coping strategies through counselling can help children express their emotions constructively and improve their overall wellbeing.

Mable works with all of these difficulties and much more. If you have questions about whether we can work with a specific issue, give our team a call on 0800 0248646.

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How to Suggest Counselling to a Child or Young Person

As a parent, suggesting counselling to your child can feel daunting. You may worry about how they will react or whether they will feel judged. However, approaching the topic with care and compassion can help ease these concerns. Here's our top tips for navigating this conversation:

1 Choose the Right Time and Place

Select a calm and comfortable setting for this discussion. Ideally, find a moment when your child is relaxed and open, perhaps during a quiet evening at home, on a log drive or while taking a walk together. Avoid bringing it up during stressful times or moments of heightened emotions, as this can lead to defensiveness.

2 Use Open-Ended Questions

Begin the conversation by expressing your observations and feelings. You might say, "I've noticed you've seemed a bit down lately, and I'm here to listen if you want to talk about it." By framing it this way, you create a safe space for them to express their thoughts. If they share concerns, gently suggest that talking to a professional, like a counsellor, could be helpful.

3 Normalise the Conversation Around Mental Health

Reassure your child that seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness. Share examples of people they admire who have sought help for their mental health. Emphasise that just as someone would see a doctor for a physical ailment, it's just as important that we care for our emotional wellbeing.

4 Give Them A Choice

If your child is open to the idea of counselling, involve them in the process. Discuss what counselling entails and how it can be a supportive space for them to explore their feelings. Offer to spend time with them finding a counsellor together, ensuring it's someone they feel comfortable with. Letting them lead the decision-making process will help them feel in control.

5 Follow Up with Compassion

After the initial conversation, check in with your child regularly. Let them know you're there to support them, whether they choose to pursue counselling or need someone to talk to. Your ongoing encouragement can make a significant difference in their comfort level and willingness to seek help.

By approaching the conversation thoughtfully, you can help your child understand that seeking counselling is a proactive step toward emotional wellbeing.

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More about Mable Therapy

We know that talking about mental health can feel daunting, particularly for children and young people. That's why we've designed a therapy service that makes the process as comfortable and engaging as possible.

Our Platform

Research shows that many children and young people prefer accessing counselling online, as it's less daunting than an in-person session. Mable sessions take place on the Mable platform, custom-built by our team of psychologists, counsellors and software developers to make therapy engaging and motivating.

Our platform features resources and activities that support a wide range of therapeutic approaches, including CBT, solution-focused therapy and person-centred counselling. The gamified technology reduces anxiety and makes sessions engaging. So whatever support your child needs, we have the resources to support them

Our Therapists

Mable has a network of fully qualified, DBS-checked, experienced counsellors with a range of specialisms and expertise. We don't just select counsellors based on their qualifications, we interview each one, and only recruit those that have that 'special spark' needed to connect with children and young people.

Our network of counsellors is UK-wide, giving you lots of choice and a better chance at finding the right match. Our counselling directory allows you and your child to browse our team and choose the person that feels like a good match. If your child meets them and they don't feel a connection, it's really easy to switch and try someone else instead.

Our counsellors adapt each session to the individual needs of the young person. They'll use a range of age-appropriate activities and games, designed to reduce anxiety and and accelerate the therapeutic work. Although sessions are confidential, they make regular contact with parents and carers and will always let them know if they have concerns. It's easy to contact the counsellor, and they'll always do their best to get back to you quickly and answer any questions.

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What Happens in a Mable Counselling Session?

The First Session

In the consultation session, we focus on getting to know you and your child. You can join the session alone to speak with the therapist, join together with your child, or allow your child to meet the therapist on their own—it's entirely up to you and what feels most comfortable.

This initial session is all about building trust and understanding your child's needs. Within 24 hours, the counsellor will call you to discuss the next steps, ensuring you feel informed and supported as we move forward with the best approach for your child's wellbeing.

Counselling sessions are not one-size-fits-all.

Some children may work through emotions with creative activities like drawing or storytelling, while others might benefit from guided conversations or therapeutic games.

Every session is designed to meet your child where they are, helping them grow at their own pace.



Ongoing Counselling Sessions

If you choose to continue, you and the counsellor will agree a regular session time where they'll work with your child. This is usually on a weekly basis.

Sessions are designed to be interactive and tailored to your child's needs, ensuring they feel safe and understood. Each session usually begins with a "check-in," where the therapist will ask how your child has been feeling and what's on their mind.

From there, they'll engage in activities and conversations that help them explore their emotions, build coping strategies, and develop resilience.

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Our therapists use technology in a way that mirrors the apps and platforms your child is familiar with. This helps reduce their anxiety and makes the therapy feel relatable.

Communicating with Parents

While counselling sessions are a confidential space where your child can feel safe to express their thoughts and emotions freely, we also understand the importance of keeping you informed and involved in their overall wellbeing.

Our sessions are private, and we don't provide written reports or share specific details about what's discussed in therapy. This confidentiality allows your child to open up and engage fully in the process, knowing that what they share stays between them and their therapist.

However, at Mable, we do believe in regular communication. Our therapists will check in with you to provide general updates on how your child is engaging with therapy, and we're always here to answer any questions or concerns you may have about the process.

For Different Age Groups

We understand that children and young people of different ages process their emotions in different ways. For younger children, we use play-based therapy, which allows them to express their feelings through imaginative play, art, or stories. This approach feels natural and non-threatening, helping them open up in a way that's comfortable.

For teens, therapy is often more talk-based, with conversations centred on what's going on in their lives, any challenges they face, and how they're feeling emotionally.

However, we still incorporate creative elements—such as journaling or digital tools— when needed. This can help to keep sessions engaging and relevant to their interests.



If there are any significant concerns or important issues that arise during therapy, we'll reach out and discuss the best way forward to support your child.

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The Dos and Don'ts of Supporting Your Child with their Counselling



If your child is seeing a counsellor, you're taking an important step in prioritising their mental health. This shows them that their feelings matter and that it's okay to seek help. As they work through complex emotions, you may already be witnessing positive changes in their behaviour.

However, it can be challenging to know how best to support your child throughout this process, especially since counselling sessions are confidential. Here are some dos and don'ts to help you navigate this journey together.

Do: Give Them Space

While it's natural to want to check-in on your child's feelings, it's equally important to allow them some breathing room. If they're attending counselling sessions, this indicates they're motivated to work on their mental health. Instead of probing for details about their sessions, create a calm and supportive environment at home. Your child will appreciate knowing you're available if they wish to talk.

Don't: Set the Counselling Agenda

It can be frustrating if your child seems reluctant to discuss certain issues in therapy. However, pushing them to address specific topics can undermine their autonomy and engagement. Your child may be processing feelings in ways that feel safe to them, and their counsellor will help guide them through these discussions.

Do: Practice Active Listening

When your child shares their feelings, focus fully on what they're saying. Active listening means putting aside distractions and engaging with empathy. You don't need to provide solutions; sometimes, simply being present and acknowledging their feelings is enough.

Don't: Overreact to Their Disclosure

If your child opens up about troubling feelings or behaviours, it's vital to remain calm. Reacting with alarm can discourage them from sharing in the future. Instead, thank them for their trust and consider seeking additional guidance from their counsellor.

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Do: Talk About Your Own Mental Health

Sharing past struggles can help normalise conversations about mental health. Discussing your own experiences in a safe, reflective way can empower your child and remind them they're not alone. Only do this if it's a topic that is no longer difficult for you and you can reflect on safely.

Don't: Dismiss Their Feelings

It's important to validate your child's emotions rather than downplay them. Every feeling they experience is significant. Take the time to listen and empathise, allowing them to express their concerns freely.

Do: Create Opportunities to Talk

Encourage regular conversations about feelings, but keep it relaxed. Activities like walking the dog or driving can make sharing feel more comfortable and less forced.

Don't: Break Their Confidence

Respect your child's privacy regarding their mental health. Sharing details without their consent can breach their trust. Before discussing their situation with others, such as family members or friends, ask yourself if it's appropriate.

Parenting can be overwhelming, and it's common to feel uncertain as your child grows. By supporting them to access counselling, you're validating their experiences and nurturing their self-esteem. Let them know you're there for them, no matter what.

Your support can significantly enhance their experience of counselling and help them feel secure and understood.

Here if you need us

We're passionate about helping children and young people with their mental health. If you have any questions about whether our service could work for your family, please give us a call. We'd love to talk to you!

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