Preparing for the First Therapy Visit

A practical caregiver checklist that does not put pressure on a child to disclose.

Before the appointment

Confirm time, location, accessibility, cost, caregiver participation and how the therapist works with children. Ask what your child can bring and whether breaks are available. Share relevant information privately with the clinician rather than asking the child to prepare a detailed narrative.

A child-friendly introduction

Use truthful, ordinary language: “We are meeting someone whose job is to help children with tough feelings and experiences. You can ask questions.” Do not guarantee that the visit will feel easy or that treatment will work quickly. Leave room for uncertainty.

Offer bounded choices

Let the child choose a comfortable item, a question to ask or a way to communicate. Avoid promises you cannot control, such as guaranteeing a particular activity. Remind the child they can tell the therapist if they are confused or uncomfortable.

After the visit

Offer rest and ordinary routine. Do not quiz your child about every detail. Follow the clinician’s instructions about feedback, safety and support between sessions. Contact the clinician if distress, behavior changes or questions arise.

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A PHRASE YOU CAN USE

“Would you rather bring your small notebook or your soft toy?”

IMPORTANT BOUNDARY

Use the matching child page: My First Therapy Visit Picture Plan.

REFERENCES & SCOPE

EMDRIA child brochure and Newcastle Hospitals NHS guidance. This guide is informational; a licensed professional provides individualized assessment and treatment.

PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE

One question I would like to ask a professional:

One choice I can offer my child without pressure:

What would tell me that more support is needed?

Bring these notes to an appropriate conversation if useful. Do not record sensitive traumatic memories here.