

CBT Skill Acquisition: Helping Children Thrive

Background

Interactive Journaling® is an evidence-based process rooted in a cognitive-behavioral approach. Though several theories exist to describe why people improve as a result of participating in a CBT-based program, the acquisition of particular skills related to cognitive restructuring and behavioral activation scores are two factors that consistently predict behavior change.

With a foundation in cognitive-behavioral therapy, The Change Companies'® *Helping Children Thrive* curriculum is designed to help participants adjust to out-of-home placement by developing skills that will empower them to effectively cope with their situation by using thoughts, feelings and experiences as catalysts for making healthy decisions in the future.

Description

The CBTSA: Helping Children Thrive instrument is a 40-item, self-report questionnaire that measures current CBT skills use among youth entering out-of-home placement. It is designed to be completed by participants at two time points: prior to beginning the curriculum and following completion of the curriculum. It is estimated that it will take approximately 15 minutes for people to complete this paper-pencil measure.

This measure is a modified version of the Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Skills Questionnaire (CBTSQ), an instrument with sound psychometric properties, including good overall internal consistency (overall: $\alpha = .91$; BA: $\alpha = .85$; CR: $\alpha = .88$). A validation study (Jacob, Christopher and Neuhaus, 2011) reported expected correlations with a variety of constructs among a large sample of patients receiving intensive CBT in a partial hospital setting.

There are three factors measured by this instrument: Behavioral Activation (BA: 7 items), Cognitive Restructuring (CR: 9 items) and *Helping Children Thrive Objectives* (HCT: 24 items).

Scoring

Sum the responses for each factor to compute a factor score:

Behavioral Activation items = 1 4 5 9 10 11 13

Cognitive Restructuring items = 2 3 6 7 8 12 14 15 16

Helping Children Thrive Objectives = 17-40 (sequential)

Scoring can be further broken down by the eight Journals comprising *Helping Children Thrive* to create subscales of specific Journal objectives:

My Place: 17-19

Relationships: 20-22

Avoiding High-Risk Behaviors: 23-25

Self-Care: 26-28

Planning for the Future: 29-31

How to Deal with Feelings: 32-34

Finding the Right Job: 35-37

What I Think Matters: 38-40

BA factor scores range from 0 to 35, and higher scores indicate greater use of BA skills.

CR factor scores range from 0 to 45, and higher scores indicate greater use of CR skills.

Helping Children Thrive factor scores range from 0 to 120, with higher scores indicating greater understanding and application of *Helping Children Thrive* curriculum content.

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Data Entry and Analysis

To understand changes in scores in participants completing the program, the appropriate statistical test is a paired t-test. A paired t-test measures whether means from a within-subjects test group vary prior to and after being exposed to the *Helping Children Thrive* curriculum.

We recommend you store participant summary data at an item level (i.e., with all 34 items individually entered to allow computation of factor scores, Journal specific scores and total scores) in an electronic spreadsheet, assigning participants a unique ID and storing data without identifying information for HIPAA compliance reasons. Note that in order to complete this analysis you must have matched data, meaning the same identifier must be used for participants at each time point.

Train for Change Inc.[®] offers comprehensive evaluation and reporting packages. Please contact us for further information.

Reporting Scores Sample

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pre- and post-test scores for (n=xx) people participating in our program that used The Change Companies'[®] *Helping Children Thrive* curriculum. There was a significant/not a significant) difference in pretest scores (M=___, SD=___) and post-test scores (M=___, SD=___); $t(_) = _$, $p = _$.

References

Jacob, K. S., Christopher, M. S., & Neuhaus, E. C. (2011). Development and validation of the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Skills Questionnaire (CBTSQ). *Behavior Modification*, 35, 595-611.