Structuring Trauma Narration

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Goals

- Review rationale for gradual exposure
- Identify different methods for structuring
  - Timeline
  - Hierarchy
  - Trauma narratives
- Participants will share creative ideas used with clients
How many sessions should we spend on Trauma Narration and Cognitive Processing?

A. 1/3 of TF-CBT (4-8 sessions)
B. 2/3 of TF-CBT (8 - 16 sessions)
C. As long as it takes
D. Don’t talk about the trauma

**if you said D... we need to talk**
When do you begin Trauma Narration and Cognitive Processing?

A. Whenever child begins talking about it
B. Once child is able to regulate self across settings using coping skills and there is good stability
C. Around session 6, after covering PPRAC
D. It really depends on the child
The Rationale

1. Reduce fear related to intrusive trauma memories
2. Identify trauma’s impacts on child’s belief systems and process
Therapist’s Goal for TN

• Create a safe, engaging structure for a youth to sit in their distress, learn to manage their emotions, and overcome the fear related to these memories.
Overall Structure of GE

- Rational for GE
- Timeline/Hierarchy
- Trauma Narrations (3 max)
- Cognitive Processing of trauma related beliefs.
Gradual Exposure Sessions: Child Portion

- 1/3-1/2 of session with child
  - Younger children will only be able to engage in TN for 10-20 minutes.
  1. Review last sessions progress and praise child effort and bravery.
  2. Review in-session safety plan/coping skills/ structure of session
  3. Engage in gradual exposure activities and utilize feelings checks and coping skills as needed.
  4. End session with 3-5 minute grounding activity
Gradual Exposure Sessions: Caregiver Portion

- 2/3-1/2 of session with caregiver
  - Review pieces of TN that child has agreed to share.
  - Elicit thoughts and feelings from caregivers.
  - Utilize in-session “safety” plan and/or actively use coping skills with caregiver during this process.
  - Utilize cognitive processing skills to support caregiver’s development of helpful, accurate beliefs related to their child’s trauma.
Timeline
• Creates another step into gradual exposure (i.e., labeling trauma experiences in youth).
• Supports therapist conceptualization of trauma impacts on youth.
• Gauges child’s emotional reactivity and/or avoidance to youth’s specific trauma experiences.
• Helps guide the next phases of trauma narration.
Questions to ask yourself:

- Is a timeline necessary?
- What can I expect from my youth due to age/onset of trauma?
- Am I eliciting thoughts and feelings about these events and different times in this youth’s life, not just labeling them?
Before mom died

- happy
- safe
- fun

Incredible Pizza
Christmas Cookies

5 years old

Boat at the day

Sadd

01/10

after mom died

- Sad
- worried
- loved
- lonely

Frontier City
Illylo male

- Whole life lived with dad
- Was happy & excited
- Did lots of fun stuff
- We always go fishing

Sexual abuse started
- Told about SA - no one believed me.
- Happened 1st time - I told worst time - I told again

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

- Stopped fishing
- Had to live with aunt for a while
- Dad stressed - I stay away
- Stopped being happy
Lived with mom

- Sad
- Emroesed
- Things just keep getting worse.
- Mom loved us - always,
  made us laugh when she was alive.
- Physical abuse
- Family fighting
- Sexual abuse - mom boyfriend
- Not enough food
- Lived in the car & hotel
- Substance abuse - mom asleep
- Scared

Moms boyfriend ruined everything.

Foster care

- 7+ homes
- Lots of school changes
- 3x inpatient
- 1 shelter

Feeling:
- Depressed
- No "gumption"
- Sometimes I think I would have been better
  off at home.

Chaos

- Freedom - no mes
- Missed a lot of school
- Stole food for me and brother

3 year span:

123456789101112131415

Last fight before dad went to jail

Mom died - killed police

Mom still saw the light...

3 days home from jail.

Mom was home

3 days home from jail

Mom was home

Mom was home

Mom was home

Mom was home
Hierarchy
Rationale for Hierarchy

• Gives us a starting point for TN.
Questions to ask yourself:

• Do I know what the trauma impacts are for my client?
  • Intrusive memories?
    • To what trauma experiences?
  • Negative self beliefs or self-blame?
    • Due to which events?
  • Specific anxiety related to trauma-reminders?
    • Which ones?
Hierarchy
Examples

- Not being adopted
- Time he broke my arm
- Grandpa dying
- Getting taken by DHS
- 1st time he beat me up
- Mom drank drove us
Trauma Narrative
Trauma Narrative Goals

- Provide youth the structure to share details related to their intrusive trauma related memories.
- Gradually gather increased details related to the most distressing portions of each memory.
- Utilize coping skills throughout process to manage distress and allow child to gain mastery over memory.
- Meaning making
Trauma Narrative Drafts

- Open ended: allow child to share what they remember without questions or guidance from provider
- Elicit increased detail related to the who, what, where, when, how with *open ended* questions.
- Elicit thoughts and feelings related to different portions of trauma memory.
Let’s Get Creative

- Visual structure to support cohesive story telling
  - For younger youth or youth with IDD/ASD
- Sports-related themes
- Super heroes or other characters who have ‘enemies’ to defeat
- Video games where there are different levels or challenges to defeat or overcome
- Shows, characters, games where there is growth, evolving, etc.
- Point or sticker systems to earn prizes or fun activities at the end of each session.
Super Heroes
Games or TV Shows

"Earn 1 piece of armor every 10 questions, or earn armor after each finished story.

Timeline = leather
1st Story = titanium
2nd Story = gold
3rd Story = emerald"
Other themes
You tell us!

What have you used to make TN more engaging, fun, and personalized for your clients?
Thank you!

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