

Session Structure

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Operational Definitions

- Session structure is the general template for conducting psychotherapy
- The “things you do” in therapy
- Logical order of steps, but not a lockstep process
- Provides direction to, focus for, and substance in therapy

Core Components

1. Mood check-in
2. Homework review
3. Agenda setting
4. Session content
5. Homework assignment
6. Eliciting client feedback

Mood Check-In

- Serves several purposes
- Provides baseline information on symptoms
- Causes reflection by client by indentifying and rating moods, behaviors, and thoughts
- Recaps last session
- Compares symptoms now to previous sessions

Mood Check-In

- Obtaining baseline measurement can be done:
- Verbally – “How was your week?”
- Using self-report measures – BDI, CDI, MASC
- Other-report – parents / significant others

Mood Check-In

- Causing the client to first identify, then connect thoughts, emotions, and behaviors increases distinguishing between moods
- Leads to increased awareness of core CBT principles, which will improve treatment outcomes

Homework Review

- Therapist needs to find out:
 - Was the assignment completed?
 - What was the content of the assignment?
 - What was the reaction to the assignment?
- This communicates the importance of homework and reinforces the client for completing it

Homework Review

- Always tailor the level of the review to the developmental level of the client
 - May need to use alternative titles (“projects”) with children to avoid negative connotation
- To decrease resistance, may be best to present HW as hypotheses or experiments with adolescents

Agenda Setting

- Sets the stage for and adds direction to clinical work
- Work with a client to set the agenda, but retain directive control
- Number of agenda items will depend on the age of the client, type of problem(s), and length of session

Agenda Setting

- Client should be informed of the
 - Pros and cons of setting an agenda
 - Gains and losses from setting an agenda
 - Gains and losses from *not* setting an agenda
- Therapists should elicit client's
 - Personal meaning in setting an agenda
 - Any dangers they see from setting an agenda

Session Content

- This is where agenda items are addressed
- Therapist needs to maintain a balance between
 - Content – what thoughts / feelings / behaviors are being elicited?
 - Structure – what tasks are being used?
 - Process – how does the client respond to content and structure?

Homework Assignment

- Follows from session content and is central to progress
- Should be meaningful and help increase motivation for continuing therapy
- We'll see lots of examples of this in our workshops across the semester

Eliciting Feedback

- Can happen at any point during the session
- During session, might ask for feedback on understanding of concepts, how tasks change or don't change feelings / thoughts / behaviors
- Can also get feedback on previous week's session, or the current session at the end

Eliciting Feedback

- Important to reinforce and encourage giving of feedback to the therapist, even if it's negative
- Also allows therapist to correct misperceptions and solidify therapeutic alliance
- Can also help with conceptualization and problem identification

Summary

- Structuring the session is a key part of CBT
- Helps both the client and the therapist
- Aids progress in therapy
