

Child and Family Centre

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SHORT TERM THERAPY FOR CHILDHOOD ANXIETY DISORDERS

presentation

Anxiety disorders in can sometimes be overlooked as they may be viewed as transient and not something that may eventually have a negative long term effect on a child's functioning. Anxiety disorders that go untreated for a long period of time can be detrimental to a child's confidence, self-esteem and overall functioning. Children with excessive worry, specific fears, negative thinking etc. can cause much distress within the family and long term difficulties may affect the child's socialisation and school functioning. It is therefore important that School Psychologists have some knowledge of how to provide counselling for anxiety problems.

The objectives of this presentation are to enhance practitioner's skills in the implementation of short term therapy for generalised and separation anxiety disorders as well as specific phobias in children. The methodology outlined will be based on principals of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Adaptations of existing treatment protocols for Childhood Anxiety Disorders (Howard & Kendall, 1996; Garland & Clark, 2000) will be presented. A vital component in the treatment of a child's anxious behaviour is inclusion of parents/family in a large portion of the process. Typically, a

child's symptoms of anxiety may be reinforced and maintained in the family context and significant long term change will only occur if parents are included in the child's therapy.

Participants will gain a greater understanding of how to utilise a short term approach in the treatment of anxiety disorders (3 to 6 sessions) with a step by step description of the content of sessions. The basics of initial assessment and psychometric tools which are utilized in identifying the problem and measuring response to treatment will also be included. In summary, participants will learn the basics of assessment of childhood anxiety disorders and how to implement short term therapy involving both parents and child based on a CBT model.

References

Howard, B., & Kendall, P. C., (1996). Cognitive behavioural family therapy for anxiety disordered youth: A Multiple Baseline Intervention. Cognitive Therapy and Research, No. 20.

Garland, E., & Clark, S. L. (2000). Taming worry dragons. Vancouver B.C.: British Columbia Children's Hospital.