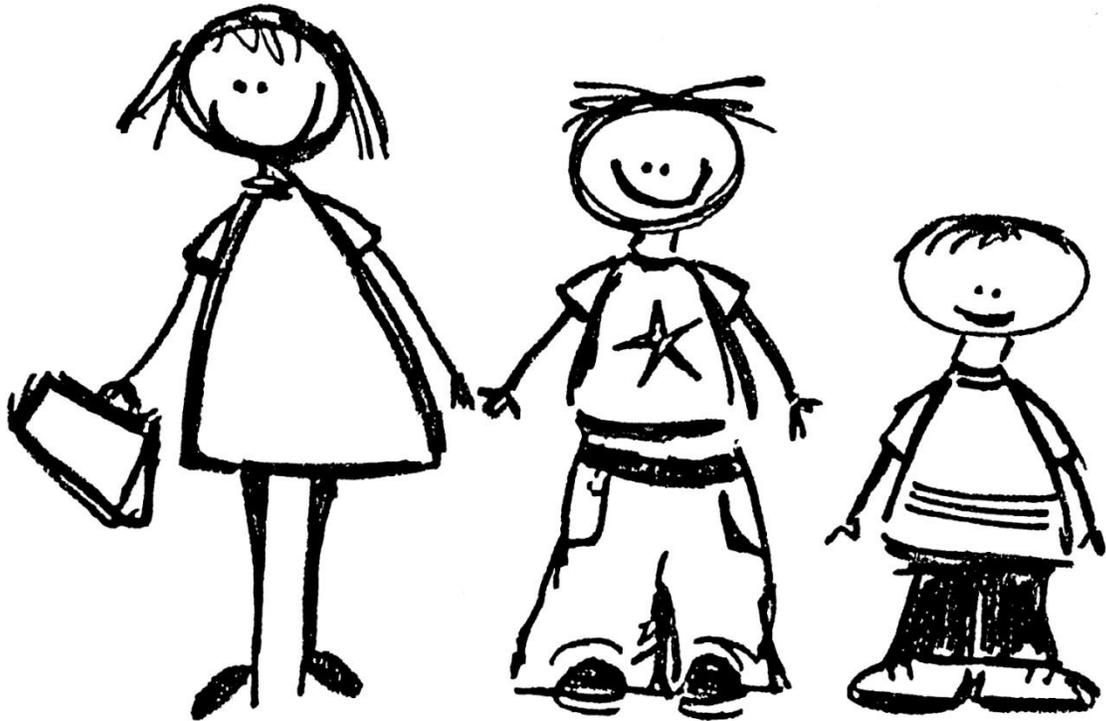


Aiken Barnwell Mental Health Center

Child, Adolescent and Family Services



My name: _____

My therapist's name: _____

My doctor's name: _____

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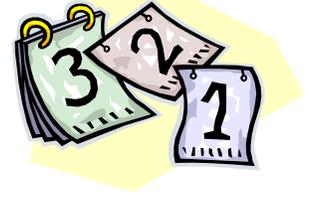
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What to expect...

You're probably here because you're having some problems. Here are a few things that might help you understand how counseling works.



1. Feeling better takes some time. It usually doesn't happen after the first few visits. If you've been having a problem for a long time, it might take some time to work through that problem and feel better. Sometimes, the problems will seem worse before they get better just because we're dealing with them. Don't worry, it's normal. Talk to your therapist if you feel worried that counseling isn't helping you.



2. Our doctors and therapists believe that BOTH counseling and doctor's appointments are important. You can expect to see a doctor within 90 days of your first visit. This is a special kind of doctor called a psychiatrist. He or she will talk to you to see if medication may help with your problem, but your doctor will want you to keep going to counseling, too. You'll see your counselor a lot more than the doctor.

3. Sometimes your counselor will want to see you by yourself, sometimes your counselor will want to see you with your parent, guardian or your whole family and sometimes your counselor will want to talk to your parents without you. This is all normal for helping you and helping families.



4. Every counselor is different. All of the counselors want to help you and want to understand the problems you're having. Some counselors will help you explain what you're thinking and feeling by playing with toys, drawing or coloring, acting it out or just by talking about it.



What is YOUR job in counseling?

1. Come to your appointments, they are made especially for you and your counselor will be waiting to see you. If you miss 3 appointments, or if you do not come to 2 appointments, or if you haven't been seen in 30 days, we'll have to close your case here and you won't get to see the doctor, get any medicine from here or see your counselor until your case is opened again. Be sure to write your appointments on the calendar so you don't forget!



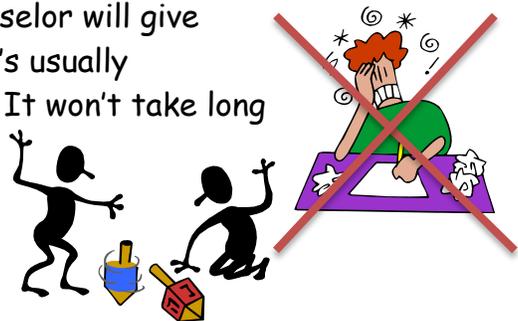
2. Talk to your therapist! If you feel uncomfortable, tell us to help us understand. We want to help make you feel safe and comfortable here.

3. If somebody is hurting you or making you do things that make you feel uncomfortable, it's important to tell your parent, guardian, counselor or another adult as soon as you can.



4. If something is bothering you, tell your counselor. We care about you, but we can't read your mind!

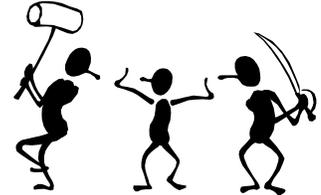
5. Sometimes your counselor will give you homework. Don't worry; it's usually something that will help you feel better. It won't take long and it won't be difficult. Your counselor might even give your parents homework!



Confidentiality

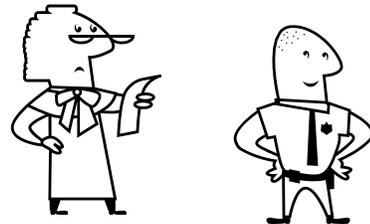
What you say in counseling is personal and what you talk about with your counselor is often private information. We respect that and want to keep your information private. You should know, however, about the times when the law requires us to share your personal information.

1. If anybody in our offices says something that leads us to believe that person may hurt their self or hurt somebody else, we may have to tell to protect you or someone else.



2. If we hear about any abuse or neglect that has happened to anybody under 18 years old or anybody that can't protect themselves, we have to tell.

3. If the law or a judge asks us to give information, we may have to tell.



Other times we may tell

- If you're seeing the doctor for medication, it's important that we both know what's happening with you. Your doctor will already know the basics, but we may need to let the doctor know some things we've talked about in counseling sessions so we can give you the best care.
- Talking to your parents or guardians is an important part of your counseling and your counselor will talk to your parents or guardians about some things. If you have questions about what your counselor will say to your parents, just ask!

Questions you might have

What is ABMHC?

ABMHC stands for Aiken Barnwell Mental Health Center. It's a place where people from Aiken County or Barnwell County in South Carolina can come to get some help when they have problems with thoughts, feelings, behaviors and/or relationships. Some people feel embarrassed about coming to a Mental Health Center, but most people find ABMHC to a place where people care and want to help.

Why do I need counseling?

Lots of kids, teenagers, and grown-ups go to counseling for many different reasons; it's usually because something about life isn't working quite right. A lot of times, kids come to counseling because they're having a hard time at school or at home. Some kids have a hard time keeping their grades up or they get in trouble a lot at school. Some kids feel sad and alone and can't find the right words to talk about their problems. Some kids feel angry almost all the time and don't understand why they feel that way. Some kids have had something really bad or scary happen to them that bothers them almost every day. There are lots of reasons you might be coming to counseling. Counseling will help you understand some of the problems you're having and will help you learn ways to feel more confident in tackling those problems with the help of people that love you. Try to help your family and your counselor help you understand exactly why counseling can help you and your family.

Why do I have to see a doctor?

Everybody that comes to ABMHC will have to see a psychiatrist sometime in the first 90 days. The doctor will talk to you and your family and decide if there is a medicine that may help with some of the problems you're having. Unfortunately, there's no "magic pill" that will fix everything, but sometimes medicine can help. There are medications that can help you pay attention and have more control over the choices you make, medications that can help your mood brighten, medications that can help take away some of the nervousness or worry you may feel, and even medications that can help you get a good night's sleep. Just remember, no medication will make choices for you, that is your job!

If the medicine is working, can I keep seeing the doctor and not see my therapist, anymore?

Our doctors and counselors work together, so if your medicine is working, talk to your doctor or therapist about graduating from counseling and getting your medicine from your regular doctor. Just remember, if you stop coming to your counseling appointments, your case will be closed at ABMHC and you won't get to see the doctor anymore, either.

Note to Parents/Guardians:



- 1. You will need to be present at every doctor and nurse appointment** if your child is on medication unless your child is 18 OR your doctor has already said it's ok for your child to come alone or with another family member.
- 2. You are expected to be involved in your child's treatment.** Some parents will attend every session with their child, some every other session and some only once a month or so; but no child can change alone. Each child needs the help and support of their family. This might mean parents and guardians will have to make some changes around the house. Often, if we want someone in our lives to change their behavior, we have to change ours. You've already done so much by bringing them here for help! Please talk to your therapist if this is a concern for you.
- 3. Please make other arrangements for other children when attending a doctor or nurse appointment** so that it is just a parent or guardian and the child who is a client. This is super important so your doctor can focus on your child and give the best care they can. Talk to your therapist if this is a problem for you.
- 4. You must remain on the premises while your child is being seen.** This is important in case there is information that we may need to discuss with you or if there was an emergency.