Advanced TF-CBT Level 2: Cognitive Processing

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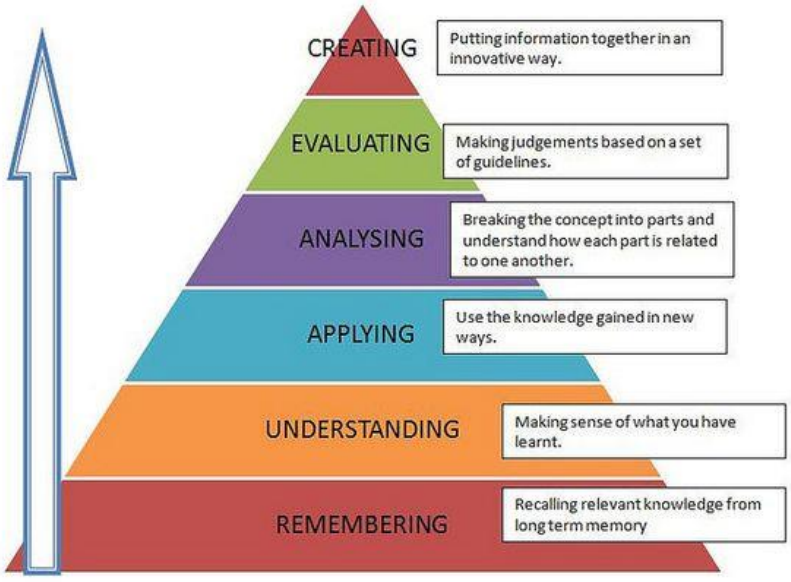
Cognitive Processing positively shapes and corrects beliefs about self, others and the world that were formed in the storm and aftermath of the trauma.

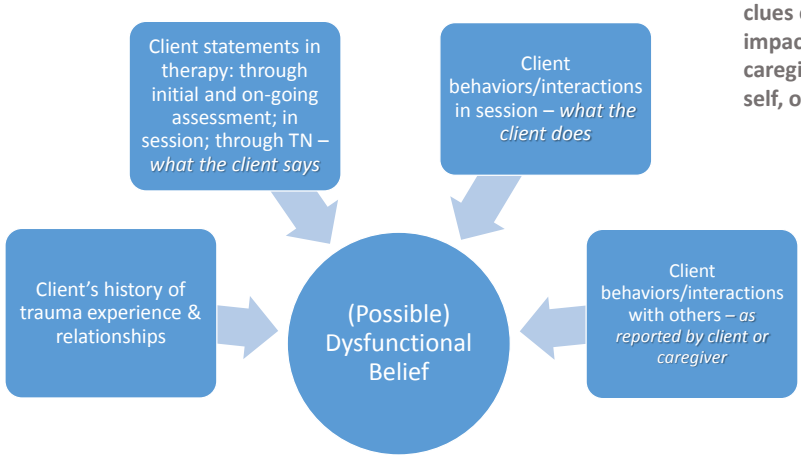


Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

Identifying Dysfunctional Beliefs

Identifying Dysfunctional Beliefs

Throughout treatment, listen and watch for clues on how trauma has impacted child's (and caregivers) beliefs about self, others, world



Lessons from Adult PTSD Treatment: Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)

https://cptforptsd.com/
CPT Web: https://cpt.musc.edu/

- CPT uses the term "Stuck Points"
  - Conflicting beliefs or strong negative beliefs that create unpleasant emotions and problematic or unhealthy behaviors.
- Stuck points may be conflicts between prior beliefs and beliefs formed after a traumatic experience.
  - Example: I used to believe that I could protect myself. Now I believe that it's my fault that I got hurt.
- Stuck points may also be formed if you have prior negative beliefs that seem to be confirmed or reinforced by the traumatic event.
  - Example: Before the trauma, I thought authority couldn't be trusted. Now I know that no authority can be trusted.

Five common themes to consider in cognitive processing of traumatic experiences

1. Safety
2. Trust
3. Power/Control
4. Esteem
5. Intimacy

1. Safety
   - Beliefs related to SELF: The belief that you can protect yourself from harm and have some control over events.
   - Beliefs related to OTHERS: The belief about the dangerousness of other people and expectancies about the intent of others to cause harm, injury, or loss.

In what ways have you seen or heard issues related to safety in trauma-impacted youth?

2. Trust

- Beliefs related to SELF: The belief that one can trust or rely on one's own perceptions or judgments. This belief is an important part of self-concept and serves an important self-protection function.
- Beliefs related to OTHERS: The belief that the promises of other people or groups can be relied on with regard to future behavior. One of the earliest tasks of childhood development is trust versus mistrust. A person needs to learn a healthy balance of trust and mistrust and when each is appropriate.

In what ways have you see or heard issues related to trust impact traumatized youth?

3. Power/Control

- Beliefs related to SELF: The belief that you can solve problems and meet challenges. Power is associated with your capacity for self-growth.
- Beliefs related to OTHERS: The belief that you can control future outcomes in interpersonal relationships or that you have some power, even in relation to powerful others.

In what ways have you see or heard issues related to power and control impact traumatized youth?

4. Esteem Issues
   - Beliefs related to SELF: The belief in your own worth, which is a basic human need. Being understood, respected, and taken seriously is basic to the development of self-esteem.
   - Beliefs related to OTHERS: Beliefs about how much you value other people. In addition, a realistic view of others is important to psychology health. In less psychologically healthy people, these beliefs are stereotyped, rigid, and relatively unchanged by new information.

In what ways have you see or heard issues related to esteem impact traumatized youth?

5. Intimacy Issues
   - Beliefs related to SELF: An important function for stability is the ability to soothe and calm oneself. This self-intimacy is reflected in the ability to be alone without feeling lonely or empty. When a trauma occurs, people react differently depending on their expectancy of how well they will cope.
   - Beliefs related to OTHERS: The longing for intimacy, connection, and closeness is one of the most basic human needs. The capacity to be intimately connected with other people is fragile. It can easily be damaged or destroyed through insensitive, hurtful, or unempathic responses from others.

In what ways have you see or heard issues related to intimacy impact traumatized youth?

Thought Ruts, Part 1: Perspective

Groundingyoga.com

Catastrophizing	• Imagining the worst possible outcome and thinking that it may be the only possible one.
Should's	• Forming strict rules and unrealistic expectations.
Filtering & Magnifying	• Filtering out the positive and magnifying the negative…like looking through tinted binoculars.
Emotional Reasoning	• Deciding that because something feels true, it must be.
Polarized Thinking & Labeling	• Making blanket positive/negative assessments for whatever comes up. Name-call to limit perception even further

Thought Ruts, Part 2: People

Blaming	• Holding ourselves or another person responsible for every problem.
Personalization	• Seeing all behaviors around us as responses to ourselves.
Self-Comparisons	• Measuring ourselves against others, making constant superior/inferior judgments to determine our worth.
Mind-Reading	• Feeling we know people's thoughts, the motivations for their behavior and how they feel about us – without a word from them.
Need to be Right	• Having to keep proving that we know best in our actions and words, no matter the cost.

THE "WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?" TEAM

All or Nothing Allen (Everything is black or white, no middle)
Blaming Blake (It's always my fault…)
Over and Over Oliver (Bad things are going to keep happening)
Negative Nate (Only bad stuff happens to me)
Shoulda Sharonda (I should be better, doing more…)
Drama Queen Jean (Blows everything out of proportion/ It's the end of the world)
Psych Out Sam (Expects the worst; Imagining others are thinking badly about him)
Bad Mouth Brandy (labels self as a loser no matter how many good things she does)
Emo Emily (Always lets her feelings be in control. If I feel it, it must be real.)

HOME PRACTICE

Situation:

Thought:

Who's the boss of this thought?

Talk Back Thoughts:

-
-

Situation:

Thought:

Who's the boss of this thought?

Talk Back Thoughts:

-
-

Draco
Harry
Neville
Hermione
Ron
Han Solo
Leia
Luke
Darth Vader
C-3PIO
Other:
Other:
Other:

Getting Started in Cognitive Processing

What is the *spirit* of cognitive processing?

- **Collaborative**
  - New belief must be realistic for the client
- **Truth to both sides of a debate**
  - Avoid taking polar opposite view of client, often this is inaccurate, unhealthy as well
  - Avoid power struggle – Not trying to prove client wrong
- **Maintain focus…**
  - Therapist guides through open ended Socratic questioning
- **Changing beliefs is an effortful process & requires practice/repetition**
- **Empowering client to evaluate own beliefs**

Cognitive Processing: Step-by-Step use of Socratic Questioning

Validation

- **Validate** current belief & connect to trauma experiences
- Using the Cognitive Triangle: Identify how belief might be a problem *(rate belief; rate connected feelings, identify behaviors)*
- Obtain permission to evaluate

Cognitive Processing Techniques

- More helpful way to think about it?
- Examining the evidence, including conducting behavioral experiments
- Lists and Definitions
- Best friend role-play
- Responsibility Pie
- Acting "as if"
- Scaling questions
- Metaphors/Stories

Re-evaluate

- Summarize new information gained and make a new triangle
- **Rate** new belief and connected feelings – new triangle
- Ask which triangle is more helpful – old one with old thought or new one with new thought
- Home assignment (e.g. try out new beliefs daily, rating feelings with new belief until next session)

Validation

- Validation can't be understated!
- Kids and caregivers can be highly sensitive to invalidation/disrespect of well held beliefs
  - If jump too quick to challenging, youth/caregiver may tune you out – you don't "get it"
- Unhelpful belief may be true but not helpful to the client
- Make sure client is willing to consider challenging their unhelpful belief
- Make sure client "owns" new belief – not just agreeing with what therapist thinks is a better thought

Re-Evaluate

Once you have completed the Socratic Technique:

- Summarize the new thoughts the child has come up with through the activity
- Create a new triangle and ask the child if instead of their old thought, they have a new thought that makes them feel less upset (use feeling word of child)/feel better. Rate the level of belief in the new thought and rate the feelings associated with the new thought
- Compare the triangles (old and new) and ask which triangle works better for the client/makes them feel better
- Develop homework that has child rate feelings associated with using the new thought.

5 Simple Questions to Start Processing

Helpful Cognitive Processing Techniques

- **More helpful way to think about it?**
  - Using Progressive Logical Questioning/scaling
- **Examining the evidence, including conducting behavioral experiments**
  - *"Something bad will happen to my mom if I go to school"*
  - *"I suck at everything"*
- **Definitions**
  - *"I've failed at everything".* – Definition of succeeding
  - *"I'm a terrible mother because I let my child get abused"* – Definition of good parent
- **Lists**
  - *"I've failed at everything".* What are some big and small ways kids show they can do things well?
  - *"I'm a terrible mother because I let my child get abused."* Let's make a list of big and small things mothers do to protect their children.
- **Family/friend role-play**
  - *"I deserved to get beaten because I talked back"* – What would you tell your best friend/your younger sister/brother?
- **Responsibility Pie**
  - *"It's my fault I was sexually abused. I kept going back to his house even after he abused me."* Let's make a list of any person, thing, or situation that may also have some responsibility. Use progressive logical questioning. Create Pies
- **Acting "as if"**
  - What if you acted "as if" you didn't suck at everything? What would you do, how would you act? Would you be willing to try an experiment this week?
- **Stories/metaphors**

"Socratic" Progressive Logical Questioning

Use a series of questions to gently challenge the client.

(Child physical abuse victim believes the abuse is all his fault. That he deserved it)

- *What have you ever heard about why some children/teens have been abused?*
- *Whose responsibility is it to make sure children are safe? Why?*
- *When your teacher is mad, do they hit you? Why not? Is it ever okay for a teacher to hit a student? Why not?*
- *When you get angry, do you hit the person you are angry with? Why not?*
- *What are ways grown ups are supposed to teach children when they make mistakes?*
- *When you were hit by your ____, did they want you to tell? Why not?*
- *What would you tell a friend who just told you they were beaten by their parent?*

@Teaching Tricks
#edchat #ukedchat #questioning

Clarification	Why are you stating that? Can you give me an example? How does this relate to our discussion? What do we already know about this?
Probing Assumptions	What would happen if…? How can you verify or disprove? What could we assume instead? How did you choose those assumptions?
Probing Rationale	What do you think causes…? How do you know this? What evidence is there that supports …? How might it be refuted?
Questioning Viewpoints	What are the strengths and weaknesses of…? What are alternative ways of looking at this? Explain why this is necessary or beneficial and who benefits from it?
Probing Consequences	How does … fit with what our experience tells us? How does … affect …? What are the consequences of this assumption? What generalizations can we make?
Questions on the Question	Why do you think I asked the question? What is the point of the question? What does … mean?

@Teaching Tricks; #edchat #ukedchat #questioning

How can these questions be adapted for use with youth?

Put in your Prep Work for Socratic Questioning

- What is the dysfunctional belief? Why is it dysfunctional?
- What is a healthier, more helpful alternate thought?
- What questions do you ask to get them there?

Adapted from slide by Shannon Dorsey, Washington Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science

Examining the Evidence- Preparation

- The sexual abuse happened because I said yes.
  - Did he say ok, fine when you said No? What did he say, do?
  - Who is older, him or you? Who is bigger?
  - What were some reasons you trusted him?
  - Can you give consent legally?
- I can never be happy because sexual abuse happened.
  - What made you happy before? Which of those things still make you happy?
  - When you think about future, how do you feel, what do you look forward to?
  - Are there things you've done since SA/times you've been happy? Tell me about them.
  - How do you know when you're happy? What's it look like? What does it feel like in your body?

Lists and Definitions

Ask client to define words AND/OR make lists

- DEFINITION: "You said you cannot trust anyone. Let's define 'trust' tell me what trust means to you." (Write down trust characteristics)

- LIST: "One thought that is difficult for you is thinking "I am a terrible mom". Let's make a list of anything that a good mom might do."

Lists

Example: "Your thought is, 'I am a bad kid.' Let's make a list of all the qualities that make for a good kid. Tell me what you think of when you think about what a good kid is like."

- Have client generate a list of attributes and ask the client which of these attributes they have or could cultivate.
- If they acknowledge that they have some good qualities, or have the potential to build some, see if they can come up with a new, more accurate/helpful thought.
  - New thoughts might include, "I have some positive qualities," "I can work on being a good kid."

Definitions

Example: "I can't trust anyone."

- Have the child (or caregiver) list all the big and small ways people in the world can be trusted
- Explore whether child (or caregiver) knows anyone who can be trusted even for the little things, even some of the time.
- A more helpful replacement thought might be, "I can trust some people for some things."

Responsibility Pie/Circle

Most often used for "my fault" thoughts

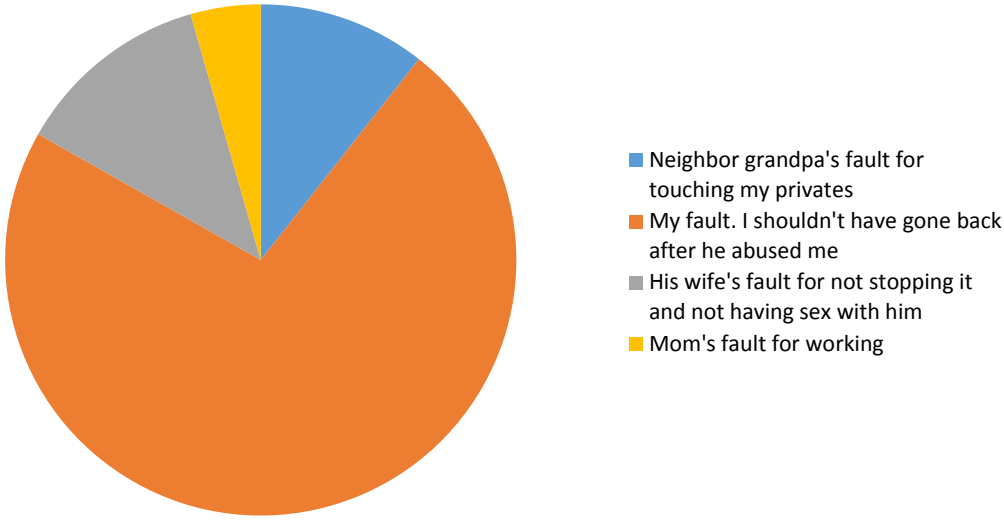
Draw a circle

- Ask the child to draw a circle. Write the thought above the circle. Ask client to color how much they think is their fault/responsibility.

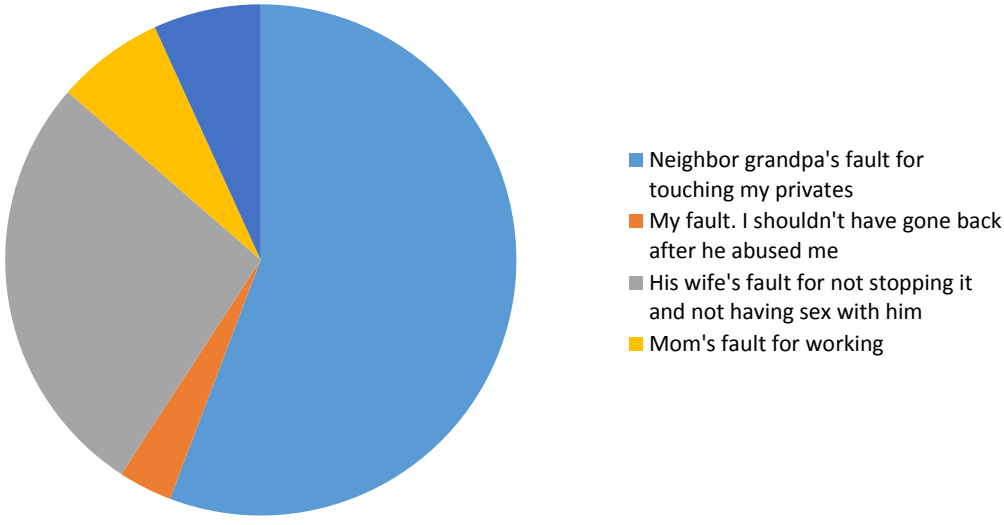
Get a list of others

- Ask the child to tell you all the other people/ places/situations/systems who are also responsible for what happened.
  - Get as many as you can

Responsibility Pie/Circle



Responsibility Pie/Circle



Bringing Creativity into Cognitive Processing

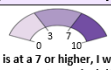
Therapeutic dream catchers:

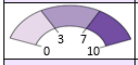
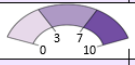
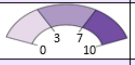
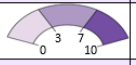
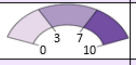
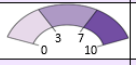
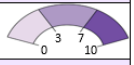
1) Draw/pattern of dream catcher
2) Decorate dream catcher
3) Have the child write out negative emotions, triggers, or experiences.
4) Trap the negative thoughts/triggers/ emotions
5) Have the child circle the dream catcher with strengths, positive traits, activities, and other things/people the client loves.

Cognitive Processing Homework

THINK-FEEL-DO WORKSHEET

SITUATION	THINK	FEEL		DO
	Original Thought(s)	Original Feelings		Original Behaviors
		Feeling	Intensity 0 = not at all 10 = most intense	
		1.	0---------5---------10	
		2.	0---------5---------10	
		3.	0---------5---------10	
	New Thought(s)	Changed Feelings		Changed Behaviors
		Feeling	Intensity 0 = not at all 10 = most intense	
		1.	0---------5---------10	
		2.	0---------5---------10	
		3.	0---------5---------10	

MY PLAN		
√	**I am feeling:**	**My feeling level is at a: (Lightest) 0 – 10 (Heaviest)**
	Mad	
	Sad	
	Other:	
My urge to cope in an unhelpful way is at a:		
 **If my urge is at a 7 or higher, I will go to my teacher, parent or a trusted adult for support.**		
My brain is thinking:		
√	**Type of Thought**	**My Heavy Thoughts**
	"Bad Mouth Brandy" Thinking I'm bad	
	"Blaming Blake" Blaming myself	
	"Shoulda Sharonda" Thinking I should be doing better or more	
	Other:	
Ways to lighten my thoughts and feelings:		
A helpful thought about myself		
A helpful thought about the situation		
I can do this now to feel better		
I can do this later to feel better		
I will use this coping skill now:		
	Muscle Relaxers	Belly Breaths
	Channel Switching	Other:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
How strong was your urge today?	**How strong was your urge today?**	**How strong was your urge today?**	**How strong was your urge today?**	**How strong was your urge today?**	**How strong was your urge today?**	**How strong was your urge today?**
						
What was your brain thinking right before?	**What was your brain remembering or thinking right before?**	**What was your brain remembering or thinking right before?**	**What was your brain remembering or thinking right before?**	**What was your brain remembering or thinking right before?**	**What was your brain remembering or thinking right before?**	**What was your brain remembering or thinking right before?**
How did your heart feel?	**How did your heart feel?**	**How did your heart feel?**	**How did your heart feel?**	**How did your heart feel?**	**How did your heart feel?**	**How did your heart feel?**
Feeling #	Feeling #	Feeling #	Feeling #	Feeling #	Feeling #	Feeling #
What alarm symptoms did your body feel?	**What alarm symptoms did your body feel?**	**What alarm symptoms did your body feel?**	**What alarm symptoms did your body feel?**	**What alarm symptoms did your body feel?**	**What alarm symptoms did your body feel?**	**What alarm symptoms did your body feel?**
Racing heart	Racing heart	Racing heart	Racing heart	Racing heart	Racing heart	Racing heart
Tense muscles	Tense muscles	Tense muscles	Tense muscles	Tense muscles	Tense muscles	Tense muscles
Weird tummy	Weird tummy	Weird tummy	Weird tummy	Weird tummy	Weird tummy	Weird tummy
Other:	Other:	Other:	ther:	Other:	Other:	Other:
Which coping skills did you use? Or could you use next time?	**Which coping skills did you use? Or could you use next time?**	**Which coping skills did you use? Or could you use next time?**	**Which coping skills did you use? Or could you use next time?**	**Which coping skills did you use? Or could you use next time?**	**Which coping skills did you use? Or could you use next time?**	**Which coping skills did you use? Or could you use next time?**
Belly Breaths	Belly Breaths	Belly Breaths	Belly Breaths	Belly Breaths	Belly Breaths	Belly Breaths
Muscle Relaxers	Muscle Relaxers	Muscle Relaxers	Muscle Relaxers	Muscle Relaxers	Muscle Relaxers	Muscle Relaxers
Channel Switching	Channel Switching	Channel Switching	Channel Switching	Channel Switching	Channel Switching	Channel Switching
Finger tapping	Finger tapping	Finger tapping	Finger tapping	Finger tapping	Finger tapping	Finger tapping
Other:	Other:	Other:	Other:	Other:	Other:	Other:
Mom, what are you are proud of today?	**Mom, what are you are proud of today?**	**Mom, what are you are proud of today?**	**Mom, what are you are proud of today?**	**Mom, what are you are proud of today?**	**Mom, what are you are proud of today?**	**Mom, what are you are proud of today?**

Cognitive Processing & Complex Trauma

Cognitive Processing for Complex Trauma

"So I just tell them it's not their fault right?"

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Common Cognitive Processing Challenges for Therapists

- Thinking errors cause us to take a too extreme position in relation to client's schemas
- Failure to appreciate differences in development of beliefs between complex and acute trauma:
  - Beliefs informed by multiple traumas not just one
  - Beliefs developed over extended periods of time
  - Often no pre-existing "healthy" belief
  - May be a higher degree of objective validity to their beliefs
  - Beliefs are more thematic (e.g., I'm worthless) than event-specific (e.g., I shouldn't have worn that skirt).

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Cognitive Processing with Complex Trauma: Useful Strategies

- The importance of validation
  - Complex trauma survivors are often highly sensitive to perceived invalidation/disrespect
  - Done poorly, cognitive processing can easily be perceived as invalidating
- Practice validating beliefs.
  - For example, how would you validate:

"I'm a worthless piece of crap; nobody likes me."

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Cognitive Processing with Complex Trauma: Useful Strategies

- Utilize "**balanced**" thinking
  - There is often truth to both sides of a debate
  - Validates the client
  - Helps avoid cognitive processing power struggles
  - Trauma can be easily conceptualized as an event that disrupts balance
  - Facilitates meaning making

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The Importance of Balanced Thinking

Safety

I'm never safe----------I'm always safe

All people are dangerous----------All people are safe

The world is not safe----------The world is safe

Trust

I can't trust myself at all----------I trust myself completely

I can't trust anyone----------I trust everybody

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The Importance of Balanced Thinking

Intimacy

I can't be close to anyone----------Everyone is my best friend

Power/Control

I'm always weak----------I'm always strong

It's all my fault----------Nothing is my fault

Esteem

I'm worthless----------I'm perfect

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Developing Balanced Thoughts

- Unbalanced: "I'm useless. I can't do anything right."
- Balanced: "I'm not happy with where my life is, **but** I am working hard to improve."
- Unbalanced: "I can't show any weakness; people will hurt me!"
- Balanced: "Sometimes it is a bad idea to show weakness, **but** there are some people I can trust to not hurt me when I cry."

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Cognitive Processing with Complex Trauma: Useful Strategies

- Make the process explicit (a parallel process!!)
  - Identify the problematic belief
  - Identify what you want to say, but DON'T say it
  - Validate the belief
  - Develop understanding of the belief
  - Help the youth/caregiver become aware of how the belief might be a problem
  - Identify a potential balanced belief
  - Identify the information they are not paying attention to
  - Help them attend to this information (Socratic process)
  - Make the process explicit

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Caregivers and Cognitive Processing

There are multiple reasons caregivers need to know these skills:

- They often have their own distorted cognitions that need restructuring.
- They are the KEY person supporting these very new skills for their child.
- They, themselves, can be a powerful source of challenging cognitions. This is why Conjoint Sessions are so critical.

Socratic Questioning for Caregivers

- Is the thought true? Always true?
- What evidence supports this idea? Any times it's not true?
- Does thinking this lead to positive or negative emotions and behaviors?
- Does thinking this help you in your relationships with friends and family?
- If your best friend had a child who experienced a similar trauma, would you say to her/him what you are saying to yourself?

What other questions do you find helpful in processing with caregivers?

Cognitive Processing

Glitches, Snags, Challenges…

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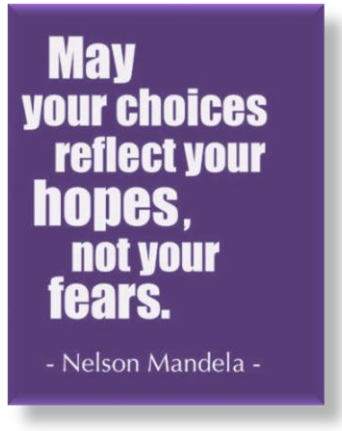
What do I do now???

- How do I do this with young children???
- How do I know when I'm done?
- Other challenges?



➢Client appears "lost" in discussion or Therapist feels going in circles
- Be explicit in focus
- Add structure or visuals, hands-on activity to teach points
- Use ratings to measure progress

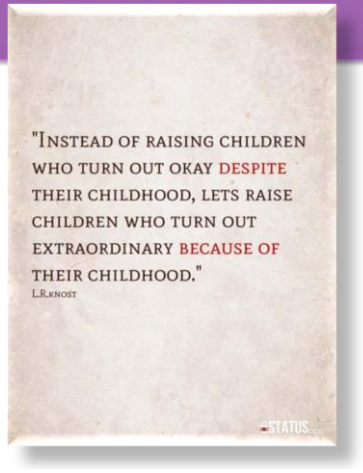
➢Client "arguing" for current belief or disengaged
- Allow client to fully educate you on why he/she thinks this way
- Validate current belief "It makes sense given your experiences of xyz…"
- Move on to another strategy
- Pay attention to if your questions come off as requiring a specific response

➢Therapist struggling to find acceptable & true endpoint
- Occurs when ideal isn't reality (child may never see parent again, neighborhood is dangerous, parents DID choose to abandon child, etc) – **Often the thought is true but unhelpful**
- Belief often overgeneralized – What part isn't true?
- May seek consultation

- Dysfunctional belief is vague – hard to challenge
  - Turn into an "If-then" statement.
  - "I have to be in control" → "If I am not in control, I will get taken advantage of."

- Child can't do solely verbal activity
  - Bring in a creative, interactive activity
  - Actively connect belief – feeling in triangle walk through
  - Look for evidence & paste under old & new belief

Examples of Internet Resources to Support Cognitive Processing



Male Celebrity Survivors

http://help4guys.org/get-help/celebrity-survivors/

Joyful Heart Foundation

http://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/

The vision of the Joyful Heart Foundation is a world free of sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. While we understand that this may not be achieved in our lifetimes, we continue to work towards it. Our mission is to transform society's response to sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse, support survivors' healing, and end this violence forever. We carry out this mission in three ways: Healing, Education and Advocacy. We conduct all our activities with the underlying spirit of collaboration, supporting and affirming existing services for survivors and efforts to end violence and abuse.

NO MORE Excuses: The Male Survivors Series

http://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/programs/education/no-more/psa-campaign/no-more-excuses-male-survivors-series

http://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/programs/education-awareness/no-more

http://www.teen.com/2016/01/18/celebrities/celebrities-with-abusive-parents/#1

Demi Lovato

Demi had a complicated relationship with her biological father, who passed away in 2013. In a video diary, Demi said she had mixed emotions when he died. "I felt conflicted when he passed because he was abusive; he was mean," she said. "But he wanted to be a good person; he wanted to have his family.

"Demi's album, *Confident*, features a a song titled "Father," a heartbreaking song she wrote about his impact on her life. She has said that her father's issues were tied to his mental illnesses.

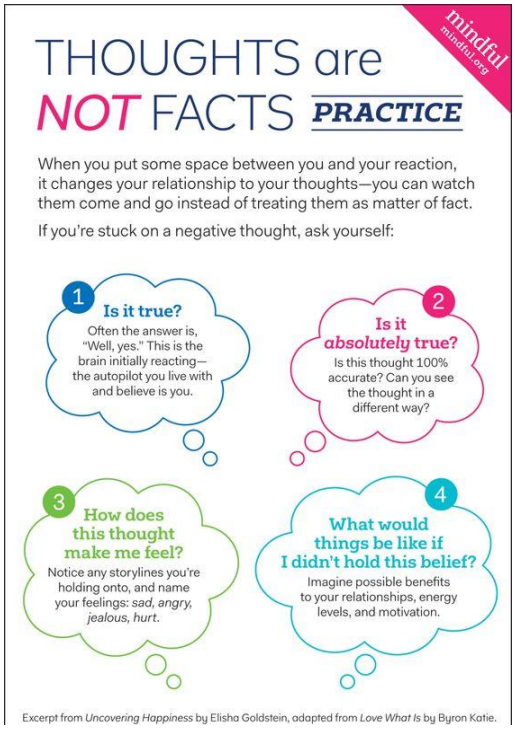
Missy Elliott

Missy grew up surrounded by horrific mistreatment. At age 8, she was sexually abused by a 16-year-old cousin. That's in addition to constant violence from her father, who would beat Missy's mother and threaten the family with guns. The rapper has since said that abuse "...don't disappear. You remember it as if it was yesterday.

http://www.vh1.com/news/239439/hollywood-celebrities-tragic-childhood/

Mary J. Blige

Mary J. Blige was only five years old when she was sexually abused. "That thing followed me all my life. The shame of thinking my molestation was my fault. It led me to believe I wasn't worth anything," she explained.



Help these kids with their

worries.

Afraid people are thinking bad things about her

Worried the same bad things will keep happening

Feels her world is a very dangerous place.

Hates certain sounds, touches and smells

Gets upset when things don't go as he expects

Expects that things will be too hard to deal with

Breathing and body change when he's upset

Thinks she can't cope away from family and home

Help yourself too.

Play **worry cards.**

Free download from:
autismteachingstrategies.com