

Child Maltreatment: New Frontiers in Research & Practice

Maltreatment, Muddles and Models: finding a fit for helping traumatised children. Mentalizing and cognitive behavioural models in conversation

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David Trickey will briefly present the Cognitive Model of PTSD, and explain how this model helps to understand the way in which traumatic events affect young people, and how it guides effective interventions such as trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy. A trusting relationship between client and therapist is a crucial pre-requisite to effective therapy; but what if the meaning attributed by the young person to the traumatic event or events, is "Don't trust others, especially those in apparent positions of authority and definitely not those who are supposed to look out for you".

Many young people's maltreatment and circumstances render them chaotic, with comorbid problems scattered across multiple domains, and largely unavailable to focused evidence based treatments, as might be offered in clinics. Such youth can be seen as exhibiting high 'P-factors' (Caspi et al) with vulnerability to chronicity and "treatment resistance", but another way to frame this is that they are unable to form trust in the social value of any knowledge in the potential helper; they have chronic "epistemic hypervigilance". AMBIT is a Mentalization-based approach to creating the conditions around a young person that are most likely to support sustainable positive change. It has been described as a "pre-therapy" and it is designed to support other evidence based approaches. A common treatment aim in AMBIT influenced teams is to improve the client's relationship to help.

Dickon and David will then discuss the similarities and differences of the understandings of, and approaches to, traumatised children, and consider whether it is possible to connect the two models in a way which will benefit more traumatised young people.