GATEWAY/TRYADS CBT PROTOCOL

CHAIN ANALYSIS (Time = 60 minutes): TEEN AND PARENT SESSION

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**Objective:** The goal of this session is to help the teen/parent identify and address the sequence of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that culminate in risky behaviors and poor parenting choices.

**Assessment** Time estimate: 5 minutes - Please refer to the manual introduction for additional instructions and examples.

1. **(Teen Only) Give ongoing assessment measures**
2. **(Teen Only) Review mood ratings.** Ask teen about most intense feelings (anger, sadness, etc.) since last session. A mood monitor worksheet can be used or teen can be asked for an average mood rating (0-10) or the high and low of the week.
3. **(Parent Only) Review teen mood/behavior problems.** Ask parent for an assessment of any teen mood or behavior problems since last session and how they were handled.
4. **(Both) Ask about teen’s suicidal ideation or self-harm behaviors during the past week.** If present, review safety precautions at home with parent.
5. **(Both) Assess the teen’s immediate suicide risk.** If there is no change in suicidality from the prior week, review the safety plan and precautions as needed. If an increase in suicidal thoughts or recent suicidal behavior is present, follow the procedures outlined in the suicidal ideation/attempter session with teen and parents. Implement any necessary safety precautions (e.g., hospitalization) based on the results of this assessment. Teen/parent therapists should notify and assist one another as needed.
6. **(Both) Assess teen alcohol and drug use over the past week as needed.** With teen, identify any links between teen’s mood and substance use. Reinforce the teen for any absence or reduction in alcohol/drug use. With parent, ask how it was managed if present and review safety precautions at home.
7. **(Both) Check teen medication adherence as needed.**

**Develop Agenda:** Time estimate: 5 minutes
Place any safety issues at the top of the agenda. Think about how to relate agenda items to skills already introduced or to be introduced later in session. Develop the agenda with the
understanding that topics will be talked about in the context of the skill section or later in session.

**Review Positive Practice:** Time estimate: 5 minutes

Review any practice assigned in last session and provide praise for any practice completed. If the teen/parent has not practiced, address barriers and review how skill could have been used.

**Skill Introduction: Chain Analysis** (Adapted from Linehan, 1993)
Time estimate: 30 minutes

1. **Provide rationale for chain analysis**

Tell the teen/parent that problem behaviors (e.g. suicide attempts, suicidal gestures, self-injurious behavior, loss of temper, arguments, fights) often happen very fast and may feel like the result of one negative thought, behavior, or event. Note that this happens for everyone but can especially risky for teens (or in homes with teens) with a history of suicidality, depression, PTSD symptoms, and/or substance use. Introduce chain analysis as a specific skill that can help the teen/parent to slow the process down and identify all of the different factors that led up to a problem behavior. Emphasize that understanding all of the different links, or the behaviors, thoughts, body sensations, and feelings, leading up to the problem-behavior can help the teen/parent to prevent the same thing from happening in the future.

Example: It sounds like you had a pretty rough time dealing with (list incident). It also sounds like things happened very fast: your body spiraled out of control, which made it hard for you to use your (SOLVE/ABCDE/other) skills. When you are not able to use these skills you are at greater risk for (list problem behavior). So, let’s see if we can slow the process down and figure out what went wrong in order to help you avoid the same thing from happening in the future. To do this we need to take a look at your behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and body symptoms leading up to (problem behavior). We can do this using a “chain analysis”.

We call this exercise a chain analysis because it takes more than one thought, behavior, feeling or body sensation to lead up to a problem behavior such as (list problem behavior). Rather, it takes a number of links or a chain of related thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and body sensations to lead to (problem behavior). The chain analysis helps us to identify the initial trigger for the problem behavior and each of the negative links that followed so that we can better understand what went wrong. After we are able to identify what went wrong, we can then rebuild the chain with positive or helpful links. So, let’s go ahead and complete this worksheet. I will help you when you get stuck.

2. **Teach chain analysis (based on Miller, Rathus, & Linehan, 2007)**

Present: Chain Analysis of Problem Behavior Worksheet

Complete the introductory questions included in the Chain Analysis of Problem Behavior
worksheet. Begin by identifying the problem behavior the teen/parent is working on (non-suicidal self-injury, suicide attempt, binge drinking, drug use, binging eating, purging, restricting, verbal/physical aggression, losing temper, saying hurtful things, screaming, etc.). Then introduce the concept of “vulnerability factors” as factors that may have happened before the trigger and increased the teen’s/parent’s vulnerability to negative emotion/poor decision making. Areas to examine include physical illness, unbalanced eating or sleep, use of drugs or alcohol, missed medication, misuse of prescription drugs, physical illness/discomfort, injury, isolation, peer pressure, and stressful events.

Example: So the problem-behavior that we will work on today is (list). Now, let’s review what led up to (problem behavior). Let’s start by identifying things that made you vulnerable to negative emotion/decision making in the first place. These typically include things like poor sleep, skipping meals, physical illness/discomfort, missed medication, isolation, alcohol/drug use, peer pressure, and stressful life events. What were some of your vulnerability factors on the day the problem behavior occurred?

After the teen/parent has identified vulnerability factors, ask him/her to identify the trigger that started him/her on the chain to problem behavior. This may be one of the teen’s/parent’s vulnerability factors, an invitation to go out with friends (common for risky teen behaviors), prior argument, etc. Be sure to help the teen/parent identify something that occurred on the same day but not so close in time to the problem behavior that there is no point of intervention (or weak links to rework in the chain).

Example: Now what trigger started you on your chain to (list problem behavior). This may be one of the vulnerability factors listed above or something else. When did the sequence of events that led to the problem behavior begin?

Using the trigger identified as the starting point, ask the teen/parent for a detailed description of each of the behaviors, thoughts, physical sensations, and feelings that were associated with each link in the chain to problem behavior (and rate the degree of each feeling). Have the teen/parent identify exactly what he/she did, said, thought, and felt. Tell the teen/parent that the goal is to describe the sequence of events leading up to the problem behavior in enough detail that an actor in a play or movie could recreate the scene exactly. Play the part of a keen observer, thinking in terms of very small chunks of behavior. Repeatedly ask questions such as “What happened next?” or “How did you get from there to there?” For teens with a confirmed PTSD diagnosis, clarify that sometimes flashbacks or memories of prior events can be links in the chain. Try to make the teen/parent do most of the work, including filling out the worksheet. Provide help as needed. If there are too many links for the space provided please continue on the back of the worksheet.
After the teen/parent has written down all of the links in the chain that led up to the problem behavior, review each link and help the teen/parent identify the “weak” or problematic behaviors and thoughts in the chain. Taking one link at a time (beginning with the first link), have the teen/parent circle the “weak” behaviors and thoughts. Then ask him/her to identify the skills he/she could have used to generate more adaptive behaviors and thoughts, as well as at least one example of a more adaptive behavior and/or thought. The more adaptive behaviors and thoughts should be written down on the (new) link line on the worksheet that follows each original link.

After completing the link portion of the worksheet, ask the teen/parents to complete the rest of the questions on the worksheet that ask about consequences, ways to prevent, and ways to repair harm caused by the negative behavior.

**Work on Agenda Item(s):** Time estimate: 10 minutes

Discuss remaining concerns related to the teen’s/parent’s agenda item or primary presenting problem (e.g., suicidality, depression, behavior problems, alcohol/drug use, PTSD, NSSI, interpersonal conflict, etc.). Help the teen/parent to apply CBT skills learned to date to devise more adaptive ways to think about or behave in the situation.

**Parent Teen Check-In: Provide overview of teen chain analysis to parents**

1a. (Teen) Introduce parent-teen check-in to teen
**NOTE**: If teen wants to keep the problem behavior confidential (and it is appropriate to do so), just provide a general overview of the chain analysis skill to parents.

1b. (Parent) Introduce parent-teen check-in to parent

**Example**: Before you leave today, I would like to invite your teen into session to share what he/she learned today. You may be quite familiar with the skill because we teach parents and teens many of the same skills, though applied to different situations, so that parents can best help their teens use new skills at home. Please do your best to support your teen in the use of the skill he/she learned today.

**Begin with a Round of Positive Comments**

Have family members give each other a compliment or positive feedback. Examples may include recognizing positive behaviors, appreciating a change the other is trying to make, or talking about an activity they enjoyed doing together. The therapist can model this by praising each family member and then asking each person to do the same.

**Example**: To start on a positive note, I want each of you to make a positive comment about the other person. I can start, by saying that I appreciate that you (parent/teen) are here today to work on these issues together. You are a pleasure to work with. Now I want each of you give it a try. (prompt as necessary)

Provide an overview of the chain analysis exercise to parents and identify how they can best support teen. Problem-solve any barriers to enacting this plan.

**Assign At-Home Practice**: Time estimate: 5 minutes

- Ask teen/parent to review the chain analysis and attempt to employ the new “strong” links in the chain (or adaptive behaviors and thoughts) in similar stressful situations.
- (Optional) Ask teen/parent to complete a Chain Analysis for a problem behavior that occurs over the next week or one that occurred in the recent past.
- Assess understanding of the assignment and address any questions.
- Problem-solve any potential barriers to practicing with teen and parent.

**END OF SESSION**
CHAIN ANALYSIS

What is the problem?

Vulnerabilities:

Consequences:

What can I do differently next time?