Challenge Software Program

Users Guide

Description: The Challenge Software Program was designed as a tool to be used with children and adolescents struggling with self-regulation. Poor self-regulation is a central theme in behavior problems and mental health disorders. Furthermore, it is connected to poor academics, social problems, and low self-esteem.

Logic: The program is based on Fundamental principles from Cognitive-Behavioral Psychology. Cognitive-Behavioral interventions have been shown to be effective in treating behavior problems, depressive/anxious symptoms, symptoms resulting from trauma, and many other common issues.

Goal: The primary goal of the program is to teach our youth that they can, in fact, have control over their responses to the things that happen in their lives. The program shows them and allows them to practice **challenging** the unhealthy thoughts that lead to poor outcomes. It also shows them that healthy thoughts, or interpretations, lead to much different outcomes, and draws attention to the internal workings of the decision-making process.

Interacting with the Challenge Software Program:

First things First: The Challenge Software Program is not intended to be a "stand-alone" therapy, nor is it to be used as a punitive instrument. The program is designed to teach children the necessary skills for self-regulation. It is helpful to present the program as "something new" that you are "going to try together." The program is designed to be used along with the guidance of an adult. However, some have reported positive effects from children using the program with limited supervision. Valuable information will be gained by interacting with the children as they navigate the software. It is also helpful to combine the teaching of a calming strategy. We all know that self-regulation gets more difficult when we are upset and our stress response is activated.

Next, familiarize yourself with the Program. Each subscription comes with a TEST child. The TEST client can be used to familiarize yourself with the program, show it to groups of children, train others, or to test new scenarios. After you login to the program, you will arrive at the Clinician Administration page. Under Client List, you will see the TEST client. This is where all of the children you enter into the program will be listed by random ID. Click on the word TEST to interact with the TEST client. This is also where you would select a child to use the program with, once they've been entered into the system.

Once you click on the word Test for the first time, you will automatically be taken to the Assessment Scenario. *This will happen the <u>first time</u> you select any child from the list.* This process takes place automatically so that you get baseline data before the child interacts with any of the intervention scenarios. Once they've completed the Assessment scenario and answered the questions, the data will be stored and attached to the specific child you are working with at the time. In this case, the data is connected to the TEST child. The data can be accessed any time by clicking on the words "Client Data" to the right of the child's ID.

Once you've completed the Assessment scenario, the child is free to interact with the Intervention scenarios. Click the word TEST if you are on the Clinician Administration page to see the Scenarios. Then, simply click on the words "WHAT WOULD YOU DO?" next to the scenario you would like to view.

The Scenarios: To view the scenarios, you must be in the "client view." That is, you will have to select a child to work with. To try this out, simply click on the "TEST" client from your client list.

To select a scenario, click on the words "WHAT WOULD YOU DO?" next to the scenario you would like to begin. Each scenario follows the same format. There is an event that takes place which affects our main character. Then the action freezes. Healthy and Unhealthy interpretations are presented. The child is asked to pick one from each side. Next, the conflicting ideas go head-to-head in a video game. *The outcome of the video game determines which ending will play in the scenario.* This symbolizes the internal conflict taking place between Healthy and Unhealthy interpretations of the event that ultimately lead to an outcome. If the Healthy thoughts win, then the Healthy ending plays. If the Unhealthy thoughts win the game, then the Unhealthy Ending plays.

After the ending to the scenario plays, the child is presented with several choices. They can try again (same level or easier level), watch the alternate ending, view the scenario from the beginning, or return to the main menu.

Client Data: Baseline data is gathered the first time a new child begins to interact with the program. After they have watched the Assessment Scenario, they are asked to answer questions about the video. Those answers are stored with this child's information and can be viewed by clicking on the words "Client Data" next to the child you want. The next screen will show all of the Dates that you have administered the Assessment Scenario to that child. Simply click on "View results" to see the data in Graph Form. What we want to see here is the child attributing more Units to "Tommy" over time, as they learn that the individual has the power to choose his or her response. You can re-assess the child any time you like by clicking on

Assessment button on a particular client's page. This is a simple way to produce **measureable outcomes.**

Adding a New Child (Client):

Now that we've covered the basics, you are ready to Add a real person to the Client List. To add a child to the Client list, simply click on the "Add new Client" button on the Clinician Administration Page. Complete the form and click "Submit." The child will be assigned a random ID number and they will be shown in the Client List. **Please record this number somewhere** so that you will know which child is which in your client list. Now they are ready to take the Assessment scenario and begin interacting with the program.

Suggesting a Scenario:

This exercise is located under "Client Links" on a particular client's page (the same page as the scenarios).

This is a very valuable tool. This allows the child to practice the very fundamental skill of identifying and challenging **their own** Unhealthy Thoughts. I can't emphasize how valuable this part of the program can be. This is where you will see the changes take shape. They actually generate their own Challenging Statements. It is also in the child's very own words.

After a child has used the program and gone through a few scenarios, he/she will have a general idea of what this is all about and will be able to practice implementing the skills with situations that are personal to his/her own life. We have presented this exercise in a very inconspicuous way, so as not to raise the child's negative anxiety about completing an exercise like this. *After the child completes this exercise, please print this page before you click Submit.* This information is priceless and can be shared with others on the team, including parents.

Games:

The Games section is simply to allow the children to have some fun if they want. It's also a place for the adults to "practice" if they want to. These are the games that are used to represent the internal conflicts within the scenarios.

Hints:

1. You can be as Directive or Non-directive as you like. You will be surprised at how much information the children will volunteer as they relate to the characters.

2. Don't be afraid to ask questions during the process. Defenses are low because you are both watching another child that is struggling.

3. Don't do more than 2 or 3 scenarios in one sitting.

4. Use the "Suggest a Scenario" exercise.

5. Allow it to be fun.

6. Watch the video Tutorial.   http://www.cpschallenge.com/howitworks.shtml