Clinical Master Class

Working Therapeutically with Children from Offshore Detention Centres
Jordan and Jordan's Family

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Common Presentation of Families

- Complex trauma history/multiple losses
- Poor mental health. PTSD and its morbidity/excessive anxiety and anger
- Parental conflict
- Domestic violence
- Marriage breakdown
- Prolonged Uncertainty
- Fear of deportation
- Parental Suicidality
- Social isolation
- Limited support

- Inability to attend to child’s emotional and physical needs
- Inability to develop a secure attachment to the child
- Overwhelmed with multiple appointments/settlement issues
- Often dealing with their dysregulated children
- Embarrassment/guilt over their children’s behaviours
- Deteriorating parental health
- Deep distrust of others
## Common Presentation of Children Aged 0-6

- Affect dysregulation
- Hyper aroused
- Withdrawn
- Hypo aroused
- Gross motor milestones issues
- Sensory processing issues
- Social/Emotional delay
- Symbolic play issues
- Language delay
- Learning development issues
- Attachment issues
- Separation anxiety

- Fear’s and anxiety
- Health problems
- Poor appetite
- Physical pain /stomach-aches
- Constipation /diarrhoea
- Feeling sick, vomiting
- Poor sleep
- Nutritional deficiencies
Demographics

- Middle Eastern background
- Christian
- Asylum seeker
- Language – Arabic and English
- Date of birth: August 2014
- Born and lived in detention for the first year of his life.
- His younger brother was born in Australia
- Referred to STARTTS: July 2017
The family currently reside in Australia

Genogram

33 Yrs
John

(May 2018)

32 Yrs
Maria

4 ½ Yrs
Jordan

3 Yrs
Adam
Urgent Referral

- Jordan is acting out
- He is becoming very aggressive
- Mum believes “it is to do with him being born in and spending 1 year of his life being in detention”
Assessment - Summary of Parents Trauma History

- Intergenerational transmission of trauma
- Trauma in country of origin
- Refugee trauma
- Boat Journey
- Detention
- Prolonged process of their asylum application
- Complications during pregnancy
- Parents relationship
Assessment - Jordan’s History

- Perinatal history
- Mum’s depression
- Mum’s inability to breastfeed
- Parental separation
Assessment - Presenting Issues

- Health – poor appetite
- Hyper aroused
- Sensory Processing Issues – oversensitivity to touch and sound
- Dysregulation Signs – overactive, defiant and stubborn
- Emotional Delay – separation anxiety
- Language Delay – didn’t use any words at all
Case Formulation: a complex Interaction of Stressors

Interventions to reduce complex interaction of stress factors

Interventions to strengthen internal and external protective factors

Restore balance and a sense of control

Aroche and Coello, 1994
Challenges

- Difficulty in bringing children to therapy
- Unresolved trauma and grief of parents
- Social isolation
- Autism: mums diagnosis
- Parents have a sense of being defeated
- Parents have lost their identity and esteem
- Mum’s depression and suicidal ideation whilst in detention
- Parental conflict and separation
- Jordan's understanding of this
Treatment Plan

- Engage with the child’s family
- Develop therapeutic relationships
- Enhance bonding and attachment
- Provide psychoeducation for parent
- Treatment would involve working with Jordan, Adam and his mother
Therapeutic Approaches

- Play Therapy
- Circle of security
- Parent Child Interaction Therapy
- Montessori Philosophy
Treatment Plan

Multidisciplinary Approaches

- Liaising with other professionals
- Speech therapy
- Referral to childcare
- Referral to support organisations
Initial Sessions

https://Unsplash.com
Treatment – Relationship Focus

1 – Jordan and Mother

- Therapist as the Role Model
- Therapist as a Facilitator
2 – Mother and Therapist

- Mother was learning through observing therapist as the role model.

- Initially mother was too overwhelmed however as treatment progressed she became more open to psychoeducation.
Treatment – Relationship Focus

3 – Jordan and Therapist
- Established a relationship with Jordan through play
- Used reflection, positive attention, predictability
- Mother observing enabled her to have a different perspective
4 – All working together
This is the current stage of treatment

- Mindful Meditation
- Origami
- Playing games that involve taking turns
- Yoga
- Mother more in charge
Outcomes – What I observe now

- Eating well
- Improved sleep
- Calmer and less aggressive tendencies
- More confident
- Increased focus and concentration
- Still reacts to sounds
- Still very active but less defiant
- He still has some anxiety
- Speaking in words but not in sentences
The essence of this intervention has been the strong therapeutic relationship characterised by unconditional positive regard.

Attachment focused and shifting perception.

Always mindful that I was Jordan’s therapist and also supporting mum.
A New Beginning?
Thank you

Presented on behalf of STARTTS by:
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