

Therapist says children are more accepting of therapy

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CHILLICOTHE— Years ago people were afraid to admit they were going to therapy, and some people are still afraid to admit that today.

There is this belief that getting help means you are broken or weird in some way. This is far from the truth which is why Patricia Mares, owner of Mares Cares Counseling, is happy to see children embracing therapy.

Mares Cares Counseling offers professional

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Patricia Mares, from Mares Cares Counseling, stands in her office. The space is decorated by the children she sees as patients and offers a cozy environment for those seeking help. SHELBY REEVES/
CHILLICOTHE GAZETTE

Therapy

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mental healthcare to south-central Ohio. The business was started by Mares almost nine years ago. Over the years the business has grown to include multiple locations and workers. This growth has allowed the business to serve almost 400 clients a week, this includes children, individuals, couples and families.

Some people fear the stigma that can come with attending therapy. Adults and children can both suffer from this, but Mares says kids are the ones that struggle the least with the idea of therapy.

“Children don’t feel the stigma,” said Mares. “It is more the adult and young adult population.”

Celebrities may play a role in this acceptance from kids. Mares says more and more she reads about celebrities praising therapy. These celebrities speaking out helps to show that going to therapy is a normal thing, it also gives children a way to relate to people they look up to.

It is nothing new for Mares who teaches breathing techniques used by the military. She says many young boys are excited to try the techniques after they know they will be doing things soldiers do.

The team at Mares Cares also plays a big part in making a child feel welcomed in therapy. The team creates a warm environment by using a house as their office, individual personalized rooms and a kitchen filled with snacks to help to welcome those coming in.

Mares connects with patients in a variety of ways, including using Legos and painting. She says Legos are a good way to encourage creativity through free building and also encourage rules through structured building where you have to follow instructions. This technique offers a unique experience that makes kids more receptive to coming back.

“I counsel a little different than others,” said Mares of her Lego therapy.

Mares also allows for each patient to set their own goals and figure out what they want to accomplish. These goals can be anything from learning how to manage anxiety to getting a diagnosis for their problems.

While working with children Mares makes sure she also connects with the parent or guardian. While she does not tell parents everything she does make sure they know the important information. She also makes sure the children know what she is telling their parents as she does not want to go behind the child’s trust. In most situations where a parent must be involved Mares will ask the child if they want to tell the parent, have her tell them or tell them together. Mares says she is a big supporter of parents as they are the people most involved in a child’s life so they need to know what is going on and be connected with the child.

Despite all of the effort put into destigmatizing therapy, there are still parents who don’t want to admit they need help and children who feel the stigma surrounding therapy. In situations like this Mares reminds people that going to therapy is a sign of strength not weakness. Being able to control your emotions and thoughts when provoked shows great strength. “Everyone could benefit from therapy,” said Mares. “Try it.” To learn more about Mares Cares Counseling and its services visit its website. If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health call the Ross County Crisis Line at 740-773-4357. This number will help connect you with resources that can help.

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