

Treating Self-injurious Behaviors in Traumatized Adolescents

Part II: Intervention

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Importance of the therapeutic relationship & safety

- Relationship building & support
 - Therapist acceptance, nonjudgement, positive regard, compassion
- Acute safety issues
 - Suicidality
 - Life threatening injuries, infection, disfigurement



Affect regulation skills & self-reference capacity

- Distress reduction & affect regulation training before trauma processing
 - Relaxation & breath training
 - Emotion identification & discrimination
 - Resisting self-injury
 - Go as long as possible, do as little as possible
 - Teaches affect tolerance

Trigger management

- Working with the Trigger Grid
 - Learned in sessions, before triggering
 - Psychoeducation about triggers
 - Identifying triggers & triggered states
 - Direct & indirect
 - Teaching metacognitive awareness of intrusive thoughts, feelings, memories

Trigger management (continued)

- Learn coping strategies (self-talk, problem-solving)
- Urge/emotion “surfing”
 - “You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf”
(Kabat-Zinn)
 - Half-life of triggered distress

Mindfulness training

- Mindfulness & metacognitive awareness
 - Developing skill to be present-centered
 - Dispassionate observer of own thoughts & feelings, nonjudgmental & accepting
 - Useful for de-escalation of acute states & improved affect regulation

Titrated exposure

- Later in treatment
- Pre-briefing & consent
- The therapeutic window
 - Undershooting versus overshooting
- Intensity control
 - Highest at mid-session
 - Interspersal
- Exploration & narrative
 - Written Homework About My Trauma

References

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