



FIELDSTONE COUNSELING

A word to parents

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

At Fieldstone Counseling we value the role of the parent in a child's life. We believe that God created and designed the family, a mother and a father, to be lovingly present in a child's life. That role is one of teaching and caring for them in order that they might know God as their Father and live a life that pleases and honors Christ (cf. Deut. 6:4-9). In other words, the role of a parent is one of biblical discipleship—parent to child.

We are aware, though, that parents often face challenges in this charge. Parents face brokenness, dysfunctional family systems, troubled families of origin, physiological, environmental, and sociological factors which all conspire to make the process of parenting a most challenging one.

At Fieldstone we are eager to offer a layer of help and care in this process. We exist to offer advice and counsel, not to replace your role as parents. In this way, Fieldstone counselors will always seek to be supportive of godly parental authority, but also seek to be a godly advocate for the child/adolescent in our care.

The counseling relationship between the counselor and the child should not be a relationship that is forced or contrived. Because of this, Fieldstone reserves the right to not see a child/adolescent who willfully, verbally, or attitudinally communicates that he/she does not want to be there.

Below are some helpful items for your consideration that our team of skilled and trained counselors have put together to help you enter into this process:

1. *Confidentiality*: The counseling relationship between the counselor and child is not covered under the same confidentiality as a relationship between two adult counselees; however, the counselor, in order to build a relationship of trust with the child, will only share what is absolutely necessary in order to keep the parent informed. It will be up to your child's counselor to develop a plan of communication with you as your child moves forward in the counseling process.
2. *Structure of session*: Each counselor will handle the sessions differently. Two of the more common scenarios include the counselor meeting with the child first, then bringing the parent(s) in toward the end. A second option entails meeting with the parent(s) & child first, then meeting the child alone. Please consult with your counselor about their preferred set up in advance of your session.

3. *Communication:* If a parent desires to meet with the counselor regarding the care of their child, then a separate session can be scheduled with the counselor. (Each family member involved in counseling will need a separate intake) Extensive email or phone communication will result in being sent an invoice for a session's worth of counseling (\$95). Your child's counselor will be responsible for coordinating communication expectations and schedules with you.
4. *First session:* The first few sessions will rely heavily on building therapeutic rapport with the child. Extensive time will be dedicated to building a relationship of trust and support where the child feels comfortable and secure sharing with the counselor. Please be patient during this time.
5. *Homework:* Counselors will, from time to time, ask the child to complete homework assignments. We would appreciate your gentle support in helping the child complete these tasks. The goal of these assignments is not to be burdensome, but for the enrichment and growth of your child.

Additionally, here are some helpful tips to navigate the counseling relationship with you and your child:

1. *Listen:* Parents, your child needs you to be a good listener (cf. Jam. 1:19). Don't assume motives or behaviors. Repeat back what your child said to you to see if you heard them accurately. Aiming for greater accuracy in our listening skills is a critical component in the parent/child relationship.
2. *Empathize:* There are four qualities of good empathy: listen for your child's perspective, don't make an immediate judgment on what is said, identify the emotional response in the child, and connect that to a similar emotion in your own experience. This four-step process can help you build an empathetic rapport with your child and help them feel secure and heard.
3. *Encourage:* Affirming the good in your child is always a good step in building a strong relationship. Remember, children are rarely discouraged toward obedience and faithfulness. Like adults, children do better when they are encouraged toward those goals. Where do you see God up to good in your child's life? Identify those places and let your child know. Encouragement always builds relationships.
4. *Formation:* Spiritual instruction for your child is good and necessary, but typically is received better outside of periods of high relational conflict. While discipline is undoubtedly an aspect of discipleship, having formative conversations with your child relies heavily on wisely assessing the time, content, and delivery of those conversations.

We hope that these items for consideration and helpful tips will be a helpful as you consider and engage in the counseling process with us at Fieldstone. We are grateful for the opportunity to *offer lasting hope to children and adolescents for life's hardships.*

Warmly,

Fieldstone Counseling Team