

Disclaimers and Expectations about Psychoeducational Tutoring By Telephone

1. Psychoeducational tutoring means teaching the child about psychological skills (such as friendship-building, anger control, self-discipline, anxiety reduction, etc.) as well as, possibly, academic skills such as reading and math. This is an educational intervention, and not a medical or psychotherapeutic or counseling intervention. Many of the subjects that are taught through the tutoring get some coverage in school health courses. The basic plan is reading books on psychological health skills, doing exercises those books describe, and chatting with the tutor. For those who need academic instruction in reading or math, that will be in addition. The conversations with the tutor are aimed simply at increasing the enjoyment of, and skill in, social interaction, and not at solving problems -- the conversations are different from those conducted by a counselor or therapist.

2. The tutor is an educator, not a "mental health professional," not a "counselor," and not a "therapist," and not a "child care provider." The tutor's job description:

does NOT include diagnosis of any mental illness or disorder;

does NOT include assessment of anyone's danger, or lack of danger, to self or others;

does NOT include solving any particular life problem that the child or parent is grappling with, even though the skills taught in the curriculum may help the child or parent to make decisions and solve problems in general;

does NOT include anything that requires training in medicine or psychotherapy or counseling;

does NOT include the preparation of reports that you can use in interacting with mental health or medical professionals;

does NOT include providing "child care" -- i.e. babysitting, making sure the child is safe, making sure the child is under the care of a responsible caretaker. (Child care is not something that we would consider trying to provide by phone; children should be under the care of a physically present responsible caretaker as appropriate for the child's age, with or without the telephone tutoring.)

3. Because this service is NOT medical, medical insurance will NOT reimburse anything for it.

4. While we try to have tutors commit to continuing with their student for at least a year, we do not have the legal right to require that. Thus there is the possibility that a tutor can discontinue the tutoring relationship. This may induce a feeling of loss in the child, or may make it more difficult for another tutor to pick up where the preceding one left off.

5. The tutors try to make the conversations private. But it is possible that someone will overhear parts of the phone conversations. If you think that a great deal of harm could be done by someone's overhearing part of a tutoring conversation, or someone's learning that your child is receiving tutoring, then please discuss this with us; you may wish not to sign up for the tutoring, or to try to make special arrangements.

6. The tutors get supervision, and some of the supervisory sessions are in groups of other tutors. We ask the tutors to use the child's first name or initial only. But other tutors may be able to identify the child if they happen to know your family. Or, a tutor may inadvertently also mention your last name. If this degree of lack of privacy is not tolerable, you may wish not to sign up, or to ask for some special arrangement.

7. We plan to gather lots of information so as to measure the results of what we are doing, and to publish those results in scientific journals. There is a separate consent form to allow, or not allow, us to use the data for research. But even leaving aside the goal of research, we want lots of data so that we can understand how much we are helping people, and whether what we do is working or not, and what characteristics of people predict what sorts of responses. We expect you to cooperate with us in giving lots of information about your child's functioning and various other things. This may get tiresome to you, as it certainly will for us. But the benefits are that we can study our intervention and make it better, and also give evidence to other people that it works, assuming it does.

8. Even if you decide for your child to quit the tutoring, and even if that is very early on, we would still like to keep on asking you how the child is doing, and to carry out other measurements. This lets us get some information on the question of how much progress people make without tutoring.

9. You pay for the tutoring by the month, not by the session. This means that if there are months where you want to take a week off, those months cost the same as those where you don't. The payments during times off are used to offset, in a very partial and incomplete way, the administrative costs and costs other than the tutors' wages. There will be times when you can't have a session, and a few (up to 4) days a month when the tutor can't have the session. The payment agreement is like tuition to school; you don't get refunds on college tuition for classes that are cancelled by the college or classes the student doesn't attend.

10. The expectation is that the student will "show" for 80% of appointments. If any more than 20% of phone calls the tutor makes result in no connection with the student, the tutoring may be discontinued.

11. When an appointment is made, that is the one time that is guaranteed that the tutor is available that day. If something comes up ahead of time, and you want to ask the tutor to reschedule, you may do so, but there is no guarantee that the tutor will be able to. If the appointment cannot be kept, please let the tutor know as far ahead of time as possible. If

you miss an appointment, please contact the tutor as soon as possible to reschedule. Please do not wait until the time of the appointment, and then tell the tutor that the appointment cannot be kept or ask the tutor to call later that day.

12. The question of whether cell phone use may increase the probability of brain cancer or other health problems has not been totally settled. Below are a couple of quotations from the website of the National Cancer Institute, <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Risk/cellphones> that indicate the lack of closure on the question.

This one suggests danger: “The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a component of the World Health Organization, has recently classified radiofrequency fields as ‘possibly carcinogenic to humans,’...”

This one suggests safety: “The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that, although some studies have raised concerns about the possible risks of cell phone use, scientific research as a whole does not support a statistically significant association between cell phone use and health effects.”

In view of the uncertainty that exists, we want to insist that your child either use a land line, or use a cell phone with either a headset or on speakerphone so that the cell phone is held at least a foot away from the head. If the child does use a headset or earbuds, we'd also like to ask you to make sure that the child doesn't have the volume turned up so high that there could be damage to hearing; listening to audible devices that are set too loud appears to be a widespread hazard to the hearing of young people.

13. It could possibly come about that the directors of the tutoring program, in collaboration with the tutor, will come to decide that the child will not benefit from the tutoring; it could be that a parent will also decide this. In order for the tutoring to proceed, both the directors of the program and the parents should desire for it to continue; if either become convinced that it is not beneficial to the child, it may be terminated by either.

14. Please give the tutor any phone numbers, email addresses, and mailing addresses you want the tutor to be able to try. Also please get the tutor's addresses and phone numbers, as well as those of the directors of the program. Please stay in touch with the tutor and the program and respond to messages as quickly as you can. The success of the enterprise relies on people's being able to communicate with each other. Please don't tolerate or permit a communication blackout. If you can't get in touch with your tutor, please let the directors of the program know as soon as possible. Our email addresses are jstray@gmail.com (Joseph Strayhorn) and jillianstrayhorn@gmail.com (Jillian Strayhorn).

15. If two parents disagree with each other about whether to engage in the tutoring, the one that objects to it will prevail. We do not want to take on the task of dealing with conflict between parents about whether the tutoring should be done or not.

16. Before beginning, please check to see if you are going to be hit with additional charges for phone calls, even though you receive them and do not initiate them. The tutoring program will not pay for additional phone charges if there are any.

17. Please do not start the tutoring with the assumption that it will be a short term intervention. It exerts its effects slowly. Sometimes more than one year is required for maximum benefit.

18. Please do not regard the tutoring as an emergency intervention. If there is an issue of self-harm, harm to others, or other danger, please make sure that you engage with a professional who is qualified to directly help you assess the risk of danger and reduce it. The tutors are NOT so qualified, even though the subject matter covered in the tutoring can possibly eventually help with the quality of life and with habits of nonviolence.

19. The first couple of weeks are generally a trial period. At the end of that time, we and you will know better whether the tutoring will be likely to work on a longer term basis.

Please sign below, if you have read and agree to the above, and want to try the tutoring despite these provisos.

Parent's signature

Date