



FAST FACTS: Therapeutic Modalities Overview

Caregivers, parents, and family of children who have experienced trauma, attachment disruptions and losses early in life can often find it difficult and overwhelming to determine how best to help with the complex challenges their children face. This resource is designed to help caregivers navigate and answer some of the many questions and challenges that arise in determining what care is best for their child(ren), how to speak with potential therapists about their approaches, and how to best collaborate and be in partnership with therapists. There is no one "right" way to care for your child and, ultimately, your family will know what is best!

At times it can also feel like nothing will help or that the challenges your child is facing are insurmountable. What research and experience tells us is that children are incredibly adaptable and resilient. Developmental trauma can be repaired, and wounds can heal. Neuroscience has shown us that the brain is highly adaptive and that with the support of healthy relationships and attachments and a bottom-up (brain- and body-based) approach to treatment, children's brains and nervous systems can be "rewired" so that they can live healthier, more regulated, connected and playful lives.

Summary of some commonly used modalities for childhood trauma, grief, loss

Determining what therapeutic approach may be best for your child can be an overwhelming and confusing endeavor. Different therapeutic modalities are designed to address different needs, challenges, and areas of the brain and body. An important first step in this process can be to work with a therapist to conduct a thoughtful, thorough, and nervous system-informed assessment. Additionally, it can be helpful to find a therapist who takes an integrative approach to their work and is able to draw on multiple modalities to best suit the needs of your child throughout their work together.

There are a wide variety of therapy modalities that have been designed to address trauma and loss for children and adolescents. Finding a modality (or modalities) that have research and evidence to support their efficacy is important (NCTSN). You may ask yourself and therapists you speak with if the modalities they use address the type(s) of trauma your child has experienced. Also, does the modality (and the therapist them self) take a culturally responsive approach to their work?

Here are some evidence-based and evidence-supported modalities you may consider exploring based on your child's unique experiences and needs:

- Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) Framework
- Sensory Motor Arousal Regulation Treatment (SMART)
- Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
- Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Art Therapy



- Various Play Therapy modalities (Theraplay, Filial Therapy, Experiential Play Therapy)
- Somatic Experiencing (SE) and Sensorimotor Psychotherapy (SP)
- Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)
- Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP)
- Trauma Resilience Model (TRM)
- Family Attachment Narrative Therapy
- Systemic Family Therapy

How to ask questions of potential therapists

Finding a therapist for your child and family can be an intimidating and challenging process. It is important to remember that finding a therapist whose modality is a good fit for your child's needs as well as someone who is a "good fit" is a necessary part of the process. You may find it helpful to have some questions prepared to ask a therapist before considering working with them. We have compiled some example questions you may consider:

- What is your experience in working with children like mine (e.g., of similar age, had similar experiences, with similar identities)?
- What kind of training did you get to work with children with these experiences/challenges? What are your special areas of practice?
- What is your therapeutic approach or philosophy?
- Are you trained to use any evidence-based practices or approaches for the difficulties of my child?
- How involved will I be in treatment and how will you keep me informed of my child's progress? How will I know if my child is getting better?
- What should I do if I have a crisis between treatment sessions or I need immediate help? Are you available as a support?
- What should I be doing at home to help support my child's treatment?
- Is there anything out of the ordinary that I should expect because my child is in treatment?
- Are there any materials I can read to learn more about my child's issues and concerns?
- Will my child get a formal 'diagnosis' and will I have knowledge of that diagnosis?
- Are your methods/protocols covered by medical insurance?
- Should I talk to my child about what happens during therapy?

Creating a supportive relationship/partnership between caregiver(s) and therapist

Therapy is a collaborative process, which means that your child's voice (and your voice) is critically important in all stages of treatment. A child spends most of their life outside of therapy, which means that a central focus of treatment should be on how to best and most effectively support your child in those environments, such as at home and at school. You may consider having conversations early (and regularly) with your child's therapist about how they

envision collaborating with you and your child's school or other settings they are a part of. Ensuring that treatment goals can translate into all environments is critical. Additionally, working with your child's therapist in an ongoing way to determine in what ways and how often you may be brought into the therapy to engage dyadically and/or as a family.

If your child is adopted or you are a foster or kinship parent, you may contact the MN ADOPT HELP program to assist you in identifying therapists who are adoption competent. This means they have had specialized training or extensive experience helping families whose children have experienced the trauma of being removed from their family and culture of origin. <https://www.mnadopt.org/resources/therapists/>

Information presented by:



Mariah Rooney, LICSW, RYT is a clinical social worker and specializes in treating the complex challenges that arise as a result of traumatic stress, attachment trauma, intergenerational trauma, and dissociation. Her clinical experience includes work with children, adolescents and adults in outpatient, community, hospital and specialty care settings. She was a fellow at the Trauma Center in Boston, MA where she received extensive training in treating individuals and families of all ages with histories of complex trauma. Mariah is deeply committed to examining the intersections of social justice, trauma and mental health and participating in efforts to decolonize mental healthcare and increase access to anti-oppressive healing spaces.

To learn more about Foster Adopt Minnesota and our efforts to ensure each child will have a permanent family, call 612-861-7115 or visit www.fosteradoptmn.org.