

Healing Trauma Together:

Building Skills for Recovery



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Introduction

Welcome to *Healing Trauma Together*. This is a group-based curriculum that was developed utilizing trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) components. TF-CBT is a treatment modality that is designed to help children, youth, and families recover from traumatic stress and other negative effects of trauma (Cohen et al., 2016). Current research literature demonstrates strong empirical support for using TF-CBT for reducing the negative emotions experienced by this population (Cohen et al., 2016).

This curriculum is for adolescent and teenage girls who have been affected by traumatic events. It is designed to help youth begin healing from the violence or abuse that they have experienced. This curriculum is important as research estimates that about 25% of “adolescents will have experienced at least one traumatic event by age 16” (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2002).

The group format is valuable as it works to reduce the feelings of shame, isolation, and stigma commonly experienced by this population (Cohen et al., 2016). The group format is important for this developmental stage as it provides opportunity to engage with peers, build self-identity, build independence, and create a safe circle of support (Aronson & Khan, 2004).

“Traumatic events include physical and sexual abuse, rape or assault, exposure to domestic or community violence, serious accidents, natural or human disasters, violent crime, violent or sudden death, or any other experience that creates threat or fear” (Covington & Russo, 2016). Trauma affects the inner self: thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and values. Trauma also affects the outer self: behavior and relationships (Covington & Russo, 2016).

Impact Statement: Participating in this group program will help participants learn about trauma, recognize strengths, practice skills for healing, and learn techniques to feel safe (Covington & Russo, 2016). Upon completion of the program, participants will have a coping plan, a safety plan, an ability to identify the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and actions, and have processed their trauma narrative.

There are six lessons in this program that will assist participants in building skills for recovery. Each lesson will include practice activities, education, and reflection opportunities to guide the group members in healing together.

6 Week Session Outline

★ **Week 1:** *Introduction to Trauma and Psychoeducation*

★ **Week 2:** *Relaxation and Feelings Identification*

★ **Week 3:** *Grounding and Mindfulness*

★ **Week 4:** *Cognitive Processing*

★ **Week 5:** *Creating the Trauma Narrative and Processing the Experience*

★ **Week 6:** *Enhancing Safety, Review, and Termination*

**Please note that this is a condensed version of TF-CBT curriculum for the purpose of the assignment.*

Week 1: Introduction to Trauma and Psychoeducation

Why am I here?

You are here to learn what trauma is, it's impact on our mind and bodies, and coping skills to help you feel better. You will also learn ways to keep yourself safe. Let's start with establishing our group rules. Next, please take some time to answer the following questions to help get us started.

- ★ What questions or concerns do you have?

- ★ What do you hope to accomplish?

- ★ What could your therapist do that would be the most (and LEAST) helpful?

Goal: Get to Know the Group

We are here together in a group to learn from one another and build a safe circle of support. Please share something about yourself using the prompts below.

- ★ What are your interests/hobbies?
- ★ What is something that makes you smile/happy?
- ★ Who are the most important people in your life?
- ★ What is your dream job/career?

Goal: Learning About Trauma

Stress is a normal and common experience. For example, school can be stressful and our relationships with friends and family can be stressful. However, there are sometimes events that occur that go beyond this normal stress. These extremely stressful events are known as traumas. Trauma does not simply go away like other forms of stress. Trauma can also cause a lot of

feelings: confusion, fear, anger, numbing, helplessness, self-blame, loss of self-control, inability to trust others, feeling unsafe, loss of enjoyment in life, etc. Trauma can also cause physical reactions: rapid heart beat, stomachaches, headaches, tiredness, shakiness, appetite problems, etc. It can cause us to experience nightmares and flashbacks. Your body enters survival mode when you experience trauma. Your body releases stress hormones, causing fight or flight reactions. Your body physically changes due to stress!

Reflection Journal:

How does this relate to you and your experience?

How do you cope with these feelings?

Trauma Reminders

It is also common to experience situations and circumstances that remind you about what happened. This can include certain places, situations, people, words, sounds, smells, sensations, or days of the year. You may feel unsafe and as if you are experiencing the trauma all over again, despite there being no danger. This causes *avoidance*.

What are your trauma reminders?

Homework:

Pros and Cons of avoidance/facing trauma reminders:

Avoiding Trauma Reminders	Facing Trauma Reminders
Pros:	Pros:
Cons:	Cons:

Wrap Up: What are three words describing how you felt in session today?

Week 2: Relaxation and Feelings Identification

Check In: Homework Review

What Do We Do When We Experience Trauma Reactions?

As we talked about last week, we feel emotional and physical reactions from trauma because our bodies continue releasing stress hormones, thinking we are in danger. This can create difficulty in our ability to focus, sleep, and feel safe.

What do you do when you feel you need to relax?

Goal: Identify the positive and negative impacts of the ways you relax:

Positives:	Negatives:

There are safe and unsafe ways to relax. Below is a list of safe ideas. Let's talk about a few together.

- ★ Focused breathing
- ★ Progressive muscle relaxation
- ★ Guided meditation
- ★ Music
- ★ Art
- ★ Yoga/stretching
- ★ Exercise/sports/dance
- ★ Relaxation apps
- ★ Soothing activities (taking a warm bath, putting on lotion, wrapping up in a blanket)
- ★ Talking to a friend
- ★ Reading

Goal: Identifying Feelings and Emotions

Please write down any feelings and emotions that you experience from your trauma.

For each feeling you choose above, imagine having that feeling right now. Where do you experience that feeling in your body? Feel free to write or draw a picture.

Let's discuss some common feelings:

- ★ Feeling Numb
- ★ Feelings in Our Body
- ★ Intrusions
- ★ Depression
- ★ Grief

Open Discussion:

- ★ For each common feeling, can you relate to this?
- ★ Is there anything teens can do to help them know how they are feeling?

Open Discussion Continued: Some teens try different things to not feel numb. Some things teens might try can hurt them or get them in trouble.

- ★ Can you relate to this?
- ★ What are some things teens can try that won't hurt them or get them in trouble?

Homework:

Relaxation Plan for Coping with Trauma Reminders

At Home:	At School:	In the Community:

Wrap Up: What are three words describing how you felt in session today?

Week 3: Grounding and Mindfulness

Check In: Homework Review

Goal: Learning Grounding Skills

Common trauma reactions include feeling like you are not in your body and becoming extremely upset. To work through these reactions, it is helpful to get *grounded*, or using your five senses to bring yourself to the present moment. Let's practice.

- ★ 5 things you see
- ★ 4 things you touch
- ★ 3 things you hear
- ★ 2 things you smell
- ★ 1 thing you taste

Goal: Learning Mindfulness

Further common trauma responses include living in the past. Mindfulness is a technique that helps bring our attention to the present. It also assists with calming and acknowledging our thoughts, feelings, and body sensations in a safe manner. Mindfulness is really helpful when you get stuck on painful memories. Let's discuss and practice some ideas.

- ★ Mindful breathing
- ★ Mindful eating
- ★ Mindful walking
- ★ Mindful coloring
- ★ Mindful listening to music
- ★ Games that require concentration

Homework: Pick a few to try and practice over the next week. Use this chart to track the techniques utilized:

Technique Used:	What was the situation/stressor?	How long did I use the technique for?	How did I feel after?

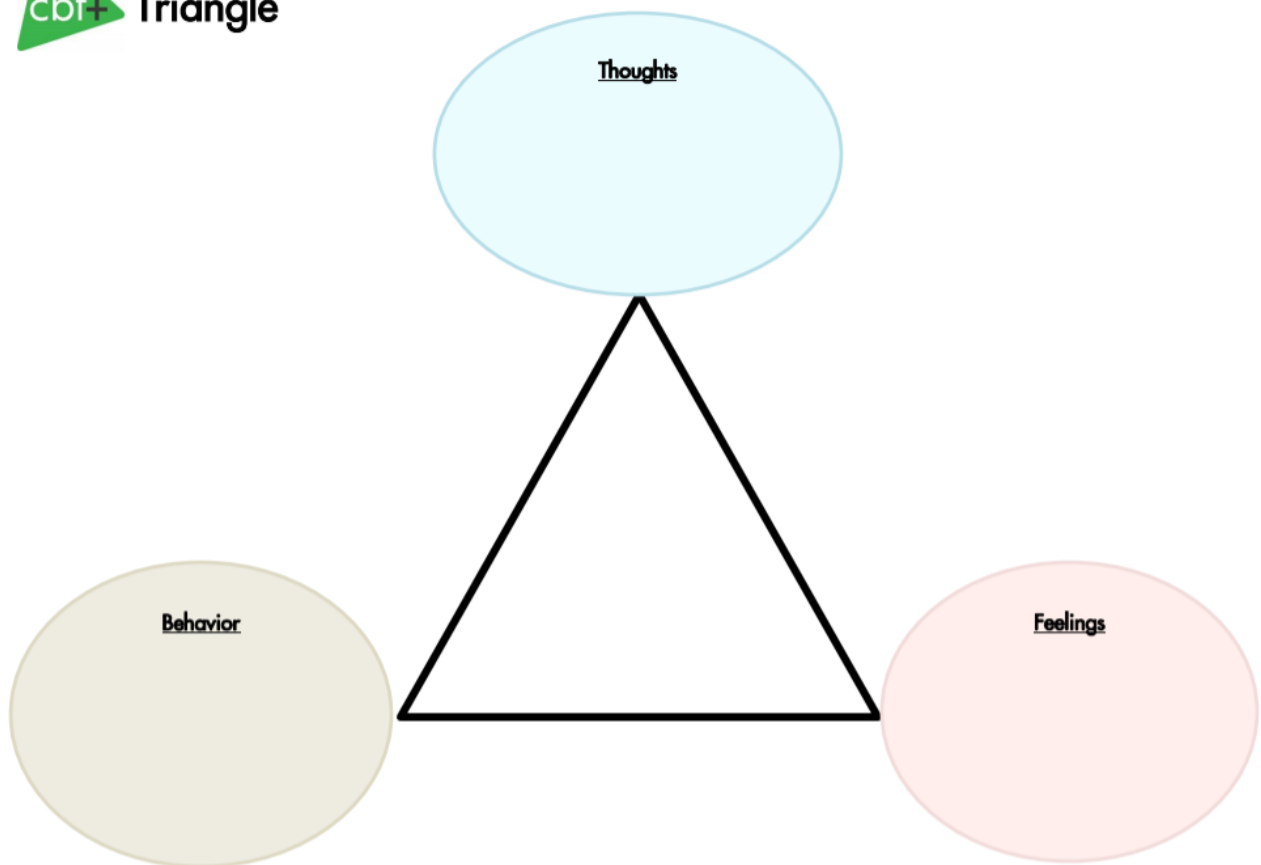
Wrap Up: What are three words describing how you felt in session today?

Week 4: Cognitive Processing

Check In: Homework Review

Goal: Understanding the Relationship Between Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions

The impact of our traumas and stressors have a lot to do with our thinking. Our thoughts affect how we feel and how we respond. When something happens to us, we think about why it happened. This process of thinking influences how we feel and how we respond.



Goal: Distinguishing Between Unhelpful vs. Helpful Thoughts

Common Unhelpful Thoughts	Common Helpful Thoughts
<input type="checkbox"/> What happened was my fault <input type="checkbox"/> I should have done something different <input type="checkbox"/> What happened means something bad about me <input type="checkbox"/> I can't trust anyone <input type="checkbox"/> I should feel embarrassed or ashamed about what happened <input type="checkbox"/> There is something about me that made this happen <input type="checkbox"/> I have to watch out for danger all the time <input type="checkbox"/> My future dreams won't come true <input type="checkbox"/> Other unhelpful thoughts you have:	<input type="checkbox"/> What happened wasn't my fault <input type="checkbox"/> I did the best I could with a hard situation <input type="checkbox"/> What I did made sense at the time <input type="checkbox"/> I've learned some things from what happened <input type="checkbox"/> Some good things have come out of a hard situation <input type="checkbox"/> The event doesn't mean anything bad about me <input type="checkbox"/> I can trust at least some people for some things <input type="checkbox"/> I don't need to feel embarrassed or ashamed <input type="checkbox"/> I can do things to help myself stay safe <input type="checkbox"/> Other helpful thoughts you have:

Your Turn To Practice:

Triggering Situation

Thoughts:

Behaviors connected to
the thought

Feelings connected to the
thought
Feeling words:

Sensations in my body:

Rate: 1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10

Unhelpful Thinking Styles - Cognitive Distortions:

<p>All or nothing thinking</p>  <p>Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'</p> <p><i>If I'm not perfect I have failed</i></p> <p><i>Either I do it right or not at all</i></p>	<p>Over-generalising</p> <p><i>"everything is always rubbish"</i></p> <p><i>"nothing good ever happens"</i></p> <p>Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw</p>
<p>Mental filter</p>  <p>Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.</p> <p><i>Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes</i></p>	<p>Disqualifying the positive</p>  <p>Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another</p> <p><i>That doesn't count</i></p>
<p>Jumping to conclusions</p>  <p>There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind reading (imagining we know what others are thinking) • Fortune telling (predicting the future) <p><i>2 + 2 = 5</i></p>	<p>Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation</p>  <p>Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important</p>
<p>Emotional reasoning</p>  <p>Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.</p> <p><i>I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot</i></p>	<p>should must</p> <p>Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed</p> <p>If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration</p>
<p>Labelling</p>  <p>Assigning labels to ourselves or other people</p> <p><i>I'm a loser</i></p> <p><i>I'm completely useless</i></p> <p><i>They're such an idiot</i></p>	<p>Personalisation</p> <p><i>"this is my fault"</i></p> <p>Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.</p>

Homework: Tracking Your Thought Troubles, Feelings, and Response

Thought Trouble:	How did the thought make you feel?	How did the situation play out? (Your Action)	Could the situation have gone differently?	If so, how?

Wrap Up: What are three words describing how you felt in session today?

Week 5: Creating the Trauma Narrative and Processing the Experience

Check In: Homework Review

Goal: Talking About Trauma

You have now learned about where trauma comes from, what it does to your mind and body, and the skills to cope with difficult feelings. These are all important skills that will help you as you begin to talk about your traumatic experiences.

Where you start your story and how you share your story is up to YOU! You are in charge, however I will conduct check-ins as we go about this process to see how you are feeling and remind you of the skills we've learned and identified as helpful.

Let's get started with a group discussion to prepare ourselves for our Trauma Narrative:

- ★ What are some feelings you have about starting the narrative?
- ★ What ideas do you have about the method in which you want to share your story with the group?
- ★ Do you have different "chapters" of your story?
- ★ Would you like to create a title for your narrative? If so, what ideas do you have?

Goal: Establishing a Self-Care Plan

Now that we have some ideas as to where to begin, we need to talk about self-care. The narrative process may bring up memories, cause you to have bad dreams, make you feel tired, or evoke difficult feelings. This is normal and it demonstrates progress. Please notice when you are having a difficult time so that the group can support you. Practice your identified coping skills. Refer back to prior session activities in the workbook to remind yourself of your useful strategies. It is so important to take care of yourself during this difficult process!

Use the space below to write yourself some self-care reminders to refer to.

Time to Share

Use this space to help you prepare for sharing your experience with the group. You can write notes, draw pictures, etc.

Great job! Thank you for being courageous.

Homework: Here is a list of common questions and thoughts that teens have after experiencing trauma. Choose to answer any questions that you feel are relevant to you and we can discuss them at the next session. This provides an opportunity to summarize what you have learned in therapy.

1. Why did this happen to me?
2. Who is responsible for the trauma(s)?
3. How will the trauma(s) affect me in the future?
4. How has trauma affected my family/relationships?
5. How has the trauma impacted my safety or my ability to feel safe?
6. How has the trauma impacted my ability to trust and/or to be close to other people?
7. Since the trauma(s), my view of the world has changed in these ways:
8. Since the trauma(s), my view of myself has changed in these ways:
9. Since coming to therapy, I have learned these things about myself:
10. Coming to therapy has helped me in these ways:
11. If I had a friend that went through a similar trauma, I would give him or her this advice:
12. If my friend thought that talking about trauma would be too hard, I would tell him or her:

Week 6: Enhancing Safety, Review, and Termination

Check In: Homework Review

Goal: Creating a Safety Plan

Safety includes being physically safe as well as feeling like you are safe and in control of yourself. Let's create your personal safety plan.

MY SAFETY PLAN:

★ People, places, situations, and/or reactions that are safe:

★ People, places, situations, and/or reactions that are not safe:

★ People, places, situations, thoughts, feelings, and/or reactions that make me feel unsafe/out of control:

★ People, places, situations, thoughts, feelings, and/or reactions that make me feel safe/in control:

Goal: Identifying the Support System

Supportive people are family, friends, teachers, etc. who care about you and your safety. They are people that you can turn to if you need help. They are people you can talk to about your struggles. Use this space to identify your support system.

Review and Wrap-Up

Do you remember how you felt when you first started this group? You have learned so much and now have the ability to help others that have experienced similar situations as you! Think about the advice you would give to others and jot down your ideas here.

It is normal to have mixed feelings about ending therapy. What thoughts and feelings do you have about ending this group?

Congratulations!

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