

Introduction to Attachment-Based Family Therapy

High rates of adolescent depression and suicide present as a major international public health problem. Suicidal adolescents are often a daunting population for clinicians to work with given their high-risk. Of the few effective treatments for this population, many are often multi-modal involving individual and group therapy, medication, etc. An empirically supported family therapy for adolescents struggling with depression and suicide that requires only weekly sessions and which can be conducted on an outpatient, home-based, or inpatient basis is Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT). ABFT emerges from interpersonal theories suggesting adolescent depression and suicide can be precipitated, exacerbated, or buffered against by the quality of interpersonal family relationships. It is a trust-based, emotion-focused psychotherapy model aiming to repair interpersonal ruptures and rebuild an emotionally protective, secure-based, parent-child relationship. The therapy is trauma-focused while also being brief and structured. Treatment is characterized by five treatment tasks: a) reframing the therapy to focus on interpersonal development, b) building alliance with the adolescent, c) building alliance with the parents, d) facilitation conversations to resolve attachment ruptures and e) promoting autonomy in the adolescent.

In this workshop, Dr. Levy will use lecture and case studies to provide an overview of the theoretical principles, research support, and clinical strategies for ABFT. Dr. Levy will review how attachment theory, emotional regulation, and trauma resolution inform the delivery of this treatment approach. She will review the goals and structure of the five treatment tasks that provide a roadmap for delivering this interpersonally focused psychotherapy effectively and rapidly in community mental health.

Target Audience

Psychologist Social Workers Counselors
Teachers Therapists Case Managers
Juvenile Judges Addiction Counselors Nurses
Course Level: Intermediate

Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the theoretical foundation of ABFT
2. Discuss the empirical support for ABFT.
3. Describe the importance of parents being involved in safety planning.
4. Discuss the purpose of the five treatment tasks.
5. Describe the strategies used in the five treatment tasks

Seminar Schedule
12-2 PM ET

Outline

OVERVIEW

DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE STATISTICS
THEORY OF NORMATIVE FUNCTIONING

Secure Attachment & Emotion Regulation
Authoritative Parenting
Attachment in Adolescence
Family as a Protective Factor

THEORY OF PATHOLOGY

Insecure Attachment
Attachment & Parenting
Risk Factors for Insecure Attachment
ABFT's Theory of Depression and Suicide

THE SOLUTION

Earned Security
Family as a Safety Net

EMPIRICAL SUPPORT

Brief Review of Research Findings
Dissemination

CLINICAL MODEL

Treatment Manual
Overview of 5 Tasks
Family Safety Planning

5 TREATMENT TASKS

Task 1: Relational Reframe
Task 2: Adolescent Alliance
Task 3: Parent Alliance
Task 4: Attachment
Task 5: Autonomy Promoting

Continuing Education Credit

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The Presenter

Dr. Suzanne Levy is a licensed clinical psychologist and training director of the ABFT Training Program at Drexel University's College of Nursing and Health Professions. Previously, she was the training director and a clinical child psychologist at the Center for Family Intervention Science at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Dr. Levy is a co-developer of Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT). ABFT is the only manualized, empirically informed and supported, family therapy model specifically designed to target family and individual processes associated with adolescent suicide and/or depression. Since 2007, Dr. Levy has been conducting ABFT training workshops and supervision for therapists nationally and internationally. She also oversees ABFT treatment in Drexel's Center for Family Intervention Science's clinical trials. She has presented regionally, nationally, and internationally on ABFT, emotion coaching, child and adolescent therapies, resilience, adolescent depression, adolescent development, and adolescent substance use. Dr. Levy has presented at 100's of workshops, conferences, and invited lectures, as well as in college classrooms. Along with her colleagues, Drs. Guy and Gary Diamond, Dr. Levy has written the ABFT manual, "Attachment-Based Family Therapy for Depressed Adolescents" published by the American Psychological Association.

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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Phil Rich, LICSW, Daphne Fatter, Ph.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2025.

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