**Parent Facilitated ACT for Pediatric OCD: Treatment Manual**

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Adapted from

Hayes, S. C., Batten, S., Gifford, E., Wilson, K. G., Afairi, N., & McCurry, S. (1999). *Acceptance and commitment therapy: An individual psychotherapy manual for the treatment of experiential avoidance, Second Edition.* Reno, NV: Context Press.

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**Summary of Treatment Sessions**

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| Session | Treatment Components |
| 1 | Discuss anxiety, where we feel it in our body, what our body does in responseHomework: Record obsessions and what was done in response |
| 2 | “Computer reset” metaphorTeach and practice mindful breathing Willingness – “bear” metaphor Homework: Practice mindful breathing |
| 3  | “Anxiety is like a wave” metaphorControl as the problem – “chocolate cake” exercise Introduce acceptance – “finger trap” exercise and “quicksand” metaphorHomework: Use “anxiety is like a wave” metaphor at home |
| 4 | Acceptance – “passengers on the bus” metaphor and activityHomework: Recognize thoughts – “passengers on the bus” |
| 5 | Defusion – “take your mind for a walk” exerciseWillingness – “petting a dog” and “rollercoaster”metaphorHomework: Listen to mind without acting on it, make behavioral commitment |
| 6 | Defusion – “holding a candy/pen” metaphorPresent moment – “listening for sounds” mindfulness exerciseHomework: “Holding a candy/pen” metaphor with behavioral commitments |
| 7 | Values – “heart shaped box” exerciseHomework: Keeping values in mind, behavioral commitment |
| 8 | Acceptance – “remembering directions to house” exerciseDefusion – color, shape of feelings, sing thoughts, funny voicesReview “passengers on the bus” and other helpful metaphorsHomework: Pick defusion exercise to use during week, behavioral commitment |
|  | Review defusion exercisesPresent moment – “movie screen” mindfulness exerciseDiscuss end of treatment |

Session 1:

Session Overview:

1. Discuss anxiety, where we feel it in our body, what our body does in response
2. Homework: Record obsessions and what was done in response

The therapist discusses the “fight or flight” response with parent and child. Fight or flight is described as your body getting ready for action. The therapist gives examples of physical symptoms (heart pounding, sweat increasing, trembling, etc.) and these are described as ways your body can help you if you need to run, work, or fight. Children are given an example of how their “great-great-great-great grandma/grandpa caveman” might have been picking berries when a Tyrannosaurus rex emerges from the bushes. *What would you do?* The therapist describes how “fight or flight” symptoms start and links to how they help the caveman get away.

The therapist then discusses anxiety. *What is anxiety?* *How is it different from being afraid of a T-rex?* Parents may need to help answer these questions. *Sometimes our bodies act like we need to get ready for fight or flight when there isn't a threat. What are some things that make you anxious?* *Where do you feel anxiety?* Therapist and parents may need to help children identify physical symptoms that they may be experiencing in response to anxiety.

The therapist helps children to understand that their body’s response is useful. *What would you do if a rattlesnake came into the room? What if you didn’t get scared? What might happen then?* The therapist explains that the goal is not to get rid of these responses, but to learn how to accept thoughts and feelings while still doing the things we deem important.

The therapist gives examples of how to complete the home record card by writing down obsessions. Children and parents are asked to commit to record obsessions anytime they occur and to bring back record cards next session.

Session 2:

Session Overview:

1. “Computer reset” metaphor
2. Teach and practice mindful breathing
3. Willingness – “bear” metaphor
4. Homework: Practice mindful breathing

Therapist, child, and parent review the record card. Recorded incidences are briefly discussed.

Therapist introduces the “computer reset” metaphor to illustrate importance of mindful breathing. *Do you have a computer at home? Have you ever been working on it and had it freeze? Why does that happen? What do you do?* Parents may help with these questions. *You have a reset button too. It’s your breathing. Breathing is the best way to help reset when you get stuck.*

Children are then taught to breathe in slowly while paying attention to how their breath feels. They are taught to feel the air make their belly rise and fall again. Parent, child, and therapist practice attending to their breath. *Have you ever seen someone sleeping? How do they look? How are they breathing? That is how we want to breathe when we are paying attention to our breathing.* To emphasize the importance of this simple exercise, children are given examples of Olympic stars that have been able to use their breathing to help them perform better.

Willingness to be in contact with undesirable emotions is discussed using a “bear” metaphor. *Have you heard of playing dead in response to an angry bear?* *What kind of thoughts do you think you might be having while you are playing dead? Would you be able to play dead and still have thoughts of running away? Could your thoughts be different than your actions?*

In a manner similar to the bear analogy, children are encouraged to use mindful breathing when they have obsessive thoughts instead of acting compulsively. Children are also asked to practice mindful breathing at least once a day. Parents are asked to coach children in mindful breathing and remind them to practice.

Session 3:

Session Overview:

1. “Anxiety is like a wave” metaphor
2. Control as the problem – “chocolate cake”exercise
3. Introduce acceptance – “finger trap” exercise and “quicksand”metaphor
4. Homework: Use “anxiety is like a wave” metaphor at home

After reviewing record card and checking in with homework, the clinician describes the “anxiety is like a wave” metaphor. *Have you ever seen someone surfing on television or in a movie? What do the waves do?* Parents, children, and therapist discuss how surfers ride waves that get bigger and bigger, but that eventually crest and break. Children are compared to surfers riding the wave of anxiety. They are encouraged to attend to anxiety as it rises and to watch for it to crest and eventually dissipate.

“Control as the problem” is introduced using the “chocolate cake” exercise. *For the next minute whatever you do, do not think about chocolate cake. Don’t think about how good it tastes or how sweet it is. Don’t think about how you want a huge piece with yummy chocolate frosting on top and how good that cup of milk would be with it.* Therapist continues to describe how good this piece of chocolate cake is throughout the minute. When the minute is up children and parents are asked if they thought about chocolate cake. *But you were told not to think about it. What happened?* The therapist helps children and parents to understand that unwanted thoughts can be much like the chocolate cake thoughts; you cannot keep them out and sometimes trying to makes it worse.

The therapist introduces a finger trap. Children and parents are encouraged to try it out. A discussion is held about how pulling away from a problem makes it worse - instead we need to push into the problem. *Have you ever heard of quicksand? What happens when someone falls into quicksand? How do they get out?* Therapist relates how getting stuck in quicksand can be made worse by fighting to get out.

As homework, children are asked to use the “anxiety is like a wave” metaphor when they find themselves getting anxious. They are asked to attend to their increasing anxiety, rather than fighting it, and to notice when it begins to dissipate. Parents are asked to remind children about the metaphor when they see their child becoming anxious.

Session 4:

Session Overview:

1. Acceptance – “passengers on the bus” metaphor and activity
2. Homework: Recognize thoughts – “passengers on the bus”

Time is spent reviewing metaphors from previous weeks. Record card is reviewed and use of wave analogy is discussed.

“Passengers on the bus” metaphor is used to describe acceptance. *Have you ever ridden on a bus? What are some of the rules for the passengers on a bus? Are passengers allowed to drive? What would happen if a passenger decided to drive? What are the rules for the driver? Can the bus driver decide he doesn’t want to drive anymore and stop just anywhere? Can the bus driver yell at the passengers? Can he throw someone off of the bus?* The therapist helps parent and child understand that the child is the bus driver and his thoughts are like passengers. When the child is having happy thoughts it is like having happy passengers. When there are anxious or obsessive thoughts, these are like passengers that are out of their seats or trying to drive the bus. Remind children and parents that they should drive the bus, not the passengers.

In order to practice, therapist, parent, and child line up chairs to pretend they are on a bus. Therapist goes first, pretending to drive the bus while parent and child try to distract the “driver” therapist or tell him where to go. Then the child practices driving to a destination while parent and therapist try to distract the driver or dictate where to drive the bus. After some practice, parent and therapist can use the child’s own obsessive thoughts during this activity to help draw the analogy. Parent also takes a turn trying to drive the bus, giving the child another turn to play the part of the rowdy passenger on the bus.

As homework, children are asked to recognize obsessive thoughts as rowdy passengers on their bus and to remember that they are the driver of the bus.

Session 5:

Session Overview:

1. Defusion – “take your mind for a walk” exercise
2. Willingness – “petting a dog” and “rollercoaster”metaphor
3. Homework: Listen to mind without acting on it, make behavioral commitment

Weekly record cards are reviewed and homework is discussed. Previous metaphors and exercises are utilized in context of weekly record cards.

Children and parents begin to learn to defuse from their thoughts during the “take your mind for a walk”exercise*.* The therapist provides some blocks for the child to build with. They discuss how the therapist will play the part of the child’s thoughts and vocalize them out loud as the child builds for the next few minutes. As the child builds, the therapist carries on a stream of vocalizations as if from the child’s “mind”. These vocalizations describe what the child is doing, urge the child to do something else, give directions, muse on random things, criticize, and express worries and concerns. This activity may be done a second time with the “mind” bringing up issues that the child is dealing with from the home record card. Afterwards, parent, child, and therapist discuss the activity. *Why did you continue to build with the blocks even when your “mind” told you to do something else? How were you able to build when your “mind” was talking about things that worry you?* Therapist and parents help child relate this activity to thoughts and actions of the child during the day. They help the child to understand that though the mind is constantly “talking,” the child can choose behaviors; the child “drives the bus.”

Additional metaphors for willingness are provided. Children are given a metaphor of willingness described as approaching a dog that is barking, even if they are intimidated. Willingness does not mean that you are not scared or that you are looking forward to doing something. Children are also given the “rollercoaster” metaphor. *Have you or mom/dad ever ridden on a rollercoaster? Was it scary? Why did you ride on it?* The therapist helps children to understand that sometimes we do things that are hard if we have a good reason to do them.

For homework, children are asked to remember the “taking your mind for a walk*”* metaphor and apply it. They are asked to practice listening to their mind “talking” similar to listening to the therapist playing the part of the “mind.” Children are encouraged to choose a particular obsession or compulsion that they can practice this on. With the help of the therapist, a small behavioral commitment is made to just listen to the mind talk without needing to act on thoughts. Parents are asked to discuss the “taking your mind for a walk”metaphor with their child throughout the week and help with the behavioral commitment.

Session 6:

Session Overview:

1. Defusion – “holding a candy/pen” metaphor
2. Present moment – “listening for sounds” mindfulness exercise
3. Homework: “Holding a candy/pen” metaphor with behavioral commitment

Weekly record cards are reviewed and homework is discussed. Previous metaphors and exercises are practiced in context of weekly record cards.

"Holding a candy/pen" metaphor is used to further help children and parents with defusion. The child is given a candy (or pen) to hold. *Are you a piece candy? You’re holding a candy, so why do we not call you a candy?* *Can you let go of the candy anytime you want?* Eventually the candy is related to cognitive experiences we have. *If you have a thought or feeling, it is like you are holding a piece of candy again. Are you the thought/feeling? But there is one difference – can you let go of the candy anytime you want?* *Can you let go of the thought or feeling anytime you want?* Using examples from the home record card the therapist, parent and child can discuss this in context. *When you were having a feeling that you were a bad person, were you a “bad person” or were you having a feeling? If we looked in the dictionary under “bad person” would we see a picture of you?*

Parents, children, and therapist practice mindfulness to encourage present moment awareness. The therapist tells the child that they are going to play a game. Everyone is to close their eyes for the next few minutes and listen for the ambient noise they can hear in the room. The therapist directs the parent and child to expand the listening to sounds outside the room in the rest of the building. Then they are directed to listen for sounds just outside the building, down the street, then a few blocks away, until they are listening for sounds across the city. When the activity is done, parents, children and therapist discuss what they heard. *What was the quietest noise you heard? Did you hear sounds outside? Did you hear sounds across the city?*

Children are once again asked to choose a behavior to target for a behavioral commitment and to use what they have learned to help them meet that commitment. Parents are asked to discuss the candy/pen metaphor with their child and remind him/her about it throughout the week. Children and parents are also asked to practice mindful listening or another mindfulness activity throughout the week.

Session 7:

Session Overview:

1. Values – “heart shaped box” exercise
2. Homework: Keeping values in mind, behavioral commitment

Weekly record cards are reviewed and homework is discussed. Previous metaphors and exercises are utilized in context of weekly record cards.

Therapist displays a heart-shaped box. Parent, child, and therapist discuss hearts, what they do for us, and how they keep us alive. They discuss why we use a heart shape to represent things that are important to us, i.e., they make us feel alive. The therapist interviews child and parent, asking questions about: what they like about themselves, what the child wants to do in the future, what the child’s friends like about him/her, what the parent likes most about the child, what activities and things are most important to the child, who is the child’s hero and why. Afterward, therapist and parents utilize the answers to these questions to help the child to identify: important values, traits that are notable, valued activities, and goals. These are written on separate sheets of paper and put into the box to represent things that make the child feel alive. These are described as values.

For the second part of this activity, the therapist selects values from the box and has the child tape them on the wall. For each value, parent, child and therapist discuss how compulsive behaviors can get in the way of moving towards these. The child is given pictures of buses to tape on the wall to represent where they feel they are driving their bus. The therapist helps the child recognize that the destination of the buses is towards his/her values.

As homework, children are asked to make another behavioral commitment with help of parent and therapist. Child is asked to identify “important things” (values) to help them keep this behavioral commitment.

Session 8:

Session Overview:

1. Acceptance – “remembering directions to house” exercise
2. Defusion – color, shape of feelings, sing thoughts, funny voices,
3. Review “passengers on the bus” and other helpful metaphors
4. Homework: Pick defusion exercise to use during week, behavioral commitment

Weekly record cards are reviewed and homework is discussed. Previous metaphors and exercises are utilized in context of weekly record cards.

The "house directions" exercise is used to help children understand acceptance. *Do you ever walk home from school? Can you tell me directions on how to get to your home from your school? What if I asked you to forget the way home now, could you do it?* Therapist, parents, and child discuss that just like they cannot forget the way home when they follow it every day, children cannot just stop unwanted thoughts. This activity is used with examples from the home record card.

Children and parents are given a variety of defusion activities. Children are asked to talk about some of the undesirable feelings and cognitions that they have. *What color would they be? What kind of shape would the thoughts or feelings have? Would it be hard or soft?* Children and parents are told that they can use this activity to stay in the moment with unwanted thoughts or feelings.

As an additional defusion technique, children are asked to sing their most common intrusive thoughts or feelings (such as "I'm a bad person") to the tune of a familiar song such as “Happy Birthday” or “The Alphabet Song.” They can also practice saying them in a funny voice. A discussion is held on how they feel afterward.

Therapist, parent, and child review the "passengers on the bus" metaphor and how this relates to values. *Are you driving towards important things?* *Are you driving the bus, or are you letting passengers dictate where you go?* Other useful metaphors can be reviewed at this time.

As homework, children are asked to pick one of the defusion activities taught during the session to use throughout the week. Parents are asked to coach the child in using defusion activities and to remind child as needed. Children are asked to choose an area in which they can make a behavioral commitment.

Session 9:

Session Overview:

1. Review defusion exercises
2. Present moment – “movie screen” mindfulness exercise
3. Discuss end of treatment

Weekly record cards are reviewed and homework is discussed.

Defusion exercises are reviewed in the context of weekly record card data. Parent and child practice defusion in-session.

The “movie screen" exercise is presented as a mindfulness exercise. Children are asked to remember a time they were in a movie theater. Parents and child close their eyes and pay attention to their breathing. They are then asked to picture the movie screen. Then they are instructed to picture their own thoughts and feelings appearing on the screen as images. They are encouraged to let the thoughts and feelings come and go. Afterwards, the activity is discussed.

Therapist, parent, and child discuss conclusion of treatment. Child and parent discuss concepts and strategies that have been helpful. They commit to continue working towards value-driven actions.