



EMOTIONAL SAFETY CONVERSATION **GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS**

As you plan for a visit to a healthcare setting, these are some recommended questions you should ask the pediatrics department to ensure that your child has the emotional safety and support needed from certified child life specialists.

QUESTION ONE

**Do you have a child life department?
Is there a child life specialist
available who can provide emotional
support to my child ahead of their
appointment or procedure?**

Start by simply asking this question!
Child life services are available in many
medical settings, but caregivers may
not enjoy the benefit of these services
because they don't know to ask.

“Child life and the environment that it provides and the care that they help us provide is essential. It is a must-have in children's healthcare.”

— Dr. Fahner, Pediatrician

IF YOUR HEALTHCARE FACILITY DOES NOT OFFER CHILD LIFE SERVICES...

We recommend taking these steps:

- Bring a favorite comfort item from home
- Ask about pain management options
- Ask about environmental modifications if your child is sensitive to or stressed by bright lights and loud noises
- Remember that YOU are the expert on your child, how they react to stressful situations, and what helps them cope
- **Let us know about your experience: emotionalsafety@childlife.org**

QUESTION TWO

Do you offer “pain-free” initiatives for my child?

“Pain-free” initiatives are treatment plans that help minimize pain from everything from needle pokes to surgery. Child life specialists focus on “pain-free” care for children to minimize potential trauma and stress and ensure that children are kept comfortable throughout the visit.

“If families know that they are able to ask for a topical numbing agent before their child has a needle stick... that's going to create a more emotionally safe environment for their child.”

— Jenaya Gordon, Child Life Specialist

QUESTION THREE

Can I and my family be involved in the caregiving plan?

You will often hear “absolutely!” Child life specialists collaborate with parents, siblings, and family members to create a customized treatment plan designed specifically to meet the emotional needs of a child.

Remember, YOU are the expert on your child!

“I think that what parents already know when they're starting the journey is that they're going to need a team. They're going to need a friend. They're going to need a guide, and that Child Life in the hospital can be their guide. And that it's a beautiful relationship between the family and between the child.”

— Michele Hall-Duncan, president and CEO of enCourage Kids Foundation

QUESTION FOUR

Can siblings be in the room with my child?

Oftentimes, your health care provider will allow siblings to be in the room as long as they are not themselves going through any medical procedures that may be potentially traumatizing. Siblings can play an integral role in the treatment of your child by providing emotional support.

“Child life specialists make the patient feel like they're the important one, they're the only one and they're there for them no matter what.”

– Theresa Snowbarger, Parent

QUESTION FIVE

Does your child life program include special initiatives like music therapy or art therapy?

Children cope in a variety of ways, and child life specialists are there to ensure that your child has a plan specifically tailored to their emotions. Ask your pediatrics department if they provide special initiatives, such as pet therapy, art therapy, or music therapy, so that your child is able to have the support that best comforts them.

“Art therapy helps to translate what’s on the inside to the outside, specifically if a child struggles with just verbalizing how they feel on the inside.”

— Michele Hall-Duncan, president
and CEO of enCourage Kids Foundation



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