

Fernando, K., & Medlicott, L. (2009). My shield will protect me against the ANTS: Treatment of PTSD in a client with and intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 34(2), 187-192.

Although there is a lack of research focusing on individuals with an intellectual disability (ID) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), individuals with ID may be more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD because of difficulties processing information and coping with stressful events. Evidence suggests there are many similarities between individuals diagnosed with PTSD with and without ID. There are a limited number of interventions and treatment specifically designed for individuals with PTSD and ID. This case report describes the successful treatment of a 24 year old female, "Heather", diagnosed with PTSD and mild ID, who experienced abuse in a past romantic relationship. We summarize this case study because it provides a detailed breakdown of the intervention and its evaluation.

Method

Heather was treated using exposure (imaginal and in vivo) therapy over 9 sessions. During therapy Heather's negative thoughts were identified as ANTS (automatic negative thoughts) and she was asked to "squash the ants". Positive coping statements were written on a paper shield that she was told to use to protect her from "flickers" (nightmares, flashbacks or negative thoughts associated with the abuse). In later sessions Heather would be asked to imagine the flickers and with herself tolerating them with her new learnt techniques such as relaxation and coping statements. Heather was asked to keep an individualized diary documenting her daily presence or absence of flickers. She was also asked to rate her daily mood on a "feeling thermometer". Recordings in the week before active treatment were used as a baseline to track the effectiveness of the treatment.

Key Findings

- Results show a decrease in the number of weekly flickers and an improvement of average weekly mood in Heather over the 9 sessions of exposure therapy.
- After 6 sessions of treatment Heather no longer reported any flickers and maintained this improvement 5 months later.
- Heather's overall presentation of self also improved by the end of the last session and she stated that the "old Heather" was no more.