Using Cognitive Behavior Therapy Techniques with Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Objectives

- Participants will understand the definition of Cognitive Behavioral Intervention (CBI).
- Participants will understand the strengths and limitations of using these strategies.
- Participants will be given several examples of CBI strategies designed for individuals with autism.
What is Cognitive Behavior Intervention? (CBI)
Cognitive behavioral intervention (CBI) is one of the 27 evidence-based practices (2014) identified by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders.

It is based on the belief that behavior is mediated by cognitive processes.

Learners are taught to examine their own thoughts and emotions, recognize when negative thoughts and emotions are escalating in intensity, and then use strategies to change their thinking and behavior.

Tend to be used with learners who display problem behavior related to specific emotions or feelings, such as anger or anxiety.

Are often used in conjunction with other evidence-based practices including social narratives, reinforcement, and parent-implemented interventions.
Age Range:

- According to the evidence-based studies, this intervention has been effective for elementary school-age learners (6-11 years) to high school-age learners (15-18 years) with ASD.

Outcomes:

- CBI can be used effectively to address social, communication, behavior, cognitive, adaptive, and mental health outcomes.
Cognitive Behavior Therapy

• Typically used for people with anxiety, depression, anger management issues
• Research also supports its use with mood disorders, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, eating disorders, substance abuse disorders, sleep disorders and psychotic disorders
• Examines the relationships between thoughts, feelings and behaviors.
• Considered to be an “Active” intervention because individuals must work and practice outside of therapy sessions
How will this work for individuals with Autism?
Consider what we know about individuals with Autism:

- Very literal and concrete
- Detail-oriented
- Visual Learners
- Difficulty with comprehension
- Difficulty with problem solving
- Difficulty with generalization
Strengths of CBT

1. Very instructive
2. Shorter-term
3. Structured
4. Can be researched
5. Can be adapted
Limitations

- Need to commit yourself to the process.
  (A therapist can help and advise, but cannot make problems go away without co-operation)
- Have to attend regular CBT sessions and carry out any extra work between sessions
- As CBT can involve confronting emotions and anxieties, one may experience initial periods where they may be more anxious or emotionally uncomfortable.
- CBT focuses on the individual’s capacity to change themselves (their thoughts, feelings and behaviors), and does not address wider problems in systems or families that often have a significant impact on an individual’s health and well-being.
Considerations:

- Functioning level
- Comprehension abilities
- Age/Developmental level
- Willingness to change behavior
- Motivation
Examples of CBI for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders
Social Narratives
What is a Social Narrative?

- Short stories that define a social situation
- Uses child-friendly vocabulary
- Presents situations to the child that can be more easily understood.
- Suggests a more appropriate response than the current inappropriate behavior being exhibited by the child
Carol Gray coined and marketed the term "Social Story".

Gray describes Social Stories as:

- "a process that results in a product."
  - "Process" = a better social understanding and consideration of the child’s perspective
  - "Product" = the Social Story that defines situations, concepts, or social skills
Picture the Goal

- Purpose is to share relevant social information
- Use visual or concrete references to explain abstract concepts
- Remember:
  - The goal is to change the response of the child to a more appropriate response
  - Share meaningful information in a way that he/she can comprehend
Autism Teaching Strategies.com
I’m going to hit you!
NO! Me first!
No, I won’t do it!
I wish he was dead!!

I’m disappointed!
This is hard!
I’m angry!
I’m worried!
I need some help!
Using Visual Supports
What is the Incredible 5-Point Scale?

Where did this come from?

- The Incredible 5-Point Scale was introduced in 2003 as a method of teaching social understanding to students with Autism Spectrum Disorders and similar challenges.

- Since that time they have learned a lot more about why the scale works and how to use them in a variety of situations and environments.

- A primary goal of the scale is to help students notice and respond to their own and others’ social behaviors.

• The objective of this scale is to teach social and emotional information in a concrete, systematic, and non-judging way.
• It can also be used to teach self regulation skills and perspective taking.
• So ultimately it teaches INDEPENDENCE!!!!
• People with Autism Spectrum Disorders appear to learn most effectively through predictable, visual systems.

**The 5-Point Scale is a predictable visual system**

With this scale, parents have a simple, yet effective way to teach social rules and expectations and to problem-solve behavioral responses of others, troubleshoot past and future social scenarios, and create plans for self-management.

STRENGTHS:

• Once a scale is developed, situations can be addressed across settings and across peoples so there is common vocabulary for all.

  GENERALIZATION  ➔  INDEPENDENCE

• This concept can be used with verbal AND non-verbal students.

• This concept can also be used in different sized steps also based on the skill being taught.
Incredible 5 Point Scale

- Breaks down a concept / behavior into 5 concrete levels, 1 - 5, often differentiated by intensity.
- There is mutual agreement to what each number represents.
- Helps your child (and you) better understand what is being asked and how to adjust behavior accordingly.
A 5 is too Loud!
Sam’s 5 Point Scale

5
4
3
2
1
The Stress Scale

5 | I could lose control
4 | Can really upset me
3 | Makes me nervous
2 | Bugs me
1 | Never bothers me
Threatening words

Angry words

Hurtful words

Just fine words

Sweet words
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Looks like</th>
<th>Feels like</th>
<th>I can try to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Danny’s Self-Management Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>What might make me feel this way?</th>
<th>How does my body or brain look?</th>
<th>What can I do now?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nothing is working! I am out of control! I can’t think!</td>
<td>Like being in a tidal wave. Screaming and maybe throwing things. I don’t hear people talking to me.</td>
<td>Shut my eyes. Try to close mouth. Try to slow down my breathing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Someone says something that makes me angry. This is usually about politics or history facts.</td>
<td>Swearing. I sometimes shake. I feel mean.</td>
<td>Stop talking. Slow down your breathing to slow down your brain. Try to walk to a safe place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There is a change I am not expecting. Someone tells me I am wrong.</td>
<td>Stomach starts to hurt. I start to have negative thoughts about someone or something. I feel mistreated.</td>
<td>Excuse myself and go to a safe place. Maybe go get a drink of water. Look through my photos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Things are going along as planned. I am getting my work completed.</td>
<td>My body is where it should be. I am in control of what I say. I prefer to be alone.</td>
<td>Hang in there. This is good. I can get some work done. I don’t need to be social.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>This is almost perfect. I got a good grade. Someone complimented me.</td>
<td>I am very calm and happy. I feel like being with other people. My brain is full of good thoughts about people and things.</td>
<td>Relax. Smile. Enjoy the moment. Compliment people back.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kari Dunn Buron, 2010
My 5 point scale

Feels like:

MAD
FRUSTRATED
JUST RIGHT
QUIET
SLEEPY

What it looks like:
Red for: physical aggression of any kind towards people or animals.
If possible, give Jasper choice to walk to bedroom or to help him (carry him). Wait until Jasper has been quiet for at least 1 minute before entering room to discuss next step (next step MUST be orange or yellow calm down). If bedroom is not a possibility (i.e., you are out in community), designate a place for Jasper to stay to calm down. Because there will not necessarily be a physical boundary like his room has, require less time before prompting to next step (i.e., calm body and calm voice for 20 seconds). When Jasper is calm say, “You have a calm body and a calm voice. We need to pick an option to finish calming down. Do you want to pick (yellow) or do you want Jasper may identify himself as orange as long as he is
What would help you feel better?

- Play dough
- Walk
- Draw
- Bounce on ball
- Puzzle
- Book
- Relax
- Water
- Bean bag
Questions?