

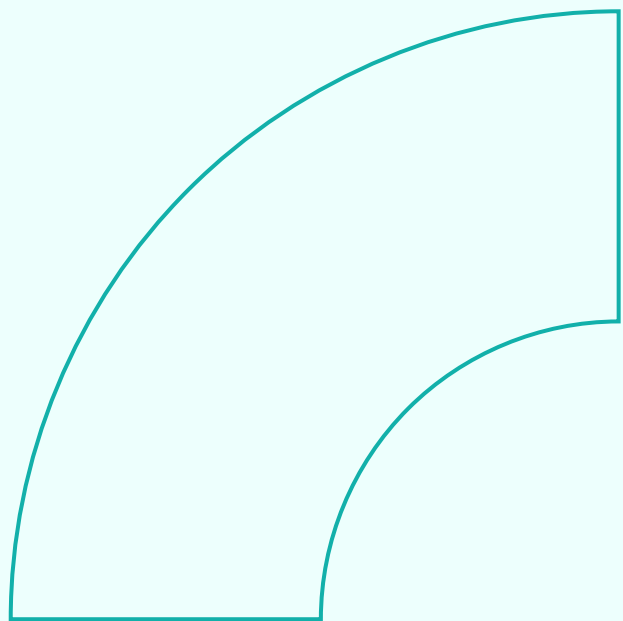
Suzy Langevin, LICSW, LADC I

“What does that even  
mean?!”

**Understanding Therapy Models Without  
the Jargon**



## About Me



Hi, I'm Suzy Langevin. I'm a clinical social worker and substance use counselor with nearly two decades of experience helping teens, young adults, and their families navigate complex mental health challenges. Now I focus on training and providing consultation to other providers to enhance their skills and confidence working with intertwined issues. I'm also a parent to two tweens, including one with ADHD, and, I personally live with ADHD, anxiety, and chronic illness/disability... along

# Selecting the Right Treatment Option



Deciding to seek support and treatment for yourself or for your child can feel overwhelming, and even a little bit scary.

It's normal to be concerned about whether or not this will actually make a difference, to worry about the cost of both money and time, and fear that your family or your parenting will be judged or found lacking by a therapist.

When you find the right 'fit' for you or your child, it can go a long way to minimizing the anxiety.

Long wait lists, insurance issues, and access issues like transportation often make finding that right 'fit' more

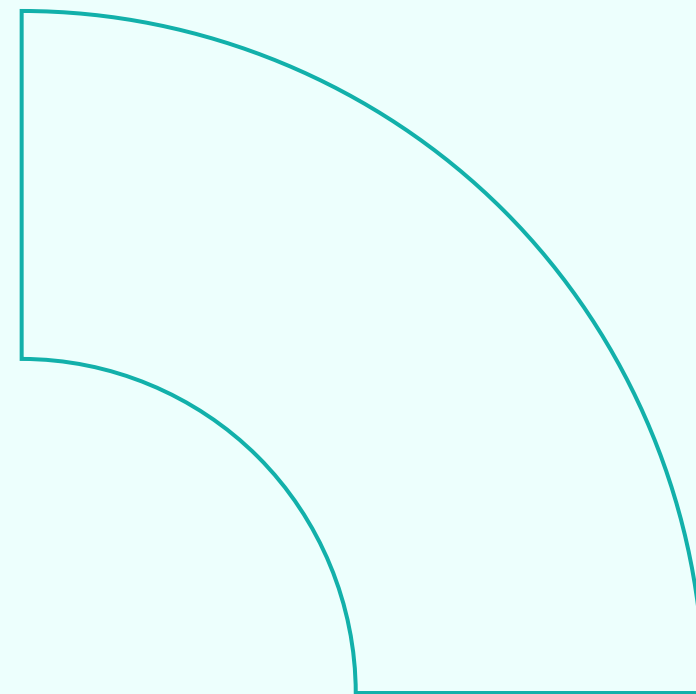


# The Most Important Factor

Studies show that the most important factor in making therapy effective is a strong “therapeutic alliance”: feeling safe, understood, and supported by your therapist.

When working with kids and families, what each person needs to feel safe, understood, and supported may be different.

When possible, parents often benefit from having their own therapist or other support like a group.



# Different Modes of Therapy



There are a variety of evidence-based treatment options for kids and families, covering a range of presenting issues.

**Cognitive Behavioral  
Therapy**

**Trauma-Focused CBT**

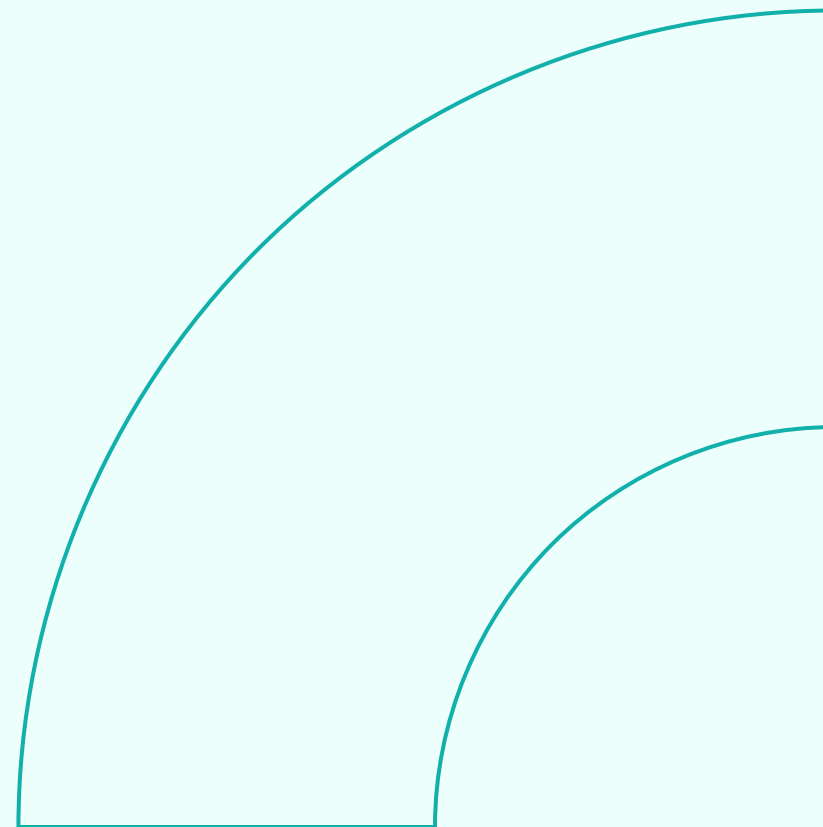
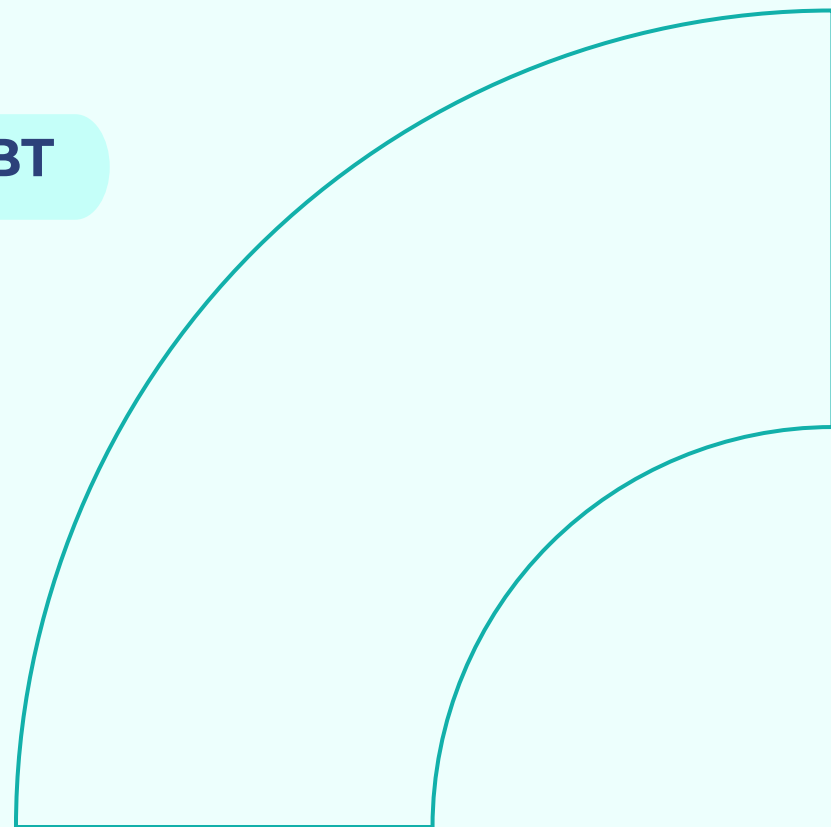
**Dialectical Behavior  
Therapy**



**Motivational  
Interviewing**

**Structural Family  
Therapy**

**Somatic  
Therapies**



# Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Connecting Thoughts, Feelings, & Behavior



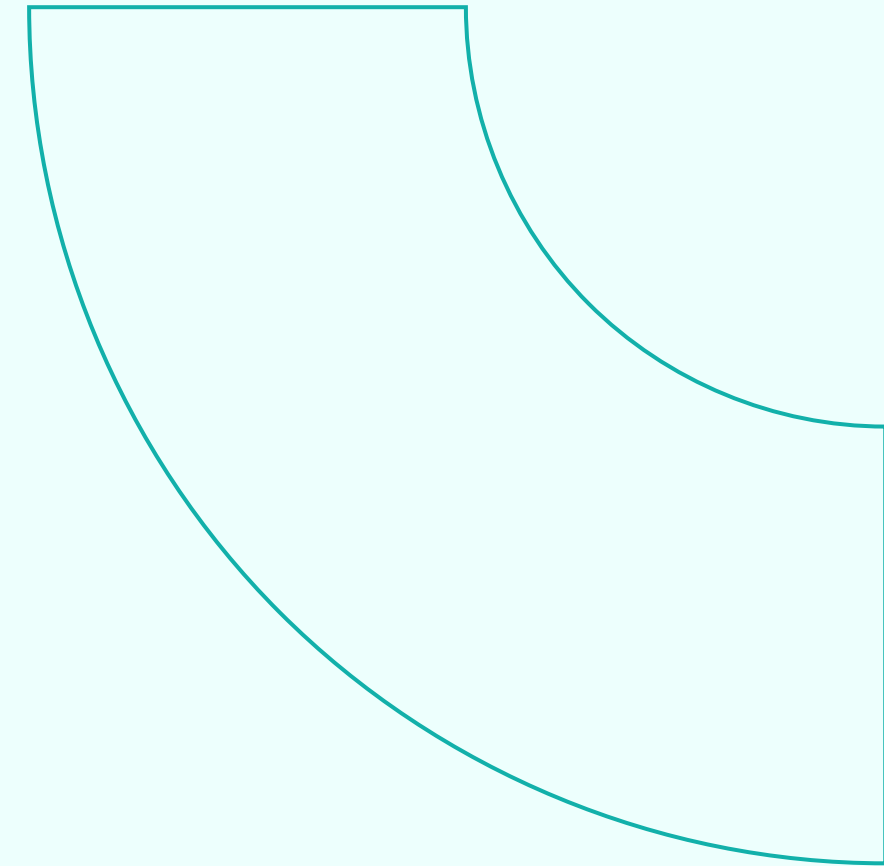
Something happens that activates a thought or a belief.

That thought or belief is how we make sense of the situation.

Often, our emotional reaction is motivated by that thought or belief rather than just the situation itself, but it happens so automatically, it's outside our awareness. We just accept the thought as fact, and our reaction as inevitable.

That emotion will often lead to a behavioral response, which then starts the cycle all over again.

By slowing down to recognize and examine the thought, we may be able to find a different perspective that's more accurate and helpful than our initial reaction.



# CBT Benefits & Drawbacks



One of the most widely studied evidence-based models

Can be adapted for a variety of different presenting issues and populations, and can be used in a wide range of situations

Designed to be shorter term:  
Goal is to learn skills and “become your own therapist”

Works quickly for many people

Evidence is largely based on white majority populations, efficacy is less well-established with marginalized groups

Some problems can't be addressed through thinking alone

Need to develop additional skills to tackle problems when thoughts are accurate

# Trauma-Focused CBT



A Specialized Model for Treating Trauma

A highly structured treatment designed to teach coping strategies to both kids impacted by trauma and their caregivers to:

- Stabilize and build skills
- Create a trauma narrative to process traumatic events
- Integrating and consolidating skills to use after treatment concludes

Uses a model of **PRACTICE:**

Psychoeducation

Relaxation

Affective expression and modulation

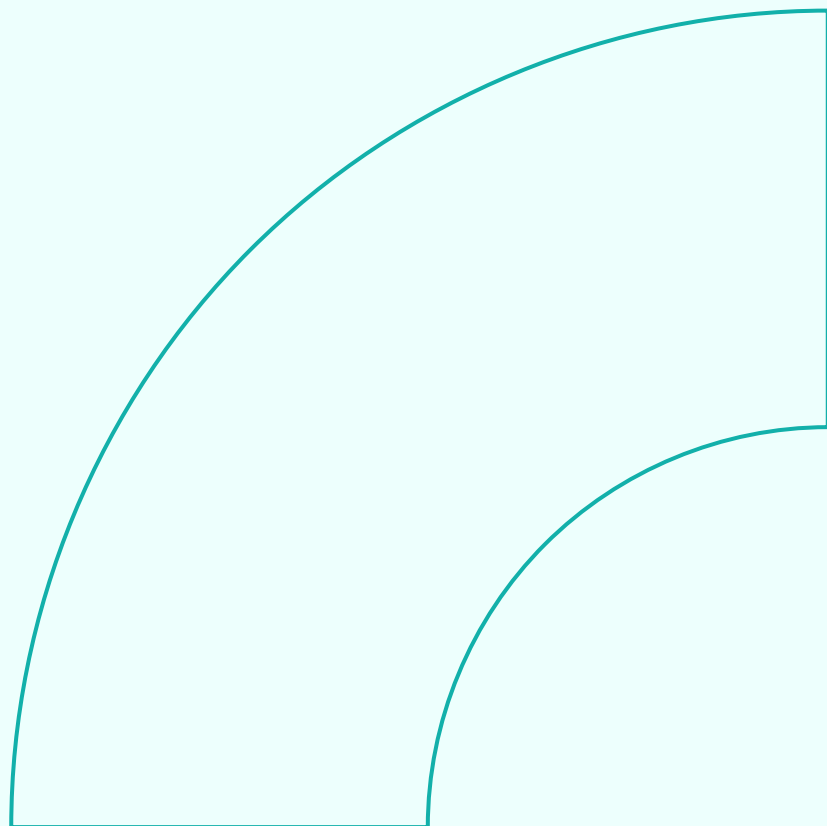
Cognitive coping

Trauma narrative

In vivo mastery

Conjoint sessions

Enhancing safety



# TF-CBT Benefits & Drawbacks



Strong evidence base for a wide variety of ages, from 4-22

Addresses trauma comprehensively

Includes parents/caregivers in treatment

Time-limited; You won't have to keep talking about this forever

Has concrete progress markers

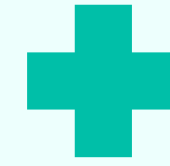
Evidence is largely based on white majority populations, efficacy is less well-established with marginalized groups

Exposure-based treatment

Very time-intensive, both for individual sessions and the treatment as a whole

Requires specific training by providers; can be tough to locate

# Dialectical Behavior Therapy



An Expansion of the Ideas in CBT, with a Mindful Twist!

A form of CBT adapted and expanded to help deal with really intense emotional experiences and behaviors like:

- Self-injury
- Suicidal thinking or behavior
- Relationship struggles

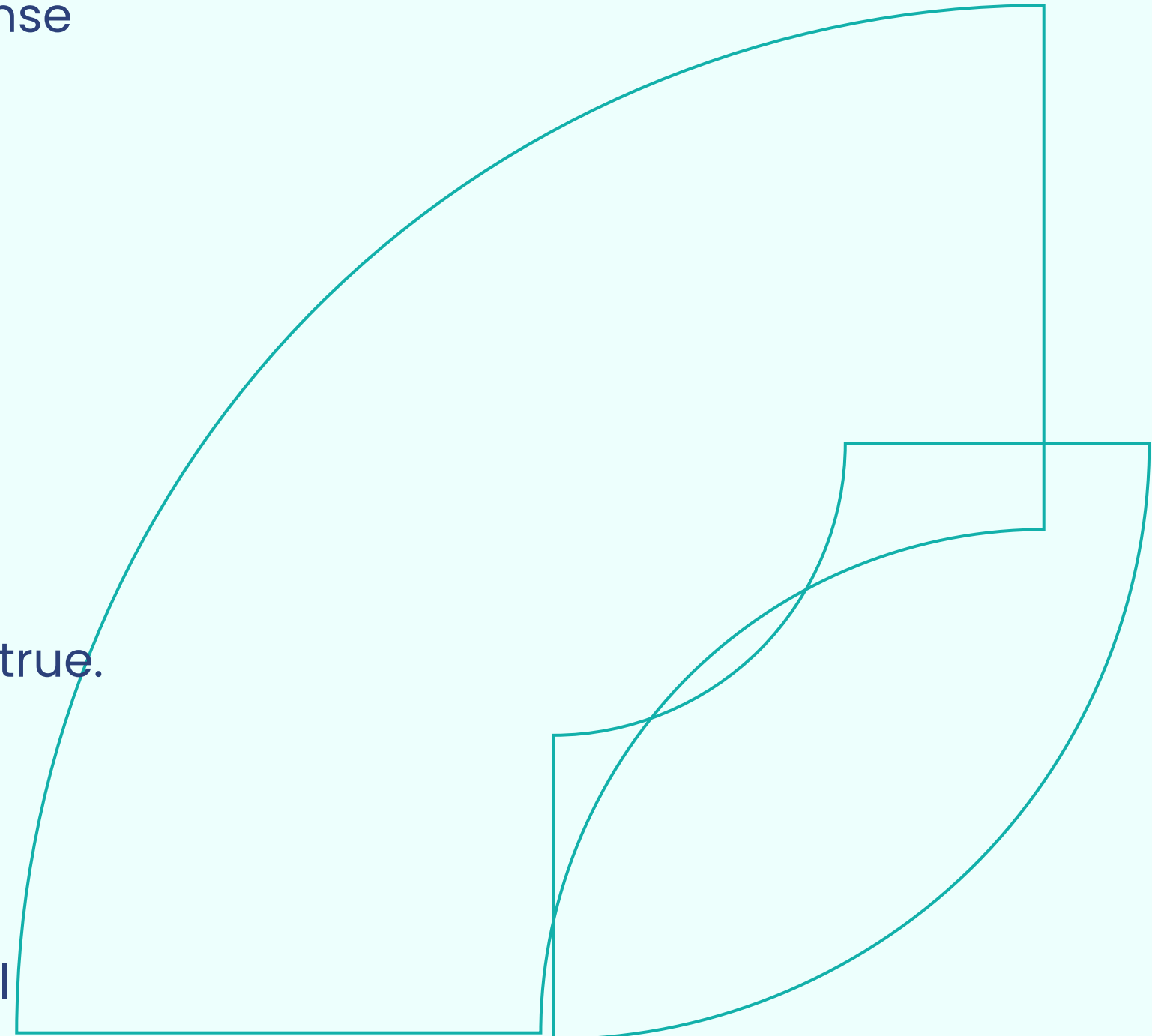
Incorporates mindfulness alongside traditional CBT strategies

Based on the idea of a dialectic: Two opposite things can both be true.

“I’m doing the best I can, AND I need to do better.”

“I can do this, AND it’s going to be hard.”

Treatment includes individual therapy, skills groups, and individual coaching



# DBT Benefits & Drawbacks



Has a lot of evidence behind it

Can be a good option for those who don't see a lot of benefit from traditional CBT

Focuses on practical skills

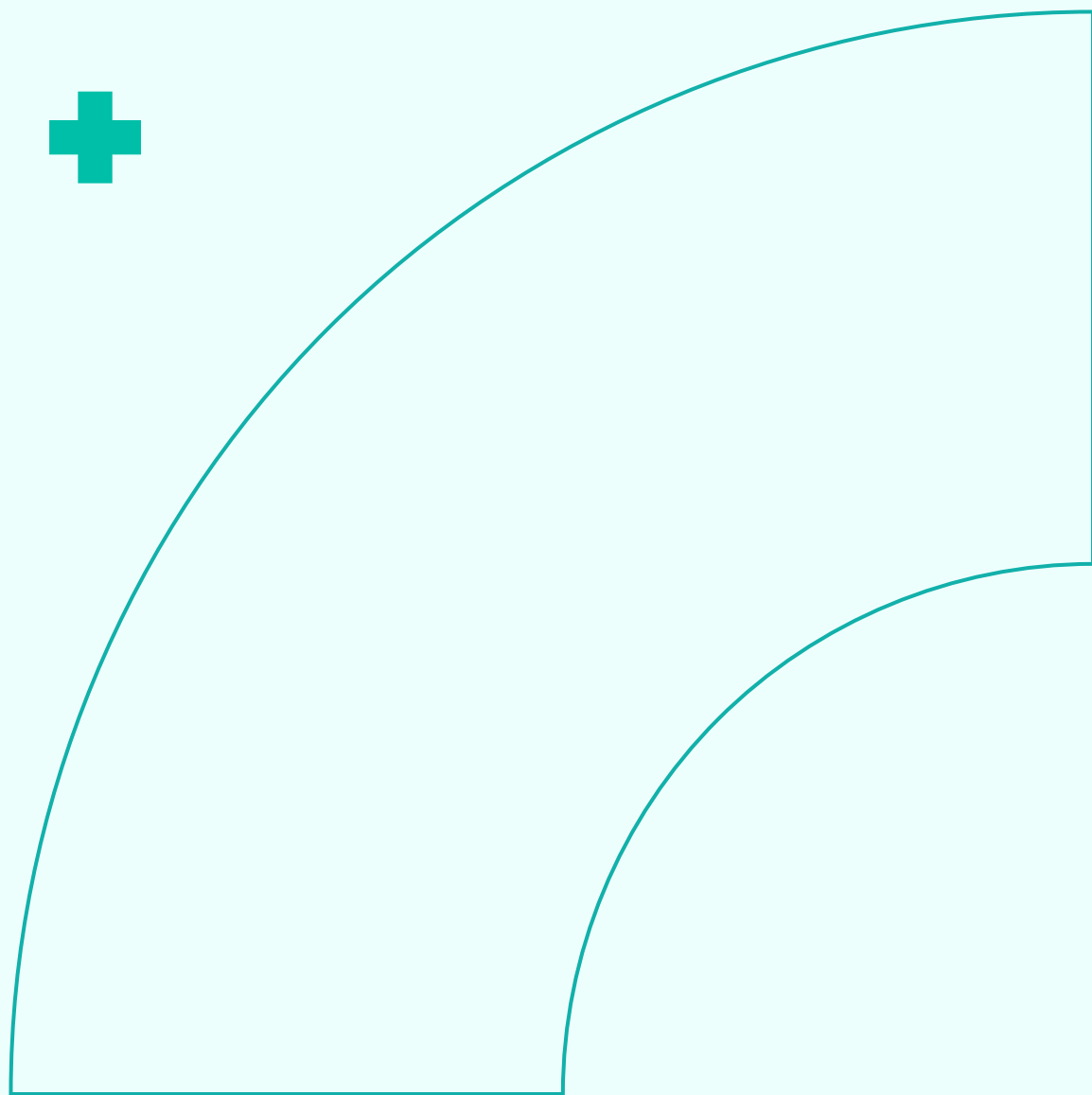
A thorough, holistic approach to mental health

Adaptations for teens help make the information more relevant

A big commitment of time and effort, especially using diary cards or coaching

Can be a challenge to find providers who can provide the full treatment protocol

Mindfulness components require full commitment



# Motivational Interviewing

Building Momentum for Change

Originally developed as a way to build motivation for change in adults with substance use disorder

Current research shows that it's helpful for a wide variety of populations and behavior changes

Focused on exploring and strengthening people's own reasons for change within a supportive environment that honors their experience and treats people with dignity and compassion

Uses techniques to draw out individual's reasons for change and amplify them to move through ambivalence about change

Change is hard for everyone! So we need to be really intentional in how we think and talk about change to move the needle

# MI Benefits & Drawbacks



Large evidence base that includes a variety of marginalized groups

Can be geared toward any behavior change that impacts health, wellness, safety, and quality of life

Improves therapeutic alliance and connection with treatment

Often isn't enough on its own, needs to be paired with skills building interventions

Some problems can't be addressed through thinking alone

Need to develop additional skills to tackle problems when thoughts are accurate

# Structural Family Therapy



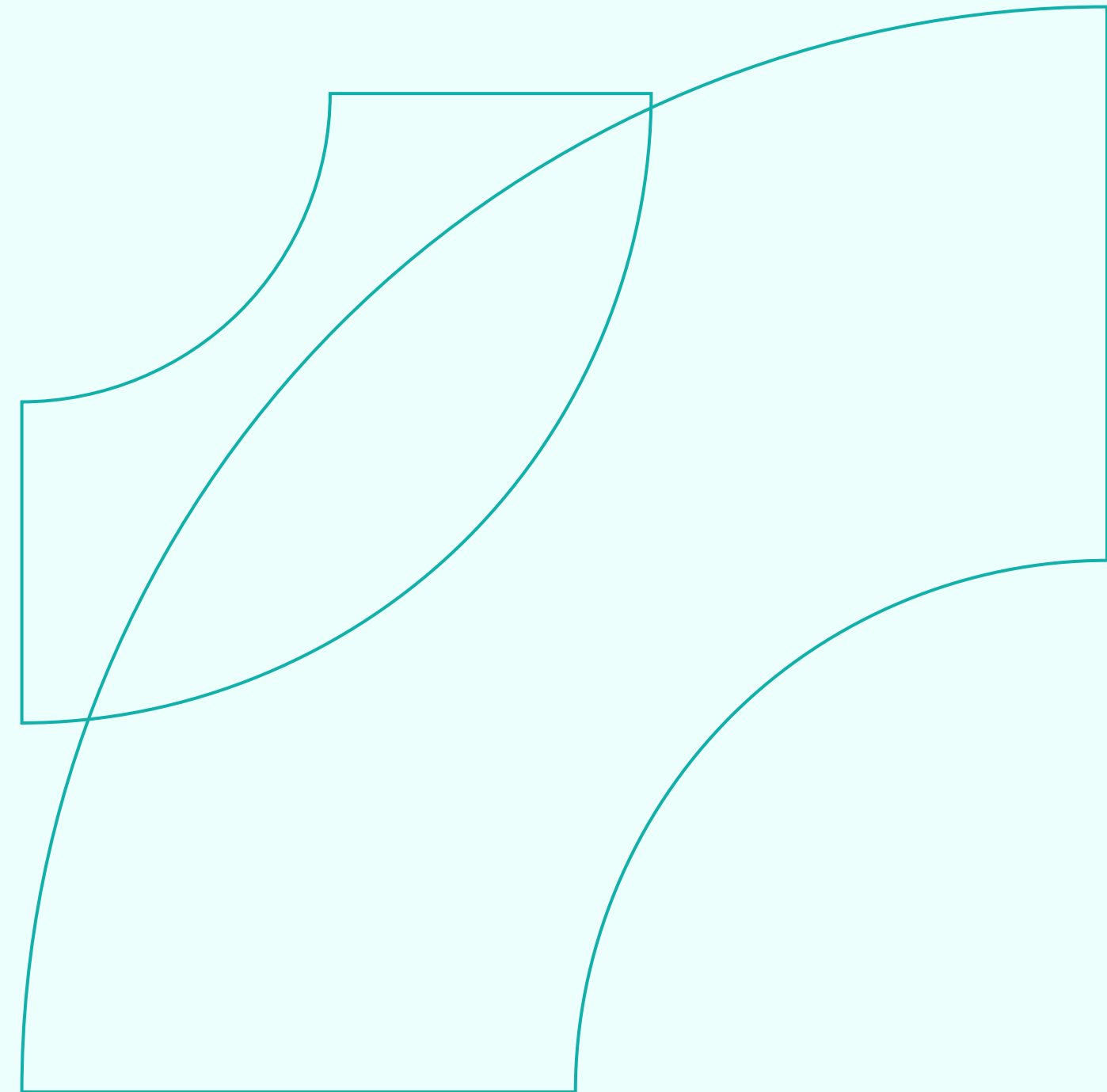
Strengthening Family Communication

Structural family therapy uses a technique called “family mapping” that examines roles and patterns within families

Focus is on understanding shifting family dynamics, and how to renegotiate roles and boundaries within the family as a result of changes, both due to normal development, and due to unexpected life events

Can be especially helpful for families that are going through transition:

- Divorce and separation
- Blended families
- Multi-generational households
- Families affected by illness or disability
- Navigating significant life changes



# SFT Benefits & Drawbacks



Time limited and goal oriented

Rooted in a strengths-based,  
client centered approach

Solution-oriented, and gives  
credit for progress to the family

Evidence supports cross-cultural  
use, including therapists being  
able to work with families that  
don't share a cultural identity

Requires all parties to be  
invested in the process

Doesn't have the space to  
address significant individual  
concerns

Doesn't spend a lot of time  
processing past events; May  
not be the best option for  
healing post-trauma

# Somatic Therapies

Using the Body to Move the Mind



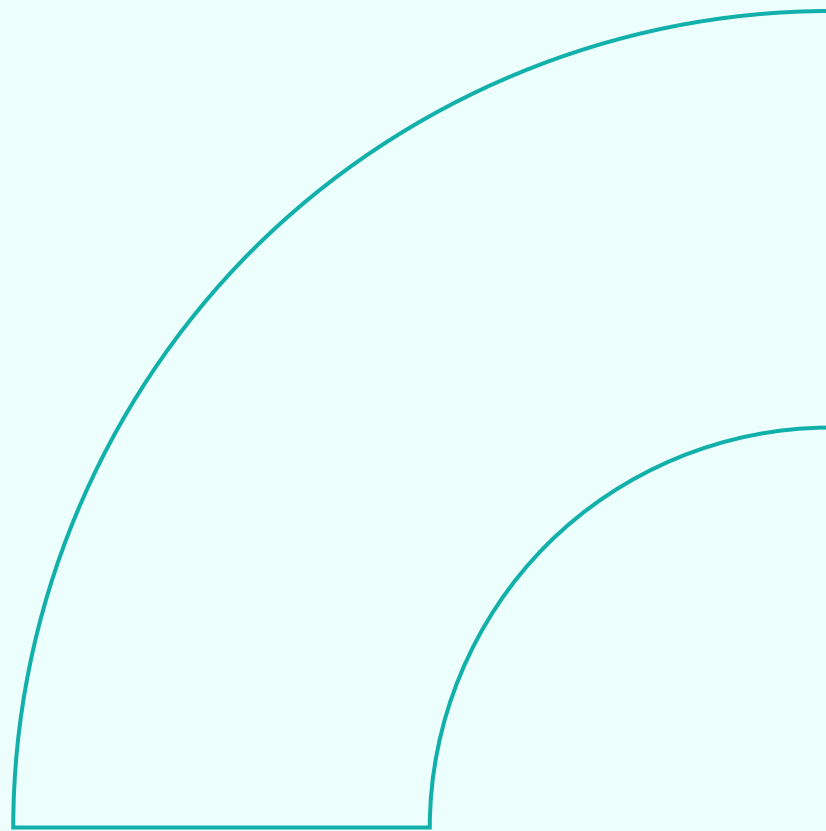
Blend traditional talk therapy techniques with more body-based strategies like movement, touch, and mindfulness

Though very new, research so far suggests that these practices can be helpful for people who've experienced trauma and haven't found traditional exposure or cognitive-based models helpful

Feedback from the body affects the brain, and vice versa, so by impacting either side of system, we can see an improvement in the other

Centered on the theory that the body 'stores' or remembers trauma differently than the brain, so healing from trauma requires healing both the body and the mind

Most common model is Somatic Experiencing Therapy, though there are



# Somatic Benefits & Drawbacks



Can be helpful for people who other types of therapy haven't benefitted

Mind-body integration has benefits for both physical and mental health

A thorough, holistic approach to mental health

Evidence is still emerging; it's unclear who will get the most benefit or who the

Requires committing fully to the process, which may be a challenge

Progress may be uneven and take longer than initially anticipated, especially if there are additional triggering

events

# Other Modes to Explore

There are lots of other options out there! Some still have emerging evidence bases, but could be a great fit for the right situation



**Internal Family Systems**

**EMDR**

**Emotional Freedom Therapy/"Tapping"**

**Play Therapy**  
(Best for young kids)

**Psychodynamic Therapy/Analysis**

**Expressive Arts Therapies**

**Solution Focused Therapy**



# Ways to Find the Right “Fit”



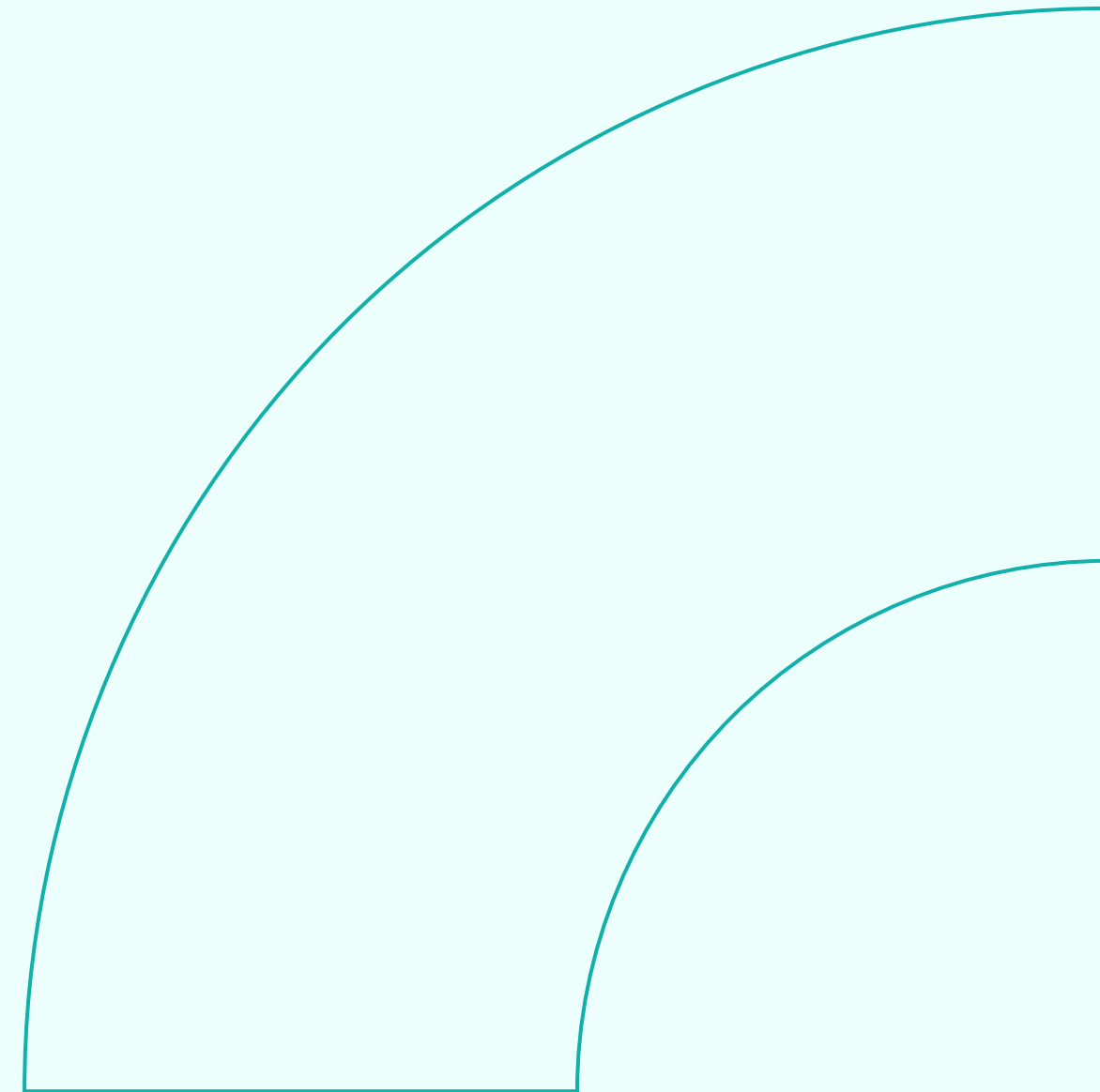
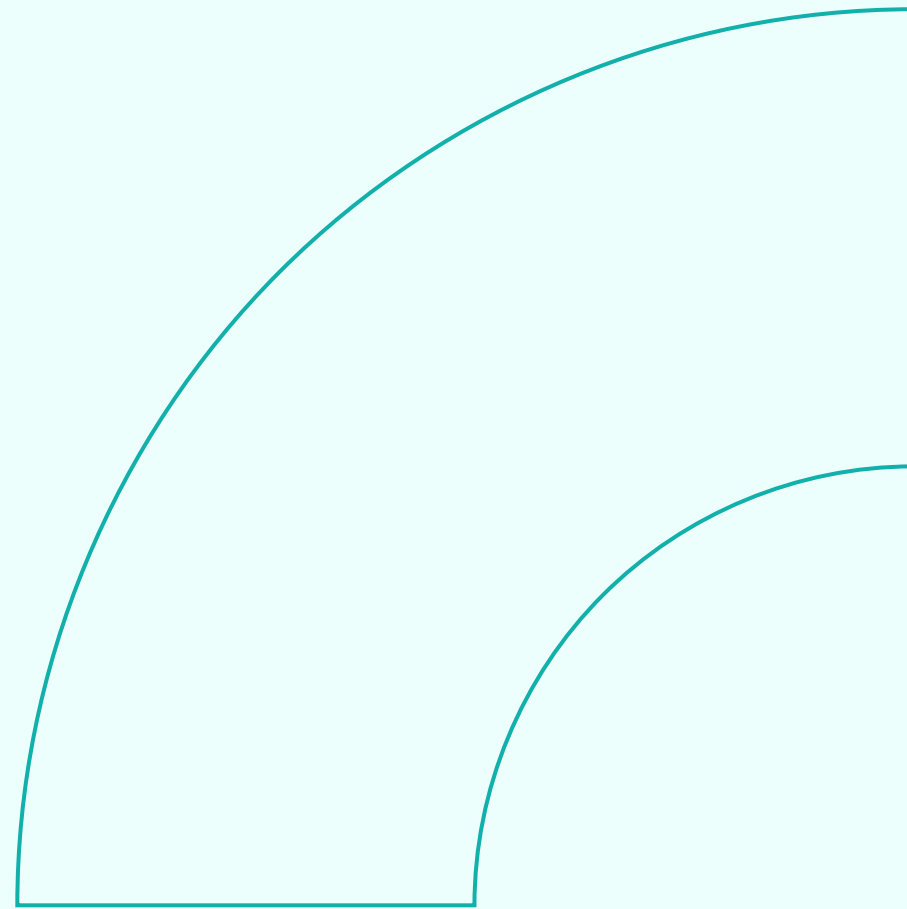
## Things to Ask Prospective Therapists Beyond “Do you take my insurance?”

- What model(s) do you use in treatment? What’s your education and training in those models? How long have you been offering this treatment?
- What license do you hold? Are you independent, or still working under a supervisor’s license?
- What are your policies for payment? Missed sessions?
- If it’s for a minor child, how will you communicate with me as a caregiver?
- How do you handle after hours calls/crises?



There’s no right or wrong answers to any of these, just what works for you! More experience isn’t the only indicator of quality, but training in how to deliver a model, especially in trauma treatment, is important!

# Questions?



Open Sky Community Services

# Thank You!

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