Integrative Treatment for Complex Trauma in Adolescents (ITCT-A)

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The four-year NCTSN experiment

• Multiply traumatized, socially marginalized youth and children
• Multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-disciplinary staff
• Structured but not classically manualized
• Relational but also cognitive-behavioral
• Intensive treatment and advocacy

• Now funded for four more years of dissemination

ITCT Pre-Post Data (N=151)

ITCT-A: Core aspects

– Assessment-based
  • Assessment-Treatment Flowchart (ATF)

– Focus beyond posttraumatic stress
  • Relational issues, identity, affect regulation
  • Avoidance responses, including tension reduction behavior, substance abuse, dissociation, “acting out”

– Centrality of therapeutic relationship: Active ingredient

– Customization
  • Age, gender, culture, affect regulation capacity

Applying ITCT-A treatment components

Problems-to Components Grid (PTG)

• Relationship Building and Support
  – Attachment, acceptance, compassion

• Acute safety issues
  – Environmental, self-endangering, survival behaviors
    • Interventions: Place to stay, suicidality, safer-sex, substance abuse, prostitution, gangs, child protection

• Psychoeducation
  – Trauma prevalence, perpetrator dynamics
  – Cultural myths
  – Normalization of having been traumatized, of having effects
  – Resources

Assessment-Treatment Flowchart (ATF) Available at www.johnbriere.com

• Completed at intake and each 3 month period
• Examples:

  Problem area              Tx priority
  1. Safety – environmental 1 2 3 4 (S)
  2. Caretaker support issues 1 2 3 4 (S)
  3. Depression              1 2 3 4 (S)
  4. Anger/aggression        1 2 3 4 (S)
  5. Low self-esteem         1 2 3 4 (S)
  6. Posttraumatic stress    1 2 3 4 (S)
  7. Attachment insecurity   1 2 3 4 (S)
**Applying ITCT-A treatment components**

- **Distress reduction and affect regulation training**  
  - Relaxation, breath training, visualization, mindfulness  
  - Emotion identification and discrimination  
  - Resisting tension reduction behaviors

- **Trigger Identification and Intervention**  
  - Learned in sessions, before triggering event occurs  
  - Identify triggers and triggered states  
  - Learn coping strategies (self-talk, problem-solving)

- **Other cognitive interventions**  
  - Cognitive reconsideration/restructuring  
  - Development of a coherent narrative

**Applying ITCT-A treatment components**

- **Titrated exposure**  
  - Multiple sources versus systematized  
  - The therapeutic window, intensity control

- **Intervening in identity issues**  
  - Reversing Other-directedness  
  - Non-judgment, non-moralizing  
  - Non-leading, open-ended, avoid interpretations

- **Family/caretaker interventions**  
  - Caretaker education groups  
  - Parenting groups  
  - Family therapy  
  - Brief caretaker individual or couple’s therapy, if indicated

**References**

