

Does TF-CBT Work?

TF-CBT has been compared to other types of supportive therapy in multiple randomized controlled trials.^{1,2} Studies have involved more than 500 children across the United States. One study found that 79% of children receiving TF-CBT no longer met criteria for PTSD at the end of treatment compared to 54% of those receiving child-centered treatment.¹ At a 12-month follow-up, treatment with TF-CBT produced a greater likelihood that PTSD symptoms did not return.²

In addition to the reduction in PTSD symptoms, TF-CBT has consistently been found more effective at reducing trauma-related

- Anxiety and fearfulness
- Depression
- Negative thinking (such as self-blame)
- Acting out at school or at home

The children in these studies had a history of trauma and are representative of urban and rural areas and homes with parents and foster parents. They came from multiple referral sources including families, child welfare agencies, criminal justice centers, mental health agencies, and crisis centers.

TF-CBT is a Model Program of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For more information go to:
modelprograms.samhsa.gov
or
nctsn.org

1. Cohen, J. A., Deblinger, E., Mannarino, A. P., & Steer, R. A. (2004). A multisite, randomized controlled trial for children with sexual abuse-related PTSD symptoms. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 43*(4), 393-402.
2. Cohen, J. A., Mannarino, A. P., & Knudsen, K. (2005). (2005). Treating sexually abused children: 1 year follow-up of a randomized controlled trial. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 29*, 135-145.

Trauma-Focused Cognitive - Behavioral Therapy

When a Child You Know Needs Help



Delaware Division of Child and
Mental Health



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What is Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral therapy?

Trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) is a treatment designed to help children, teenagers, and their caregivers overcome painful effects resulting from disturbing life events.

For children and teens, such events might include sexual or physical abuse, the sudden death of a loved one, serious medical problems, exposure to violence, or natural disasters.

Children who witness or experience these types of traumas can be troubled by memories and flashbacks that persist long after the event has passed.

Who Can Benefit from TF-CBT?

TF-CBT is designed for children who experience significant emotional and behavioral difficulties following a traumatic event. Observed changes in a child's feelings, thoughts, and behavior might include symptoms indicative of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as:

- Becoming suddenly sad, upset or afraid when reminded of the event
- Avoiding people, places or things linked to the event
- Being disturbed by frequent thoughts, pictures, or dreams of the event
- Becoming easily startled

Other problems might include:

- Feeling depressed
- Preferring to be alone more than usual
- Exhibiting variations in eating or sleeping
- Having difficulties at school, including problems with concentration
- Becoming frequently angry
- Complaining of frequent headaches or stomachaches

If a child or adolescent you know shows signs like these following a disturbing incident, contact a therapist specifically trained to work with traumatized youth to decide if a treatment like TF-CBT may be beneficial.

What happens during TF-CBT?

Children and their caregivers meet weekly with a trained therapist for approximately 12 to 16 weeks. Sessions tend to be 90 minutes long, and participation is expected from both the child and caregiver. They meet with the therapist separately or together.

During the session, the child and caregiver learn about:

- Symptoms resulting from childhood trauma
- Skills for managing troubling thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Skills for relaxation
- Ways to cope with difficult memories and reminders
- Ways to work together to discuss what happened
- Safety skills

