

Advanced TF-CBT Level 3: Trauma Narrative

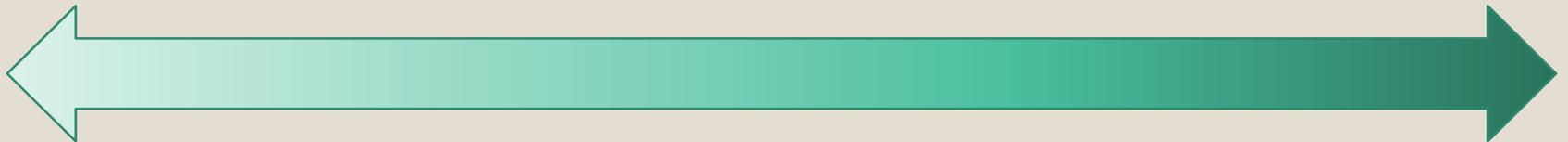
Elizabeth Risch
Amanda Mitten
Melissa Bernstein



Purpose of Trauma Narration

- Fear reduction/Desensitization
- Healthy, balanced beliefs
- Making Meaning

Desensitization



Meaning Making

Identify, Organize, and Process Complex Trauma Themes: Useful Strategies

- Desensitization
- Behavioral/Emotional
- Trees
- Who, what, when, where, how?

- Meaning Making
- Cognitive/Emotional
- Forest
- Why?

- Visualize trauma narration and processing as a continuum
- Adjust your location on this continuum based on the session-to-session needs of the client

Child's Engagement in Trauma Narration

Ambivalence or
Hesitance at a minimum,
Avoidance or Refusal are
common.

“Some days she comes in and really wants to get stuff off her chest and shares a lot about her past, other days she doesn't want to. So it's been a slower process.”

Therapist's Key Tasks in Trauma Narration

- Guidance through memories
- Validation
- Maintaining safe, controlled space

We will provide many examples, ideas today. Remember these are simply the methods... The power is always in the interpersonal sharing & processing of the past.

TN Development Tips for Managing Avoidance

1: Establish an In-Session Safety Plan

- Identify level on feelings scale that means a relaxer is needed.
- Develop list of brief (1-3 minute) relaxers to be used when a break is needed.
- Reinforce that when relaxers are completed and distress is down, you'll go back to their story development.
- Develop plan for a grounding activity at the end of the session.

2: Determine what stories the child will share

- Trauma symptoms should guide
 - May need both thematic & fear reduction
- Collaborative process with child
 - Persist through avoidance
- May use a timeline to help identify trauma events and create hierarchy from least to most distressing.
- Getting started is important...
 - May find starting point and go from there

3: Collaboratively Develop a Plan for Reviewing the Youth's Trauma Memories.

- Will the standard chapter format work? Or is a more creative way going to better fit for this youth?
- Examples from past cases:
 - UFC Fighter fighting opponents toward the final match with the toughest competitor
 - Spiderman battling progressively tougher villains
 - Frodo journeying through the dangerous forest and battling specific obstacles along the way
 - Star Wars episodes about the hero's greatest battles against the Dark Side

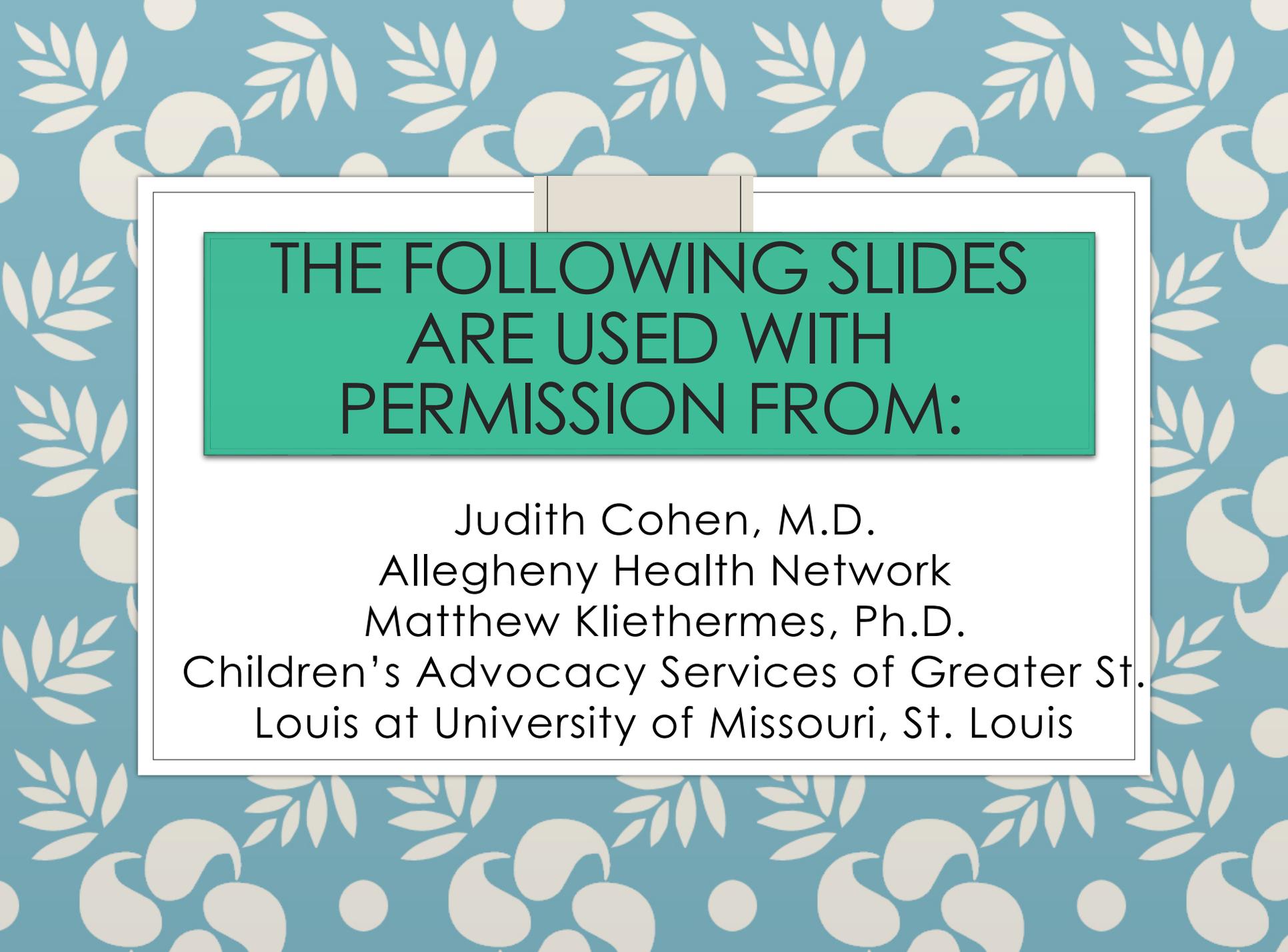
Avoidance Management Ideas

- Just get started
 - Agree to only tell non-trauma part of day
 - Hand child pen, “write what you can”
 - Ask specific Q: who was there
 - Start 1st person based on what is known (therapist does 1st two sentences)

Avoidance Management Ideas

- Make it fun, safe, comfortable
 - Bring a snack
 - Change the environment
 - Lessen expectations to make it do-able
- Get active – Make it an activity
 - Lessens interpersonal pressure
- Highlight success
 - Remember – not the product, it's the process

Thematic Chapters in Trauma Narration



**THE FOLLOWING SLIDES
ARE USED WITH
PERMISSION FROM:**

Judith Cohen, M.D.
Allegheny Health Network
Matthew Kliethermes, Ph.D.
Children's Advocacy Services of Greater St.
Louis at University of Missouri, St. Louis

Complex Trauma: Trauma Narrative Needs

Difficulty regulating resources and skills needed for adaptive functioning

- Interpersonal problems
- Affective instability
- Behavioral instability

May or may not have fear related to memories.

Trauma primary impact often on **Belief Systems...**



Trauma Impacted Theme

THEMATIC TRAUMA NARRATIVE:

*“What the heck is a
THEME?”*

View from the Literary World

- Definition:
 - The underlying message of a story
 - Critical belief about life conveyed in the story
 - What the story means
 - Stories often have more than one theme.
- Function:
 - Bind together essential elements of a story
 - Provide understanding of the “character’s” experiences
 - Give key insight into how the author views the world/life

View from Trauma-Focused Therapy

- A “stable and coherent framework for understanding one’s experience” is an important psychological need for trauma survivors (McCann & Pearlman, 1990)
- Processing themes is an attempt to help meet that need



Processing Themes: Moving Away from “TN Tunnel Vision”

- Processing themes requires looking for meaning across traumas rather than within one trauma
- The meaning ascribed to a trauma often changes following exposure to subsequent traumas
- Themes are patterns that form over time in a child’s life. They often pop up as thinking errors
- Common themes include:
 - **Safety**
 - **Trust**
 - **Power/Control**
 - **Esteem Issues**
 - **Intimacy Issues**

Activity: Catch the theme for Narrative Work

- I can't tell anybody that I'm hurting
- I don't care about anyone
- Why even try I'm just going to fail

Identify, Organize, and Process Complex Trauma Themes: Useful Strategies

◦ TIMELINES

- Can be used in assessment and all PRACTICE components
- Facilitate “forest level” processing...
- ...but also allow “tree level” processing
- Visual nature of timeline seems to make themes more accessible for youth
- Yes, You do still guide child in sharing specific memories that create & connect to the theme
 - Unloveable – child tells about being left alone while parent used drugs, termination of parental rights, day learned of failed adoption.
 - People can’t be trusted. – child tells about sexual abuse by father, mother not believing, subsequent abuse in fostercare

Examples of thematic narrative chapters

- “My history of trusting people”
- “Period of no control”
- “ How I lost respect for others”

TN Development Tailoring to Unique Needs

What do I do now???

- Narrative isn't coherent or cohesive
- Youth isn't reporting or exhibiting distress
- Difficulty determining if youth's distress is decreasing
- Questions re: the accuracy or truthfulness of the narrative
- Chronic or extended session absences
- Youth is experiencing significant distress between GE sessions
- Others?

TN Development Working with Caregivers in the TN

What are common challenges in Gradual Exposure with Caregivers?

T **R** **A** **U** **M** **A**

Traumatic Event	Re- experience	Avoidance	Unable to Function	Month (at least)	Arousal
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Preparation with Caregivers

1. Preparation for hearing Narrative
Start determining & increasing their readiness from day 1... or schedule parent only sessions to do catch up later.
2. Gradual Exposure to child's narrative
Not always, but always normalize & monitor distress
3. Processing of caregiver's reactions
Those necessary for facilitating healthy parenting and support in conjoint
4. Plan for supporting child in conjoint
Varies dependent on caregiver (roleplay vs write letter on own)

Caregiver Issues in Trauma-Focused Work

- Inappropriate self-blame and guilt
- Inappropriate child blame
- Denial that abuse occurred (or affected child)
- Fear of opening can of worms
- Caregiver's own PTSD Symptoms

What do you most often come across?

THE TRAUMA NARRATIVE PROCESS WITH CAREGIVERS

Questions to consider:

- What agreement will be set with child and caregivers to keep TN sharing contained to therapy only for now?
- How much of the child's trauma story is already known by the caregivers?
- How much of the child's trauma story will be appropriate to share with caregivers?
- How to work with the child to select what portions of the TN will be shared with the caregivers?
- What work needs to be done with the caregivers to prepare them for hearing the story?