

Combining MATCH-ADTC with Experiential Learning

The **MATCH-ADTC** (Modular Approach to Therapy for Children with Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, or Conduct Problems) model is a flexible, evidence-based approach to mental health treatment, particularly for children and adolescents. It provides clinicians with modular, customizable interventions based on the child's specific needs. The model involves different phases of therapy that align with stages of treatment.

Experiential Learning Theory is a widely recognized and influential framework that describes how people learn through experience. Since learning is the primary process used to navigate life, people can use this process for all forms of learning, development, and change. Learning occurs in any setting and continues throughout life. The experiential learning process supports performance improvement, learning and development. The experiential process of learning is a four-step cycle.

Experiencing – Reflecting – Thinking – Acting.

- **Experiencing (Concrete Experience):** Learning begins when a learner uses senses and perceptions to engage in what is happening now.
- **Reflecting (Reflective Observation):** After the experience, a learner reflects on what happened and connects feelings with ideas about the experience.
- **Thinking (Abstract Conceptualization):** The learner engages in thinking to reach conclusions and form theories, concepts, or general principles that can be tested
- **Acting (Active Experimentation):** The learner tests the theory and applies what was learned to get feedback and create the next experience.

Here's an overview of the MATCH-ADTC model, along with **two experiential learning activities** for each stage:

- **Assessment and Initial Engagement**
 - **Goal:** Build rapport with the child, gather information about the presenting issues, and begin understanding the child's emotions, behaviors, and context.
 1. **Interactive Drawing and Storytelling:** Have the child create drawings or comics that represent their current thoughts, emotions, or fears. As they explain their artwork, the therapist gains insight into the child's internal world and emotional state. - ***Purpose*:** To make the child feel comfortable and allow them to express emotions non-verbally.
 2. **Life Timeline or "Emotion Map" Creation:** The child creates a visual timeline of key life events or experiences and links each event to emotions felt at that time. They can place these events on a "map" to represent positive, neutral, or negative feelings. - ***Purpose*:** To help the therapist understand significant events in the child's life while encouraging the child to reflect on their experiences in a non-threatening way.
- **Skill-Building (Psychoeducation and Coping Skills)**

- Goal: Teach the child skills for emotional regulation, coping with stress or anxiety, and understanding their condition.
 - 1. Role-Playing Stressful Scenarios: Engage the child in role-play exercises where they face common stressors or anxiety-inducing situations. After each role-play, discuss how the child felt, and introduce coping strategies like deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or positive self-talk. - *Purpose*: To give the child real-time practice using newly learned coping strategies in a controlled, safe environment.
 - 2. Calm Box or Stress Toolkit Creation: Have the child create a physical box or toolkit filled with objects or reminders of coping strategies (e.g., stress balls, affirmations, breathing exercise cards, favorite songs). Encourage them to use this when they feel stressed. - *Purpose*: To provide a tangible way for the child to practice self-regulation and feel empowered to manage emotions on their own.
- Exposure (Facing Fears or Difficult Emotions)
 - Goal: Gradually expose the child to situations or thoughts that trigger anxiety, fear, or avoidance in a controlled and safe way.
 - 1. Fear Ladder Creation and Gradual Exposure: Help the child create a “fear ladder” where they rank situations from least to most anxiety-provoking. Then, the child practices facing these fears in gradual steps, starting with the least stressful situation and moving upwards. - *Purpose*: To desensitize the child to anxiety triggers while providing opportunities to practice coping strategies.
- Virtual or In-Vivo Exposure Exercises:
 - Goal: If appropriate, take the child through virtual reality simulations or real-world exposure to their fears (e.g., social anxiety, public speaking).
 - 1. Start with lower-level fears and increase the intensity as they build confidence. - *Purpose*: To give the child hands-on experience with managing anxiety in real-world settings, facilitating experiential learning through direct confrontation of fears.
- Problem-Solving and Cognitive Restructuring
 - Goal: Help the child identify and change maladaptive thought patterns and learn to solve real-life problems.
 - 1. Thought-Challenging Cards: Create a set of “thought-challenging cards” where the child writes down common negative thoughts or beliefs they experience (e.g., “I always fail”). Then, using a problem-solving template, the child is encouraged to write rational counter-thoughts and practice using them in real situations. *Purpose*: To help the child recognize and restructure negative thinking through active engagement with their thoughts.
 - 2. Problem-Solving Role Play: Present the child with hypothetical scenarios that reflect common problems they face (e.g., a fight with a friend, difficulty at school). The child uses a step-by-step problem-solving model

to generate solutions and act them out. - *Purpose*: To help the child practice critical thinking and problem-solving in emotionally challenging situations.

- Relapse Prevention and Maintenance

- Goal: Strengthen the skills the child has learned and prepare them to maintain progress after therapy ends.

1. “Future Me” Planning Session: The child creates a visual or written plan about how they will use their coping strategies and skills in the future. This can be a collage, letter to themselves, or video where they express their confidence in handling future challenges. - *Purpose*: To reinforce long-term use of skills by making the child visualize their future success and growth.
2. Relapse Prevention Role-Playing: Role-play scenarios where the child might face triggers or setbacks in the future (e.g., school stress, family conflict). Have the child practice using their coping strategies and problem-solving skills to navigate these potential challenges. - *Purpose*: To give the child real-time practice in handling setbacks, reinforcing resilience, and preparing them for long-term success after therapy.