TF-CBT for Children and Youth in the Child Welfare System

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Objectives

Participants will:

1. Identify challenges to implementing TF-CBT with children, youth, and families in the child welfare system

2. Describe strategies for overcoming challenges to implementing TF-CBT with children, youth, and families in the child welfare system

3. List resources to use with children and youth in the child welfare system and their caregivers
Trauma among Children and Youth in the Child Welfare System

- Higher rates of trauma exposure and more trauma symptoms (Kolko et al., 2010)
- Complex trauma
- System-induced trauma
- Separation and loss
- Instability in caregiving/environments
Removed

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOeQUwdAjE0
TF-CBT with Children and Youth in Foster Care

- RCT’s: 15% in foster care, average number of traumas 3.4 per child
- Studies showing TF-CBT is effective for kids in foster care
  - TF-CBT group had better symptom reduction and engagement strategies led to better treatment retention (Dorsey, Cox, Conover, & Berliner 2011)
  - TF-CBT group had better symptom reduction and fewer placement changes and runaway attempts (Weiner, Schneider & Lyons 2009)
Challenges to Implementing TF-CBT with Children and Youth in the Foster Care System

- Complex trauma
  - Attachment/relationship difficulties
  - Difficulties with emotional regulation
  - Behavioral difficulties

- Multiple presenting problems
  - Co-occurring disorders

- Systems issues
  - Court involvement
  - Changes in placement
  - Group homes/residential treatment facilities

- Caregiver engagement
  - Engaging substitute caregivers
  - Involving biological parents
Child Welfare System Challenges

- Court involvement
  - Clarifying therapist role and confidentiality
  - Using PRAC skills to cope with stress related to court
  - Trauma narrative process

- Changes in placement
  - Work with caregivers to reduce disruptions and ease transitions
  - Provide as much consistency as possible
  - Use PRACTICE skills to cope with change
  - Addressing trauma and loss reminders
  - Life narrative to integrate experiences in placement
TF-CBT with Complex Cases

- Co-occurring disorders
  - Differential diagnosis
  - Medication
- Triage for priority focus
- Staying focused on trauma
  - PRACTICE components
TF-CBT in Residential Treatment Facilities

- Trauma training for all staff (e.g., Sanctuary Model, Think Trauma Toolkit)
  - TF-CBT Handouts for RTF Milieu Staff

- Child/youth should be adjusted to RTC and stable (or “stably unstable”) before starting TF-CBT

- Addressing trauma triggers
  - TF-CBT Coping Cards

- Caregiver involvement
Caregiver Engagement

- Engaging substitute caregivers
  - Evidence-based engagement strategies (McKay, McCadam, & Gonzalez, 1996; McKay, Nudelman, & McCadam, 1996)
  - Validating caregiver concerns
  - Increasing motivation to participate
  - Psychoeducation and trauma-informed parenting skills
    - [http://www.fosterparentcollege.com/](http://www.fosterparentcollege.com/)
    - Off-Road Parenting
- Involving biological parents
  - When and if
  - Assessment of parent functioning and ability to support child’s healing process
  - Atonement/clarification process

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TF-CBT and Complex Trauma: Attachment

- Gradual exposure to therapeutic relationship
  - Relationships are threatening
  - Therapist may be a trauma trigger
- Building trust by enhancing psychological safety
  - Containment and session structure enhance safety
- Boundaries, consistency, and transparency
- Address difficulties in attunement and perspective taking
- Enhance attachment to caregiver
Psychoeducation

- Include systems-induced trauma (e.g., removal, foster care, multiple placements, separation from siblings)
- Incorporate reasons for removal/CW involvement
- Resources:
  - Maybe Days: A Book for Children in Foster Care
  - Murphy’s Three Homes: A Story for Children in Foster Care
  - Finding the Right Spot
  - I’d Rather Be with a Real Mom Who Loves Me
  - Foster Forward: Are You Fitting in or Freaking Out? Workbook
  - Foster Adelante: Te estas incluyendo o te estas haciendo loco?
Complex Trauma and Behavioral Issues

- CODs and COWs
- MUPS/FUPS
- Psychoeducation: biology and stress response, trauma triggers
- Coping plans for trauma triggers
- Psychoeducation and parenting skills for caregivers
- Using the cognitive triangle
Complex Trauma and Emotional Regulation

- Safety and relaxation prior to or during psychoeducation
- Emotional attunement and mirroring
  - Collateral and conjoint work
- Practicing and mastery of regulation and coping skills in session
- Interventions
  - Metaphors: Incredible Hulk, iceberg
  - Bottle exercise
  - Apps: Virtual Hope Box, Mood Tracker
Trauma/Life Narratives

- Incorporating multiple traumas and multiple placements
- Planning the chapters/timelines: prioritizing significant positive and negative life events
- Summaries with some detailed accounts
- Trauma integration
- My Lifebook Journal
The Me I Once Was

https://youtu.be/PYUpdXnFSc8
Processing Trauma-Related Distortions

- Themes: safety, trust, intimacy, power/control, esteem

- Achieving balanced thinking utilizing:
  - Examining the evidence
  - Progressive logical questioning
  - Best friend role play
  - Responsibility pie

- What are some of Zoe’s likely trauma-related distortions?

- How would you challenge her distortions?
Conjoint Sessions and Enhancing Safety

Challenges:
- Sharing with foster parents
- Sharing with birth parents
- Sharing with other supportive adults

Safety challenges:
- Hypervigilance vs. desensitization
- High risk behaviors/survival coping
- Relationship choices
- Environmental stressors/lack of supports

Interventions/resources:
- [https://www.plannedparenthood.org/teens](https://www.plannedparenthood.org/teens)
- Apps: Safe Spot, MY3-Support Network, Safety Plan

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