

Running head: EVALUATING PRACTICE

**Evaluating Effectiveness of CBT for a Student with Anxiety and Defiant Problems**

Nyack College School of Social Work

SWK 628- Social Work Program and Practice Evaluation

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## **Evaluating Effectiveness of CBT for a Student with Anxiety and Defiant Problems**

### **Describing the Client & Problem**

#### **Client Background**

The practice evaluation plan assesses A.J. A is a male student that is fifteen years old. His birthdate is March 6th, 2005. He is currently a 10th-grade student at Highlander Academy. A's classification is under emotional regulation impairment. His diagnosis is oppositional defiant disorder, anxiety, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. A has a history of behavioral incidents that have interfered with his educational experience. Therefore, A was referred to Highlander Academy so that his additional accommodations and modifications can support his ODD, anxiety, and ADHD. According to A's psychological evaluation in 2017, school records indicate that A was first brought to the Child Study Team's attention due to continuing history of non-compliant and increasingly challenging to manage and aggressive behaviors within the school setting.

#### **Client Problem**

The review of records indicated two psychiatric evaluations. A was seen by Dr. F in May of 2011. Dr. F reported that A displayed symptoms consistent with Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder, combined type. Due to inaccurate information in Dr. F's assessment, a second opinion was sought. Dr. S evaluated A in June of 2011. Dr. S concluded that A presented as an emotionally disturbed youngster. Dr. S felt that A presented with psychiatric disorders that were severely impacting his ability to function academically. Dr. S did not report A was suffering from ADHD. He felt that the attentional from school phobia.

Thus, Highlander Academy is a small program that has a restrictive environment. The school social worker's goal is to have A to function in the least restrictive academic setting. However, A does not want to go to high school. He expressed that he does not think the high school is a "chill" environment. For instance, he can wear a baseball cap at Highlander Academy, but he cannot wear a high school baseball cap. A does not like the rules that he needs to abide by at the high school. His uncooperative behavior toward school rules can be a presenting problem because when he gets a job, there will be rules that he needs to follow, and cannot override them. A few adjustments that A needs to identify and then figure out ways to overcome those challenges. A has anxiety about the environment he does not know. Hence, that is why he is adamant about remaining at Highlander Academy. A's anxiety is a concern because it keeps him from exploring other options or opportunities for growth, especially when it comes down to achieving the goals he has made for himself.

### **Client Intervention**

A had disclosed the goals he had for himself when the school social worker administered the All About Me Survey and the Student Assessment for Transition Planning. These two assessments helped the writer to evaluate the interventions A would need to help him make the steps toward his desired goals and interests. After high school, A's plans are to join the United States Marine Corps, attending Hohokus School of Trade and Technical Sciences next school year, or attending community college to become a police officer. These are great goals that A has considered for himself, and these goals build upon his strengths, interests, and passions. However, there is a lack of social skills and anxiety that needs to be strengthened and managed better to succeed well with his post-secondary aspirations. As for A's anxiety, his anxiety prevents him from focusing on the steps he needs to achieve to improve or progress in life.

Thus, to ease his anxiety, it would be helpful for the social worker to guide him to identify the steps he needs to achieve. The best intervention that would help A reach his goals is attending individual counseling once a week for twenty minutes at Highlander Academy. The school clinical social worker can work with A each week by utilizing cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). There are CBT techniques that can ease his anxiety that is preventing him from progressing in his goals. Leahy's (2017) CBT techniques include identifying short-term and long-term goals and overcoming regret avoidance.

### **Intervention Hypothesis**

- Hypothesis is that receiving 12 weeks of Cognitive Behavior Therapy will ease A's anxiety about taking steps to achieve his long-term goals.

Receiving 12 weeks of Cognitive Behavior Therapy will help A's inability to follow the rules and regulations that go against his comfort and defiant thoughts and actions.

### **Client Goals & Objectives**

### **Client Problem Areas & Target Problems**

A has anxiety about making decisions regarding his post-secondary aspirations. A has three interests that require applications. A shared that he wants to focus on a school where he can learn from hands-on activities for this year. He wants to pursue the field of welding. However, he feels overwhelmed thinking about making the steps toward applying for the Hohokus School of trade. The applications are overwhelming for him to think about, making A procrastinate and hesitate to pursue the application steps. Another obstacle, A has to overcome is abiding by the rules that Hohokus will have. The Trade School will not allow him to keep his hair down and not wear accessories, such as a hat for safety regulations.

**Intervention Goals & Objectives**

Table 1. CLIENT PROBLEMS, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, &amp; INTERVENTIONS

<b>PROBLEM AREAS AND TARGET PROBLEMS</b>	<b>CLIENT GOALS</b>	<b>CLIENT OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>INTERVENTIONS</b>
<b>Social Anxiety of going to new environments</b> (A does not feel comfortable transitioning back to the high school from Highlander Academy. What makes him think Hohokus Trade School will not be a difficult transition?)	Improve adjusting to new environments by overcoming regret avoidance	Client will attend individual counseling 1x a week for 12 weeks.	Cognitive Behavior Therapy
<b>Overwhelming and anxious thoughts that paralyzes him from progressing</b> (thoughts control his outcome from progressing toward his goals)	Decrease overwhelming and anxious thoughts	Client will attend individual counseling 1x a week for 12 weeks.	Cognitive Behavior Therapy
<b>Lack of complying to rules and regulations</b> (he already expressed he is unwilling to tie his long hair back into a pony tail and is unwilling to not wear a baseball cap)	Increase complying with rules	Client will receive 45 minutes of a CBT intervention for 12 weeks	Cognitive Behavior Therapy

A's objectives are the following:

- 1) scheduling a visit to Hohokus School of Trade and visit welding classes,
- 2) to become familiar with the welding industry to see if it is a career he wants to pursue,
- 3) to discover the rules and regulations of the program,
- 4) and prepare if they are rules he is willing to abide by so he does not violate any technicalities.

The most effective intervention to help A overcome the anxiety that prevents him from exploring new environments would be 20-minute individual counseling once a week. Individual counseling can help A identify the stressors, triggers, and obstacles that interfere with pursuing his goals. Then, once A identifies the stressors and triggers, he will be able to pursue action steps of progression.

A expressed his concerns about not wanting to tie his hair up and always wanting to wear a baseball cap. These may seem like small obstacles, but to A, these are challenging obstacles for him to consider in overcoming. It would be essential for the social worker to break down his thoughts of anticipation to recognize the long-term gains. For instance, right now, it may seem like a lot to sit down and complete the application process for the Hohokus School of Trade. However, it would be imperative to help A see the long-term gains to see that the temporary anticipation of discomfort will result in a great outcome. Thus, A can identify his long-term goals and then recognize that there are steps to achieve those goals, including applying for the program and being comfortable with not wearing a hat. The steps can be broken down to help A not be overwhelmed and attach the behavior to the action. Then, A can disclose how she would feel in the future for completing that step. Therefore, individual counseling can help identify his long-term goals. It would be beneficial for A to endure this season of anxiety caused by thinking about applying for the welding program. It would also be necessary for A to look beyond the immediate moment, think about the gains of what the program can do for him, and how his goals align with enrolling in a Trade School.

### **Research Design**

There are multiple factors to consider in order to choose the most effective research design for A's practice evaluation. According to Bloom, Fischer & Orme (2009), it is essential for the researcher to ask themselves how many clients are included in the evaluation, are you able to collect concurrent or reconstructed baseline data, how many problems, how many interventions used for each problem, and will there be any changes to the interventions? Therefore, this practice evaluation involves one client named A. The researcher is able to collect the client's concurrent baseline data by analyzing the student's behavioral reports from Highlander Academy. A has more than one problem. His problems entail social anxiety of going to new environments, overwhelming and anxious thoughts that paralyzes him from progressing, and lack of complying to rules and regulations. The researcher identified that there is one intervention for each problem and the interventions may change if A demonstrates improvement with his target problems. Thus, the most effective research design for this practice evaluation concludes the multiple-target design. Bloom et al. (2009) indicated that the multiple-target design has sets of two or more simultaneous A-B designs involving different targets. See Figure 1. There are different interventions presumed to deal with A's problems. The interventions include a variety of cognitive behavioral therapy techniques or strategies. A design refers to A's behavioral baseline at Highlander Academy and B design refers to interventions taken in place to measure the behavioral targeted problems. For example, the multiple-target design measures the baseline of A's behaviors related to his targeted problems and then A's behaviors will be measured again once the interventions are applied when A receives 12 weeks of Cognitive Behavior Therapy. Figure 1 displays that the baseline for Goal #1 (blue line) measures that the client does not feel comfortable in new environment, so that is why the line is a negative slope.

However, after 12 weeks of CBT intervention, the blue line demonstrates a positive slope because the client improved adjusting to new environments by overcoming regret avoidance.

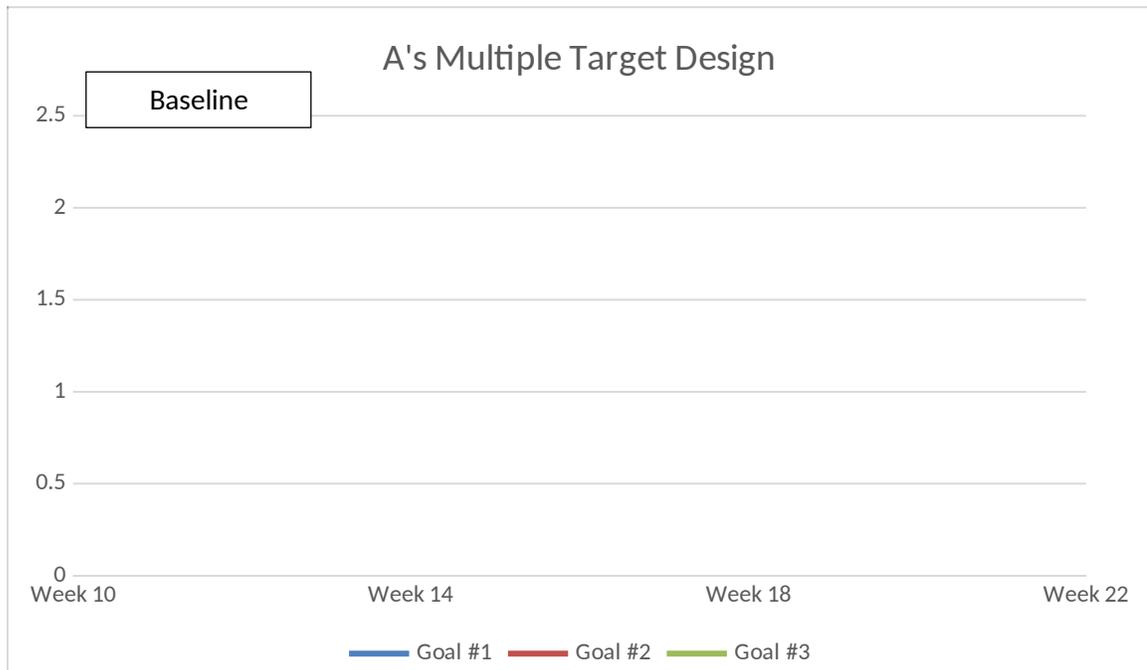


Figure 1 Example of Multiple-Target Design

The researcher identified that to develop or test a measure and a hypothesis needs to be established for measurement. In this case, the hypothesis is that receiving 12 weeks of Cognitive Behavior Therapy will ease A's anxiety about taking steps to achieve his long-term goals. Receiving 12 weeks of Cognitive Behavior Therapy will help A's inability to follow the rules and regulations that go against his comfort and defiant thoughts and actions. The hypothesis is that cognitive behavior therapy interventions will improve A's targeted problems. However, the study has threats regarding the validity of the measurements. In this case, construct validity includes examining whether a measure correlates in a predicted manner with correlated variables (Bloom et al., 2009). When a measure correlates in a predicted manner with correlated variables, such as utilizing cognitive behavior therapy to improve A's anxious thoughts and behavior.

Thus, construct validity indicated that If a measure changes in a predicted manner in response to an intervention, it is essential to state that a measure is sensitive to change. However, the limitation regarding a sensitive measure to change is that it would be necessary if a change does occur in a targeted problem. The researcher would want to make sure the measure will identify the difference. Another internal threat of validity is that since it was noted that A experiences defiant responses, then he may be disobedient and would be unwilling to accept the interventions. If A is reluctant to cooperate in the interventions, he will not overcome the developed targeted problems.

### **Measurement**

A has identified three goals that address a specifically targeted problem. The three goals include improving to adjust to new environments by overcoming regret avoidance, decrease focalization and recognize longer-term gains, and eliminate lack of abiding rules with attitude. These goals used multiple quantitative and qualitative measures to gather and assess A's progress. It is essential to recognize that when researchers use various measures, then the reliability and validity of the measures are identified, and the possible weaknesses of the measurements are identified. Thus, identifying the shortcomings of the measurements can help the clinician consider changing interventions to improve the client's targeted problems and behavior. A's first two goals entail observed anxiety symptoms, and the last goal involves slight defiant behavior. Therefore, an Individual rating scale (IRS) regarding disobedient thoughts was administered by an independent evaluator, such as the administrator at Highlander Academy, to increase the validity of the results reported by A.

### **Quantitative Measurements**

The researcher will use the Individualized Rating Scale as the standardized measurement tool in this practice evaluation plan. The Individualized Rating Scale provides a formal approach to evaluate a change in the client's behavior. The purpose of this rating scale is to identify the anxious thoughts and responses the client is experiencing each day and the circumstances that trigger the anxious thoughts. The Individualized Rating Scale includes five factors: the intensity of anxiety, the severity of feeling worried toward new environments, emotional regulation, coping skills, the intensity of defiant behavior regarding rules, and the ability to process the overwhelming thoughts. Sample questions include: "what is the intensity of your anxiety," "what is your severity of feeling worried in new environments," and "what is the intensity of defiant behavior when you have rules to follow?". Responses to most questions are provided using a scale of not at all, very low, moderate, and too high.

According to Bloom et al. (2009), the one advantage to the Individualized Rating Scale's validity is that it will provide an overall picture of the state of the A's targeted problems. A disadvantage of this Rating Scale's validity is that the summary of the scores can be deceiving. The average of the scores can disguise whether all problems have changed a little, one problem changes a lot, or the remaining targeted issues changed a little. As for reliability, the rating scale can be inconsistent because the response to the questions can vary depending on if the client is experiencing present anxious thoughts or defiant behavior that would hinder the measurement's results. Overall, the Individualized Rating Scale assesses and measures the client's symptoms of anxiety and unruly behavior. Highlander Academy's administrator will measure it during the student's lunch period.

### **Qualitative Measurements**

In addition to the students' quantitative measurements, the client will record sufficient data about the changes or lack of changes in their behavior regarding the three targeted problems. Therefore, the log will ask the client on concise questions regarding their anxious and defiant behavior. For example, he will be asked the following: has there been a new environment the past week that caused you anxiety, what was the last time you were anxious, when is that last time you were defiant, and so on. The purpose of collecting this qualitative data is to evaluate if the client has noticed any improvement in the student's behavior related to the identified targeted problems. This qualitative evaluation can help the researcher identify if the interventions would help or hinder the student from achieving his goals and objectives. Therefore, based on the information gathered, the researcher will examine the client's feedback on their behavior according to the data's tendencies and patterns. The evaluation process requires gathering and analyzing the information, identifying patterns, and categorizing behavioral themes. It was noted that the researcher would introduce qualitative data by providing precise information and observations received from the student in the completed evaluation.

It was noted that A suffers from overwhelming and anxious thoughts that paralyze him from progressing. In other words, his thoughts control his outcome from moving toward his goals. Therefore, the data analysis from the client's exploratory log can help the clinician clarify and define the target. The exploratory log can then gather detailed information on the mark for help in the assessment of trying to pinpoint and describe the problems and the circumstances surrounding A's occurrence (Bloom et al., 2009). The log will help identify A's life events causing anxious and overwhelming thoughts, which prevents him from progressing toward his goals and interests. The triggering events that impact the client's behavior are discovered and

displayed in a descriptive data format to implement sufficient interventions for the client's treatment plan.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

#### **Quantitative Data**

The most effective quantitative data analysis method that the researcher will use to analyze A's practice evaluation is goal attainment scaling. Goal attainment scaling helps establish the client's goals. Bloom et al. (2009) stated that the goal attainment scaling entails identifying the client's problems, assigning individualized weights to those problems, estimating the client's goals for each targeted problem, obtaining follow-up scores on actual outcomes of each targeted problem, and averaging results across all issues for the client. The goal attainment scaling requires four necessary steps. The steps are collecting the client's information for which the goals will be scaled, a description of the most critical targeted areas where changes would be achievable and helpful. More steps include developing specific predictions for a series of outcome levels for each targeted problem area and then scoring the outcomes during follow-up. Thus, when the main targeted problems are identified, then a scale of behaviors are developed. The scale is then created on a form known as the Goal Attainment Follow-Up Guide (Bloom et al., 2009). This guide displays each vertical scale representing a scale of goals related to the client's targeted problems. It is imperative to note that the goal attainment scaling intends to operate within a time limit. The goal attainment scaling discovers the most realistic prediction of the goal based on the client's expected date to achieve the goal.

#### **Qualitative Data**

The qualitative data analysis method helps the researcher analyze the client's practice evaluation, including in-depth interviews, open-ended surveys, and an exploratory log. The gathered information from these methods helps the clinician analyze the data to assess the client better. For instance, the clinician can analyze the in-depth interview notes to identify any events or circumstances that trigger the client's anxious thoughts and defiant behavior. Thus, the exploratory log gathers the client's information. It would be essential for the clinician to explain the log to assist the client record what occurs in his life. This way, the recorded information will result in inaccuracy to help the clinician evaluate the intervention plan. Once the data is recorded and gathered, the clinician analyzes the data and identifies any behavior patterns or trends. This analysis can help the clinician determine the targeted problem, which can help the clinician identify the most effective intervention to improve the behavioral issue. In this study, the log revealed a behavioral issue pattern when the client was put into new environments. Thus, due to analyzing the gathered information and finding the behavioral patterns, the clinician was able to categorize the theme of anxiety as A's major issue. Then, the clinician implemented Cognitive Behavior Therapy to help the client improve adjusting to new environments by overcoming regret avoidance.

### **Findings and Implications**

The Cognitive Behavior Therapy and its techniques will help the client overcome their identified targeted problems. A's issues include social anxiety of going to new environments, anxious thoughts that paralyze him from progressing toward his goals, and lack of complying with the rules and regulations. However, overcoming his social anxiety of going to new environments and overcoming his anxious thoughts is a process. The client will continue to practice the Cognitive Behavior Therapy techniques to identify short-term and long-term goals

and overcome regret avoidance. It was disclosed that A benefitted from performing the exploratory log to help the clinician pinpoint any problems or circumstances triggering the anxious and defiant thoughts and behaviors. Also, the qualitative measurement results derived from the pre-test and post-test scores helped the clinician evaluate the data about the changes or lack of changes in the client's behavior regarding the three targeted problems. It was reported that A has progressed toward his goals of attending Hohokus School of Trade, and his overwhelming and anxious thoughts have subsided. However, A's defiant behavior toward following the rules and regulations is a continued work in progress. It is recommended that other interventions besides Cognitive Behavior Therapy need to be implemented to help students that suffer from obeying rules and regulations.

## References

Bloom, M., Fischer, J. & Orme, J. G. (2009) *Evaluating practice: guidelines for the accountable professional* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson.

Leahy, R. L. (2017). *Cognitive therapy techniques: A practitioner's guide* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). The Guilford Press.