

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Practice and Procedural Questions:

How can I get my child into therapy?

- The process is rather simple. The best way to begin is to reach out and share some of the concerns you have; this can be done by email or a phone call. You can also text me at 650-993-9321: just be sure to include your name, your child's name and a few times you are free to connect by phone. I will text you back within a few hours, and likely be able to connect with you by phone at your earliest convenience.

Is there any charge or fees for information?

- No: mental health is a complex and confusing area of treatment. There are few out there willing to guide others, which is why Unfold Psychology makes it a priority to provide anyone in the community with information.

How soon before I can have my child seen?

- Unfold Psychology is always at your disposal: we will make every effort to see your child at your earliest convenience. Assuming your schedule permits, we guarantee your child will be seen by a clinician within the week.

How important is "fit" (the relationship between the psychologist and the client/family)?

- Put simply, it is VERY important. If the fit is not good, and a rapport is not established, then it is best to let us help you find another clinician, who your child will relate to better. We will stay with you through the entire process, and provide you with several, excellent referrals.

My child is a girl/boy, does it make a difference if their clinician is a male or female?

- Yes and no; many children will have a preference regarding the sex of their doctor. This is absolutely normal. Young men often prefer to speak with a male doctor about the guy stuff, just like many young women would opt to speak with a female. However, all of Unfold Psychology's providers work with both male, female and transitioning youth. If your child does express a preference, then it is best to respect it; given the lack of qualified clinical psychologists in the bay area, it may not always be possible to find the preferred match. It is always a good idea to meet and speak with the doctor about this issue, and get their feedback.

I am worried about COVID, do you provide video and/or telehealth therapy?

- Yes: at Unfold Psychology we offer both teletherapy and video therapy. Both are facilitated through HIPAA protected channels, and are easy to use. Prior to your child's appointment with their doctor, they will be sent an email with a link connecting them to the HIPAA protected portal. Your child's doctor will be waiting. We do encourage your child to use earphones/air pods in order to ensure privacy.

What is your cancellation policy?

- Unlike 99% of every other doctor's office, we are empathetic to the reality that life changes rather rapidly. Kids forget, they get sick, sometimes they just don't feel like it...

At Unfold Psychology we do not think it is appropriate to penalize your family. There are **NO CANCELLATION FEES OR PENALTIES** if your child or you miss a session. We do recommend you try to make the session up within a week, so that the tempo of the therapeutic treatment remains intact, but sometimes this is not possible. We also ask you to do everything you can to avoid missing sessions, and if you have to, please let us know with as much advance warning as possible: you can do this by call, text or email.

My child needs treatment, but I cannot get them to actually attend, what should I do?

- Let your clinician know what is going on, why your child is resistant, and we will discuss some of the more commonly effective strategies to encourage attendance.

My child does not want to “see a therapist,” how can I get them to come to your office?

- Unfold Psychology is a concierge practice; our mission is to provide your family and child with the tools they need to be their very best. If your child is nervous, or scared, about meeting a new doctor, we would happily meet your child at your home. Yes, we make HOUSE CALLS. In many cases, getting a child to the office is just not feasible. Sometimes it is because your child is nervous or because they are having a behavioral emergency. In these situations, house calls are a special service Unfold Psychology provides.

Do you respond to emergencies?

- Yes. As long as your child is not in imminent danger, and there is no risk to yourself, the child or the clinician, Unfold Psychology will drive to wherever your child is, and support both your child and family through the crisis. If the situation is critical, or there is an imminent threat which would possibly cause bodily harm, then it is best to call 911. Even if you have to call 911, we would still encourage you to allow us to be there when the police arrive. In an emergency, clarity and calm are often absent. Unfold Psychology brings not just their experience and expertise, but a cool, calm, mental health professional, who is familiar with liaising with the police and who can ensure the experience is not overtly traumatizing - which it often becomes whenever a family member feels compelled to call the police.

## **Treatment Techniques:**

What type of treatment modalities do you use in therapy?

- The answer to this question is directly related to several factors: 1) age, 2) presenting problem, 3) current mental status and 4) degree of cooperation/effort. The most effective, evidence based, treatment is cognitive behavioral therapy. This is not always the best choice, however. Some kids are eager to engage in CBT (which almost always requires the child to do some self-reflective exercises in between sessions, to track their symptoms, read psychoeducational materials intended to highlight relevant facts or

simply journal). The best treatment is often a mixture of several techniques and multiple interventions.

You can find a quick reference link to Unfold Psychology's treatment profiles:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/profile/707121>

I am looking for a psychologist to treat my child/adolescent, what does the process 'look' like?

- If you have found or been referred to Unfold Psychology and/or Dr. Heafey, then the process is extremely simple. All you need to do is contact us, let us know a good time to call you back and then let us know a little bit about what you are looking for or how we can help you.

You can contact us by:

Phone: 650-993-9321

Email: [austin@unfoldpsychology.com](mailto:austin@unfoldpsychology.com)

Text: 650-993-9321

I am concerned about my child's behavior, what should I do?

- First thing to do is try to remain calm.

I think my child might have a learning disorder, what should I do?

- This topic is discussed in great detail, you can find it by clicking on this link [INSERT LINK TO LANDING PAGE ON HOW TO DETERMINE IF MY CHILD HAS A LEARNING DISORDER]

Do you take insurance?

- Unfold Psychology is a Private Pay or Out of Network Provider. This does not mean we do not offer ways for you to receive reimbursements from your healthcare insurance. In fact, we offer two ways to make it easier for our patients to get back the most money they can!
  - 1) We provide every patient with a pre-formatted, "Super-Bill." This is the document you need to submit to your insurance provider, in order to be reimbursed for out-of-network services. Generally speaking, insurance companies will offer between 25-60% of therapeutic services. To find out exactly how much money you can expect, all you need to do is contact your insurance company and ask "what percent of the bill do you cover from out of network mental health providers?"
  - 2) Unfold Psychology also offers it's patients a special service which files your superbills on your behalf. When a patient is "on-boarded" or accepted in the practice, they are offered the option to enroll in this program. This is a program separate from Unfold Psychology, but one many patients have provided positive feedback on. If you have decided to work with one of Unfold Psychology's clinicians, then the details of how you can sign up for this service are sent to you at the same time you are sent an informed consent, practice policies, a specially selected set of intake questionnaires and some brief assessments.

Do you do testing for learning disabilities?

- Yes, and much more! Not only do we help identify if your child has a learning disability,

but we also provide you with techniques you can apply to work, school, even daily life, in order to improve cognitive function and, most notably, work and long-term memory.

How do you treat anxiety?

- After your clinician has conducted a thorough 'intake;' only after understanding the onset, duration, intensity and the degree to which it interferes with the person's life, will a clinician make a decision about which treatment protocol to use. However, the great variable, and one we have some control over, but not as much as we would like, is the patient's commitment. How much do they want to get better? For those who sincerely want to get rid of their anxiety, then the answer is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. We can design an 8-10 week treatment plan, provide handouts, homework, and ensure they understand what to do if symptoms return in order to avoid 'relapse.'

If the patient is not as committed, or struggles with attention, consistently struggles with memory, and has poor executive functioning, then Cognitive Behavioral Therapy would not be appropriate. There are many other options, but all of them lack the efficient time-mediate approach that makes CBT such a great option. However, even if CBT is not indicated, it will inevitably be used, just in a less 'intense' way.

How do you treat depression?

- See answer provided for "How do you treat anxiety?"

How can I determine if my child has ADHD?

- Identifying if your child has ADHD requires both clinical skills and cognitive assessments. While it would be nice if "distractibility" or "cannot sit still" were the only criteria to consider, the reality is it's a complex diagnosis only a physician, neuropsychologist, or a doctoral level mental health provider can diagnose.

If I do not want to use medications to treat my child's ADHD, what other options are there?

- Tons! To begin with, Unfold Psychology is the only practice in the Bay Area licensed to administer COGMED. COGMED is a computer program that helps improve, enhance and extend an individual's working memory. Working memory is probably the most crucial "piece" of the "cognition" puzzle. Essentially, it's the amount of information you can hold in your head for 30 seconds. The average person's working memory potential is 7, plus or minus 2 (7 items, 7 numbers etc.) People with ADHD have poor working memory, which is why they are often characterized as 'forgetful' or 'spacey.' Imagine if your working memory was not 7 +/- 2, but 3 or 4 +/- 3? It would be difficult to recall things long enough to write them down, let alone recall things in general.

Many youths with ADHD will appear to be either hyperactive or a bit 'spacey.' We do not know if the hyperactivity (the most common presentation of ADHD) is a response (similar to a coping behavior) to not having a very strong working memory, or if it's just a part of the disorder. If you think about it, it makes sense why a kid would not want to sit down if they were unable to keep up with the instructions coming from the teacher (for example). Conversely, another way to manage this inability to focus is to look inward vs. outward (expressing oneself 'outward' being associated with Hyperactive ADHD). Children rarely

have the ability to simply 'manage' boredom. When a kid is forced to sit in a chair, in a classroom, they don't have many options if, despite how much they try, they simply can't keep up with what the teacher is saying. This is why we think kids tend to become overly focused on the external world (hyperactive) or they become overly focused on their internal world (daydreaming, losing themselves in their imagination).

The great news is there are many options to treat ADHD. Just like depression and anxiety, CBT offers the highest treatment success. There are other techniques, such as instituting a schedule, learning how to self-initiate incentive programs, and even interventions as simple as asking the child to dictate, outloud, what it is they want to remember, until they are able to write it down. When there is a process requiring a stepwise process (step 1, step 2, step 3...), we have discovered how much kids love to create clever raps or rhymes to help them recall what to do first, second, etc.

Put simply, no single answer is ever the *only solution* for a complex, multisensory diagnosis of ADHD. If you would like to ask more questions about these non-pharmacological options, or learn about what psychopharmacological options are available, give us a call!

What do I do if I am worried about my child's mood\*?

- First, do not panic. Children are highly sensitive to their parent's mood and behavior. Subtle changes are often noticed and responded to, which can then make it difficult to ascertain if your children are telling you the truth or if they are simply trying to put your mind at ease. That said, we suggest parents consider doing the following:
  1. Speak with a licensed mental health provider about your concern and ask if they think you should make an appointment.
  2. Proactively get the info any provider will inevitably ask: 'why do *you* think *your* child has a decreased or excessively heightened mood?' In a safe place<sup>1</sup> (the margins of your calendar, a discrete notepad, etc) write down as many simple notes about the traits which lead you to worry your child may be depressed. If you are not sure which behaviors to focus on, then simply keep track of how many times your child is happy throughout the day or write down the behaviors you do not consider to be consistent with your child's baseline mood (when they did not appear to change). For further help, you are welcome to give Unfold Psychology a call and ask which behaviors you should focus on.
  3. Ask yourself if your child is the same one you knew 1, 3, 6, 12 months ago. It's difficult to determine subtle changes when the time frame is brief, which is why it's always useful to consider what things were like a couple months or a year ago - this will give you a much better idea of whether your concerns have merit.
  4. Make an appointment with your child's primary care provider and ask for them to run a full blood panel (draw blood and have it sent to a lab for testing). Specially, you should request a "CBC," or complete blood count, with an emphasis on thyroid functioning. Depending on your child's age, you might also consider

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<sup>1</sup> We emphasized "in a safe place" because we suggest that you not share or let them know you are literally taking notes on their daily behavior. If they find out, it is unlikely they will respond positively, but it will also put them on the defensive, which is often a deterrent to receiving effective treatment.

asking your doctor to have the lab check for 1) the presence of illicit drugs and 2) the COVID antibodies. No harm comes from checking.

***\*You can apply the answer to this question to almost any behavioral or psychological problem you are unsure about.***

How much is too much “screen-time”?

- As a general rule of thumb: Children under 2 years old – NO SCREEN TIME

| Age   | Non-Educationally Based Screen Time Recommendations (# of hours / day) | Unfold Psychology’s Recommendation (# of hours / day)                |
|-------|--|--|
| 0-2   | 0  | 0  |
| 2-7   | <1   | 1 hour, 1 movie, 1 show etc.   |
| 7-12  | 1  | 1-1.5 hours school night, 1-2 non-school nights                      |
| 12-18 | 1-2  | 1-2 school nights, 1-3 on weekends (avoid consecutive 3 hour nights) |

Are video games inherently dangerous?

- No. Some studies indicate they lower a child empathy, but these studies are mixed. Many games do include highly graphic and disturbing images, and are not appropriate for children at certain ages.

Are there any video games that are preferred over others?

- Nonviolent video games, and ones deemed age appropriate are preferable. You can find which age is appropriate using the ratings system clearly identified on all new video games.

College and University e-sport teams are most commonly associated with the following titles: League of Legends, Counter Strike: Global Offensive, Hearthstone, and Overwatch. Many of these video games are not appropriate for a younger age range. These games are emphasized above others because they foster teamwork, coordinated actions and intricate strategy. There are additional titles, but they are not as commonly used in “intercollegiate competitions.” They include: Fortnite, Dota2, Call of Duty, and Rocket League. Some schools also integrate Minecraft.

I’m worried my child is no longer interested in school, are there any things I can do?

Yes! If you give Unfold Psychology a call, we can help you find new motivation techniques, organizational strategies and cognitive supports to ensure you child does not lose greater interest in their learning. Education half online and half at school is tough, but it is not impossible!