



Quick Tips for Providers: *Approaches to Psychotherapy*

Psychotherapy refers to a variety of techniques used to help children and adolescents who are experiencing difficulties with their emotions or behavior. There are several evidence-based psychotherapies that involve different approaches, techniques, and interventions. At times, a combination of different psychotherapy approaches may be helpful. Therapy is most effective when it fits the needs of the specific child and family, this may involve a combination of different psychotherapy techniques.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) helps improve a child's mood, anxiety, and behavior. CBT therapists teach children that their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interrelated so by changing distorted thinking patterns or changing behaviors, children can change the way they feel. Specialized forms of CBT have also been developed to help children coping with traumatic experiences.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) can be used to treat adolescents who have chronic suicidal feelings/thoughts, engage in intentionally self-harmful behaviors, or have Borderline Personality Disorder. DBT emphasizes taking responsibility for one's problems and helps the person examine how they deal with conflict and intense negative emotions.

Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) is a brief treatment specifically developed to treat depression and is effective with adolescents. IPT may also be used for a variety of other clinical conditions. IPT focuses on how interpersonal events (e.g., divorce, loss) affect an individual's emotional state and helps improve emotional regulation skills. Individual difficulties are framed in interpersonal terms, and then problematic relationships are addressed.

Parent Management Training (PMT) is designed to help parents develop effective child behavior management skills, often for children with disruptive behaviors. Therapists work directly with parents to help them acquire effective skills to use with their child. Parents are taught how to effectively set limits, enforce consequences, reinforce positive behaviors, and increase desired behaviors at home and in school. Training programs are individualized for the unique needs of each family. Parent Child Interaction Therapy is a specialized form of PMT that uses real-time coaching sessions in which a parent interacts with their child while the therapist provides guidance to support positive interactions.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is designed to increase behaviors that are helpful and decrease behaviors that are harmful or affect learning. ABA therapy programs can help increase language and communication skills, improve attention, focus, social skills, memory, and academics and decrease problem behaviors. ABA is provided by board-certified behavior analysts, therapists, or registered behavior technicians (RBTs). ABA is often implemented with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

For more information, please visit aacap.org and childmind.org.

This handout is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of award U4CMC32913-01-00. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

