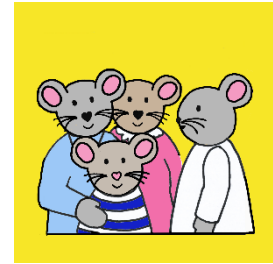


Trauma Narrative

Use This:
To develop a diary pertaining to traumatic events in order to reduce anxious responding to memories and related events.



Goals

- The child will understand the reason for creating a story about the traumatic event
- The child will initiate or add to a written narrative about the traumatic event
- Through relaxation and repeated exposure to the narrative, the child will learn to control anxious responding to traumatic cues
- The child can find ways to challenge blaming or catastrophic thoughts related to the event
- The parent will understand the progress being made using these strategies

Materials

- ***Fear Thermometer*** and ***Fear Ladder*** (2 unrated copies, for anxiety/trauma), ***Feelings Thermometer*** (for depression) (pp. 305, 307, 329)
- ***Start-and-Stop Practice Record*** (p. 312)
- Writing materials (e.g., pen and paper, computer)
- ***Weekly questionnaires*** and ***Monitoring sheet*** (see pages 268 – 285)
- ***Therapist Note Taking Sheet*** (p. 267)

⌚ If time is tight: Make sure the child understands the rationale and adds some new content to the trauma narrative

Main Steps

<input type="checkbox"/> Set an Agenda	Remember to start by setting an agenda together and by reviewing any practice assignments.
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtain Weekly Ratings	If the main focus is traumatic stress or anxiety, use the 0 to 10 scale of the <i>Fear Thermometer</i> to obtain <i>Fear Ladder</i> ratings from both the child and his or her parent. If the main focus is depressed mood, use the <i>Feelings Thermometer</i> to take a rating. Review the <i>Weekly questionnaires</i> and <i>Monitoring sheet</i> in detail.

<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce Rationale	<p>If this is the first time performing this module, explain the general rationale of creating a trauma narrative. Many people find it difficult to think about or discuss their bad experiences. However, when one tries to avoid thinking or talking about them, the memories may come back unexpectedly, and in a way that is especially vivid and upsetting. In order to develop control over these memories, it is important to discuss them, a little at a time, in order to become used to the feelings those memories generate.</p> <p>Example script</p> <p><i>Have you ever fallen down and scraped your knee? When you scrape your knee, sometimes dirt and germs get caught in the wound and it can get infected. That's why it is so important to clean out a cut when it happens, even though doing so can hurt a bit at first. Over time, cleaning it allows the scrape to heal, even though it might leave a little scar. If you ignore the scrape, it gets worse and doesn't heal properly. By talking about the scary thing that happened to you, a little bit each week, we can make sure that you are able to heal from this event, and over time the feelings will fade so that it doesn't feel as fresh and scary as it does right now.</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Create Feeling of Safety	<p>Reassure the child that although you plan to write about or discuss some of the events that happened, you are there to assure their safety and comfort, and to provide support if he or she begins to feel too uncomfortable.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce <i>Fear Thermometer</i> (if necessary)	<p>If the child has not yet been introduced to the <i>Fear Thermometer</i>, introduce it here, pointing out how it will be used to monitor the degree of fear and to help you know if things are getting too uncomfortable. If the child is already familiar with the fear thermometer, you may skip the <i>Fear Thermometer</i> activity immediately below.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> ACTIVITY <i>Fear Thermometer</i>	<p>Have the child give a rating for his or her current level of fearfulness. You may need to practise once or twice with sample anchors to make sure the child is giving accurate ratings. Ask the child what the number he/she chose means, in order to be sure he or she understands the concept. Ask the child to indicate, using the <i>Fear Thermometer</i>, how afraid he or she would be of several other situations (i.e., eating his/her favourite dessert, riding on a roller coaster, being in a strange place by him or herself) in order to make sure that the child feels comfortable using this scale. It is particularly important that the child be able to use the full range of the scale, not just the ends.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/> ACTIVITY Relaxation	Review and practise the skills learned in Learning to Relax [Depression module] (if the child has already covered Quick Calming [Depression module] and finds that relaxation approach preferable, then review and practise that approach instead). This should take approximately 10 minutes. Use the Fear Thermometer or Feelings Thermometer to rate the child's emotional state before and after relaxing.
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop Narrative	<p>Once the child is in a relaxed state, begin writing or adding to the narrative.</p> <p>If the child is just starting the narrative, it is often useful to begin with a non-traumatic chapter (e.g., some content about him- or herself, where he or she lives and with whom). Over the course of multiple sessions, the writing will involve the traumatic event itself. As this happens, encourage the child to describe the context surrounding the event, for example their relationship with the perpetrator, or the day before the event occurred, etc. Provide praise to the child throughout this process.</p> <p>Until the narrative is complete, do not challenge any negative or catastrophic thoughts reported by the child; simply record them and note that these may be areas to revise at a later time.</p>
Example script	
<i>Let's go back to the day you woke up because you smelled smoke in your house. Where were you when you woke up? What did you see around you? What did you hear/smell/feel? What did you think inside your head? What happened next? What was the worst moment?</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage Thoroughness	While the child is writing, encourage him or her to write all the memories, as well as the thoughts and the physical sensations that accompany them.
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide Reassurance and Elicit Coping Skills	If the child seems overwhelmed, remind him or her that these are only feelings. They are not related to something that is happening right now, but something that happened to him or her in the past. If the anxiety becomes too elevated, you may also prompt the child to use relaxation to establish control over these feelings.
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop the Final Chapter	Once the traumatic event has been described in its entirety (usually after several sessions of writing), it is useful to have an additional final section of the narrative in which the child describes the ways in which he or she has changed, or how his or her life is different now, as well as advice he or she would give to other children.

Practise Reading When the child is finished writing for the day, ask the child to read everything that he or she has written so far, from the very beginning of the narrative. If the child is hesitant, you can offer to read it aloud. If there is time, ask the child to repeat reading the narrative.

Typically, the child will experience less emotional and physiological activity after each repetition, but if not, you can also ask the child to use his or her relaxation skills.

Take Ratings Use the **Fear Thermometer** or **Feelings Thermometer** before and after each reading to quantify the degree of anxiety within each session. If the child experiences a decrease in ratings, point this out to him or her as evidence that he or she is making progress. If using the **Fear Thermometer**, you may record ratings on the **Start-and-Stop Practice Record**.

Address Cognitions Once the narrative is complete (no more content being added) and has been read aloud over several sessions, determine whether the child has any lingering blaming thoughts (“it was my fault”) or overestimations of recurrence (“I know it will happen again”). If so, you may introduce (or review, if covered already) the appropriate Cognitive module [Depression module] to address these beliefs (e.g., BLUE or STOP). Review specific examples of problematic thoughts in the narrative with the child, and determine whether they are accurate and helpful. Ask the child to identify the types of thoughts present (e.g., “blaming”) and to provide alternatives. At this point, the narrative can also be edited to reflect the child’s more accurate beliefs.

Example script

Can you see any thoughts in this paragraph that are not accurate or helpful? What about here, where you thought, “If I had woken up earlier I would have been able to save my cat from a fire?”

Please help me understand a little better. Was there a way you could control when you woke up?

ACTIVITY Relaxation Once again, practise the skills learned in the Learning to Relax or Quick Calming module [Depression module]. Use the **Fear Thermometer** or **Feelings Thermometer** to rate the child’s emotional state before and after relaxing.

Send the materials for the next session Tell the parent/s you will send a written summary and the materials for the next session. Remind them that they do not need to be completed for next session as you will go through them together in the session. Tell the parent/s you will also send the **Weekly questionnaires**, and **Monitoring sheet** which need to be completed for the next session.

Confirm date and time of the next call.

<input type="checkbox"/> Summarising	Ask if they would like you to summarise the session, if they want to summarise or if you should do it together.
---	---

Leave ‘Em Laughing

End the session on a positive note with the family by perhaps talking about things that are unrelated to treatment or a game or activity that will leave them feeling good about the work you’ve done today. The end of each session should be used to praise the family’s efforts and to convey support and encouragement.

Helpful Tips

- It is best if you keep the trauma narrative with the child’s records in your office rather than send it home with the child each week. Among other things, doing so will safeguard the privacy of the narrative and prevent it from being lost or misplaced.
- When writing the narrative, some children may easily recall information, while other children may require gentle prompting from you.
- Some children may also want you to do the writing, which is allowable.
- Younger children may provide drawings to accompany the narrative, and all children should be given the opportunity to decorate or personalise their narrative if they wish.
- For children who have experienced multiple or repeated traumas, it may be more helpful to create a “timeline” or “life story” rather than focusing on specific isolated events.

How’s Your Style?

- Did you praise often?
- Did you review often, by asking questions?
- Did you simplify the steps as needed?
- Did your pace match that of the child or family?
- Did you stay on track?