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Dear Parent,

When your child enters therapy it is important for you to know what to expect. You will find the specific business details in the accompanying treatment agreement, but here are a few general guidelines that may answer questions of format or logistics.

In general, I will greet you and your child in the lobby. This is not a good time to discuss personal information unless there is an imminent emergency. It is better if we set aside a time to talk in another more private setting.

You have every right to know how your child is progressing in therapy and to seek collateral contact with me which is vital to a positive treatment outcome for your child. I support your commitment to your child's well-being and will stay in regular contact with you to support the goals that we have developed together. In order to stay well informed I will do one or more of the following to update you and review treatment progress: spend a few minutes at the beginning or end of your child's session, schedule a separate parent appointment and /or provide brief phone consultation. The method used will depend on several factors, including the goals of treatment, your child's age and emergency situations. Typically these are times for you to ask questions and to give me pertinent information and is at a time your child is out of hearing range if needed and appropriate. When parents are not living together it is doubly important that we work as a team to keep one another adequately informed. Typically, I will be sharing with you areas of progress and concern, asking questions and offering suggestions to support the therapy work in your child's outside experiences at home, school and in the community. While I will let your child know that we are having appropriate contact, it is important to remember that discussing the actual contents of the therapy is usually destructive for the experience and relationship we are fostering. (Please note the treatment agreement for exceptions to confidentiality.)

Confidentiality is a basic foundation for most psychotherapy experiences in order to build adequate trust and experience the playroom as a unique and helpful setting. Parents often ask about the degree to which they should inquire with their child about the contents of the therapy experience. In general, it is good and important for your child to know that you are interested and open to hearing anything they find important to tell you, but it is usually counterproductive to inquire directly or frequently. This may set up an uncomfortable dynamic between you and your child as they work to express themselves and find alternative options of thinking, feelings and behavior in our work together.

Sometimes it is helpful for me to observe your child in another setting such as home or school. Consultation by phone with teachers or medical doctors is also often necessary and we can discuss these options as they seem appropriate to your child's treatment. Parents often ask how they can present the notion of attending psychotherapy to their child. It is best to be direct and honest and to the point. I have never found it helpful to surprise your child by bringing them to an initial appointment without telling them where they are going. Often letting your child know what I do and how the process will work is best. You might consider saying:

Our family is having trouble with feelings lately. All families have difficulties sometimes. One thing our family is having trouble with is: adjusting to divorce, making and keeping friends at school, controlling anger, etc. I know someone who works with children and families about feelings. Mostly you will play and work together and I will wait for you to finish. Sometimes I may come in with you, too. What do you think/feel about this? Do you have questions?"

You have decided that initiating therapy will be helpful and important for them and your family so remember that you are explaining the context of therapy but are not asking their permission to attend. Also remember that therapy should never be defined as a consequence of bad behavior.

In the beginning, and sometimes throughout, it may be important for you to plan to actually wait in the lobby so your child can "check" on you if they need to. If your child is having severe difficulties separating from you, I may ask you in and work you out gradually. I will cue you directly on this. When the therapy session is over it is important that you be ready to receive your child. Please let me know if you will not be waiting and/or will be late. It is very difficult for a child to be left waiting and to watch the next child or person replace them in the office before a parent "reclaims" them.

Please have your child wear clothes that are okay to play and even paint in. Also let me know if they have food allergies as we sometimes have occasion to have a snack in session.

In regard to payment, it works best to pre-write your check and hand it to me in the lobby. Typically, unless it is part of the treatment goals, I will work to keep your child out of our adult transactions.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions at any time. I look forward to the opportunity to work with you and your child.

Laini