Integrative Treatment of Complex Trauma for Adolescents and Young Adults (ITCT-A)

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Complex posttraumatic outcomes

- Anxiety, depression, anger
- Posttraumatic stress
- Affect dysregulation
- Negative relational and self-schema
- Avoidance responses
  - Dissociation
  - Tension reduction behaviors
    - Self-injurious behavior, sex, bulimia, aggression, suicidality
  - Substance abuse
  - Suicidality

Core aspects

- Assessment-based
- Focus beyond posttraumatic stress
  - Relational, affect dysregulation, problematic avoidance
- Centrality of the therapeutic relationship
- Safety within therapy and environment
- Customization
  - Age, gender, culture, affect regulation capacity
- Avoidance of judgmental/authoritarian therapist behaviors
- Advocacy and system intervention
Assessment-Treatment Flowchart

• Usually following the Initial Trauma Review (ITR-A) and/or Possible Interview Question Topics (PIQT)
• Completed at intake and each 2-3 month period

Priority ranking (circle one for each symptom):
1 = Not currently a problem
2 = Problematic, but not an immediate treatment priority
3 = Problematic, a current treatment priority
4 = Most problematic, requires immediate attention
(S) = Suspected, requires further investigation

ATF-A example items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem area</th>
<th>Tx priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Safety – environmental</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Caretaker support issues</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Anxiety</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Depression</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Anger/aggression</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Low self-esteem</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Posttraumatic stress</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Attachment insecurity</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 (S)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problems–to-Components Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem (from ATF-A)</th>
<th>Treatment components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety (environmental)</td>
<td>Safety training, system interventions, psychoeducation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker support</td>
<td>Family therapy, intervention with caretakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttraumatic stress</td>
<td>Titrated exposure, distress reduction/affect regulation training, cognitive processing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applying ITCT-A treatment components

- 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, gang, child protection

- Psychoeducation
  - Trauma prevalence, perpetrator dynamics
  - Cultural myths
  - Normalization of traumatization, effects
  - Resources

Applying ITCT-A treatment components

- Distress reduction and affect regulation training
  - Relaxation, breath training, visualization
  - Emotion identification and discrimination
  - Mindfulness
    - Meta-cognitive awareness: Just Thoughts, Not Facts
  - Urges/emotion surfing

- Trigger Identification and Intervention
  - The “Trigger Grid”
  - Identify triggers and triggered states
  - Learn coping strategies (self-talk, including meta-cognitive statements, problem-solving)
  - Additions and revisions over time

Applying ITCT-A treatment components

- Titrated exposure
  - Multiple sources versus systematized
  - Resistance/avoidance as self-titration
  - Permission to control exposure process
  - The therapeutic window
  - Intensity control

- Relational processing as exposure therapy
  - Exposure to archaic relational schema
  - Activation of abuse/neglect-era emotions
  - Disparity between memory and treatment environment
  - Extinction/reconsolidation/“updating”
Applying ITCT-A treatment components

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

Substance use and abuse

- Separate treatment manual at attc.usc.edu
- Start with safety assessment, stabilization
- Simultaneous treatment of substance abuse and trauma
- Remoralization, empowerment
- Slower, less intense exposure treatment, greater attention to therapeutic window
- More attention to affect regulation skills
- Avoid confrontation
  - Nonjudgmental, focus on SUA as coping strategy

Pre-Post Data for ITCT (A and C)

Average of >40% improvement across symptoms
No control group
N = 151

- Depression
- Anger
- Posttraumatic Stress
- Disability
- Social Functioning
ITCT-A references

Briere, J., & Lanktree, C.B. (2014). Treating substance use issues in traumatized adolescents and young adults: Key principles and components. Los Angeles, CA: USC Adolescent Trauma Training Center (available at attc.usc.edu)
