



What Parents Need to Know When Their Teen Starts Therapy

Starting therapy is a meaningful step for both your teen and your family. Understanding what to expect can help you feel more confident and supported in the process. I'm here to answer any questions or concerns you may have!

The First Few Sessions

The beginning of therapy focuses on:

- Building trust and rapport with your teen
- Gathering background information
- Understanding current challenges

From there, a **diagnosis (if appropriate)** and a **treatment plan** are developed. Think of the treatment plan as a flexible roadmap... *it can evolve over time.*

Parent Communication

I offer **bi-weekly 15-minute parent check-in calls** to:

- Provide brief updates
- Answer questions
- Offer guidance on how to support your teen

These calls are meant to keep you informed while still protecting your teen's privacy.

What Will Be Shared vs. What Won't

One of the most important parts of teen therapy is balancing your right to be informed with your teen's need for privacy. This balance is what helps teens feel safe enough to be honest in sessions.

I will share:

- General themes we're working on (e.g., anxiety, friendships, self-esteem, family stress)
- Overall progress or patterns I'm noticing
- Skills your teen is learning (communication, coping strategies, emotional regulation, etc.)
- Specific ways you can support your teen at home
- Concerns that may benefit from parent awareness (without disclosing private details or with your teen's permission)

I will not share:

- Play-by-play details of sessions
- Exact statements or stories your teen shares
- Sensitive or personal disclosures your teen has not given permission to share
- Maladaptive or concerning behaviors disclosed in session, unless there is an imminent risk to your teen's safety.

If concerns arise, I will work to encourage and support your teen in sharing this with you, and when appropriate, we may address it together in a joint session.

This privacy helps your teen build trust and speak openly, which is essential to the therapeutic process.

Exceptions:

Confidentiality has limits. I will always communicate with you if there are concerns about:

- Risk of harm to self (e.g., suicidal thoughts or behaviors)
- Risk of harm to others
- Abuse, neglect, or situations requiring mandated reporting

In these cases, the priority is keeping your teen safe, not keeping secrets.

Finding the Right Balance

Therapy works best when we balance:

- **Your teen's independence and voice**
- **Your role as a supportive, involved parent**

We'll work together to:

- Identify goals that matter to your teen
- Support those goals at home when appropriate

What Progress Can Look Like

Progress isn't always linear. You may notice:

- Gradual changes in communication
- Improved coping skills
- Increased self-awareness
- Sometimes, temporary discomfort as difficult topics are explored
- Ups and downs, especially in the beginning

All of this can be part of meaningful growth.

How You Can Support the Process

- Encourage, but don't force conversations about therapy
- Respect your teen's privacy
- Stay open and non-judgmental
- Reinforce effort, not just outcomes

If you have any other questions, feel free to reach out.

www.sarahdesantislcsw.com

Sarah@SarahDeSantisLCSW.com

954-342-6885