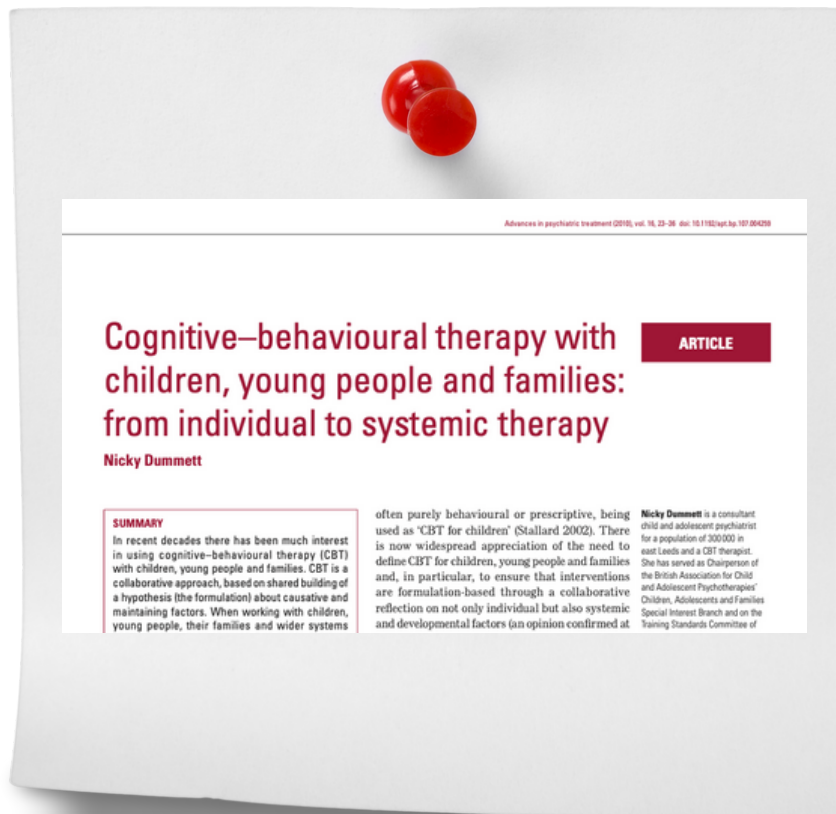


SYSTEMIC CBT FORMULATION

Based on: Dummett, N. (2010) Cognitive-behavioural therapy with children, young people and families: From individual to systemic therapy. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, **16**(1), 23-36.



I was introduced to Dummett (2010) model of systemic CBT formulation whilst studying for a postgraduate certificate in enhanced CBT for children & adolescents. I find it a fabulous template and can be adapted and used for adults too. I particularly like how there is space to include family structure and carer factors that influence the young person's presenting difficulties. Current distress is presented in the middle as a 5 areas maintenance cycle and the rest can be built up as therapy progresses. You may choose not to share the whole formulation with the child or young person, but it provides an excellent framework to guide therapist understanding of the bigger picture from a broader systemic and developmental perspective.

Although it may look complex at first sight, you will notice that the longitudinal information is presented from the bottom up. To the left you can add boxes according to the systems and developmental issues relevant to the young person. This includes culture, sexuality and ethnicity. Although these are not identified on the example, the formulation is totally flexible. I personally include strengths and values to inform treatment.

The example is of a 16 year old only child who presented with depression and social anxiety. The systemic formulation allowed greater understanding of her fear of rejection and uncertainty as both father figures were estranged without any explanation. She developed negative beliefs about self and approval based rules which maintained her anxiety and low mood. Including her mother and grandparents on the formulation also increases understanding of her attachment style.

Maternal grandparents

Very close bond
In middle of two daughters
problematic relationship

Mum (42)

Works in retail
Dedicated mother
Confides in daughter
Chronic pain
Life long history of anxiety
Awareness of mental health

Biological father

Left mum whilst pregnant.
Married mum's sister so
also uncle. Family feud.
'Not a nice man'. Estranged.

Step Dad (44)

Was in the family for 5 years.
Warm and caring.
Relationship ended without
warning. Estranged.

not together

16

emotions

Anxious 80%
Sad 50%

physical

Felt sick (since night before)
Throbbing head
Exhausted

behaviour

Made myself stay
Didn't speak or look at
anyone (masking)

thoughts

What if I can't keep up? Then I will
fall behind. I will disappointment
people. I am not good enough

worry & rumination

situation

Before entering
music lesson

Strengths & values

Talented musician
Creative
Derby County fan
Loyal friend
Aspirations, hopes &
dreams
Values therapy
Motivated & curious

rules

If I am not in control,
then something bad will
happen

If I don't please others,
then I will be rejected

recent events

Lockdown isolation
then time off college
with Covid

Age
14-16

later events

Mum married step dad
and had good
relationship. He left
suddenly and didn't
know why

Age
7-13

early events

No father present &
didn't know why until
aunt told her she was a
mistake and not wanted

Age
3-7

core beliefs

I am alone
I am not good enough
I am not important

Others leave you
Others are judgemental
Others hurt you

World is uncertain

school & development

Only child
Met all milestones
Secure attachments -
Describes mum as 'best
friend'
High achiever
Close knit community
Large friendship group

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