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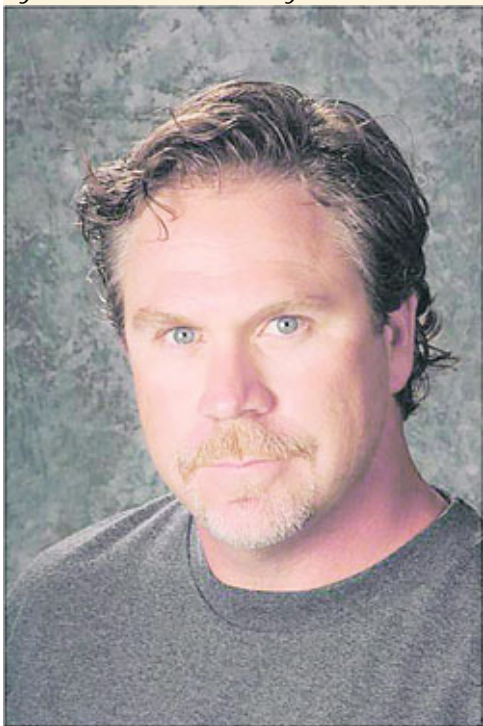
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Dear Dr. Harold, How do I know the difference between normal acting out and if my kid needs to see a therapist?

By Dr. Harold Jules Hoyle Ph.D.



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When our bodies are broken or out of balance, it is often quite clear when we need to go to the doctor and when we do not. When our behaviors, thoughts or emotions are out of balance it can be more difficult. If you have kids now, you were raised in a time when therapy had much more of a negative stigma than it does for the current generation. When Tiger Woods needs a golf coach, it shows our society opening up to the fact that we could all use a little help. I am consistently surprised at how many young people will say, "Yeah, most of my friends have gone to see someone about something", the reality is therapists can be very helpful for folks who are going through a rough transition, so below I will provide you with some tips for knowing when to go and seek help.

Know your kids

One of the first questions a mental health professional will ask you is, "What brings you here and is this a change for your child?" Catching a change in behavior, thoughts, emotions, sleep, eating or interaction with friends is only possible if you know what your kid's behavior is like in those areas. I just listed the first categories that will be of interest to mental health professionals. When and if you go to a professional, you will be asked about these areas, For one kid, deciding to skip a meal is not out of the ordinary, for another it indicates that something needs attention. Your child needs balance. They need to develop their intellect (school, adventure), their body (exercise, sports), their social life (family and

friends), and their spiritual life (your religious tradition and the sense of the beautiful and divine). These are the proactive areas to work on with your kids. The most common areas of distress for kids are anxiety, depression, anger, and developmental issues.

Connect with the school,
and other adults who
interact with you child

You see your child primarily in one of the venues in life; their home life. They spend a great deal of time at school or your house of worship or music lesson or with coaches, siblings or friends. These are all resources for you in collecting the data that you need to make a decision. If the child always has a headache when sport is brought up, but in no other area, then you probably have some work to do in that one area. If all of the areas in your child's life are seeing behavioral changes, you should start looking into professional to work with your child or adolescent.

Next steps when you
think it is time

Get an appointment with your child's pediatrician in order to answer the first question we want answered, "To what degree is there a medical cause for what is going on." If there is a medical issue then any type of talk therapy will not be the whole solution. It could be part of the solution, but not the whole. Once you have taken care of that, many health plans have some short term therapy and can be helpful in diagnosis and short term treatment. Another option is private practitioners. Since children and adolescents are not likely to get up in the morning and say, "Hey mom can I go to therapy today?", finding the right therapist can be important. The therapeutic relationship can be difficult to predict. Spend some time making sure that there is a good match between your child and the therapist. Then work closely with them towards a solution. Good treatment can work wonders.

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