

SHAPING THE FUTURE

2019 ATSA Conference | Thursday November 7 | 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

T-32

Touch Is Not Evil: Helping Youth Understand Healthy Touch

Christin Santiago, BS, CTRS
The Whitney Academy
Anette Birgersson, LP
Skills Clinic AB

Youth who have experienced trauma and engage in problematic sexual behaviors, often have difficulty in the social domain. They struggle to build trusting, reciprocal relationships (Lisak and Ivan, 1995; Marshall and Marshall, 2000). Experiencing repeated trauma, often leads to deficits in brain development, which leads to less hemispheric integration, causing difficulties to regulate internal states as the basic emotions and sexual impulses, language and executive functioning. (Doucette, 2004; Teicher, et al, 2002). (Schore, 2003; van der Kolk, 2005)

Often, this results in a misinterpretation of touch, both by the youth, and by those that care for and serve them. When problematic sexual behaviors are present, it is often decided that we should employ either “no touch” or “limited touch” protocols, as a means to mitigate possible sexual arousal and therefore problematic behaviors. As a profession, we tend to over-sexualize normal behaviors based on seeing those behaviors through the lens of problematic and harmful sexualized behaviors. Any touch or situations where touch is sought is deemed problematic and pathologized.

As a result, the youth served often do not understand how to receive the touch they desire and require to form healthy attachments and relationships. They believe that all touch is “bad” and sexual, and therefore should be avoided. Instead, treatment should be focused on increasing safe and healthy touch, which would decrease and eliminate unhealthy and problematic touch.

Utilizing a DBT combined with recreational therapy with these clients and with staff, places a emphasis on improving the skills relating to improved and interpersonal skills (Brown, J. F., Brown, M. Z., & Dibiasio, P., 2013), with touch being the primary medium to build and form healthy relationships. The model offers a strengths-based approach that directly targets the major areas of concern that youth with problematic sexualized behaviors display: guilt, shame, trust, emotional regulation, mind-body connection.

This workshop will be focused on a multi-sensory approach for incorporating healthy touch into treatment planning. It will be lecture based, as well as experiential, giving participants the opportunity to fully engage in the treatment model, to learn best practices, gain skills and offer techniques for incorporation into their own practice.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

2019 ATSA Conference | Thursday November 7 | 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

Learning Goals:

- Upon completion of this educational activity, learners should be able to gain a better understanding of how to utilize touch as part of the treatment model
- Upon completion of this educational activity, learners should be able to understand how to create interventions that are sensory-based and individualized
- Upon completion of this educational activity, learners should be able to gain a better understanding of the different types of touch and their appropriate application within treatment

Christin is the Director of Recreation Therapy for the Whitney Academy, and has been for 12 years. In that role, she has developed innovative therapeutic activities to foster personal and interpersonal growth in the youth served. She has presented this topic to clinical audiences across the United States, Canada, Scotland, England, Wales, Norway and Sweden. Prior to working at the Whitney Academy, Christin has worked with youth in clinical settings, incorporating outdoor adventure programming to develop self-esteem and success in her clients. She attended the University of Connecticut to achieve a BS in Therapeutic Recreation, and is a Board Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification. Christin is also a member of the Board of Directors for the National Adolescent Perpetration Network.

Anette started working in social services 1997 directly after graduating from university. The first year in in a community based setting, since 2002 in a private company providing both inpatient and outpatient treatment. She is a licensed Cognitive Behaviour Therapist and have been practicing as such since 2003 and got her license in 2015. In 1998 she started to work with children and adolescents with sexual harmful behaviour and have kept on doing that.

She is trained in CBT (Stockholms university and Lunds university in Sweden), DBT, TF-CBT, PE, TF-CBT, ERGT and has developed a program for treating sexually abusive youths and children.

She has also been a guest lecturer at universities in Sweden, as well as been a facilitator at workshops and training events. She does trainings and educate professionals and students about young sex offenders and sexualised behaviours in children and adolescents, she also trains within the program, ERASOR - Estimate of Risk of Adolescent Sexual Offense Recidivism, TF-CBT and DBT.

Anette is a private practitioner and a lecturer at Linköpings University. She is also a member of the advisory board for the National Adolescent Perpetration Network, a member of the Board of Directors for the Swedish TF-CBT Association, and a member of the ATSA International and Juvenile Practice committees.