

A CLOSER LOOK AT A SPECIFIC TREATMENT FOR TRAUMA

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
NOVEMBER 2019 RESOURCE SHARING

We have discussed trauma many times as our monthly topic. There is a specific evidence based treatment for children ages three to eighteen and their parents who have been exposed to trauma. By “evidence based” we mean that a program has been rigorously evaluated or tested using various scientific methods and shown to work. The treatment or program was evaluated in large studies with diverse populations and resulted in positive outcomes that could be sustained for a minimum of six months after the program or treatment ended. We will look at more evidence based programs in future months.

Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) - TF-CBT is a therapy model designed to treat the effects of trauma in children or adolescents, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety behavior issues and more. TF-CBT helps parents and caregivers too by reducing their distress. TF-CBT consists of 12 –18 therapy sessions on average. Typically a parent or other caregiver participates in TF-CBT alongside the child. Children benefit more from TF-CBT when a parent or caregiver participates along with them, showing improvement more rapidly. There are individual sessions for the child/adolescent, individual sessions for the parent or caregiver and combined sessions as well. Some examples of trauma that TF-CBT can help with are sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence, community violence or an unexpected death of a loved one.

The focus of treatment is to:

- ◆ Assist the child or adolescent to develop coping strategies for traumatic stress reactions
- ◆ Reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety or acting out behavior which are common in children exposed to trauma.
- ◆ Improve parenting skills, increase parental support and reduce parental emotional distress and depressive symptoms.

What can my child/adolescent expect from TF-CBT?

- ◆ Learning that the trauma was not their fault and that they are not the only ones who have survived a similar traumatic event.
- ◆ Identifying feelings and learning how to manage them.
- ◆ Learning how to relax and tolerate trauma reminders.
- ◆ Identifying negative thoughts that cause depression and anxiety.
- ◆ Learning how to replace negative thoughts with more helpful thoughts.
- ◆ Learning how to resolve problems.
- ◆ Learning safety skills.

An important treatment goal is to provide the child an opportunity to discuss details about the trauma in a supportive and nurturing environment. In developing this “trauma narrative” the child’s brain begins to replace traumatic memories with more helpful thoughts about the trauma. In time, these powerful traumatic reminders begin to lose their impact on the child and become less frequent.

If you think your child may benefit from this treatment, talk with your mental health case manager or treatment provider.

To learn more about Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Evidence Based programs, check out the links below.

<http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/newvpp/tfcbt>

<https://tfcbt.org/>