

## What is TF-CBT?

Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) is an empirically supported treatment model designed to help children, adolescents, and their caregivers in the aftermath of traumatic experiences.

## What Does TF-CBT Do?

- Provides education to children and their caregivers about the impact of trauma on children and common childhood reactions to trauma.
- Helps children and caregivers identify and cope with a range of emotions.
- Develops personalized stress management skills for children and caregivers.
- Teaches children and caregivers how to recognize the connections between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- Within the course of therapy, encourages children to share their traumatic experiences either verbally, in the form of a written narrative, or in some other developmentally appropriate manner.
- Helps children and caregivers talk with each other about the traumatic experiences.
- Modifies children's and caregivers' inaccurate or unhelpful trauma-related thoughts and beliefs.

## How Can Caregivers Be Supportive?

- Praising the child ("I am very impressed by how much courage you are showing by telling me this" - "Wow, what a great job you've done in counseling! You've worked really hard on this.")
- Asking open-ended, non-threatening questions ("How did you decide to tell someone about what happened?") as opposed to questions that could be perceived as critical ("Why didn't you tell me before?")

## What Should I Talk About With My Child Outside of Sessions?

Questions/discussions for which the caregiver or child is not prepared can have negative consequences and undermine the work being done in therapy. We recommend that caregivers and children follow the same rules about communication outside of sessions that are used throughout treatment. Caregivers should not question children about the trauma or the therapy itself. If the child initiates discussion, you should respond supportively but not encourage in-depth conversations. What should I say? ("Thanks for telling me that; I hope you and your therapist are talking about that.")

## Common Myths About Death

- *Myth - Talking makes it worse.*  
Many adults believe talking about death will make them sad. Death of a significant person is what causes the sadness and longing, whereas talking about it helps share the pain. By successfully completing & talking about the trauma narrative with the child, the caregiver has an experience in which addressing grief directly makes the feelings more manageable.
- *Myth - Grieving occurs in set stages.*  
There are not set stages for the grieving process. Although the frequency and intensity of grief may decrease, it is important to realize and be prepared to have grief-related feelings at any time as memories arise and as the course of bereavement continues.
- *Myth - Children don't grieve.*  
There are many misconceptions: that children do not grieve; they do not understand death; they need to be protected from feeling sadness and should not express their grief; they are resilient and bounce back; they are unaffected by the adults around them who are grieving; or a bereaved child will surely have problems later in life. Children do experience grief, but they do not necessarily have the same experience as adults.



## Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy



"You can't change the past, but you can do something with the present and prepare for the future. This is what really kept me going."

- A grandmother raising grandchildren who had experienced trauma

## Carson Valley Children's Aid

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

This brochure has been created to give you some information about the therapy your child is receiving at Carson Valley Children's Aid. Your child will be participating in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or, TF-CBT.

We are excited to be able to offer TF-CBT, as it is proven by research to be very effective with children and adolescents who have experienced trauma.

We hope you will read the enclosed information and follow up with questions in your family therapy sessions.

Sincerely,  
The Clinical Team at Carson Valley Children's Aid



**Please visit this helpful website for more information and resources**

[www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org)

(National Child Traumatic Stress Network)

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## Understanding Children's Reactions to Trauma

### What is Trauma?

A scary, dangerous, or violent event that threatens an individual's life and/or sense of safety.

#### Preschool Children

- Feel helpless and uncertain
- Fear of being separated from their parent/caregiver
- Cry and/or scream a lot
- Eat poorly and lose weight
- Return to bedwetting
- Return to using baby talk
- Develop new fears
- Have nightmares
- Recreate the trauma through play
- Are not developing to the next growth stage
- Have changes in behavior
- Ask questions about death



#### Elementary School Children

- Become anxious and fearful
- Worry about their own or others' safety
- Become clingy with a teacher or parent
- Feel guilt or shame
- Tell others about the traumatic event again and again
- Become upset if they get a small bump or bruise
- Have a hard time concentrating
- Experience numbness
- Have fears that the event will happen again
- Have difficulty sleeping
- Show changes in school performance
- Become easily startled

#### Middle and High School Children

- Feel depressed and alone
- Discuss the traumatic events in detail
- Develop eating disorders and self-harming behaviors such as cutting
- Start using or abusing alcohol or drugs
- Become sexually active
- Feel like they're going crazy
- Feel different from everyone else
- Take too many risks
- Have sleep disturbances
- Don't want to go places that remind them of the event
- Say they have no feeling about the event
- Show changes in behavior