

TF-CBT with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Presenter:
Mayra Mendez, PHD, LMFT, CGP

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Trauma and Disabilities

- People with DD are more likely to be exposed to trauma AND exposure to trauma makes DD more likely
- Developmental disability is broad term that includes:
 - People with intellectual disabilities
 - People diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder
 - People with medically-related impairments.

Disabilities Facts

- Developmental disabilities have alarmingly high rates of trauma
- Individuals with disabilities are four times more likely to be victims of crimes as non-disabled
- Prevalence of sexual abuse for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is 16.6 percent compared to 8 percent for general population
- The risk of abuse increases 78 percent due to exposure to the disability service system

TF-CBT adaptations for ID

- Takes longer due to processing limitations
- Requires greater integration of creative therapy tools and techniques
- One concept may need several sessions of exploration
- Less talk and more non-verbal communication

Assessment

Dilemmas

- Communication challenges
- Self-reporting of trauma uncommon
- Limited intellectual capacity

Adaptations

- Wide range of collateral interviews
- Psycho-education of caregivers
- Slow down speech, use simple language, present one concept at a time, supplement therapy with drawing and play materials

Diagnostic Considerations

Dilemmas

- Concrete thinking
- Frequent miscommunication and misunderstanding
- Misperception of social cues
- Misrepresentation of information
- Poor sequencing ability
- Poor recall
- Tendency to ask irrelevant questions
- Tangential communication

Adaptations

- Consider incorporating multisensory tools that may aide client to comprehend questions
- Avoid assumptions; seek clarification using verbatim reflective language
- Understand the level of impairment and cognitive processing of the client

Thought Process

Challenges

- Difficulty with fluidity and flexibility of thinking
- Inability to process ambiguity
- Black and white thinking
- Tendency to concentrate on one aspect of a situation while neglecting other aspects
- Difficulty prioritizing and breaking down tasks into manageable parts
- Tendency to have highly focused areas of expertise and interests
- Poor capacity for skill generalization
- Utilization of a skill in one situation but not others.

Adaptations

- Present information simply
- Check for understanding
- Be specific
- Avoid ambiguous statement
- Limit choices
- Avoid leading questions or comments
- Make literal reflections
- Present information in small parts
- Incorporate client's area of focus to gain clarification in a way that is meaningful to the client
- Work on building coping skills rather than insight

Initial Assessment Considerations

- What are critical factors to consider before approaching assessment with a client diagnosed with intellectual disabilities?
- How would you begin engagement of client?
- How would you assess for client's experience of the events occurring the day of the trauma?

Feelings identification exercises: Challenges for children with intellectual disabilities?

- Feelings brainstorm
- Color your life
- Feelings charade
- Feelings wheel

Cognitive coping strategies: Challenges for children with intellectual disabilities?

- Fly away balloons
- Remote control
- Replacement thoughts
- Write and wipe
- Positive activity

Narrative Challenge

- Client unable to articulate story
- Alternative narrative: picture
- Narrative may take longer period of time

Feelings thermometer challenges:

- Client unable to make meaning of 0-10 measure
- Client may be able to identify feelings, or label feelings, but not able to connect feelings accurately to experiences
- Client demonstrate affect changes over time when speaking of feelings

Considerations for TF-CBT

- What should be the immediate clinical focus?
- How does the therapist enter the system?
- How to engage a child with multiple disabilities?
- Play to elicit:
 - Processing of feelings
 - build coping skills
 - develop narrative
 - solidify treatment gains

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