



SD5 Counsellor's HANDBOOK





School District 5

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

HANDBOOK FOR SCHOOL
COUNSELLORS

JUNE 2023

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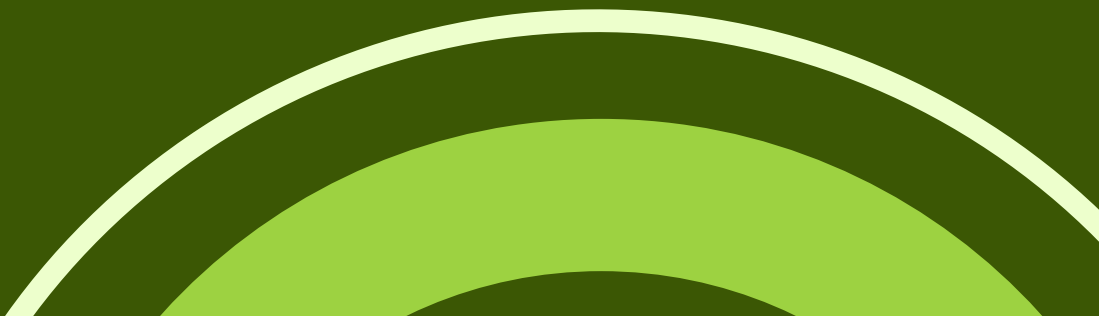
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The Southeast Kootenay School District (SD5) counsellors would like to acknowledge that this document was created on the homelands of the Ktunaxa, and is specifically located within the communities of ʔaʔam and Yaʔit ʔa·knuʔiʔit. who are the original caretakers of the land. It is a privilege to work on the homelands of the Ktunaxa, and the counsellors strive to ensure counselling practices are done from a place of cultural humility and safety.



ʔAQʔAM

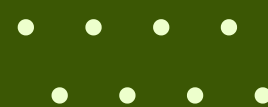


Yaʔit ʔa·knuʔiʔit



KTUNAXA
NATION

Handbook Purpose



This handbook is meant to provide guidance for SD5 counselling practices; it is not meant to be prescriptive or restrictive in nature as the context of each situation will influence our practice

Preamble

Due to changes in society and limited community-based resources, the role of school counsellor has expanded to become a comprehensive array of services for students. Today's school counsellors have a complex role. They must be flexible to provide support for students with academic, educational, social, emotional, and personal issues, whatever the age or grade of the student. School counselling is responsive and relational, involving consultation, coordination, education, and counselling, as the need arises. School counsellors often use a team-based approach, consulting and coordinating with students, parents, teachers, administrators, school support staff and outside agencies as needed. School counsellors are also teachers who offer preventative services and information. Finally, school counsellors provide individual and group counselling.

This handbook has been developed by a Professional Learning Community of School District #5 school counsellors, using a variety of resources, for ourselves and for our colleagues with the support of District management. We foresee benefits in having a common handbook to guide our practice and to orient our new counselling colleagues to the profession. And, just as our roles have evolved and will continue to evolve, we expect the handbook will evolve. If other districts would like to use the information provided in this document for the creation of their own handbook, we ask that you share your intent with us so that we can track the usage of the document.

Qualifications & JOB DESCRIPTION



QUALIFICATIONS

School counsellors must possess a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology or a related field from an institution recognized by the BC Teacher Qualification Service. School counsellors must also possess a professional teaching certificate and be members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. HR will ultimately make the final decision on qualifications.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Given the work being done by the British Columbia School Counsellor Association (BCSCA) on behalf of all school counsellors in British Columbia, it is important to be aware of the role description contained in the Ministry document: Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines. According to the role description contained in this manual (Section D) school counselling provides both intervention and prevention services, including individual, group, and classwork. The focus of school counselling is to enhance students' development, to foster a supportive school culture, and create or highlight opportunities for student to empower themselves toward positive change.

COUNSELLOR ROLES

- promotes personal and social growth from a developmental perspective.
- counsels students and their families to facilitate growth in the students' self-esteem, individual responsibility, decision making, and social skills.
- ameliorates factors which may precipitate problems for students.
- enhances students' educational achievement through goal setting, assisting with the development of SLP's, IEP's and activities, such as promotion of effective work and study habits.
- provides appropriate interventions to assist students with problems and issues.
- Impacting individual success which could include accessing community services.
- facilitates career education by assisting students and their families to investigate career options and post-secondary education, with a focus on personal and academic planning.

RESPONSIBILITIES

A counsellor's first responsibility is to act in the best interest of the student. Counsellors subscribe to the following basic tenets of the profession:

- Each person has the right to respect and dignity as a unique human being and to counselling services without prejudice as to person, character, belief, or practice.
- Each person has the right to self-direction and self-development.
- Each person has the right of choice and the responsibility for decisions reached.
- Each person has the right to privacy and the right to expect the counsellor-client relationship to comply with all laws, policies, and ethical standards pertaining to confidentiality.

Ethical Guidelines & PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

We refer to documents from the following organizations to guide our practice: British Columbia Teacher Federation (BCTF), British Columbia School Counsellors Association (BCSCA), Canadian Counselling, Psychotherapy Association (CCPA), British Columbia Association of Clinical Counsellors (BCACC), SD 5 Partners Handbook and SD 5 Policy and Procedures.

Currently in School District 5, professional development funds will pay for each counsellor's membership in the BCSCA. We believe it is valuable for school counsellors to belong to the BCSCA. Counsellors may also choose to belong to other professional organizations, such as British Columbia Association of Clinical Counsellors (BCACC). In doing so, school counsellors may also look to an aspirational code of ethics, in addition to the above organizations. Recommended Ethical Codes of Conduct include the Canadian Code of Ethics for Canadian Psychologists (Canadian Psychological Association, 2000), the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association Code of Ethics (Canadian Counselling and Psychological Association, 2020), the British Columbia Association of Clinical Counsellors (BCACC, 2014), and the British Columbia School Counsellors Association (BCSCA, 2022).

Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

Even when all legal requirements are followed, a counsellor may still face ethical dilemmas. In such situations, school counsellors should consult with appropriate colleagues and utilize ethical decision-making models. There are several appropriate models that can be utilized and integrated and could include but is not limited to: the CCPA's Principle-based Ethical Decision-Making model, the BCACC Guideline for Ethical Decision Making.

Professional Standards

Teacher-counsellors are expected to seek opportunities to continue their own professional growth either through in-service or professional development opportunities and to work towards the improvement of their profession.

Teacher-counsellors expect ethical behaviour from their professional associates; teacher-counsellors will attempt to rectify unethical behaviour on the part of their associates and will assist colleagues in observing ethical practices related to the work of the teacher-counsellor. Teacher-counsellors, as employees of a school or other institution, accept policies and principles of the institution as a condition of employment unless they conflict with professional standards and ethics. Should this occur, school counsellors are encouraged to consult with other counsellors and District Management. Teacher-counsellors offer professional services only through the context of a professional relationship.

Consent

IT IS THE COUNSELLOR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO INTRODUCE CONSENT/INFORMED CONSENT IN A WAY THAT IS DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE AND RELATIONAL. CONSENT IS ONGOING.

ELEMENTARY

- Informed consent at the elementary level must be from client and parent/guardian. The practice in SD 5 is to obtain parental consent for all counselling services provided to elementary aged students (K-6). We do recognize that situations may vary and that this practice may need to be adapted for the best interest of the child.
- In circumstances where parents reside in the same home or share guardianship, and communicate openly about counselling for their child, written consent from either will suffice. In situations of high conflict and limited communication between guardians, best practice is to obtain consent from both. Creating a family centered approach is helpful when students are accessing counselling to facilitate open communication, sharing of goals, and continuation of care.
- Due to the nature and complexity of counselling in the elementary school it is important to note that not all interactions with the school counsellor will require parental consent. This may include but is not limited to supervision roles, check-ins, and class discussions/lessons. In addition, in the event of safety concerns, elementary counsellors can to meet with a child for risk assessment purposes.
- In the event of a crisis or safety concerns, elementary counsellors can meet with a child to assess concerns without parental consent as per the Fair Notice pamphlet. Please note that the documentation parents/guardians sign upon school registration also speaks to such a scenario, with parents agreeing that student services, such as counselling, may be accessed or utilized during such times.

Consent

IT IS THE COUNSELLOR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO INTRODUCE CONSENT/INFORMED CONSENT IN A WAY THAT IS DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE AND RELATIONAL. CONSENT IS ONGOING.

MIDDLE AND SECONDARY

- The BCSCA notes that middle/junior and secondary school counsellor's role is to provide counselling including personal/social issues, scholastic/educational concerns and career counselling, consultation, coordination of services and education and these roles are interrelated to meet the holistic needs of students.
- The Canadian Counselling Association (2001) includes the principle underlying the concept of the mature minor in its ethical standards for counsellors who work with children. It states: parental right to give consent diminishes and may even terminate as the child grows older and acquires sufficient understanding and intelligence to fully comprehend the conditions for the informed consent. (p.11)
- As such, students from grade 7-12 who display the intellectual capacity to grant assent or informed consent can seek counselling services without the consent of the parent or guardian. This determination is based on:
 - sufficient intelligence to understanding the risks and benefits to engaging in the counselling process along with the capacity and/or ability to give or express consent.
 - the best interest of the student.
 - the ability to understand confidentiality and the limits of.
- Due to the nature and complexity of counselling in the middle and secondary setting it is imperative to note that not all interactions with the school counsellor require informed consent as some of the discussion may be around academics/course selections and changes, referrals to community agencies, and career guidance. Consent is needed when students are receiving continuous and ongoing individual and or group counselling.

Confidentiality

Information received through the counselling relationship is confidential and, as such, the counsellor does not voluntarily share such information without the student's prior consent.

This statement applies equally to session notes, recordings of sessions, assessments, and any other documents used to assist in the counselling process. Notes are to be kept as part of the counsellor's record, but not part of the records kept in the office of the school.

The BCSCA notes that the limits of confidentiality should be made known to students when meeting in private; however, there may be situations and information disclosure that occurs before this can be provided.

Limits to confidentiality:

- 1. **CONSENT:** With the consent of the student, the counsellor may share information received through the counselling relationship.
- 2. **POTENTIAL HARM:** If behaviour of the student threatens potential harm to him/herself or another person, the counsellor shall take appropriate action to protect the student and/or the other person.
- 3. **CHILD PROTECTION:** A counsellor who has reason to believe that a child is, or might need protection, shall report the information to the appropriate authorities in accordance with legal obligations pursuant to child protection legislation.
- 4. **CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION:** A counsellor may consult and collaborate with other professionals for purposes of more effectively helping the student. The school counsellor shall share only such information that will serve the best interests of the student.
- 5. **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:** A counsellor may be required to provide records in compliance with the law. It must be noted that a school counsellor's notes are the legal property of the board. Employees of School District 5 must adhere to district policy, which is under the umbrella of the British Columbia Ministry of Education.

School counsellors work for the Government, therefore the collection, use and disclosure of information are regulated by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA).

Reporting Protocols



Harm to Self or Others: School counsellors have a legal and ethical responsibility to report students at risk. Whom we report to depends upon the circumstances. When assessed as appropriate to do so school counsellors report/inform appropriate authorities (parents/guardians, police, and/or MCFD/KKCFS) when students disclose safety issues. Suicidal thoughts and ideation should be assessed by a school counsellor and when unavailable the student's care should be transferred to someone who has the professional capacity and competency to complete said assessment. When there has been a change in baseline, school counsellors may need to ensure adequate safety planning is implemented based on the information provided which may be connected to behaviours distinct from suicide. It is recommended to consult with other counsellors and document the decision-making process. If information is conveyed to administration, administration may enter their ethical decision-making process which may be guided by district policy and procedures and convey information to appropriate stakeholders.

We must also report child protection issues in accordance with the legislation.

Creating safety while respecting the rights of the student is paramount. School counsellors will strive to find a balance between the student's right to confidentiality and the need to collaborate with others to ensure safety.

Behavioural and Digital Threat Assessment



SAFER
SCHOOLS
TOGETHER

School counsellors are trained and asked to be a part of the Behavioural and Digital Threat Assessment Management (BDTAM) team. The BDTAM Tool Kit is the VTRA assessment that we utilize when assessing a threat. These resources can be found here: <https://saferschoolstogether.com/resources/bdtam-training-resources/>.

Counsellors are consulted (and often asked to follow up on) Worrisome Online Behaviour (WOB). When there is a direct or indirect threat of harm to others, the threat assessment protocol will be activated.

As a member of the school threat assessment team, the counsellor will be involved in this process, as well as delivering or coordinating follow up services to at risk students. Counsellors of SD5 are required to attend training, and new counsellors who have not received training will need to work closely with school administrators, and possibly involve other counsellors who have training when an incident occurs.

Crisis Response

Counsellors may be called upon to support or help coordinate a crisis response at any school within SD5. As per the crisis response plan, this participation would be under the direction of an administrator or district staff member as stated in the crisis response plan. Please refer to your crisis response binder for further information, and ensure you have the most current crisis response plan.



Counselling Notes &

RECORD MANAGEMENT

Counsellors will follow the guidelines of the BCSCA for record keeping and informal notes. These records should be kept for a minimum period of at least one full school year following the last supports provided to a student. Record destruction should occur at two points within the school year: January and June to ensure records are not retained for longer than necessary and are destroyed regardless of content. This aligns with FOIPPA Section 31. Section 31 states to keep records at “least one year after using the record(s) to make a decision about an individual in a way that has an impact on that individual’s life”. It is reasonable that counselling records be kept a minimum of one year after graduation.

The counsellors’ files are their professional property and as such the files should be retained by the school counsellor, stored appropriately, and destroyed within the appropriate time frame. The files can move schools to remain within the possession of the counsellor who had the professional relationship. If the counsellor leaves the district, the files are to be transferred to the district board office to be held with clear instructions as to when said files can be destroyed in compliance with district procedures which aligns with FOIPPA.

Counselling notes should be stored in a secure location. (File cabinet, locked shelf or drawer in a locked room or if online they should be encrypted or in a locked and passcode file).

Counselling Notes:

TIPS FOR KEEPING NOTES

LESS IS MORE

Information collected regarding a student in the school system is protected under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA), but remains property of the School District. Notes made about a student that become part of a counselling file are not confidential to the counsellor but belong to the School District. This applies to both paper and electronic files. While counselling conversations may remain confidential to the participants, records of those conversations are subject to subpoena and requests made under the Freedom of Information Act.

SUFFICIENT INFORMATION

Ongoing counselling notes should include sufficient information to allow monitoring and evaluation of services and timelines by the counsellor. Case files include consultations and referrals made on behalf of the student and relevant details to support student needs. Notes that may be seen by an outside party – such as the student’s parent – can make the student vulnerable if the notes are accessed, especially if the student has been receiving counselling about an issue that is divisive within the family.

Counselling Notes:

TIPS FOR KEEPING NOTES

THINK BEFORE YOU WRITE

Write your notes with the expectation that someone else will read them with a critical eye. Case notes are not a place for counsellors to theorize, but a source of useful facts. Judgmental statements do not belong in case notes.



KNOW THE RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

Have a discussion with other counsellors in your School District to clarify district protocols regarding counselling notes.

Counselling Notes &

CUMULATIVE FILES

SD 5 Counsellors are expected to include a summary of services in the student cumulative file twice yearly for audit purposes for students with an H designation as well as once yearly for students with an IEP designation. In addition, administrators and district staff may request a confirmation of services provided in the school that year and is located typically on the front cover of a student file. Confirmation of services is occasionally filed in by Student Services but communicate and work with the School Based Team on expectations. Students and guardians can access their school file, while most other requests would be in the form of a court order.



Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements & Thanks: Our sincere thanks to BCSCA, CCPA, BCACC, PEI School Counselling Services Standard and Guidelines Handbook for Counsellors, Dr. D McBride, Guidance Council of the Alberta Teacher's Association.

APPENDIX

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Appendix A

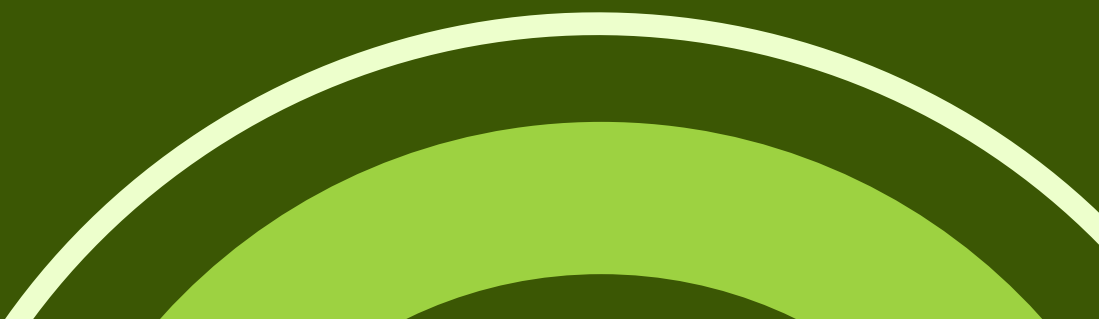
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Appendix B

THINGS YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT
COUNSELLING, BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

Appendix C

QUESTIONS FOR FAMILIES WHEN
CONSIDERING COUNSELLING



Ethical Decision Making Process

CCPA

- Step One - What are the key ethical issues in this situation?
- Step Two - What ethical articles from the CCPA Code of Ethics are relevant to this situation?
- Step Three - Which of the six ethical principles are of major importance in this situation? (This step also involves securing additional information, consulting with knowledgeable colleagues or the CCPA Ethics Committee, and examining the probable outcomes of various courses of action.)
- Step Four - How can the relevant ethical articles be applied in this circumstance and any conflict between principles be resolved and what are the potential risks and benefits of this application and resolution?
- Step Five - What do my feelings and intuitions tell me to do in this situation?
- Step Six - What plan of action will be most helpful in this situation?

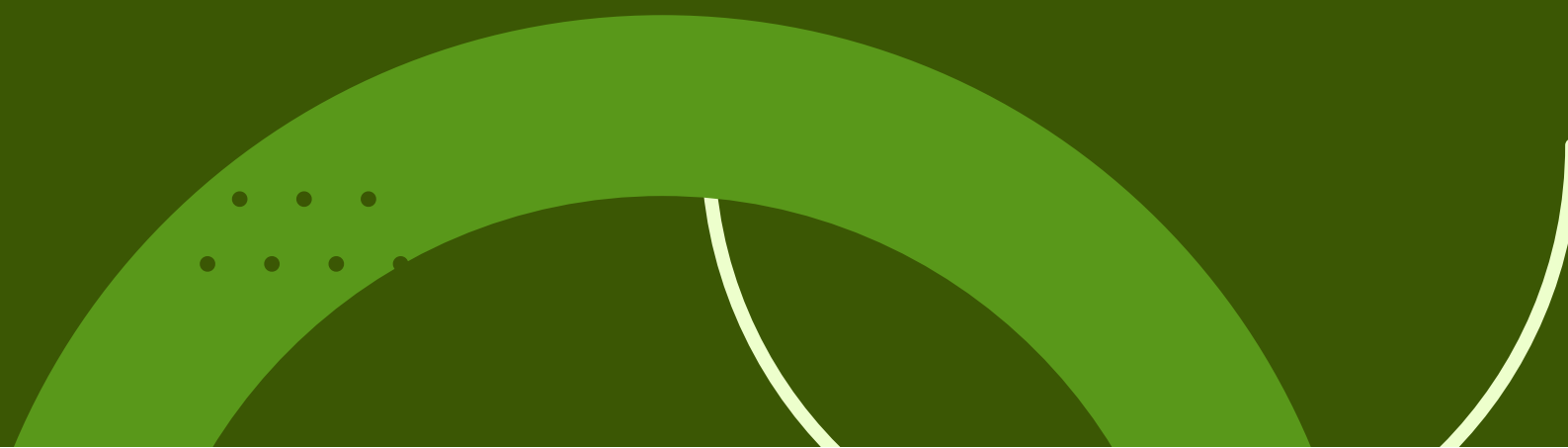
CCPA, 2020, P.3-4



Ethical Decision Making Process

BCACC (OCTOBER 2008)

<https://bcacc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/1BCACC-Guideline-Ethical-Decision-Making-2008.pdf>



Things you wanted to know about counselling

BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

What credentials do the counsellors have that are different from teachers?

- The counsellors are teachers and they also must have a Master's Degree in Counselling/ or other relevant field.

How do I see a counsellor?

- If it is not an emergency some schools may have online booking or a counselling administrator. If neither of these are in place, parents can directly contact the school-based counsellor, request services via the classroom teacher, administration, and/ or student services staff.

You can tell the counsellor as little or as much as you like.

You can stop seeing the counsellor at any time.

The counsellor may also provide support by connecting you with other agencies such as Child and Youth Mental Health, East Kootenay Addictions, Canadian Mental Health (Youth Outreach).

If you are working with a counsellor outside of the school, the school counsellor will make all efforts to not double up on services, and will occupy more of a consultative, coordination and crisis supportive role.

Things you wanted to know about counselling

BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

Will the counsellor tell anyone (ie. teachers, parents) what I tell her/him?

- Generally, what you say is confidential unless you give us permission to share it with someone. In certain situations, we are required by law to tell someone else. We must tell someone else;
 - if you share something that is potentially harmful to yourself.
 - if you share something that is potentially harmful to others.
 - if you share that you or someone else is being physically, sexually or emotionally abused. This would include neglect not caring for basic needs) as well as information regarding an animal that might be neglected or abused.
 - if a judge asks one of us something about you.
 - if you share about past, present or future illegal acts we reserve the right to take appropriate action
 - if the counsellor needs to consult with a counselling colleague or supervisor regarding your circumstances. We keep your personal information out of the conversation as much as possible so that you will not be identified.

Does my child need to see the school counsellor?

- This question comes up for many parents at some point. Maybe your child doesn't seem the same lately, maybe you are noticing unusual behaviours, maybe your child received a recent diagnosis, maybe their teacher is concerned, or maybe they seem sad or anxious. Just like with adults, it is normal (and actually healthy) for kids to go through ups and downs.

Questions for Families

WHEN CONSIDERING COUNSELLING


Are your child's feelings or behaviours impacting their day-to-day life and functioning?

- As counsellors, we care a lot about this question because we get concerned if behaviours or feelings are getting to the point that most days are difficult. Perhaps your child has anger outbursts that are causing them to lose friends. Perhaps your child is so anxious or sad that they no longer want to do activities they would normally enjoy.

What other supports does your child have in place?

- We ask this because counselling may not even be the most relevant support for your child. Perhaps your child is struggling with behaviours that are related to a behavioural diagnosis or a learning disability. While we never like to put things into one box, perhaps behaviour intervention or learning support could be a more relevant support. Another consideration is how busy your child already is. Sometimes overloading a child with support can be overwhelming, and sometimes it even creates the idea for kids that they are not capable of succeeding on their own.

What have you already tried?

- Have you had conversations with your child? Emotional support and validation from a caregiver go a long way. <https://www.mentalhealthfoundations.ca/parent-coaching> has some great videos and resources that we encourage you to look at to help with developing a healthy/communicative relationship with your child. Other ideas that help many families include spending time together outside, doing activities with your child that they enjoy, or even considering getting support for yourselves (as parents). The best thing you can do for your children is to make sure you are getting the support you need.
- 

Questions for Families

WHEN CONSIDERING COUNSELLING

Has the difference in your child's mood or functioning been going on for more than a week?

- There are many reasons your child might be having an “off” day that do not warrant them needing to see a counsellor. There are hormonal times of the month, disappointments that happen at school, fights with friends, and many other reasons they may seem “off.” If you notice your child is still struggling after a few weeks, this might indicate they need some additional support. If you've tried what you can to support them at home and they are still struggling, let's talk!

What do you think they could gain from going to counselling?

- We often hear the message “they just need someone to talk to.” As much as counsellors love listening and talking to kids, we try to encourage you (as parents or caregivers) to try to be this person. A healthy attachment relationship is most helpful and healing when it comes from a regular caregiver, versus a helping professional. Counselling methods vary but can include emotional coaching/validation, problem solving, offering tools for your child, helping your child walk through a difficult memory or scenario to process, and helping them find healthier ways of coping with their challenges. If you are unsure as to whether counselling could be helpful for your child, please reach out and ask. We are happy to point you in the right direction.



When using any of the information contained within this handbook, please cite:

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