

"My Child Is in Therapy... Now What?"

A Sanity-Saving, Role-Clarifying, Growth-Supporting Guide for Real Parents in Real Families

Welcome to the Club of Brave Parents and Healing Kids

Your child is in therapy. That sentence alone is courageous. Whether it's for anxiety, trauma, ADHD, depression, OCD, autism, behavioral challenges — or a combo of all the above — you made the call. You filled out the forms. You sat in the intake.

And now you're asking:

Now what — at home, where I don't always know what to say, what not to say, or how to help my child when they slam their door right after therapy?

This guide isn't about clinical language or treatment plans. It's about how you, the parent, can support the process *without trying to fix it all yourself*.

Why Parent Involvement Matters So Much

You are the **bridge** between therapy and the real world.

- Kids spend 1 hour in therapy. They spend **167 hours with you**.
- Your child's therapist can teach skills — but you help your child **practice and believe in them**.
- You are the model, the anchor, the translator, and the safe place — *even when things feel messy*.

Research shows that **therapy is more effective** when parents are involved — not just *present*, but *active participants* in the work of change. This is why we often recommend co-occurring parent coaching. So that while your child is doing their own work in therapy, you are learning how to reinforce this at home.



Common Questions Parents Ask (And Real Answers That Help)

1. "Do I go into sessions or not?"

- ✓ Kids and teens often need solo time, *however* parent check-ins are A-OK!
 - 🧠 You don't need to be in the room to be part of the work.
-

2. "What do I say when they don't want to talk about therapy?"

- ✓ Respect the boundary.
- Say:

"You don't have to share anything you're not ready to. Just know I'm here when you are."

- 🧠 The goal isn't extraction. It's safety.
-

3. "Can I give the therapist feedback or raise concerns?"

- ✓ Yes. Always. Kindly and directly.
- Say:

"I noticed my child seems more anxious after sessions — can we talk about how to support them?"

- 🧠 You are a key source of information. You deserve a voice in the process.
-

4. "What if I feel like *I'm* the problem?"

- ✓ Join the club. That means you're self-aware, not guilty.
 - 🧠 The best support you can offer your child is **doing your own work too**. Consider parent coaching, your own therapy, or reading about your child's diagnosis.
-



What *Actually* Helps Parents Do During Therapy

- ✓ Be the Skill-Supporter

- Ask the therapist: “What skill are you working on that I can reinforce at home?”
 - Use the same language at home: “Use your toolbox. Is this a red-zone moment?”
 - Celebrate effort: “You practiced using your words even when it was hard — that’s huge.”
-

✓ Be the Nervous-System Regulator

- Your calm is their calm. Your dysregulation multiplies theirs.
 - Learn co-regulation: Breathe with them. Match tone. Use less language, more presence.
 - Be the safe space. Especially after a hard session.
-

✓ Be the Consistent One

- Keep routines stable.
 - Hold boundaries gently but firmly.
 - Follow through on what you agree to in therapy.
-

✓ Be the Repair Artist

- You will mess up. That’s normal.
Say:

“I shouldn’t have yelled earlier. I was overwhelmed too. Let’s both try again.”

🧠 Modeling repair is more powerful than avoiding rupture.

💛 The Honest Truth About What You’ll Probably Do (And Why You’re Still a Great Parent)

1. Ask the therapist for “the answer”

🔧 Fix it: Therapy doesn’t hand out solutions. It builds skills — and that takes time.

2. Worry it’s not working fast enough

🔧 Fix it: Progress in therapy is often **quiet, slow, and subtle**. Trust the process *and* stay curious.

3. Compare your kid to others

🔧 Fix it: You don't need a neurotypical child. You need *this child*, supported and seen.

🚫 You're Not Going to Ruin the Process

Even if:

- You forget to practice the strategy
- You accidentally invalidate your child
- You cry in your car after therapy
- You lose your cool before school

You are not ruining anything.

Therapy is not about perfection — it's about showing up. Growing together. Trying again.

Your involvement doesn't have to be polished — it just needs to be *present*.

🚧 What Not to Do (Even Though It's Tempting)

❌ Asking the Therapist to Tell You Everything

You might be thinking:

“I'm the parent — I should know what my child said.”

But here's the deal:

- Therapy works because it's **safe and private**.
- If your child feels like everything they say will be passed on to you, they'll stop opening up.
- Therapists are ethically bound to keep information private **unless** the child is unsafe or in danger.

💡 Instead, ask:

“Is there anything I should know to support them better right now?”

“Are there general themes coming up that I can reinforce at home?”

🧠 Why it works: You're getting the *guidance* you need without demanding a transcript.

✗ Telling the Therapist What to Tell the Child

You might think:

“Can you please tell her that she needs to stop screaming at her brother?”

“Can you explain to him that he can’t keep using anxiety as an excuse?”

We get it. You’re frustrated. You want backup.

But therapy isn’t about **delivering your agenda** through a third party. It’s about:

- Helping your child explore thoughts and behaviors safely
- Building trust, insight, and *internal motivation*
- Learning new skills in a non-judgmental space

💡 Instead, say:

“We’re struggling with this dynamic at home — can you help her explore strategies that might work better?”

“He seems stuck on this belief. I’d love your help guiding him toward more flexible thinking.”

🧠 Why it works: You’re inviting support — not control.

💬 If You're Feeling Shut Out, Say This:

“I know this is private space for my child, and I respect that. I also want to feel connected and useful in the process. Can we find ways I can support what’s happening in sessions, even if I don’t know the details?”

This shows you’re:

- Respecting the work
 - Open to growth
 - Still involved, just not intrusive
-

🛑 Final Reminder: Your Role Is Not to Direct the Therapy

Your role is to:

- Keep the outside world safe and steady

- Model healthy communication and regulation
- Support the work without shaping the narrative
- Show your child that therapy isn't something *done to them* — it's something done *for them*

You are not being excluded — you're being trusted to reinforce from the outside what's slowly growing inside.

And that? That's powerful.