

How to Prepare your Child for the Assessment

Preparing your child in advance for the psychoeducational assessment can reduce your child's anxiety and encourage their cooperation in the assessment process.

For elementary school-age children, it is advised that you inform them a few days to a week in advance that they have an appointment scheduled. This will give your child time to process the information and ask any questions that may come to mind. Older children can be told further in advance. Remind your child the day before the appointment that they will be spending time with me the next day, usually instead of going to school. Missing school can be a major sales point!

In describing what I will be doing with them it is advised that you avoid using emotionally laden terms such as "testing," "doctor," "learning disabilities," and "giftedness" with your child. For example, rather than saying "You are going to a doctor to be tested for learning disabilities," or "You are going to be tested for giftedness to see how smart you are," you could explain that you made an appointment with someone who "will do brain and thinking exercises" with them to understand "how their brain learns best" which will help you and their teachers figure out how to make school and learning more fun for them. You can explain that the actual exercises they do with me will involve a variety of things, such as answering questions, doing puzzles, drawing, listening to stories, and playing games. We'll take breaks and there are stickers and toys involved. Emphasize that most children enjoy the experience and are eager to come back. Most importantly, make an effort to convey a positive and confident attitude about the experience.

Try to ensure that your child gets a good night's sleep before the assessment and eats a healthy breakfast in the morning. Bring everything that your child normally needs, such as glasses or an inhaler for allergies. Pack snacks and a drink for refueling during rest breaks. I like to start at 9:30 and break for lunch at 12:30, at which time either you can take your child out to lunch, or if they are old enough, they can find a place in the neighborhood to eat. Lunch breaks are most successful if they also involve some fresh air and exercise. Students/families are asked to return after this up-to one hour break and to then continue to work from approximately 1:30-4:00 or 4:30. These timeframes are flexible and I will do my best to accommodate you and your child's schedule.

Young children may wish to bring a "blankie" for comfort or a favorite toy or book to show us. I have had children do card tricks, show me their art work, and explain to me (in great detail) what they love about Minecraft. I do not do the testing with the parents in the room, as I find the dynamic is better if I can establish an independent relationship with the child. However parents may choose to sit in the waiting area nearby where they can often hear what we are doing. Parents are also welcome to drop their child off and return at designated times.

Your child will be treated with respect and empathy. It is a very high priority to me to make the process comfortable and enjoyable. It is likely that when you come to pick up your child they will greet you bursting with enthusiasm, eager to tell you how well they did and how much fun they had.

I will not be able to give you feedback immediately after the first meeting as I will not yet have had an opportunity to score the tests or reflect on the meaning of the patterns of performance. Also, I prefer to avoid discussing your child in front of him/her. Please be patient and allow me to go through the process – I promise to share details and give you every opportunity to understand your child as soon as possible.