Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET)

Concept and Efficacy
I was born in 1979 in Mogadishu town. I lived with my both parents. I had two sisters and four brothers and am the last born of my family. Five are my elders. I grew up in Mogadishu the capital of Somalia, my father was running a shop and business man too. Mother was having restaurant that was owning. I used to go to School and my school name was Called Hamira Primary School. My elder brother Burhan and my brother Burhan were in a College. My elder brother Was Radijo Abdi Said. Sayid Abdi Said, Libri Abdi Said, Burhan Abdi Said, Amir Abdi Said and me Mohamud Abdi

Father used to live home at around 7:00 am in morning. Sometimes he could come home for lunch. Some time we could take for him me and my brother food at the shop. This could be walking for 50 km from home to the shop, but father used to tell me to stay at home. Stop moving even telling my brother that we should watch out from cars when crossing the road. My mother used also to live home and could come late in the evening after closing her restaurant. This was in the year 1987.

She ran her hotel at a period of one year. So in the year 1988 she closed the hotel due to that she could not manage business was becoming dull. Father could come back at around 5:00 pm in the evening he finds us playing in the compound he could tell us that everybody should bring his books and show what you've learnt. He brought those folders our books he could tell us to keep up with studies so that we can have bright future. So he could sit with us telling us stories. Some time also he could play with us foot ball. This all was a happy time in Mogadishu. we stayed all of us together. He always
Abdul's story
Trauma and Memory
The brain under threat

Arnsten et al., Nat Rev Neurosci 2009
Threat Cascade

Schauer & Elbert 2010
Associative Memory (Hot Memory)

- Automatically activated by cues
- Sensory, emotional & physiological perceptions
- Fragmentary reports
- Sensation of “Here and Now”

Context Memory (Cold memory)

- Deliberately retrievable
- Knowledge about the event in the context of life, time & space
- Chronological report
Stress and Memory

memory performance

stress level

Amygdala

Hippocampus
I was living in Mogadishu. It happened during the afternoon. Before that I’ve been to school.

Threat network of a traumatic event

COLD

sensory
cognitive
emotional
physiological

sister screaming

HOT

It hurts!

I can’t do anything!

Why isn’t anybody helping?

soldiers
gun
carpet

anger

fast breathing

shivering

heart beating

sweating

guilt
despair

fear

horror

HOT

I was living in Mogadishu.

COLD

It happened during the afternoon.

Before that I’ve been to school.
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
Clinical research with populations affected by war and conflict

- Torture and war victims seeking asylum in Italy and Germany
- Afghan children in Kabul
- Tamil children in Sri Lanka
- Former child soldier in Northern Uganda
- Genocide orphans and widows in Ruanda
- Ex-combattants and civilians in Somaliland
- Ethiopian HIV-AIDS orphans

Implications for the Treatment of PTSD
Implications for the Treatment of PTSD

Relevant mechanisms:
- Activation of the fear network + Completion of autobiographic memory =>
- Contextualization of associative memory
- Inhibition of threat structure

Requisites for a therapy that can be used “in the field”:
- short duration
- easy to learn
- culturally sensitive
- account for social and political context
Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET)

Combination of behavioural exposure and testimony therapy (Lira and Weinstein)

Psychoeducation

Documentation of biography

Use of the narration for human right work
NET - The procedure
NET – the procedure

0. Session:
   Diagnostic Interview

1. Session:
   psycho-education (for child and parents),
   lifeline, drawing/photo of the lifeline
   start with narration
   for example:
   - life circumstances when patient was born
   - siblings
   - school
   - friends
NET - Lifeline

Rope as symbol for Life

Flowers as symbols for good events

Stones as symbols for bad events
NET – the procedure

2. Session:
- re-read preliminary narration
- fill in more details
- continue with narration
- slow down whenever you approach a traumatic “stone”

8. Session (or any other LAST session):
- re-read the narration for the last time
  (maybe add hopes for the future)
- signing ritual and handing over of narration
# Re-creating context for hot memory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cold memory/Context</th>
<th>Hot memory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space:</td>
<td>Sensory:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where did it happen?</td>
<td>What did you see smell, taste, hear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>Cognitive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When did it happen?</td>
<td>What did you think?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronology:</td>
<td>Emotional:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened?</td>
<td>What did you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened next?</td>
<td>Physiological:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did your body react?</td>
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NET & KIDNET: The Evidence
NET: Evidence

- NET causes a significant reduction of PTSD even in unsafe living conditions
- There is no indication that NET can cause serious side effects or harm
- NET has comparably low rate of drop outs
- NET has been superior to supportive counselling (Neuner et al. 2004, Ertl et al., 2011) and short IPT (Schaal et al, 2009) and anxiety management CBT (Hensel-Dittmann, 2011)
- NET is effective for children between 7 and 16 (Ruf et al, 2010, Catani et al, 2009), with adolescents and young adults (Schaal et al. 2009, Ertl et al.) as well as with elder participants of about 75 years (Bichescu et al., 2007)
- NET can be carried out by trained lay therapists (Neuner et al., 2008, Catani et al., 2010, Schauer et al, in prep., Ertl et al., 2011, Jacob et al., 2014)
- NET can be disseminated in a train-the-trainer approach (Jacob et al. 2014)
THANK YOU!