



# STICKS & STONES

## THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

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**Kristina Kosmac is a Registered Clinical Psychotherapist, Social Worker, Family Therapist, Relationship/Couples Therapist And Registered Sand Play And Expressive Therapist.**

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## Supporting your Child through Therapy

Don't expect too much in the first few sessions. Often Children can feel intimidated at the prospect of coming to therapy, and for a good reason. Before a first meeting, therapists start as strangers.

The first few sessions are often “get-to-know-you” sessions. These sessions will begin slowly and allow your therapist to build an initial connection. Give your child time to build a rapport with their therapist. It is essential to encourage your child. Working with children often involves nonverbal approaches. Kristina incorporates her training in

- Child-centred play therapy
- Sand play and Expressive therapies
- Child Based CBT and ACT approaches within her counselling
- Systems therapies.
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These approaches are not just playing—developmentally, children 12 and under express themselves through play, including their emotions, thoughts, and feelings.

## Give Encouragement, even when it is not returned.

Encouraging your child to attend their appointments can be challenging. If you are struggling to get them to their sessions, don't be afraid to share your concerns with your clinician. It will take

time for your clinician to understand your child's reservations and create an approachable environment.

It is essential to:

- Never speak negatively about the therapist. If a child discloses that they do not like what their therapist is doing, enquire more and be curious. Continue to remain encouraging and stay curious if any challenges arise.
- Understanding that there will be times when your child may come out of therapy and experience a range of emotions, sometimes feeling upset, confused, challenged, or overwhelmed. Parents and carers need to hold these feelings and understand that these are a part of the process. The children are often processing what has occurred within their therapy.
- Contact your therapist if you struggle to hold the emotions that come up.
- Understanding that your Child makes go backwards before they go forward
- Be aware of the limitation that a therapist has within her role. Bringing a child to see a clinician can often be anxiety-provoking for carers/ parents.

## Know what to share with your child's therapist and what not to

While intentions are often good, sharing every concern or issue you perceive your teen experiencing can position therapy as overly problem-focused. It's vital that they feel they can develop their relationship with their clinician, one that's not overly coloured by a parental/ carers perspective. Suppose a child knows their parent is constantly back channelling information to their therapist. In that case, they'll have a hard time ever trusting their clinician and feeling like they have a genuinely confidential space. It is important to trust your clinician and understand that she will seek our input if needed.

## Give Your Child Ownership over the Therapy Process

As tempting as it may be to ask your child questions about their appointments, please know your child may resist therapy if they worry about what to say or what they said to the counsellor gets back to you—whether it's coerced by a parent or leaked by the therapist. Confidentiality is a cornerstone for successful counselling. Some exceptions exist to confidentiality—ask your prospective therapist about these exceptions.

## Offer kids a chance to fill you in about their therapeutic goals, but don't pry for information.

Parents might think that their child never wants to talk to them about their sessions. In my experience, this isn't always the case. Often, children are interested in keeping their parents informed, but they won't respond well to questions that feel like prying.

## Working with children involves working with parents/ Carers becoming involved. Be open to this.

Often Kristina will see a child for 1 hour per week, and ultimately therapy works best when parents and carers are involved and there is a willingness to follow up / affirm and encourage the strategies provided in sessions.

When a teen is ready and with her permission, Kristina integrates her sessions with children using family therapy and systemic lenses. Often with your child's permission, the therapist will call for a family session or a parent/carers session, be willing to go! She is a skilled therapist who is able to maintain a confidential space for the identified client while also engaging parents in the change process to the extent necessary.

Parenting is hard work; supporting parents is a part of child work. Kristina incorporates her facilitator training and family systems work with her 30 years of experience working in the community by including evidenced-based parents' programs such as

- Tuning into Kids and Teens
- Bringing up Great Kids
- PARKAS
- Psychoeducation
- Mindfulness

Kristina uses her Circle of security training with strategies that incorporate appropriate responses if children have experienced a significant event such as family violence, bullying, post-separation, grief, or sickness. Parents/carers play a critical role in shaping this process and ultimately determining the effectiveness of change with their Child and their involvement.

## Assessment

Kristina understands her limitations, and she is also aware that it can be impossible to be an expert in everything. Kristina has developed the skills to formulate a thorough mental health assessment, having worked in clinical mental health settings. Kristina understands that many behaviours can be linked to genetic and biological factors e.g. autism, anxiety, dyslexia. After assessment, Kristina will have the ability to provide the best pathway for your child providing guidance and referral if needed to other professionals such as psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, paediatricians, speech therapists, occupational therapists and G.Ps. Her priority is to provide the best holistic care for your child. She understands that care for your child may need to take on a systemic approach that entails other professionals.