

Trauma Focused CBT Interventions for Preschoolers

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Learning Objectives

- Look at the developmental needs of preschool clients
- Identify specific interventions within each component of TF-CBT
- Provide a forum for other professionals to share interventions they use with preschool clients

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What the Research Shows

- Traumatized preschoolers are able to meaningfully engage in a cognitive behavioral approach
- Sustained improvement reported at 1 year
- Improved coping and decrease in intrusive thoughts

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Developmental Needs

- Language
- Attention
- Memory
- Style of learning
- Other aspects of development



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So...What Does This Mean?

- Presenting TF-CBT in a developmentally appropriate way
- More caregiver involvement
- Session structure
- Celebrating ALL successes!



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Parental Involvement

- When the parent gets treatment, there are fewer behavioral and depressive symptoms in the child
- The parent's emotional reaction to the trauma is the strongest predictor of treatment outcome

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Parenting Goals

- Overall positive parenting strategies
- Managing client's trauma symptoms
- Enhancing ability to assist client in managing trauma symptom



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Helpful Parenting Behaviors

- These can help buffer the impact of the trauma:
 - Scaffolding
 - Praising
 - Emotional connectivity
 - Focus on coping rather than distress

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Individual Caregiver Sessions

- Teach them the same skills and information as the child
- Educate on behavior modification
- Take the time to practice with the parent
- Remember...what they focus on is what will grow

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Pre-Treatment Assessment

- Want to get history of trauma, symptoms, and overall functioning and the relationship between them
- Seek information from multiple sources
- Standardized assessment measures
 - http://medicine.tulane.edu/sites/g/files/rdw7611/YCPC_v5_23_14.pdf
- Assess developmental level

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Components of TF-CBT

- Psychoeducation
- Relaxation
- Affective Expression
- Cognitive Coping
- Trauma Narrative
- In-vivo Exposure
- Conjoint sessions
- Enhancing Safety

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Psychoeducation: Goals

- Orient the client and parent
- Normalize the impact of trauma and symptoms
- Instill optimism regarding treatment



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Psychoeducation: Parent's Role

- Reduce resistance – explain what you are doing to get them on board
- Provide parent with more specific information about the specific trauma
- Assess faulty cognitions
- Emphasize safety

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Psychoeducation: Strategies

- Broader in content (less depth)
- Use certificates to orient to TF-CBT
- Use pictures to represent symptoms
- Monster puppet
- “How do kids feel when...?”



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Relaxation: Goals

- Increase global use of relaxation
- Reduce physical manifestation of trauma symptoms
- Increase distress tolerance

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Relaxation: Parent's Role

- Enhance caregiver's ability to manage trauma symptoms
- Children learn affective and behavioral regulation based on relationship with caregiver
- Picking up on cues
- Coach and cheerleader

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Relaxation: Strategies

- Have caregivers do relaxation with child
 - Rocking
 - Rub child's back
 - Read relaxation script
 - Bubbles
- Be cautious about re-traumatizing
- Three things you would like to do today



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Relaxation: for Parents

- Allow parents to openly share their own reactions to the trauma
- Secondary traumatic stress
- Ensure parents do not seek support from the child

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Affective Expression: Goals

- Emotional identification
- Learn to rate intensity of emotion
- Increase distress tolerance



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Affective Expression: Parent's Role

- Let child know all feelings are OK
- Emotion coaching
 - Recognize emotions
 - Validate feelings
 - Help child label emotions
 - Set limits surrounding emotional expression

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Affective Expression: Strategies

- Inside Out
- Emotions Bingo
- Color Your Feelings
- Homework is very important



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Cognitive Coping: Goals

- Links between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Differentiating between the three
- Learn to recognize and alter cognitive distortions

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Cognitive Coping: Parent's Role

- Learn to identify inaccurate beliefs
- Help children differentiate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
 - Use real life experiences, books, TV shows
- Prompt – what is a more helpful thought
- Use homework to assist in skill building

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Cognitive Coping: Strategies

- Visual cues – brain and body
- ANTs – to assist with understanding patterns of cognitive distortions
- Use sorting activities
- Warm fuzzies and cold pricklies
- Colored sunglasses



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Trauma Narrative: Goals

- Enhance coherence and organization
- Disrupt association between reminders and distress responses
- Increase self efficacy
- Empower child by talking about the trauma

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Trauma Narrative: Parent's Role

- Enhance communication with child
- What do you want to say to your child?
- What do you want your child to know?

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Trauma Narrative: Suggestibility

- Source attribution
- Defer to adults
- Difficulty providing details

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Trauma Narrative: Strategies

- Be cautious about language choices
 - When? How many? Why?
 - Be precise
- Monitor your own facial expression
- Start with open ended questions
- Use diagram prompts
 - Think, feel, smell, hear, touch, see
- Same as in cognitive coping

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Trauma Narrative: Reprocessing

- Keep the child active
- Keep in mind:
 - What preschoolers worry about?
 - How do preschoolers think?
- Focus on mastery moments

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Trauma Narrative: Road Blocks

- Young children can show improvement without a trauma narrative
- Still show more effective parenting and fewer externalizing problems

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Enhancing Safety: Goals

- Reduce risk of recurrence
 - Warning signs/cues
- Enhance communication with caregiver
- Reduce impact on future development
- Enhance self efficacy



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Enhancing Safety: Parent's Role

- Help child identify a plan
- Direct open communication
- Increase awareness of when trauma symptoms may resurface
 - Developmental triggers

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Enhancing Safety: Strategies

- Written plan – use pictures
- Identify safety supports
- Personal space bubble



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What Strategies Do You Have To Share?

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Q & A

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