

Cognitive and Behavioral Strategies for Individuals with Autism

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Overview

- Historical Roots
- Guiding Principles
- Goals of Therapy
- Categories of Strategies
- Modifications for ASD
- Practical Examples & Exercises

Historical Roots

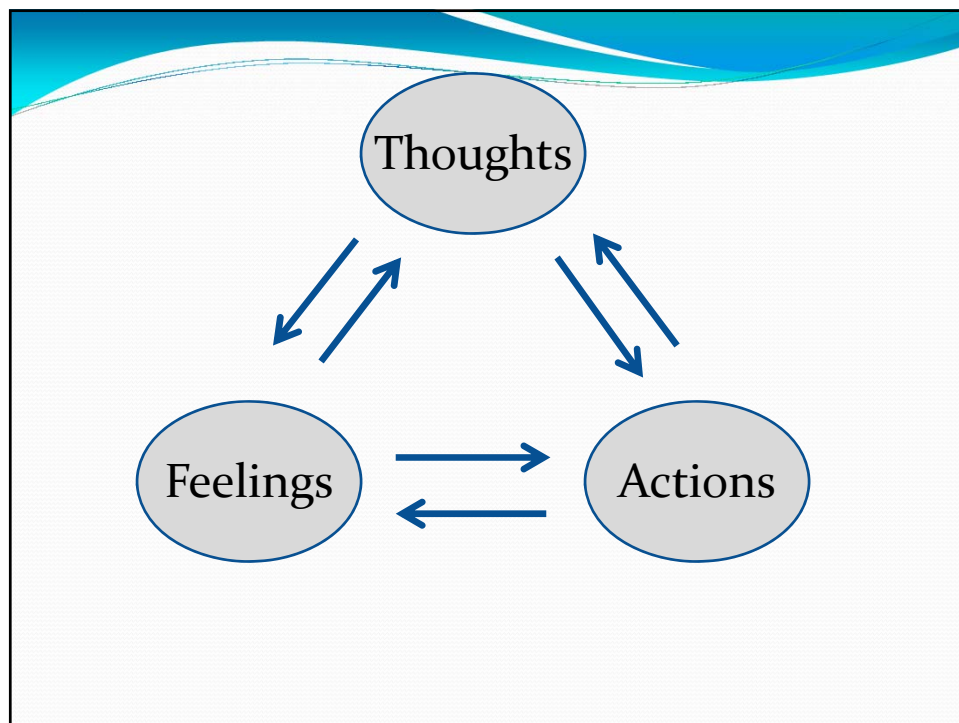
- Behavior therapy – early 20th century
- Psychodynamics – early 20th century
- Cognitive therapy in the 1950s and 1960s
- Dissatisfaction with psychoanalytic approaches
- CBT may emphasize behavioral, cognitive, or both strategies

Two Big Ideas

- Cognitive perspective – role of thinking in how we act and feel
- Behavioral perspective – considers how behaviors are learned through paired associations

Five Common Guiding Principles

- Collaborative effort between client and therapist
- Promotes self-efficacy to tolerate emotions and behavior change
- Short term and directive
- Present focused and goal oriented
- Monitors progress towards goals



CBT in a Nutshell

- Cognitions (thoughts) mediate our emotional and behavioral responses
- Implies that it is not external events (e.g., people, situations) that cause our responses but rather our thoughts about those events
- Therefore, if we change our thoughts, we can change our behaviors and feelings

Goals of Therapy

- Encourage the person to be more consciously aware of their emotional state
- Learn to respond more appropriately and effectively to the situation or emotion
- Become more sensitive to how others are feeling

Three Categories of CBT Strategies

- Cognitively based
- Skills and reinforcement based
- Problem-solving therapies

Cognitively Based CBT

- Maladaptive thoughts lead to negative behaviors
- Beck – anxiety & depression treatment
 - Cognitive biases (minimize the positive)
 - Negative beliefs about self (splitting, catastrophizing, jumping to conclusions, emotional reasoning)
 - Automatic thoughts

Skills and Reinforcement Strategies

- Based on behavioral principles
- Involve teaching coping skills and problem solving skills to help clients cope or solve problems in a variety of situations
 - Applied Behavior Analysis
 - Problem solving therapy

Problem Solving Therapy

- Identifying problems
- Clarifying goals
- Generating possible solutions
- Evaluating the possible outcomes
- Implementing the solutions
- Evaluating the solutions

Summary

- CBT is an umbrella term
- Therapies that have Cognitive and Behavioral components
- There are many strategies and combinations of strategies

Co-occurring Disorders

- Anxiety
- Depression
- OCD

Cognitive Targets

- Automatic negative thoughts and images
- Intermediate and Core beliefs
- Understanding the differences and interactions of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors

How do we do this with kids with ASD?

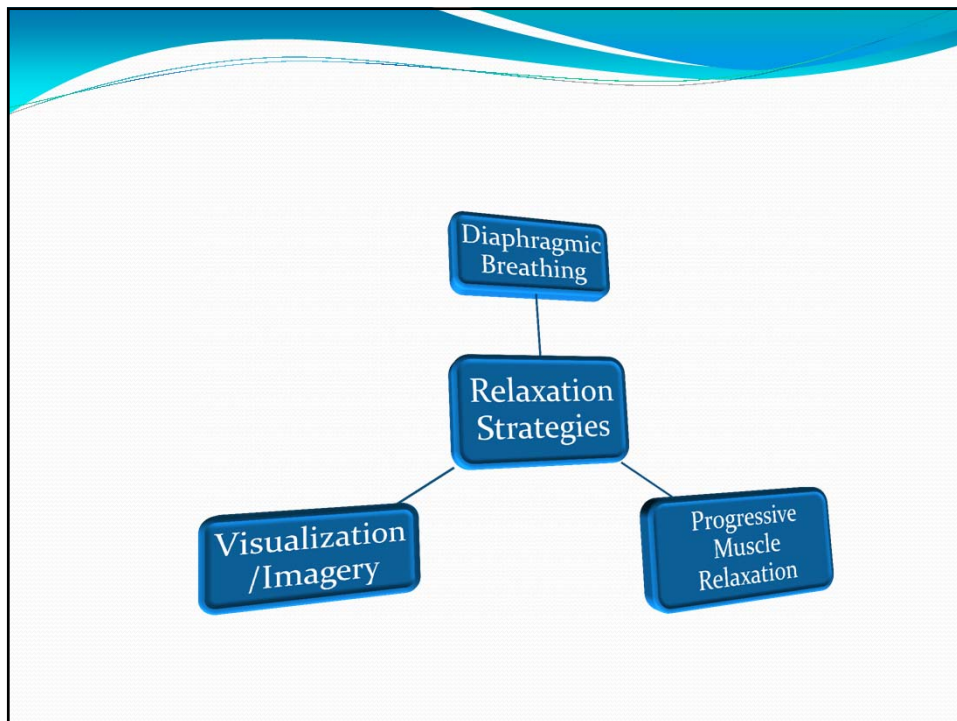
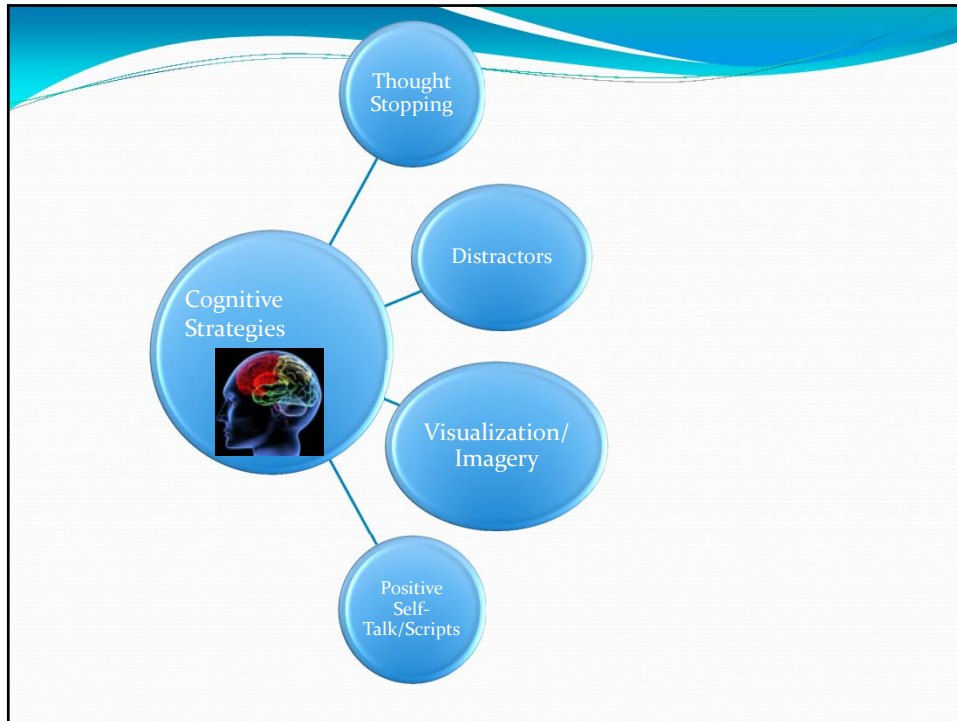
- Big ideas broken into small pieces
- Visuals
- Using restricted interests
- Cognitive Mapping

Emotional Identification

- Basic emotions
 - Joy
 - Sadness
 - Fear
 - Anger
 - Disgust
- Recognition of physiological symptoms
- Precursor behaviors
- Labeling

How do we do this with kids with ASD?

- Repetition
- Generalization and Adaptation
- Visuals
- Restricted interests
- Story telling through art, play, scripts, etc.
- Parent involvement



Diaphragmatic breathing

- [Video of Diaphragmatic breathing](#)
- Let's try together

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Why PMR works
 - Release of neurotransmitters
 - When the body calms, so does the mind
 - Reduces pulse, blood pressure
 - The muscles actually drop to a more relaxed state than normal after tensing
- Let's do it!

Visualization

- This can take many forms
- Visualization of body calming
- Visualization of calming stimuli (bringing all 5 senses to the calming stimuli)

Behavioral Activation

- Schedule activities
- Monitor mood and activation with data
- Systematically increase activation
- Set goals

Behavioral Activation Example

- Bailey is depressed and has not been engaging in things that she used to enjoy
- She often thinks she is worthless, eats too much and doesn't exercise
- Bailey wants help, but is resistant to change.

Other strategies

- Systematic Desensitization
- Exposure and Response Prevention
- Flooding
- These should all be done with a skilled therapist

Mindfulness and ACT

- The role within CBT
 - What is mindfulness?
- Acceptance vs. Thought Stopping
- Values
- Defusion
- Committed Action

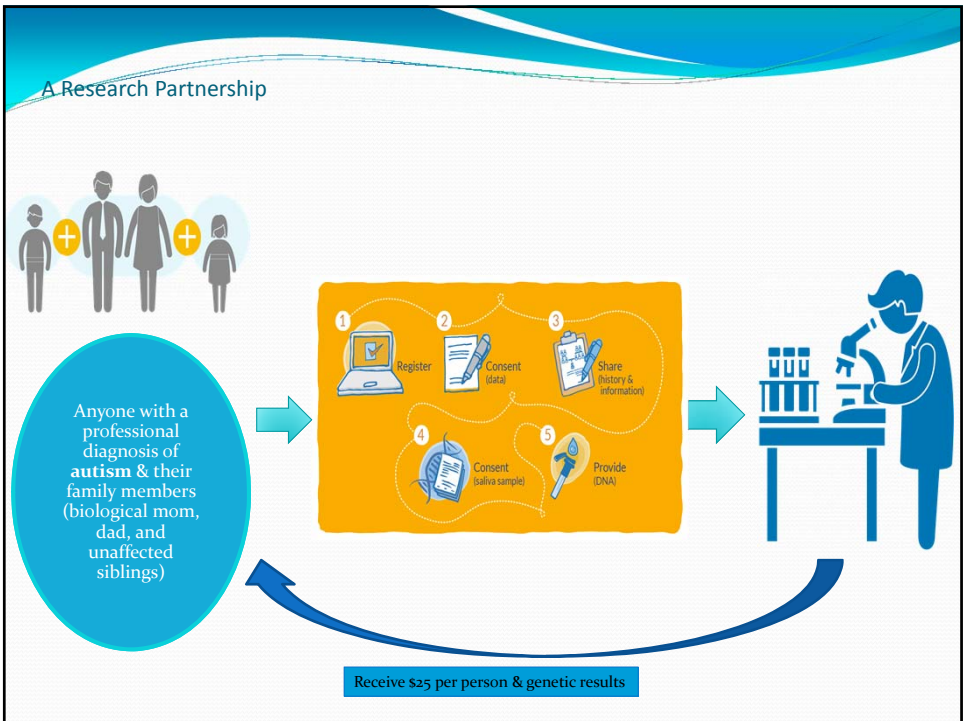
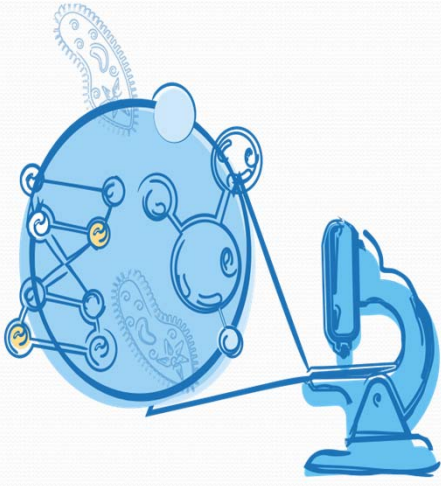


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- Accelerate clinical research by providing the autism research community with a clinically and genetically characterized cohort of consented participants



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Questions