



Talking to Your Child About Seeing a Psychologist

Many parents delay seeking help not because they doubt it is needed, but because they dread this conversation. It is usually gentler than you fear. Six principles that help.

Start here: children take their cue from your tone. If you present it as ordinary and hopeful, it becomes ordinary and hopeful.

1 • Keep the language everyday

“Someone whose job is understanding worries and feelings” lands better than clinical terms. For younger children: “a bit like a coach, but for feelings.”

2 • Choose a calm moment

Raise it during an ordinary, settled time — a walk, a car journey — never in the middle of or straight after a difficult episode, when it can feel like a consequence.

3 • Be honest, at their level

Do not spring it on the day. A simple truthful frame works: “We have noticed things have felt hard lately, and we have found someone whose job is helping with exactly that.”

4 • Normalise it

Lots of young people talk to someone — it is common, not strange, and it is support, not punishment. Make clear nothing is “wrong” with them.

5 • Give them some control

Where possible, let them hold choices: what they share, whether a parent stays in the room, even something as small as when the appointment happens. Control lowers fear.

6 • Promise no surprises — not total secrecy

Do not promise that nothing they say will ever be shared; that promise cannot always be kept. Promise instead that nothing will happen behind their back, and they will always know what is going on.

And if they refuse? That is common, and not the end of the road. Parents can begin on their own — with Dr Millward, the First Step Consultation can happen without your child present, and many pieces of work start exactly that way.

Ready to talk it through? Begin with a First Step Consultation — 90 minutes with Dr Millward, and a written formulation that explains what is going on and exactly what she recommends. → drclairemillward.com

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