Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT)

Date: 2012 (For resources, this is the publication date. For programs, this is the date posted.)

Information

Type: Program/Practice, Treatment/Services Program, Program with Evidence of Effectiveness
Organization: Drexel University
Costs: See the archived NREPP listing [1].

Contact

See the archived NREPP listing [1].

Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT) is a 16-week treatment for youths ages 12-24 who have experienced depression, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, or trauma. The model is based on an interpersonal theory of depression, which proposes that the quality of family relationships may precipitate, exacerbate, or prevent depression and suicidal ideation. In this model, ruptures in family relationships, such as those due to abandonment, neglect, or abuse or a harsh and negative parenting environment, influence the development of adolescent depression. Families with these attachment ruptures lack the normative secure base and safe haven context needed for an adolescent’s healthy development, including the development of emotion regulation and problem-solving skills. These adolescents may experience depression resulting from the attachment ruptures themselves or from their inability to turn to the family for support in the face of trauma outside the home. ABFT aims to strengthen or repair parent-adolescent attachment bonds and improve family communication. As the normative secure base is restored, parents become a resource to help the adolescent cope with stress, experience competency, and explore autonomy. The treatment manual and additional training and resources are available from the program developer. See the NREPP website for contact information.

Designation as a "Program with Evidence of Effectiveness"

SPRC designated this intervention as a “program with evidence of effectiveness” based on its inclusion in SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP).

Outcome(s) Reviewed (Evidence Rating)*

- Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors (Effective)
- Depression and Depressive Symptoms (Effective)

Read more about the program's ratings [1].

* NREPP changed its review criteria in 2015. This program was reviewed under the post-2015 criteria. To help
practitioners find programs that fit their needs, NREPP reviews the evidence for specific outcomes, not overall programs. Each outcome was assigned an evidence rating of Effective, Promising, or Ineffective. A single program may have multiple outcomes with different ratings. When considering programs, we recommend (a) assessing whether the specific outcomes achieved by the program are a fit for your needs; and (b) examining the strength of evidence for each outcome.

2012 NSSP Objectives Addressed:

Objective 8.3: Promote timely access to assessment, intervention, and effective care for individuals with a heightened risk for suicide.

Links within this resource

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