TF-CBT for Children and Youth in the Foster Care System

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Objectives

Participants will:

1. Identify challenges to implementing TF-CBT with children and youth in the foster care system

2. Describe strategies for overcoming challenges to implementing TF-CBT with children and youth in the foster care system

3. List resources to use with children and youth in the foster care system and their caregivers
Trauma among Children and Youth in the Foster Care 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
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)
  - TFCBT group had better symptom reduction and fewer placement changes and runaway attempts (Weiner, Schneider & Lyons 2009)
Video: “We Carry It with Us”
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
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
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
  - Crayon activity for emotional numbing
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
TF-CBT with Complex Cases

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

- Trauma training for all staff (e.g., Sanctuary Model)
- 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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Resources

http://www.selfesteemshop.com/

- 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 estás haciendo loco?
- My Lifebook Journal
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