

ADVICE TO PARENTS

from a kid who's "been there"

Parents often face difficulties in getting their young one to cooperate and participate in therapy sessions. The very act of getting your child to go may be a challenge or a power struggle. The following is advice from a teen who was very resistant to attend therapy and was willing to share these insights to help parents with understanding some of the perspectives of young patients.

Your kid will not be happy – it's best if you let go of this expectation!

It's going to be uncomfortable for you, the parent. Get used to the discomfort and be prepared for change to take place over time and with persistent, consistent parenting.

The initial drive/motivation for your teen will be to do what's being required in order to get out of therapy/treatment/residential (whatever is the situation). LATER they will move into the desire for change for their own self-awareness, wellbeing and growth.

Your kid will likely just appear to be (and may *actually* be) "going thru the motions" just to "get out."

Kids are in irrational thinking. You have to be the parent.

As a kid, the thought is: "do I want this overbearing parent and the awful feeling of the parent making all the rules to end? I guess I will have to do the therapy then." :-)

A GOOD THERAPIST

Find a good therapist who will recognize that the initial motivation for your kid is to "say what others want to hear" in order to "get out." The best therapists will supportively help the kid stay in that mode long enough to shift into a new level of doing it for the "right reasons."

"This is the right thing to do" was not on my mind, ever. I did a lot of what my mom said was going to have to be done in part because I was genuinely afraid of her (*she's a black belt and can kill with her bare hands*) ;-)

It took me and my mom a good 6 months of 2x per week of sessions to begin to shift. Mom was doing intensive "parenting skills" therapy and working on her own emotion regulation. I was doing a lot of intensive "stress tolerance" therapy, working on learning how to have insight and my own emotion regulation. It helped me that my mom was doing her work. It made me be willing to do mine.

EXPLANATION OF WHY KIDS APPEAR "ABLE" SOMETIMES AND "UNABLE" IN OTHERS

The anxiety and stress of school and teachers and parents and demands all week long were unbearable. My brain in this mode was getting a lot of stimulation and taking on the burden of a lot of expectations I was not equipped to handle.

The reason I would become so happy and full of energy on Fridays was because the anxiety of the demands I couldn't meet was alleviated. There was a genuine release and relief. Knowing I would not have to tolerate that stress for a couple days buoyed my emotional state.