

Write on Board

Source: Sonya Waddell

Theme: Self-Esteem

Recommended Age Range: Nine and Up (Sexually abused or traumatized clients)

Treatment Modality: Individual

Goals

- Increase positive statements about self
- Help clients understand that the event or trauma that occurred in their lives does not define who they are

Materials

- Whiteboard or large sheet of paper
- Markers

Description

The practitioner asks the client to verbalize positive traits about him/herself. The practitioner writes the words on the white board in various positions (straight, diagonal, etc.). Next, the practitioner asks the client to name some things he/she can do well. The practitioner adds the words to the whiteboard, and asks the client about things he/she has accomplished and writes them on the board. The client identifies significant positive life events he/she has experienced and writes them on the board. Then the client is asked to list people who love and care about him/her and to add these names to the whiteboard. By this point, the board should be full of words and names.

The practitioner then places one (depending on the number of traumatic events) little black dot in any corner on the whiteboard. She/he tells the client that the little black dot represents the sexual abuse (or other traumatic experience) that happened to her/him. The practitioner states that even though the sexual abuse (or other trauma) happened, there are still so many positive things the client can focus on (referring to the board and naming what the client has stated). The practitioner points out the many things the client is great at doing (referring to the board and naming what the client has stated). The practitioner tells the client there are so many people who care about him/her (referring to the board and naming the people the client has listed). The practitioner states that this dot(s) can hardly be seen and is so little compared to all of the wonderful and positive characteristics the client possesses and all of the wonderful people in his/her life. The client is asked if he/she wants to add anything to the board and then the practitioner gives the client time to process the information. The practitioner might take a picture of the final board and all that is written on it and give it to the client as a reminder of all the positives in his/her life.

Discussion

Many clients who have experienced trauma believe that the trauma defines their life and who they are. They often feel damaged, guilty, hopeless, or helpless. Clients often focus on the bad and forget all of the positive qualities they possess, and they forget the people who care about them. This activity puts the traumatic experience into context, and helps clients focus on their positive attributes, their support systems, and their positive life experiences.

About The Author

Sonya Waddell, LPC, is a therapist and forensic interviewer at the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy in Atlanta, Georgia. She interviews children who have made allegations of sexual and physical abuse and who have witnessed abuse and homicide. She also provides individual and group therapy and conducts trainings on child abuse in the community.

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