

The Counselor's Corner.

The Doctor Knows Best.

Most parents can share stressful stories of their children getting hurt. Kids fall off bicycles, get cut, and start bleeding. Windows, doors, or other objects slam against their fragile little hands and arms, and injuries from sports happen too often. With this kind of crisis, all parents spring into action. We don't grab a needle and thread and start suturing, nor do we try to push a broken bone into place. We know what we have to do: take them to the emergency room and place them into the care of people who have the proper education and training.

In contrast, not all parents will contact a medical doctor to examine a child when emotional, learning, or behavioral problems **consistently** come to the forefront. Some will pretend there is no problem while others somehow delude themselves into thinking they can handle it all by themselves. Unfortunately, a delay in seeking outside help could lead to greater problems and scars.

Some parents falsely fear that they or their child might be labeled. Another group of parents somehow wants to take too much credit for what their children do, good and bad. When this happens, there is a blurring between what belongs to us and what belongs to the child. For example, we may have consistently motivated a child to do well and study hard, but any award earned by the child is his, not ours. In the reverse, we can promote good behavior, but inappropriate behavior and other issues do not belong to us either. When we are clear about this, we can avoid false pride and its opposite, shame and self-blame.

In an article called "Taking your child to a Therapist" (<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/finding-therapist>), therapy is applauded as a way to "help kids develop problem-solving skills and to teach them the value of seeking help." This article lists twenty areas of concern. It is worth reading. Much involves drastic changes (interests, friends, eating, academics, socialization, and more). Victims of any kind of abuse and trauma are high on the list of those who need therapy. Children showing involvement in any kind of substance abuse or self-harm need immediate help.

During school months, children spend more time each week day with teachers than their own parents. Take the feedback you receive from teachers, counselors, and principals very seriously. They can spot patterns to help you and your doctor explore problems and come up with solutions.

*The New York Times* ran an article called "New Parent, Old Parent: 5 Signs That It's Time to Seek Outside Help for a Struggling Child" (October 25, 2013). This discussion between parents at two different stages in their lives was very enlightening, resulting in the agreement that there are clear signs: 1. When a child is endangering himself or threatening to harm himself. 2. When your other children are unhappy, frightened or upset by a sibling's behavior, or a parent's response to that behavior. 3. When the child's behavior is interfering with his daily life, or the family's functioning. 4. When disagreements about how to handle a child's problems put a strain on your marriage or partnership. 5. When you, as a parent, don't know what to do.

Just as we cannot ignore the physical issues of our children, we cannot avoid treating the emotional, mental, or behavior problems. It is all about helping our children live healthy lives. We must also remember that the most effective type of child therapy includes family therapy. We need to seek help for ourselves first, and continue therapy along with the child. We all have the same goal in mind: doing what is best for our children. Therapists help provide us with the tools.

Diane L. Rivard

