



Wellness Quick Guide

Are Medications the Right Next Step?

Guide to Supporting a Child's Mental Health Journey



**Grounded in clinical knowledge,
tailored for real people.**

This resource was reviewed by Dr. Kevin Simon, MD, MPH, an attending pediatric psychiatrist and addiction medicine specialist at Boston Children's Hospital and Assistant Professor at Harvard Medical School. His feedback helped ensure this content is both accurate and empowering for real-life use.

Why This Guide Matters

Making decisions about mental-health treatment, especially medication, can feel overwhelming.

You're not alone.

This guide helps you pause, reflect, and make informed choices grounded in care, not fear. Because exploring treatment isn't about changing who your child is — it's about helping them feel better, function better, and flourish.

Disclaimer: Your health is unique, and the information in this guide is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for personal medical advice. Consult with a healthcare provider or registered dietitian to create a plan that is right for your specific health needs and goals.



Step 1: See the Bigger Picture

Real Talk



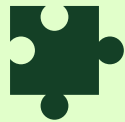
Medication is one piece of the puzzle — not the whole picture. Every child deserves a full picture of care, where each piece supports both healing and growth.



Try This: Understand the Puzzle Pieces

Therapy

(individual, group, or family-based)



School supports

(accommodations, counseling, IEPs)



Lifestyle shifts

(sleep, nutrition, movement, screen time)



Medication

(when recommended and monitored by a provider)



What to Remember

“There's no perfect order for putting together care. What matters is the path that helps your child feel safer, stronger, and more supported.”

Step 2: Ask Questions ... Lots of Them

Real Talk



Asking questions isn't pushback — it's partnership. Curiosity helps providers tailor what's best for your child.



Ask About:

What's the diagnosis or concern we're treating?

What are the goals of treatment?

Are there non-medication options we should try first or alongside medication?

What benefits should we expect, and what are the possible side effects?

How will progress be measured, and what if the plan needs to change?

Takeaway Tip:

Keep notes in your phone. You don't have to remember everything in the moment.

Step 3: Find the Right Fit

Real Talk



Every child is more than a list of symptoms. The right plan fits your child's personality and your family's values.



Try This – Think About:

What matters most for your child's day-to-day quality of life

Cultural or spiritual beliefs you have about healing

Past experiences (positive or not) with care or medication

Concerns about shame or being judged by others

Your capacity to manage routines, appointments, and follow-ups

What to Remember

"Naming what matters out loud helps your family lead with clarity, not fear."

Step 4: Build a Winning Team

Real Talk

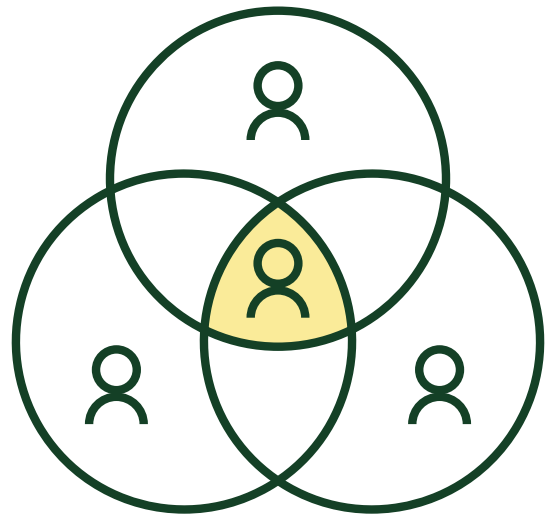


Every kid deserves a squad that's got their back. A strong team builds trust and stability — and kids notice when adults work together for them.



Your Team Might Include:

- + Pediatrician or primary-care doctor
- + Psychiatrist or nurse practitioner
- + Therapist or counselor
- + Teacher, social worker, or school counselor
- + Trusted coach, mentor, or family member



Ask About:

“Can you explain this in plain language?”

“How will we know if it's helping?”

“Who should I reach out to if concerns come up?”

Takeaway Tip:

Many schools or clinics have case managers who can help coordinate care. Ask if someone is available.

Step 5 – Review, Reflect, Revisit, Repeat

Real Talk



Treatment is a journey, and the path can change along the way. Some children need support briefly; others benefit longer. Every stage teaches you something.



Options Can Be:

Short-term:

Some children use meds for a few months or years to stabilize and then taper off.

Ongoing:

Some children need consistent support for ADHD, anxiety, or mood regulation.

Flexible:

Some meds are adjusted or paused based on progress and guidance from medical providers.

What to Remember

Saying yes today doesn't mean yes forever. It means yes to helping your child right now.