

There's no need to be scared of the educational psychologist

Dear
parents!

You have registered your child with the Educational Psychology Service, and you have surely not found this an easy decision to make. We will do our best to advise you as best as we can, but please do not expect "miracles". You can rely on us to provide you with a high degree of educational psychological experience. The guiding principle of the consultation will always be the welfare of your child because this is our only obligation.

Registration with a counselling centre usually also causes anxiety, both in adults and children. Educational psychological counselling first comprises a conversation with you, in which we will try to define and narrow down the existing problem as precisely as possible. The aim will be to develop a contract together with you. In some cases, this introductory talk is already all that is needed; if you feel that you have received the information and food for thought that will enable you to do justice to your child's needs without further outside help, please let us know. As educational psychologists, we are also happy if a well-founded conversation (had with plenty of time and not just in passing) can already be of help to you.

Normally we will ask you for a lot of information during the preliminary talk; this is necessary for educational psychological counselling because we need to be able to get a picture of your child in all their relationships and contexts. So we will not only ask about the school situation, but also about the family situation in the past and today because this is important for our work. But you can always give us a clear "STOP" if you feel like a question is too personal!

It is often useful to bring certain documents with you, for example your child's latest school report or a few of their exercise books.

Working with your child's teacher can be useful in many cases. However, our advice is initially private and subject to the duty of confidentiality, i.e. we will not contact the school without your explicit and written consent.

If we agree in the preliminary discussion that appointments for school psychological diagnostics should be made with your child, the question arises as to how you can prepare your daughter or son for this.

Here are some tips:

- Tell your child calmly and clearly why you have decided to take up the offer of educational psychological counselling. The need for school psychological counselling is not a black mark, neither for you nor for your child! Never tell your child that he or she has "now gone so far" that you have to ask the school psychology service for advice.
- Make it clear that this is a problem that you cannot solve with the tools you have, and that you need to ask for advice from outside the family. Don't trivialise the issue! Name the problem (whether it is difficulties with spelling or arithmetic, failure in tests or your child's behaviour, choosing the right type of school – or whatever prompted you to seek our help). All experience shows that it makes no sense at all to pull the wool over children's eyes. Educational problems are normal, as is seeking help

Please explain the following to your child:

- We're called "educational" psychologists, but we're not "school". We have absolutely nothing to do with the school system. We are not teachers and we do not give marks. You are also allowed to complain about school with us!
- We will certainly play with your child – but in addition to this play, we will also provide services. This will be different from their required performance at school. When it comes to testing, we should agree on using the term "brain teasers". We will actually give your child puzzles to solve – and experience shows that children like to deal with puzzles!
- We want to help your child, but we don't give them "orders"! What happens between the child, us and you is initially kept between us and has no immediate consequences. What you ultimately do with our advice remains entirely up to you. Your child should know that too.
- We demand a lot from your child! Nevertheless, decades of experience show that children remember their appointments with the educational psychological service as pleasant. Why? Many children are not accustomed to having adults (besides their parents) looking after them for hours and giving them their full attention.
- If your child does not want to stay with us alone, we will look for solutions. For example, it may be that you as parents stay in the waiting room for the time being until your child sends you away himself. But you should not be present in the examination situation.

And finally:

- If your child wears glasses, they should bring them to the examination appointment.
- Your child does not need to bring pens; however, if they have a preferred writing instrument, they should bring it.
- You can't do a school psychology examination with a child who is unwell. If your child is ill, please cancel the appointment, if necessary at short notice.
- Important social events such as birthdays or school trips that your child would like to attend are also a reason for cancellation (but in this case please cancel in good time).

We look forward to getting to know you and your child!

*Leonard Liese,
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