

# DEALING WITH TRAUMA: A TF-CBT WORKBOOK FOR TEENS

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# DEALING WITH TRAUMA: A TF-CBT WORKBOOK FOR TEENS

## Introduction

This workbook has been developed for use with teenagers who have experienced one or more traumatic events. The activities in the workbook correspond to the treatment components of the Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) model, which was developed by Judith Cohen, Anthony Mannarino, and Esther Deblinger (Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger, 2017). The intended use of the workbook is by master’s level mental health professionals or graduate students under appropriate supervision who have completed TF-CBT Web 2.0 and have also participated in the live Initial TF-CBT training with a Nationally Approved TF-CBT Trainer and have participated in follow-up consultation and/or supervision with an approved TF-CBT Trainer, Consultant, or Supervisor.

The workbook was created as a supplemental resource to assist therapists as they work through each component of the TF-CBT model with their clients. This workbook is one of the many resources that therapists can use in implementing TF-CBT, and the manual cited above provides an extensive list of books, activities, and other therapeutic aids. Additional resources can be found at: <https://tfcbt.org/>. The workbook intends to provide a helpful framework to cover each component of TF-CBT, but other resources and activities should also be utilized as clinically indicated (i.e., books, role plays, art activities, audio relaxation exercises, therapeutic board games, music, etc). Get creative! As always, clinical judgment takes precedence. It is important to adjust TF-CBT components to meet the specific strengths and needs of each teenager. Some of the activities included in the workbook may not be appropriate for all teens, and flexibility needs to be balanced with fidelity to the treatment model. For example, if you are working with an adolescent who is not avoidant regarding his or her trauma(s), you would skip page 12 (More about Avoidance). Moreover, trauma narration and processing, an important component of TF-CBT, generally includes the creation of a separate project or book often referred to as a narrative that would not be incorporated as part of this workbook.

The workbook activities were developed for implementing the PRACTICE components of the TF-CBT model: Psycho-education, Relaxation, Affective regulation and modulation, Cognitive coping and processing, Trauma narration and cognitive processing of the traumatic experience(s), *In vivo* mastery of trauma reminders, Conjoint sessions, and Enhancing future safety and development. The teen and caregiver will initially need some orientation to TF-CBT, and issues of confidentiality and sharing of the teen’s work need to be discussed from the outset. The workbook may be used in its entirety or just some pages may be used for specific components. Keep in mind that some traumatized adolescents may require other types of treatment before, during, or after TF-CBT. The workbook activities correspond to the components of the TF-CBT model as follows:

Orientation to Therapy and TF-CBT, Engagement	Pages 5-7
Psycho-education on Trauma and Reactions to Trauma	Pages 8-10, 12

Relaxation	Pages 13-16
Feelings Identification	Pages 17-20
Feelings Ratings and Affect Modulation	Pages 21-23
Grounding and Mindfulness	Page 24-26
Cognitive Processing	Pages 27-30
Creating the Trauma Narrative	Pages 31-32
Processing the Traumatic Experience(s)	Page 33
<i>In Vivo</i> Mastery of Trauma Reminders	Page 11
Conjoint Session – Sharing about Traumatic Experiences	Page 34
Enhancing Future Safety and Development	Pages 35-37
Review and Termination	Pages 38-41

Following the structure of the TF-CBT model, the therapist meets individually with the teen each week to complete the above (and other supplemental) treatment activities. Then the therapist meets with the caregiver individually to work with the caregiver on the same component, to teach him/her the skills to support the teen at home and for the caretaker to process his/her own feelings about the trauma. Sharing the activities completed by the teen in the workbook can be a helpful way to work with the caregiver on the treatment components if the teen is comfortable with that. Caregivers usually appreciate seeing their adolescent’s artwork and writing, and sharing these provides the opportunity for the therapist to increase the caregiver’s empathy and understanding of the teen’s experience, however, it is not essential. Use your clinical judgment if the teen does not want you to share a particular page with a caregiver or if sharing is contraindicated in any way. Some games or activities may be used during conjoint sessions in which the teen and caregiver can practice and share together. For example, teens may enjoy teaching their caretaker the relaxation activities or talking about feelings together in session. It is important to have caretakers involved in the safety component. Again, flexibility is important!

Practice activities can be assigned each week for the teen, caretaker, or dyad at the discretion of the therapist. The workbook includes homework/practice activities that are labeled as practice and are intended to help the teen apply and integrate the coping skills in their daily lives and to manage trauma reminders and trauma-related distress. You may create activities for the dyad to play at home, assign thought logs, etc. Use your imagination, and tap into the individual teen’s strengths and interests when planning your interventions.

For further information on TF-CBT and its components, please refer to the treatment manual:

Cohen, J.A., Mannarino, A.P., & Deblinger, E. (2017). *Treating trauma and traumatic grief in children and adolescents: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. New York: The Guilford Press.

An additional resource is the on-line TF-CBT Web 2.0 training at:  
<https://tfcbt2.musc.edu/>.

## WHY AM I HERE?

TF-CBT is an effective approach that helps teens deal with and make sense of their traumas. You will learn about trauma and coping skills to help you feel better and be more successful in achieving your goals. You will also learn ways to keep yourself safe. Feel free to write down your responses to the questions below or just tell your therapist.

- ❖ How does that sound?
  
- ❖ What questions or concerns do you have?
  
- ❖ What do you hope to accomplish?
  
- ❖ What could your therapist do that would be the most (and LEAST) helpful?

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Choose any of the following questions to answer or share anything about yourself that you want your therapist to know.

- ❖ What are you into?
  
- ❖ What are you good at?
  
- ❖ What words would your best friend use to describe you?
  
- ❖ Who are the most important people in your life?



## LEARNING ABOUT TRAUMA

We all experience stress. School can be stressful. Arguments with friends and family can be stressful. Those are normal types of stressors. Sometimes things happen that go way beyond normal stress. Extremely stressful events are known as traumas. Traumas are usually situations where someone was abused, hurt or killed or thought they could have been. Traumas can cause a lot of feelings including being confused, terrified, overwhelmed, helpless, angry, and/or numb. When faced with a trauma, you go into survival mode and use survival responses like fight, flight, or freeze. When you experience trauma, especially over and over again, you can get “stuck” in survival mode. It can be hard to feel safe. You may feel out of control or that life is out of control. It can be hard to trust people or get close to people. You may get into a lot of conflict and drama with the people around you. You can also start feeling like nobody cares about you. Therapy helps teens overcome these kinds of distressing thoughts and feelings and enjoy life and relationships with others more.

- ❖ What are some ways this fits your experience?



## TYPES OF TRAUMA

There are different kinds of traumas. Let's focus on the traumatic event(s) that you have experienced. Your therapist will help you answer some common questions teens have about trauma, or you can create your own questions. If you have experienced more than one type of trauma, you can use more than one page.

- ❖ What is it called?
- ❖ What does that mean?
- ❖ Who does this happen to?
- ❖ Do a lot of teens experience this?
- ❖ Why does this happen?

How do teens react when this happens to them?

Create your own questions here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## HOW DOES TRAUMA AFFECT YOU?

Many teens have upsetting memories or dreams about their trauma(s). Some teens feel “on edge” or nervous or angry. After trauma, a lot of teens watch out for danger and worry about bad things happening. Many teens have trouble sleeping and concentrating in school. Some teens feel like they don't want to talk about or think about the trauma(s), but trauma memories pop into their minds anyway. They may have troubling thoughts and feelings about the trauma (like “I did something wrong” or feeling depressed). When something reminds them of the trauma(s), teens may feel overwhelmed, like the trauma is happening all over again. They may feel out of control and react in extreme ways. Some teens may feel empty and numb, like they can't feel anything at all. After trauma, some teens feel like things aren't real or they might feel disconnected from themselves and their own bodies. They may use drugs or alcohol, fighting, sex, cutting, overeating or running away to try to deal with their trauma reactions and/or distressing feelings.

❖ Which of these reactions do you relate to?

❖ What do you do to cope with these reactions?

## DEALING WITH TRAUMA REMINDERS

Trauma reminders are things that remind you about the trauma(s). They can include certain places, situations, people, words, sounds, smells, sensations, or days of the year that remind you of the trauma(s) but are not actually dangerous. When you experience these reminders, you may feel unsafe or as if you were living through the trauma(s) over again. You may find yourself engaging in behaviors that don't fit the situation or get you in trouble with others. You might also avoid anything associated with the trauma reminder. This can get in the way of your life and the things you like to do. At times you may have strong emotional reactions to situations that seem unrelated to prior traumatic experiences. But once you are aware of your possible reminders, you can use coping and relaxation skills to manage your emotional reactions better. Your therapist and other support people can also help you take small steps to be able to face situations that remind you of your traumas in a safe way so that you don't have to keep avoiding them. **Please write down or tell your therapist about a few of your trauma reminders below.**

You and your therapist will come up with a plan to deal with trauma reminders. In fact, all of the coping skills you learn will help you with that. Throughout therapy, you will practice in session and at home to gain control over these trauma reminders in your life.

## MORE ABOUT AVOIDANCE

Some teens try very hard not to talk about, think about, or have feelings about their traumas. It is normal to want to erase traumatic memories or to pretend like the traumas never happened. Unfortunately, you can't just make the traumas go away. They tend to pop up and get in the way of your life until you deal with them more directly. Let's consider some of the pros and cons of avoidance compared to facing traumas in a more direct way.

Avoidance	Facing Trauma
Pros:	Pros:
Cons:	Cons:

Which approach has more pros than cons for you?

## CHILLING OUT

After traumas happen, you might feel tense, “on edge,” and anxious. This is because when faced with danger or extreme stress, our bodies release stress hormones to help us survive. It can be hard to concentrate in school, to sleep, and to feel calm and safe with all these stress hormones floating around our bodies. But there are things you can do to feel more relaxed.

- ❖ What do you do when you need to chill out?

Sometimes we do things to relax that can cause more problems (playing video games instead of studying for a test) or may not be good for us in the long run (eating too much).

Are there any down sides to the things you do to relax?

## WHAT HELPS YOU CHILL OUT?

There are a lot of things we can do to help us feel relaxed. Below is a list of ideas. Some may sound good to you, some may not. That's okay because different people relax in different ways. You can check off any that you want to try. If none of them sound good, you and your therapist can add to it or create your own ideas, too.

1. Focused breathing
2. Progressive muscle relaxation
3. Guided meditation
4. Music
5. Art
6. Yoga/stretching
7. Exercise/sports/dance
8. Relaxation apps
9. Soothing activities (taking a warm bath, putting on lotion, wrapping up in a blanket)
10. Talking to a friend
11. Reading

Which of these activities work best for you? Put a star next to the things you can practice at home.



## MY PLAN FOR CHILLING OUT

Make a list of things you can do to help you relax. It helps to practice these things regularly so you can use them when you are upset.

Chilling Out at Home:

Chilling Out at School:

Chilling Out in the Community:

## CHECKING IN: CHILLING OUT

- ❖ How are you feeling today?
- ❖ Did you practice any of your chilling out plans?
- ❖ What helped?
- ❖ What got in the way?
- ❖ Is there anything else you can try?



## ABOUT FEELINGS

Feelings are the emotions you experience in your body and heart. There are many different feelings that you may have, and your feelings may change from moment to moment. Sometimes you might even feel two or more feelings at the same time. There are no good or bad feelings, but there are positive and negative ways of expressing feelings.

Please write down as many feelings as you can think of below or ask your therapist to set a timer for a minute and see how many feelings you can name.

How would you describe these feelings? Are there colors associated with them? Can you think of a situation for each experience?

## FEELING NUMB

Some teens who have been through trauma feel numb and have trouble identifying how they are feeling. Some teens have difficulty experiencing any feelings.

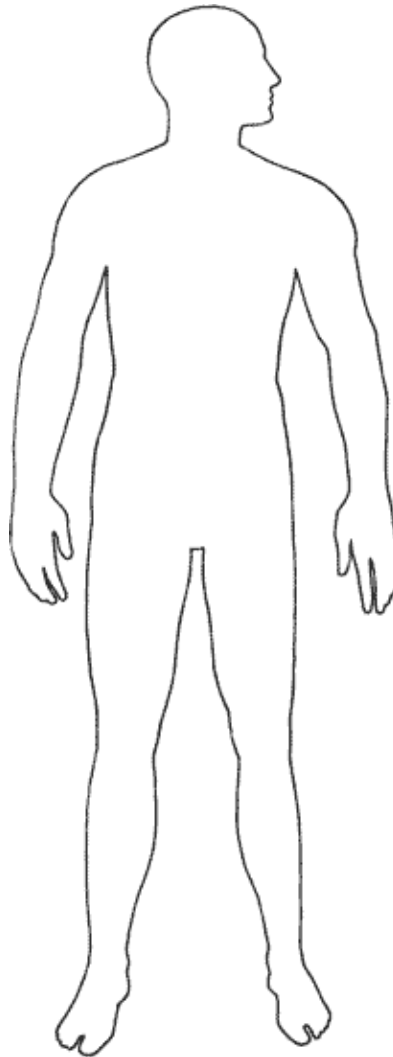
- ❖ Can you relate to this?
- ❖ Is there anything teens can do to help them know how they are feeling?

Some teens try different things to not feel numb. Some things teens might try can hurt them or get them in trouble.

- ❖ Can you relate to this?
- ❖ What are some things teens can try that won't hurt them or get them in trouble?

## EXPERIENCING FEELINGS IN YOUR BODY

One way to understand your emotions is by paying attention to your body. When something stressful happens, do you get a pit in your stomach? Or do your muscles get tight? Your body might give you signs to understand your emotions. Let's look back at the feelings you listed on Page 16. You don't have to do all the feelings you listed; you and your therapist can choose which feelings you want to include. For each feeling you choose, close your eyes or look down and imagine having that feeling right now. Where do you experience that feeling in your body? Please color in the places on your body where you experience each feeling and draw or tell your therapist what it feels like.



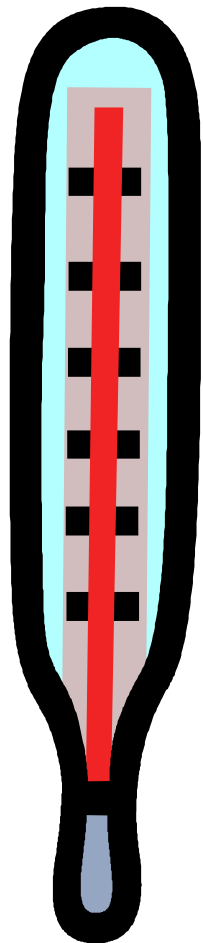
## FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

A good way to tell how we feel and how others feel is by noticing facial expressions. You and your therapist can take turns showing or acting out different feelings and trying to guess the emotion. Or you can use a mirror or take selfies to express a series of feelings. **If this is hard for you, you can do something else, like collect different expressions of emotions in magazines and make a collage.**

*Tip: If you are not sure how someone is feeling by their expression, you can ask them.*

## HOW STRONG OR INTENSE ARE YOUR FEELINGS?

Sometimes you experience an emotion mildly or just a little bit, and other times you might experience the same or a different emotion more strongly or even very intensely. You can rate or measure your feelings, just like a thermometer measures temperature. The number tells how intense the feeling is. You can also think of feelings intensity as volume, like when you are listening to music. Intense feelings are very loud, while less intense feelings are more quiet on the volume dial. It is helpful to be aware of how intense your emotions as a step toward helping you cope with your feelings.



10 VERY STRONG

9

8 A LOT

7

6

5 MEDIUM

4

3

2 A LITTLE

1

0 NOT AT ALL

What feelings are you having right now? How would you rate each of those feelings (on a scale of 1–10)?

## COPING WITH DIFFICULT FEELINGS

When you experience a difficult feeling very strongly, it is helpful to remember that emotions are temporary and you will not feel this way forever. Feelings are like waves that come and go with highs and lows. But if you are feeling stuck in a low or feel like the waves keep crashing on your head, you can do things to lessen the intensity of the feeling. For example, if your anger is at an 8 (strong), you can do things to bring it down to a 1 or 2. What are some of these things you can do? Make a list of coping skills you can use to manage any of your difficult feelings or talk with your therapist about creative ways to identify coping skills.

*You have the power to help yourself feel better.*

## CHECKING IN: COPING SKILLS

- ❖ How are you feeling today? How would you rate your feelings, on a scale of 1–10?
- ❖ What coping skills did you try this week?
- ❖ How did it go?
- ❖ Were there any challenges to using your coping skills?
- ❖ If so, what can you do to overcome the challenges?

## GROUNDING SKILLS

If you ever feel like you are not in your body or if you start feeling really upset, it is helpful to get grounded in your five senses. You can try holding up your hand and counting:

- ❖ 5 things you see
- ❖ 4 things you touch
- ❖ 3 things you hear
- ❖ 2 things you smell
- ❖ 1 thing you taste

This helps bring you back to yourself and the present moment. You and your therapist can also talk about and practice other grounding skills and think about situations in which to use them. Try them out as needed.



## MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness means focusing your attention to the present moment, while calmly acknowledging your thoughts, feelings, and sensations in your body without judgment. This is really helpful when you get stuck on painful memories, thoughts, or feelings. There are different ways to practice mindfulness. You and your therapist can talk about which activities you might want to try. Here are some ideas:

- ❖ Mindful breathing
- ❖ Mindful eating
- ❖ Mindful walking
- ❖ Mindful coloring
- ❖ Mindful listening to music
- ❖ Make and use a mindfulness jar with glitter, water, and glue
- ❖ Games that require concentration (like Soduko, crossword puzzles, memory)

*Tip: Pick a few to try and practice over the next week.*



## THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS

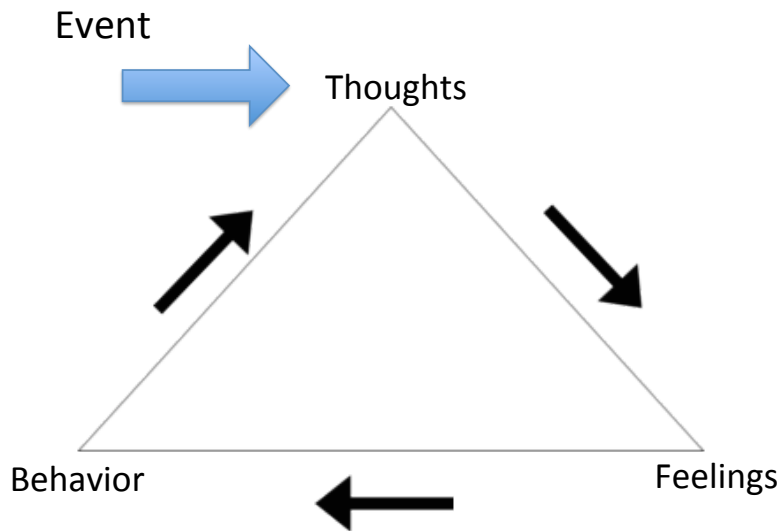
What are **thoughts**? Thoughts are the ideas, images, opinions and/or what you say to yourself (i.e. self-talk) in your brains. Thoughts may appear suddenly or you may actively generate them through the process of thinking. Can you think of some examples of thoughts that you sometimes have?

What are **feelings**? What are some things you have learned about feelings? What are some feelings you are having right now?

What are **actions**? Actions are the things we do or how we act. Can you name some behaviors that get you what you want? What about actions that might get you in trouble?

# THOUGHTS MATTER

Our thoughts affect the way we feel and how we act. When something happens, we think about it. Those thoughts affect how we feel and what we do.



Let's look at your thoughts and how they make you feel and act. List three different thoughts you had today (or recently), how each thought made you feel, and what you did.

Event	Thought	Feeling	What You Did



## EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

When you feel sad, angry, worried, or anxious, what thoughts are going through your head? What are you saying to yourself? Just because you have a thought, it doesn't mean the thought is automatically true or that you have to keep thinking that way. You can examine the evidence to see if #1The thought is true and #2The thought is helpful to you.

Try doing this below. First write a thought that makes you feel upset.

Write down or tell your therapist the evidence in the chart below.

<u>Evidence that the thought is true</u>	<u>Evidence that the thought might not be true</u>	<u>Evidence that the thought is helpful to you</u>	<u>Evidence that the thought is not helpful to you</u>

What did you learn about your thought? If the evidence shows that the thought might not be true and/or helpful, what would be a more true/more helpful thought?

## TRAUMA NARRATION

You've learned a lot so far about trauma, relaxation, feelings, coping skills, and your thoughts. These are all important things that will help you as you begin to think and talk about your traumatic experiences with your therapist. You get to decide where you want to start and how you would like to share your traumatic experiences (you and your therapist can talk about different ways for teens to share about their traumas and ideas you have about how you want to do your narrative). As you're sharing about yourself and your trauma(s), your therapist will help you check in on your feelings. If you start feeling strongly upset, you can stop, and your therapist will help remind you of ways to manage your feelings. Remember – you're in charge. You can talk with your therapist about any of the following:

- ❖ Feelings you have about starting the narrative
- ❖ Ideas about how you want to share about your traumas with your therapist
- ❖ What the different "chapters" or parts of your narrative will be
- ❖ A title for your narrative
- ❖ Other:

## SELF-CARE PLAN

When you are in therapy, it is important to take good care of yourself. You will likely continue to cope well during the trauma narration process, but sometimes teens may notice more trauma memories popping up, or you may have some dreams about the traumatic experiences or just feel a little more tired than usual. All this is normal and in fact a sign that you are making good progress in therapy. However, it is important to share with your therapist and other trusted people if you are having a hard time. It is also important to keep practicing useful coping skills you have learned (chilling out, managing your feelings, grounding, mindfulness, attention to your thoughts). You can write down or talk with your therapist about which coping skills will help you the most during the narration process.



# YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ABOUT THE TRAUMA(S)

Remember how we learned that our thoughts are important? Your thoughts related to the trauma(s) affect how you feel and act and can impact other areas in your life. These thoughts can help you feel better more quickly, or they can keep you feeling upset. Let's look at some of your thoughts related to the trauma(s). You may have included some of your thoughts and feelings in your narrative and can talk about those with your therapist. Below is a list of questions and thoughts that teens often have after a traumatic event. You and your therapist can choose which questions you will discuss, and you can add your own questions or thoughts at the end of the list. Then, for each question, you can write down or talk with your therapist about your responses. As you identify your thoughts related to the traumas, you and your therapist can also talk about related feelings and actions. If any of these thoughts are untrue and/or unhelpful (you can examine the evidence if you're not sure), you and your therapist can explore alternative thoughts that are more accurate and/or more helpful to you. You may want to use these questions to help you create something that will educate or help other teens or to summarize what you have learned in therapy.

1. Why did this happen to me?
2. Who is responsible for the trauma(s)?
3. How will the trauma(s) affect me in the future?
4. How has trauma affected my family/relationships?
5. How has the trauma impacted my safety or my ability to feel safe?
6. How has the trauma impacted my ability to trust and/or to be close to other people?
7. Since the trauma(s), my view of the world has changed in these ways:
8. Since the trauma(s), my view of myself has changed in these ways:
9. Since coming to therapy, I have learned these things about myself:
10. Coming to therapy has helped me in these ways:
7. If I had a friend that went through a similar trauma, I would give him or her this advice:
11. If my friend thought that talking about trauma would be too hard, I would tell him or her:
- 12.
- 13.

## SHARING ABOUT YOUR TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

Great job! You did it! You have been courageous in sharing your traumatic experiences and talking about your related thoughts and feelings. It can help to talk about the trauma(s) with someone you trust. In addition to your therapist, is there anyone else you might want to talk about your trauma(s) with? How would you feel about sharing your trauma experiences with this person some day?

Are there any questions you would like to ask your trusted person?

## BEING AND FEELING SAFE

As we learned earlier, trauma can impact your ability to feel safe or in control of yourself. This can get in the way of your daily activities, relationships, success in school/work, etc. **BEING** physically safe and in control is important, but so is **FEELING** safe and in control, both with others and yourself. You and your therapist can create a personal plan that covers both physical and emotional safety.

## YOUR SAFETY PLAN

- ❖ People, places, situations, and sensations, and/or reactions that are safe:
  
- ❖ People, places, situations, sensations, and/or reactions that are not safe/I feel out of control:
  
- ❖ People, places, situations, and sensations, thoughts, feelings, and/or reactions that make me feel unsafe/out of control:
  
- ❖ People, places, situations, and sensations, thoughts, feelings, and/or reactions that make me feel safe/in control:

## YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

There are people who care about you and your safety. These are people you can go to if you need help or if you want someone to talk to. This might include family members, friends, teachers, etc. If you like, you can write your name or draw a picture of yourself on the middle of this page. Then identify your support system by writing the names and/or drawing pictures of all the people who support you and help keep you safe around you. You can include their phone numbers or contact information, too. You can also write down or talk with your therapist about what kind of support each person can provide or the type of problem you might go to them for.

Remember you are not alone! It's important to seek out your support system if you need to talk or are having a hard time.



## ADVICE TO OTHER TEENS

You have learned a lot in therapy and from your experience. You are in a great position to be able to help another teen who has been through trauma. Do you remember how you felt when you started therapy? If you like, you can write an anonymous letter to another teen about what you have learned and any advice you want to give him/her about dealing with trauma and being in therapy. With your permission, your therapist can share this with other teens who are just starting therapy. If you don't want to write a letter, you can just tell your therapist what advice you would give.

## YOUR FUTURE

What hopes, dreams, and goals do you have for your future? You can write down or talk to your therapist about what goals you have for the next year, the next five years, and the next ten years. What will help you achieve your goals?

*You can achieve anything you set your mind to.*

## LET'S REVIEW

What have you learned in therapy? What was the most helpful part? What was the least helpful part? Please write down the most important lesson you want to take with you from therapy. You can take this with you to help you deal with future stress or future problems.



## SAYING GOOD-BYE

Sometimes, you might have mixed feelings about transitions and endings. What feelings do you have about graduating from therapy? What feelings do you have about saying good-bye? You can use this final page to write down any thoughts or feelings you have about ending therapy, or you can make a collage or think of another creative way to express yourself.

**CONGRATULATIONS ON ALL YOUR HARD WORK!!**