

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

Thank you for inviting us into the life of your child. We believe that God designed the family to be lovingly present in a child's life. Fathers and mothers prepare their children for a life-long relationship with God as their Father and Christ as their Savior and Lord (cf. Deut. 6:4-9). In other words, the parent's role is one of biblical discipleship — parent to child.

We are aware that parents often face challenges: brokenness, family dysfunction, troubled childhood experiences, and physiological, environmental, and sociological factors. We are eager to help you in this process. We give advice and offer counsel, not to replace you in your role as parents, but to support and guide you. Our counselors seek to supportive godly parental authority, while also seeking to be a godly advocate for the teen in our care.

The counseling relationship between the counselor and the child should not be forced or contrived. We reserve the right not to see a teen who communicates with his/her will, words, or attitude that he/she does not want to participate in counseling./

We encourage you to consider the below items as you considering entering this process:

1. *Confidentiality:* A counseling relationship with a teen does not include the same level of confidentiality as a relationship with an adult. However, in order to build trust with the teen, the counselor will only share what is necessary to keep the parent informed. Your counselor will develop a communication plan to keep you informed as your teen moves forward in the counseling process.
2. *Parental Involvement:* Your counselor will typically ask you to join your teen for a part of the counseling session, either at the beginning of the meeting or at the end. Please talk to your counselor about his/her preference prior to your session.
3. *Consulting the Counselor:* If you want to meet with the counselor regarding your teen, a separate session should be scheduled with your counselor. Extensive email or phone communication (outside a scheduled session) will be billed at a rate comparable to regular counseling.
4. *Building Trust:* In the first few sessions the counselor will focus on building trust with the teen so he/she feels comfortable and secure sharing with the counselor. This is essential to a healthy counseling relationship, and it can take some time. Please be patient during this part of the process.
5. *Growth Assignments:* Counselors may ask the teen to complete growth assignments. These assignments are not intended to be burdensome but to enrich and build up your teen. We ask you to gently support him/her as he/she completes these tasks.

Additionally, here are some helpful tips for how you can support your teen in the counseling process:

1. *Listen:* Parents, your teen needs you to be a good listener (cf. James 1:19). Don't assume motives or behaviors. Repeat back what your teen said to you to see if you heard him/her accurately. Aiming for greater accuracy in our listening skills is a critical component in the parent/child relationship.
2. *Emphathize:* Empathizing with your teen helps build trust and helps him/her feel secure and heard. Good empathy includes: (1) listening for your teen's perspective, (2) waiting to pass judgment on what was said, (3) identifying the emotional response in your teen, and (4) connecting that to a similar emotion you have experienced.
3. *Encourage:* Affirming the good in your teen helps build a strong relationship. Like adults, teens do better when they are encouraged toward obedience and faithfulness. Identify places where God is bringing good in your teen's life and let him/her know.
4. *Formation:* Spiritual instruction is typically received better outside of periods of high relational conflict. If your teen is receiving counseling for difficulties in his/her relationship with you, we encourage you to be discerning in how you relate to him/her. Having constructive conversations with your teen will require you to wisely assess the time, content, and deliver of these interactions.

We hope that this will help you as you engage in the counseling process with us at ADC. We are grateful for the opportunity to offer your teen lasting hope for life's hardships.

Anabaptist Discipleship Center Counseling Team