

# Creative Interventions: Merging Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT) with Play Therapy

by Karla Rodriguez, M.S., LMFT



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How does Play  
Therapy work?



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Why use PT?

- **Why Use Play?**
- Most parents have had the experience of hearing their words (good or bad) reflected in their child's play. Here's why: Play is the primary way that children:
  - Learn about their world,
  - Understand how things work,
  - Express themselves,
  - Develop new physical skills,
  - Develop new mental skills, and
  - Develop social skills and bonds.

• <http://utahplaytherapy.org/types-of-play-therapy/>

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Why use PT?

• Why Use Play?

• We can understand our children better if we understand their play. By watching children play, we often learn more about their thoughts, feelings, motivations, and struggles than by talking with them! Play has been called the "language of childhood" and if we learn (or relearn) that language, we can build more satisfying relationships with our children.

• <http://Utahplaytherapy.org/types-of-play-therapy/>

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Types of PT

• Non-directive Play Therapy

• Non-directive play or client-centered therapy allows the child to direct the play. The therapist uses reflective listening to encourage expression of feelings and observes behavior. Non-directive methods show unconditional acceptance and build trust. Children gain understanding of their problems and work toward their own solutions.

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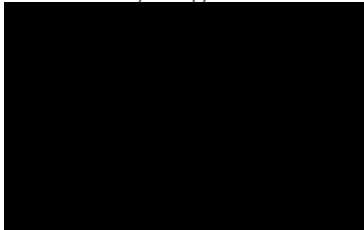
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Types of PT

• Non-directive Play Therapy



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Types of PT

- **Directive Play Therapy**
- In directive play therapy, the therapist plays a bigger role and encourages the child to engage in specific activities. Directive play has an identified topic and goal. It is also used to teach children skills.

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Types of PT

- **Types of Directive Play Therapy**
- **Assessment Play**- Therapist observes child in numerous play to evaluate attachment, developmental level, mental health status, etc.
- **Expressive Arts Therapy**- Drawing, painting, clay, poetry, dance/movement, etc.
- **Bibliotherapy**- Uses books to explore and teach concepts.

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Types of PT

- **Types of Directive Play Therapy**
- **Filial Therapy (Child Parent Relationships)**- Filial therapy (CPR) is a unique approach to therapy that emphasizes the parent-child relationship as a means of alleviating and preventing problems. The parent is involved in play therapy and taught how to implement methods in home.
- **Sand Tray Therapy**- the child uses symbols to tell their story in the sand. Emphasizes tactile and sensory mediums.
- **Imaginary Play**- dress up, doll houses, kitchen, puppets, blocks, etc.

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Types of PT

- Directive Play Therapy

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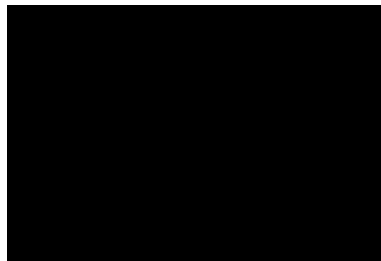
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T-F CBT



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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components

- Assessment and Engagement
- Psychoeducation
- Parenting (Caregiver)
- Relaxation
- Affective Modulation
- Cognitive Coping
- Trauma Narrative [Exposure and Cognitive Processing]
- In-Vivo Exposure
- Conjoint Trauma Narrative
- Enhancing Safety

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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

- Assessment and Engagement (Building Rapport)
- Engagement Methods:
  - Ice Breakers




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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

- Psychoeducation
- Bibliotherapy
- DIY Flash Cards
  - Normalize exposure to trauma: "You're not alone/not the only one".
  - Explain and normalize PTS symptoms/PTSD and avoidance: "You're not crazy".
  - Establish social norms regarding child responsibility for trauma and trauma coping: "It's not your fault and you did the best you could".

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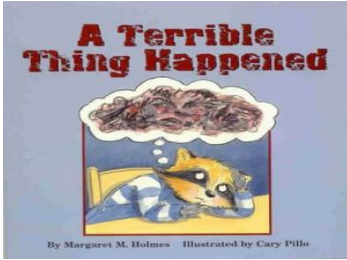
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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

General  
Trauma and  
Trauma  
Symptoms



[View Book](#), by Unknown Author & format order: [View Book](#)

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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

General  
Trauma and  
Trauma  
Symptoms




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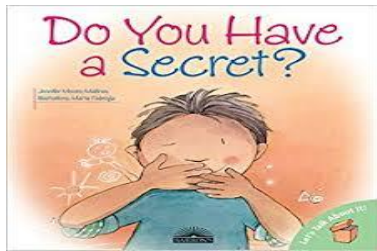
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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

Sexual Abuse




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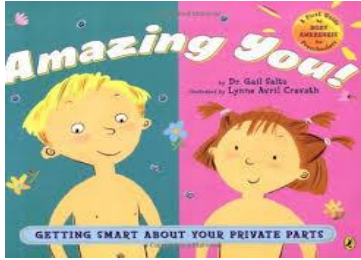
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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components  
—  
Sexual Abuse



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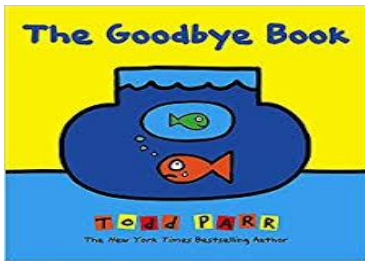
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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components  
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Bereavement



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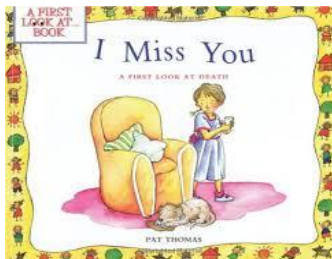
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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components  
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Bereavement



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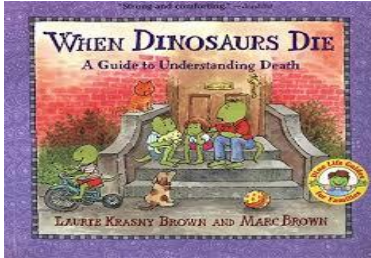
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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components  
Bereavement



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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

- Parenting (Caregiver)
- Improve the relationship (e.g., enhance closeness, warmth and support)  
Teach/reinforce use of skills:
  - Family Games
  - Previous Games related to Psychoeducation
  - "Peach and Pit"

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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components



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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components

- Relaxation
- Create awareness of capacity to change from state of tense/distressed state to state of relaxation.
- Teach specific skills for calming/reducing distress in the moment (e.g., at home, school, in the community).
  - Belly Breathing
  - Bibliotherapy
  - Balls

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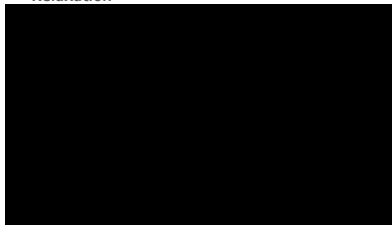
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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components



- Relaxation

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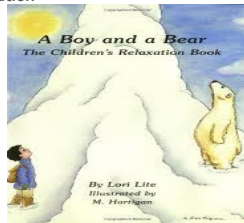
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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components



- Relaxation

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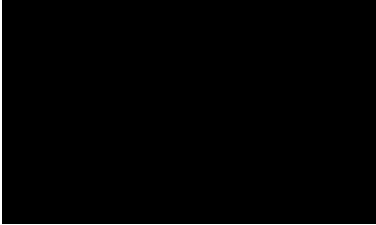
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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

• Relaxation



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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

• Affective Modulation

- Increase capacity to identify range of feelings, have a feelings vocabulary, and link to appropriate expression.
- Teach the Cognitive Triangle: Relationship between Thoughts, Feelings, and Behavior.
- Learn to rate feelings at different intensities (1-10, small/medium/large burrito; thermometer).
- Normalize conflicting feelings – normalize multiple simultaneous feelings.
- Identify/learn strategies to improve/calm affect (modulate affect)
- Identify feelings associated with the traumatic event (when it happened, thinking about it now).

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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

• Affective Modulation

- Fishing Game
- Ring Toss (big / hand held)
- Moody Monsters Flash Cards, Books
- Pop Quiz! (timed, by letter, by situation)

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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components



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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

- Affective Modulation
  - Fishing Game
  - Ring Toss (big / hand held)
  - Moody Monsters Flash Cards, Books
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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

- Cognitive Coping
- Teach (or revisit) the CBT Triangle.
- Help the client learn to identify automatic unhelpful or inaccurate thoughts that the client may not immediately be aware of, but which are causing distress.
- Get buy in to the idea that thoughts drive feelings and thoughts can be changed.
- Generate coping self-statements.

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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components

- Cognitive Coping
- Comic Book Strips
- Scenario Flash Cards
- Pop Quiz!
- Affirmation Stones / "Magic Beads"

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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components

- Cognitive Coping



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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components

- Trauma Narrative [Exposure and Cognitive Processing]
- Client is able to "face up" to trauma experiences (e.g., think and talk about the trauma), especially hotspots or worst moments.
- Identify unhelpful or inaccurate trauma-related cognitions ("it was my fault"; "I shouldn't have...") and altered core views of self ("I'm not a good person"), others ("people cannot be trusted"), or the world ("nothing is safe").
- Identify more helpful or more accurate ways to think about traumatic exposure, self, others, family, the world, and the future.
- Client develops a helpful understanding of what happened that acknowledges the trauma but does not define the child and contains hope and lessons learned.

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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components

• Trauma Narrative [Exposure and Cognitive Processing]

- Legos
- Shopkins
- Stories
- Comic Books
- Life Sound Track



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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components

- In-Vivo Exposure
- Separate harmless conditioned fear responses (e.g., trauma reminders or triggers) from real danger.
- Reduce avoidance that interferes with daily functioning.
  - Incentives / Token Economy
  - Charts

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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components

• In-Vivo Exposure



MY DAILY CHORES						
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Make My Bed						
Help With Laundry						
Washroom or Floor Star Floor						
Put Dishes Away						
Clean Up My Toys						
Brush My Teeth						

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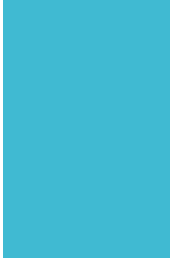
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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components

- **Conjoint Trauma Narrative**
- Provide opportunity for child to: "face up" and share narrative with key trusted adult(s) and receive validation, praise, support.
- Allow trusted adult to learn about child's perspective.
- Promote opportunity for caregiver and child to practice talking about the trauma (questions, concerns, feedback, etc.).
- Create opportunity (if appropriate) for parent to make amends/acknowledge (e.g., failure to be resource, disbelieving/blaming initial response, discounting, etc).



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T-F CBT and A-PRACTICE Components

- **Enhancing Safety**
- Create safety plan to help child (and caregiver) be safer re ongoing dangers (e.g., lives with DV or physical abuser, in violent neighborhood).
- Teach safety skills for use in risky situations that may arise in the future (e.g., home alone, kids pressuring, dangerous neighborhoods, dating)
- Develop specific safety plan for self injury or suicidal thoughts (e.g., promises).
- In cases of sexual abuse, provide psychoed regarding normal sexual development to counter the negative experience of abuse.



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T-F CBT and  
A-PRACTICE  
Components

- Enhancing Safety
- Role play
- "Filming a Commercial"
- Safety Box or Treasure Chest



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Questions?

- For a list of resources included in this presentation please email:
- [frontdesk@karlamft.com](mailto:frontdesk@karlamft.com)

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