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Tips on Getting Adolescents to Appointments

- Discuss openly your concerns and reasons for the appointment. e.g. “Things seem to be X lately and I am worried about this. Lets try getting some help with this”.
- Try a, “let’s give it a go” approach and see what you think. e.g. “Lets book in for one appointment, then we can review how it went.”
- Acknowledge that it’s difficult to see someone new for the first time.
- Remind them of prior times they didn’t want to go to an appointment, and it actually turned out ok.
- Do some positive role modelling. Parents need to acknowledge they need help too. e.g. “I don’t know what to do about this, I am hoping they can give me some tips too”.
- If helpful, you could even allow a choice between two professionals they can see for support. e.g. “This counsellor here, or this one here. Who would you like me to book an appointment with and try?”
- If suitable, you could allow your adolescent to make contact and book the appointment.
- Arrange contact with the professional prior to the first appointment to break the ice. A face-to-face contact would be ideal, but sometimes even a phone call, SMS, or a letter can be helpful.
- Find out what will happen during the appointment time and discuss this with your adolescent. This will often help relieve any worry or anxiety about what will happen and how it will happen.
- Discuss that the professional is there to support and help them – giving them tools to improve things. The session is for them. You could also mention, “You may want to start thinking of what things you could talk about”.
- Discuss privacy and confidentiality. Find out how the professional works with adolescents around these issues. Be clear that sessions away from school are private and will not be discussed with anyone else unless agreed – unless required by legal, risk or safety issues.
- Remember, each adolescent is different. Allow time for information to be processed and questions.
- Don’t make threats about getting help - discuss things calmly when they can be understood.
- Keep in mind: The goal is about getting your adolescent some support, reducing their anxiety about it, and **normalising that getting help is a good thing**. You will have to adapt these strategies for what works for your child.

After the Appointment:

- Be real. Sometimes you don’t find the right professional for your adolescent the first time, or it takes a while to get to know each other. If at all possible, try and stick with one professional for a few sessions before moving on.
- Allow and encourage open discussion about what they liked and disliked about the appointment. Remember: **Just listening** to the adolescent is crucial!