



# Guide to Choosing a Child Therapist

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# How Do You Know If Your Child Needs Therapy?

## (And How to Pick a Child Therapist)

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### The Obvious

Check any that apply to your child:

- Your child has been sexually abused or a perpetrator on someone else
- Your child is suicidal, hurting himself, or talking about wanting to die
- Your child is physically violent with you or other people
- Your child has a sudden change in mood or behavior that worries you
- Your child asked to see a counselor

If you marked yes to any one of these, you should definitely seek immediate assistance.

#### These children need immediate attention.

- ✓ If your child has been a victim of sexual abuse or any other type of abuse, report it immediately to the local authorities. To **report child abuse** or neglect in **Tennessee**, call the **Child Abuse Hotline at 877-237-0004**.
- ✓ If your child is making statements or taking steps to harm himself or others, seek emergency assistance at a local hospital by calling 911 or going to an emergency room. In Tennessee, you can also have Mobile Crisis Assistance come to you by calling **Alliance Healthcare Services at 901-577-9400 or 901-577-9400**.

### The Concerning

Check any that apply to your child:

- Your child seems depressed, anxious or moody more than usual
- Your child is having academic or conduct problems at school
- Your child has experienced a life-changing event (divorce, death, traumatic event, change in school, change in environment, frequent moves, etc)
- Your child has frequent “meltdowns” or problems managing anger/frustration

If you marked yes to any of one of these questions, your child will definitely benefit from outpatient mental health services. These children typically start with weekly or bi-weekly office visits along with parent consultation.

## The Others

Check any that apply to your child:

- You just “sense” that something is not right with your child
- You “know that something is wrong” but can’t figure out what
- You want to help your child learn better coping skills
- You want your child to have a neutral person to talk to
- You are not sure what else to do and just want help and support

If you marked yes to two or more of these questions, your child might benefit from outpatient services. These children typically start out with biweekly on monthly visits, group therapy, or school counseling services.

## How To Pick a Child Therapist?

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The #1 predictor on success in therapy is this thing called “**Therapeutic Alliance**”.

That essentially comes down to:

- ✓ Do you like the person that you are seeing for therapy? AND
- ✓ Do you trust them to help you? AND
- ✓ Do you think that they care about you?

You figure that out by talking with a few therapists and then following your GUT INSTINCT about which one you and your child will LIKE and TRUST the most.

**Some factors to consider:**

### The Obvious

- ✓ **Credentials** (Someone that is licensed to provide mental health services). This could be a psychologist, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker or a Licensed Professional Counselor. In Tennessee, you can verify credentials and read a practitioner’s profile by going here: [TN Department of Health](#)

## The Helpful

- ✓ **Review** their [website](#), social media [profiles](#), and [Psychology Today](#) listing
- ✓ **Call them** and see how long it takes to get a response (most clinicians try to respond within 48 hours)
- ✓ **Talk** to your pediatrician, psychiatrist, school social worker, or friends for referrals.  
Note: It is unethical for mental health professionals to use client testimonials (in most cases) on their own websites. Some reviews are posted on outside websites or even through your insurance company.
- ✓ **Additional Qualifications** or Certifications that set this person above the rest
- ✓ **Experience** with this type of Problem

## The “It Factor”

- ✓ You connect with the person and their initial personality
- ✓ You feel comfortable asking questions
- ✓ You leave the conversation feeling hopeful about the future
- ✓ The therapist seems honest and can tell you why they might be a good fit

Note: a good therapist will also tell you if they are NOT qualified to help you (because it is outside of their scope of practice) and can point you to in the right direction of someone who can help.

## Other Things to Consider

- ✓ Office Location
- ✓ Appointment Times and Availability
- ✓ Fees
- ✓ Insurance Accepted Questions

## What To Say When You Call...

(Use this script to interview multiple therapists and compare your results)

“

Hi, I'm calling to see if you might be a good fit for my child. I am concerned because he/she is \_\_\_\_\_.

1. Is this problem something that **you specialize in**?
2. Are you accepting new patients? (Yes is the answer you are looking for!)
3. Do you accept my insurance?
4. What are your fees?
5. What can I expect at the first meeting?
6. How long is the appointment and do you typically run **on time**?
7. **What can I expect a typical therapy session to “look like”?**

(The clinician should be able to describe if they will see your child alone or with you, if they offer parent consultations and how often, what types of interventions they use – i.e. talk, play, sand, art, trauma-focused, behavioral, etc).

8. **When is your next available appointment?**

Thank you very much for speaking with me. I will be making a decision and will be in touch soon if we choose your services.

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Try to reach out to at least 2 or 3 clinicians in your area. After your call, jot down your IMPRESSIONS here....

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If one stands out, book an appointment and continue the process by meeting in person. Remember, your perception of your ability to work with this person is the most important factor. If a clinician is highly recommended, but “rubs you the wrong way” you might give them a chance with a face to face meeting. But don't be afraid to choose someone else that you “just like better.”

### Is Jennifer Taylor Play Therapy Services a good fit for your family?



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Call 901-579-0242

for a free 15 minute phone consultation  
or email at: [info@jentaylorplaytherapy.com](mailto:info@jentaylorplaytherapy.com)