



Trauma and Play Therapy

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Learning Objectives

- Identify at least one intervention to use when working with traumatized children
- Have a better understanding of various types of traumatic stress and how it impacts children's lives
- Identify at least 2 Tools used to Assess Trauma in Children
- Define Grief & Mourning and understand children's reactions to each

Trauma informed care dictates

"Do No Harm"

What is Trauma?

"Trauma is a sudden and unexpected and non-normative event that overwhelms the person's perceived ability to cope. And at the same time causes physiological arousal, and the most critical feature of it is that it produces a debilitating sense of helplessness and loss of control in the individual who experiences it." Dr. Eliana Gil

Let's take a look at a session of play therapy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzvO_PcfaVg

Some Things to Consider:

Children and adolescents experience trauma under two different sets of circumstances.

- Some types of traumatic events involve
 - (1) experiencing a serious injury to yourself or witnessing a serious injury to or the death of someone else,

Some Things to Consider:

- (2) facing imminent threats of serious injury or death to yourself or others, or
- (3) experiencing a violation of personal physical integrity. These experiences usually call forth overwhelming feelings of terror, horror, or helplessness. Because these events occur at a particular time and place and are usually short-lived, we refer to them as **acute traumatic events**.

Some acute traumatic events include:

- School shootings
- Gang-related violence in the community
- Terrorist attacks
- Natural disasters (for example, earthquakes, floods, or hurricanes)

Some acute traumatic events include:

- Serious accidents (for example, car or motorcycle crashes)
- Sudden or violent loss of a loved one
- Physical or sexual assault (for example, being beaten, shot, or raped)

More Things to Consider:

In other cases, exposure to trauma can occur repeatedly over long periods of time. These experiences call forth a range of responses, including intense feelings of fear, loss of trust in others, decreased sense of personal safety, guilt, and shame. We call these kinds of trauma *chronic traumatic situations*.

Some chronic traumatic situations include:

- Some forms of physical abuse
- Long-standing sexual abuse
- Domestic violence
- Wars and other forms of political violence

Let's talk a little about traumatic stress

Can you help identify some types of traumatic stress that children may suffer/encounter?

Traumatic stress:

Children suffering from traumatic stress symptoms:

- Generally have difficulty regulating their behaviors and emotions
- May be clingy and fearful of new situations, easily frightened, difficult to console, and/or aggressive and impulsive

Traumatic stress:

- May also have difficulty sleeping, lose recently acquired developmental skills, and show regression in functioning and behavior.

Types of Traumatic Stress

- Community Violence
- Complex Trauma
- Domestic Violence
- Early Childhood Trauma

Types of Traumatic Stress

- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Medical Trauma
- Natural Disasters

Types of Traumatic Stress

- Refugee and War Zone Trauma
- School Violence
- Sexual Abuse
- Terrorism
- Traumatic Grief

Traumatic Stresses Defined:

•**Community Violence** includes predatory violence (robbery, for example) and violence that comes from personal conflicts between people who are not family members. It may include brutal acts such as shootings, rapes, stabbings, and beatings. Children may experience trauma as victims, witnesses, or perpetrators.

Traumatic Stresses Defined:

Complex Trauma describes the problem of children's exposure to multiple or prolonged traumatic events and the impact of this exposure on their development.

Complex Trauma Cont'd

Typically, complex trauma exposure involves the simultaneous or sequential occurrence of child maltreatment—including psychological maltreatment, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and domestic violence—that is chronic, begins in early childhood, and occurs within the primary caregiving system. Exposure to these initial traumatic experiences—and the resulting emotional dysregulation and the loss of safety, direction, and the ability to detect or respond to danger cues—often sets off a chain of events leading to subsequent or repeated trauma exposure in adolescence and adulthood.

Traumatic Stresses Defined:

Domestic Violence Sometimes called intimate partner violence, domestic abuse, or battering—includes actual or threatened physical or sexual violence or emotional abuse between adults in an intimate relationship. This clinical definition is broader than the legal definition, which may be restricted to acts of physical harm. Domestic violence can be directed toward a current or former spouse or partner, whether they are heterosexual or same-sex partners.

Domestic Violence Cont'd

Anywhere from **3 to 10 million** children are exposed to domestic violence in the United States every year. Studies suggest that the majority of children who are exposed to domestic violence are **young-under the age of 8**.

Traumatic Stresses Defined:

•**Early Childhood Trauma** - Early childhood trauma generally refers to the traumatic experiences that occur to children aged 0-6. These traumas can be the result of intentional violence—such as child physical or sexual abuse, or domestic violence—or the result of natural disaster, accidents, or war. Young children also may experience traumatic stress in response to painful medical procedures or the sudden loss of a parent/caregiver.

Traumatic Stresses Defined:

Neglect - Child neglect occurs when a parent or caregiver does not give a child the care he or she needs according to its age, even though that adult can afford to give that care or is offered help to give that care.

Neglect cont'd

- Not giving food, clothing, and shelter.
- Not providing a child with medical or mental health treatment

Neglect cont'd

- Not giving prescribed medicines the child needs.
- Neglecting the child's education. Keeping a child from school or from special education can be neglect.

Neglect cont'd

- Neglect also includes exposing a child to dangerous environments.
- Poor supervision for a child, including putting the child in the care of someone incapable of caring for children. It can also mean abandoning a child or expelling it from home.

Neglect is the most common form of abuse reported to child welfare authorities.

Traumatic Stresses Defined:

Physical Abuse - Causing or attempting to cause physical pain or injury.

Physical Abuse cont'd

- It can result from punching, beating, kicking, burning, a child in other ways.
- Sometimes, an injury occurs when or harming a punishment is not appropriate for a child's age or condition.
- Physical abuse can consist of a single act or several acts. In extreme cases, it can result in death.

Traumatic Stresses Defined:

School Violence

- School violence includes fatal and nonfatal student or teacher victimization, threats to or injury of students, fights at school, and students carrying weapons to school.
- Formal definitions of school violence range from very narrow to very broad.

School Violence cont'd

•The Center for the Prevention of School Violence, for example, defines it broadly as "any behavior that violates a school's educational mission or climate of respect or jeopardizes the intent of the school to be free of aggression against persons or property, drugs, weapons, disruptions, and disorder."

Traumatic Stresses Defined:

Sexual Abuse

•Child sexual abuse includes a wide range of sexual behaviors that take place between a child and an older person or alternatively between a child and another child/adolescent.

Sexual Abuse cont'd

•Behaviors that are sexually abusive often involve bodily contact, such as sexual kissing, touching, fondling of genitals, and intercourse.

Behaviors may be sexually abusive even if they do not involve contact, such as of genital exposure ("flashing"), verbal pressure for sex, and sexual exploitation for purposes of prostitution or pornography.

Traumatic Stresses Defined:

Traumatic Grief

- Childhood traumatic grief may occur following a death of someone important to the child when the child perceives the experience as traumatic. The death may have been sudden and unexpected (e.g., through violence or an accident), or anticipated (e.g., illness or other natural causes).

Traumatic Grief cont'd

- The distinguishing feature of childhood traumatic grief is that the trauma symptoms interfere with the child's ability to go through the typical process of bereavement. The child experiences a combination of trauma and grief symptoms so severe that any thoughts or reminders, even happy ones, about the person who died can lead to frightening thoughts, images, and/or memories of how the person died.

Common Reactions to Traumatic Stress in Children:

See Handout

Children, Violence, and Trauma – Treatments That Work

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EyvaEk0K-k>

Instruments for Assessing Traumatic Stress in Young Children:

See Handout

Let's look at one Assessment Tool

Children's PTSD Inventory (CPTSDI)

- The CPTSDI is a clinician-administered le for children between 6 and 18 years old. Items were based on DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for PTSD. Examples of traumatic ("scary") experiences are described, and then the child is asked if he or she has ever experienced a scary event and, if so, if he or she felt upset when it happened scaand/or if the child felt he or she could do nothing to stop it from happening.

Children's PTSD Inventory (CPTSDI)

- The instrument yields dimensional and categorical scores to indicate severity and presence of a diagnosis of PTSD. In addition, scores on 5 subscales (Situational Reactivity, Re-experiencing, Avoidance and Numbing, Increased Arousal, and Significant Impairment) are yielded. The CPTSDI can be used in either research or clinical settings.

Children's PTSD Inventory (CPTSDI)

Sample Items

- Has a very scary thing happened to you?
- Did you feel that you could not do anything to stop this from happening?

Children's PTSD Inventory (CPTSDI)

- If you see or think about people, places, or things that remind you about what happened, do your hands feel sweaty? Since this happened, have you changed your mind about your chances of having a long life?
- Have your grades in school gotten worse since this happened?

What About Parenting Stress? Parent's Trauma?

Instruments for Assessing Parenting Stress and Strengths

- Life Stressor Checklist—Revised (LSC-R): Wolfe, Kimerling, Brown, Chrestman, and Levin (1996)

Instruments for Assessing Parenting Stress and Strengths

- Parenting Stress Index (PSI): Abidin (1995)
- Davidson Trauma Scale (DTS): Davidson (1996)

ACEs

What is it?

ACEs are Adverse Childhood Experiences that harm children's developing brains so profoundly that the effects show up decades later; they cause much of chronic disease, most mental illness, and are at the root of most violence.

The 10 ACEs Researchers Measured:

- Physical, sexual and verbal abuse.
- Physical and emotional neglect.
- A family member who is:
 - depressed or diagnosed with other mental illness;
 - addicted to alcohol or another substance;
 - in prison.

The 10 ACEs Researchers Measured:

- Witnessing a mother being abused.
- Losing a parent to separation, divorce or other reason.

GRIEF AND MOURNING

SOMETHING ELSE TO CONSIDER...

GRIEF

What is Grief?

- Normal appropriate emotional response to loss
- Unique to the individual experiencing it
- No general time table for completing it

GRIEF

- Thoughts and feelings that are experienced *WITHIN* oneself
- Experienced upon the death of someone or other losses experienced

Uncomplicated vs. complicated grief

- Uncomplicated Grief
 - Typical grief response to a significant loss
- Complicated Grief
 - Grief response is complicated, usually by a traumatic event

Normal Grief Reactions in Children

Behavioral Changes:

- Emotional shock
- Denial
- Sadness/Despair
- Depression

Normal Grief Reactions in Children

- Guilt, shame, self-blame
- Anger & Acting out
- Regressive Behavior
- Fear, Anxiety, Panic
- Jealousy
- Acceptance

Normal Grief Reactions for Adolescents

- Assuming mannerisms, traits or wearing clothing of the deceased
- Emotional regression and even bed-wetting, which can be upsetting to adolescents
- Needing to repeat stories over and over again of the deceased

Normal Grief Reactions for Adolescents

- Saying nothing at all
- Becoming overly responsible (the “new” man or woman of the house), which distracts from own feelings by taking care of others
- Need to integrate the loss into their developing identity

Normal Grief Reactions for Adolescents

- Anger and lashing out at others can happen any time for no apparent reason
- Intense anger at deceased for dying, later feelings guilty for their anger
- Mood changes over slightest things, unexpected outbursts or crying
- Feeling the loss is not real and did not happen at all

Complicated Grief Reactions

Typical responses are:

- Prolonged
- Extreme
- Pervasive
- Affecting the ability to function normally in school or with peers

Helping Grieving Children Express Grief

- Allow children to express grief in their own ways
- Do not pressure children to resume normal activities before they're ready

Helping Grieving Children Express Grief

- Be available to listen
- Let children know that having and expressing feelings are normal
- Avoid expressions that suppress grief

Helping Grieving Children Express Grief

- Gently intervene if the child is taking on the role of a bereaved adult
- Grieving adults should not hide feelings from children
- Allow children to express religious and spiritual concerns
- Allow children to remain in familiar surroundings. Avoid sending children away.

Mourning

What is Mourning?

- "Expression" of grief
- Internal experience of grief and expressing it OUTSIDE of oneself

Bill of Rights for Grieving Teens

Let's Look at the Handout

Questions???

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Resources:

http://www.nasmhpd.org/docs/NCTIC/Trauma_and_Recovery_Tonier.pdf

<http://www.nctsnct.org/trauma-types/early-childhood-trauma>

<http://nctsnct.org/content/defining-trauma-and-child-traumatic-stress>

Saigh, P., Yaski, A.E., Oberfield, R.A., Green, B.L., Halamandaris, P.V., Rubenstein, H., Nester, J., Resko, J., Hetz, B., & McHugh, M. (2000). The Children's PTSD Inventory: Development and reliability. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 30*, 369-380.
