Implementing Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) in a Group Format

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What is Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) ?

TF-CBT is a hybrid approach that integrates...

- Trauma sensitive interventions
- Cognitive behavioral interventions
- Attachment theory
- Developmental neurobiology
- Family therapy
- Empowerment therapy
- Humanistic therapy
TF-CBT Core Values

- Components based - allows for flexibility
- Respectful of cultural, religious values
- Adaptable – age, gender, etc.
- Family focused – involvement of parents and siblings
- Therapeutic relationship is central
- Self efficacy focused – highlight strengths with praise
When is TF-CBT... 

**Appropriate**  vs.  **Not Appropriate**

- Evidence of childhood trauma(s)
- Possible link between trauma and current difficulties
- Ages 3 to 18
- Some memory of trauma(s)
- Single, multiple and complex trauma

- Actively suicidal
- Dangerous acting out behaviors
- Active substance abuse
- Placement very brief and temporary
- No memory or acknowledgement of trauma(s)
Encourage Humor and Fun!

I have seen what a laugh can do. It can transform almost unbearable tears into something bearable, even hopeful.
- Bob Hope

To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain, and play with it!
- Charlie Chaplin

If you’re not laughing – you’re not doing it right!
- Barbara Bonner (2005)
TF-CBT includes individual, parent-child and family work

**Child’s Treatment**
- Education
- Skill building
- Exposure/Processing

**Caregiver’s Treatment**
- Education
- Skill building
- Exposure/Processing
- Behavior Management

**Family Sessions**
- Education
- Skill building
- Exposure/Processing

**Conjoint Sessions**
- Preparation for Joint Sessions
PRACTICE Components

- **P** sychoeducation and parenting skills
- **R** elaxation
- **A** ffective expression and regulation
- **C** ognitive coping
- **T** rauma narrative & processing
- **I** n vivo gradual exposure
- **C** onjoint parent child sessions
- **E** nhancing safety and future development
Practical Advantages of Group TF-CBT

- Serve larger numbers of clients (reduce waiting lists)
- Increases availability of popular evening slots
- Added bonus – great vehicle for training new staff or trainees
- Provides peer support for children and parents
Possible Therapeutic Advantages of Group TF-CBT

- Excellent format for psycho-education and skill building
- Behaviorally demonstrates prevalence – which is important for children in the concrete stage of thinking
- Particularly effective at reducing the shame and stigma associated with sexual abuse and other traumas
- Parenting groups have been shown to be a very effective method to improve parenting skills
- Research supports effectiveness of TF-CBT with 14 randomized trials including several group tx trials


Implementation of Group TF-CBT

- Therapist(s) to lead caregiver group
- Therapists to lead child group concurrent to caregiver group
- Conjoint portion of session at end with all families together provides opportunities to review psycho-education and practice skills
- Caregivers and children move through PRACTICE components in parallel
- Conjoint activities reinforce skills learned in the separate groups
Issues Specific to Group TF-CBT

- Longer sessions, if at all possible (1½ - 2 hours)
- Same as individual but group members are asked to maintain confidentiality
- Offering equal time to caregivers in caregiver group
- Careful selection of activities for child group, especially for young children and children with behavioral difficulties
- Structure and behavior management important in child group
- Children meet as a group except when creating their trauma narrative, which is completed by pulling children out individually
- All families meet together for conjoint sessions except when child shares narrative with caregiver, which is conducted separately
Group TF-CBT Sessions Flow

Entire process is gradual exposure

Baseline Assessment: Neutral + Baseline Trauma Narrative

1/3

Sessions 1 - 4
✓ Psychoeducation /Parenting Skills
✓ Relaxation
✓ Affective Expression and Regulation
✓ Cognitive Coping

1/3

Sessions 5 - 8
✓ Trauma Narrative Development and Processing
✓ In vivo Gradual Exposure

1/3

Sessions 9 - 12
✓ Conjoint Parent Child Sessions
✓ Enhancing Safety and Future Development
Therapeutic Engagement with Caregivers

- Begins before intake and continues through tx*
- Collaborate and overcome concrete barriers*
- Inquire about prior therapy experiences*
- Establish the need for tx based on assessment*
- Motivate caregiver to collaborate by *
  - Reviewing scientifically documented benefits of TF-CBT
  - Highlighting benefits of caregiver participation
- Describe rationale, structure and expected course of treatment
- Instill hope and encourage optimism by emphasizing child and family strengths

*(McKay, 2008; Dorsey, et al, 2013)
Creative Group Activities

- Psycho-education
  - Family Feud, bathing suit people
- Relaxation
  - Wet noodle – tin soldier exercises
- Affective expression and modulation
  - Puppets, role plays, games, charades, songs
- Cognitive coping
  - Best friend role plays with group friends
- Enhancing Safety
  - Role plays, hula hoops, traffic light game, more songs!
Advantages of Group Skill Building and Cognitive Processing with Caregivers

- Noticing that others who are implementing parenting skills between sessions report excellent progress inspiring others to try

- Caregivers often have greater compassion for others in the group which inspires them to be gentler and kinder to themselves

- Having genuine respect for others in the group helps caregivers to feel less stigmatized by their child’s experience
What Do You Know?
A Bilingual Therapeutic Card Game

To order your card game, contact the CARES Institute at sandsja@rowan.edu
Group Graduation

- It’s a real party!
- Party themes, music, speeches, toasts
- Graduation caps, certificate presentations
- Pizza, snacks, cake, balloons, etc.
My Body Song

My body’s nobody’s body but mine
You run your own body let me run mine
Sometimes it’s hard to say NO and be strong
When the No feelings come, then you know something’s wrong
My body’s nobody’s body but mine
You run your own body let me run mine
My body’s mine from my head to my toes
Leave me alone when you hear me say no

www.peteralsop.com
Certificate of Completion

Presented to

Child's Name

for outstanding effort and participation!
Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)
Free of Charge Online Training Resources

TF-CBT Web
www.musc.edu/tfcbt

CTG Web
www.musc.edu/ctg

TF-CBT Consult
www.musc.edu/tfcbtconsult

WEST PENN ALLEGHENY HEALTH SYSTEM
www.wpahs.org

UMDNJ CARES INSTITUTE
www.caresinstitute.org

MUSC National Crime Victims Research & Treatment Center
www.musc.edu/ncvc

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