

Handout #1: Baseline Narrative Assessment (modeled after Sternberg, Lamb et al., 1997)

Definitions of the Baseline Assessment:

Neutral Narrative: A neutral narrative about a recent positive or neutral experience can be elicited in the first session as a means of developing rapport and teaching a child how to respond to questions (with as much detail as possible). A neutral narrative can also be elicited before you begin writing the trauma narrative as a means of showing/reminding a child what kind of detail you want in the trauma narrative.

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Baseline Trauma Narrative

An open-ended question or statement about the traumatic experience that the clinician asks in the first or early session as a follow-up to the neutral narrative. The baseline trauma narrative should be elicited in the same manner as a neutral narrative: *Now, just like you told me about your birthday party/school trip, tell me in as much detail as you can about the time your uncle touched you. Start from the beginning and tell me where you were, what you were thinking, what you were feeling and what your body was feeling.*

Purpose of the baseline assessment:

1. Baseline neutral narrative helps with rapport building, may provide info about child's interests, allows the child to practice providing a spontaneous narrative and helps the therapist assess the child's developmental abilities in terms of sharing details and expressing feelings and thoughts about a positive or neutral event.
2. Baseline trauma narrative allows the therapist to contrast child's ability to share neutral narrative with their ability to share information about the trauma. Assess how comfortable the child is providing information about the trauma. If a child is open about the trauma and answers the question with minimal anxiety, you know you might be able to move through the gradual exposure at a quicker pace.
3. Assess language and narrative development. How much detail does a child give with open-ended questions and reflective statements (see participant handout)? This assessment helps the therapist to set appropriate developmental expectations for the child's trauma narrative.

Note: The **Baseline Trauma Narrative** is different from the **Trauma Narrative**, which is developed in sessions 5-8, the middle phase of treatment. Specific chapters of contained incidents surrounding the trauma (i.e., telling, the medical exam, the first time it happened) are written in detail.

Handout #2: Creating the Trauma Narrative Book

Role play with a co-leader or group member how to elicit a chapter from a trauma narrative. Ask your client if they want to start by writing a chapter about telling or the first time the sexual abuse happened. (NOTE: “Please Tell” is a book that can be read to children and can be useful in presenting the idea of creating a trauma narrative).

If you’ve read “Please Tell”, you can introduce the trauma narrative by asking the child:

“So...what do you think about Jessie’s book? I think it would be a great idea to write a book about what happened to you. You could write one that’s better. In Jessie’s book, she talks about counseling, telling, her interview with the ladies and what her uncle did to her. What chapters do you want to put in your book?” NOTE: With some children listing the chapters in advance may be anxiety provoking – in those instances you can offer two suggestions for the first narrative as indicated below.

If you HAVE NOT read Jessie’s book, you can introduce the trauma narrative by saying:

“I think it would be a great idea to write a book about what happened to you.First, let’s make a list of chapters or parts of the book we want to include. Some kids talk about counseling, telling, talking to the ladies who interviewed her, talking about what happened. What chapters do you want to put in your book? NOTE: With some children listing the chapters in advance may be anxiety provoking – in those instances you can offer two suggestions for the first narrative as indicated below.

Show the audience how you elicit chapters and then give the client a choice between two of them:

“Would you like to start writing about telling or about the first time the sexual abuse happened? OK, I’m going to be your secretary and write down everything you say. I’m not a fast writer so I may ask you to slow down. What you say is really important so I want to make sure I get everything down. Start by thinking back to the day you told and tell me what was happening before you told. Where were you? What made you decide to tell? Give as many details as you can, including what you were thinking, what you were feeling and how your body was feeling. Start when you are ready”.

Pause out the role play at a certain point and ask the audience what they see you doing.

Demonstrate the following:

- Pacing the client by slowing them down at times. This helps them tolerate their feelings
- Reading it back to the client as you go so as to pace and desensitize.
- Keeping neutral body language so as not to reinforce certain aspects of the narrative.
- Don’t interrupt a lot. This is a first draft. Prompt for feelings, thoughts, body sensations.
- Reread the chapter to the client to assess for errors in recording and to expose them again. You can then ask for more details.
- Wait to process.
- Validate and praise at then end.

Ask broad, open-ended questions, such as:

What were you thinking?
What were you saying to yourself?
How were you feeling?
What happened next?

Make clarifying and reflective statements, such as:

Tell me more about it...
I wasn’t there, so tell me...
I want to know all about...
Repeat the part about...

Handout #3: Reviewing Child's Narratives

Review the below narratives and identify through small group discussion those aspects of the narratives for which it might be important to elicit more information and/or process further. In addition, identify dysfunctional thoughts or cognitive distortions that will be important to process and correct.

A 14-year-old girl named Alicia exposed to Domestic Violence

The last time my mom's boyfriend hurt her was when I came home late from my girlfriend's house. Joe started yelling at me. And that's when my mom said "stop". I got scared right away. I knew he was going to start getting mad. I was thinking that she shouldn't have talked back to him, because it might start a fight. And it did. I thought that mom should not have said that. I was starting to get scared; my body was starting to get shaky. Then my mom looked at me. And that's when he went crazy – calling my mom a lousy mother. Then he hit her real hard on the face. I was thinking why did I come home late and was thinking that I messed up my mom's life again. I wanted to cry, but I didn't. I couldn't think at all. I just froze and when I thought he was done with my mom, I tried to help her. Then I got really scared because Joe started telling me to let her alone or he'll teach me a lesson too. I couldn't help crying then and kept crying and crying. I was thinking I can't do anything right. When the neighbor knocked on the door, he said he was going to call the police and Joe said fine. I thought now everybody will know our business. I felt mad. Then my mom's boyfriend left before the police came.

A 6-year-old boy named John sexually abused by older cousin

Me and my cousin were playing outside in our fort. Mommy and Auntie Sue were in the house. I felt happy. He said let's play house. I said okay. He pulled down my pants and he told me to lick his peepee. I licked it and he licked me. He licked me on my butt. I felt weird and yucky and scared. Then Mommy came out and said to come in. Bobby said better not tell. That's it. Mommy said Bobby can't come over anymore 'cause he's bad, but I did it too. It makes me sad and mad. Mommy said it's bad when I play house.