

Benefits of Bibliotherapy



Vries, D., Brennan, Z., et al. (2017). Healing with books: a literature review of bibliotherapy used with children and youth who have experienced trauma. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, (1). Retrieved from: <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=59ee1d85-bea7-406a-bcb7-dfa50adf37a0%40sessionmgr120>

De Vries et al. published a literature review in the *Therapeutic Recreation Journal* on the *benefits of Bibliotherapy on children who have experienced a traumatic event*. Literature on the topic shows that Bibliotherapy as a psychosocial intervention has had benefits on increasing the coping skills of children who have experienced a traumatic event, and can combine the use of literature with helping children overcome problems and facilitating healthy growth. Different areas of Bibliotherapy exist, which range from cognitive to clinical to developmental levels, and aim to use literature in ways that help a child address their fears and anxieties over an event and teach self-help skills. This therapeutic intervention allows children to view themselves as characters in a story, and can discuss with therapists how they would change the way a story unfolds, what character they would want to be, and can allow a child to feel they have something/someone to identify with and feel less alone or misunderstood.

Research has shown that reading in general can be highly beneficial for children, and combining that with a therapeutic lens allows for children to develop high self-efficacy and coping skills, while learning to identify with characters and individuals on a higher level. By allowing traumatized children to identify with a character, there is a greater ability for that child to identify the feelings and emotions they may have a hard time identifying to themselves.

Montgomery, P. & Maunders, K. (2015). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 55, 37-47. The effectiveness of creative bibliotherapy for internalizing, externalizing, and prosocial behaviors in children: a systematic review. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/science/article/pii/S0190740915001590>

The University of Oxford published a *systematic review of Bibliotherapy studies on the effectiveness of Bibliotherapy on prosocial behaviors in children*, and how it can be used to intervene and treat internalized and externalized behaviors and how to increase positive behaviors. In the studies reviewed, it was found that Bibliotherapy had a small to moderate effect on internalized, externalized, and prosocial behaviors. This review also supported the proposed hypothesis that creative bibliotherapy interventions are able to work alongside CBT therapy effectively, and allow children to express themselves in ways they may not be easily able to do verbally.

Creative bibliotherapeutic interventions are not strictly defined through one main level of practice, but can be seen as adjustable based on the intervention style needed and along the general lines of CBT. This review showed the promise of bibliotherapy as an intervention in conjunction with other therapy styles, which shows the versatility and accessibility of bibliotherapy as a creative approach to helping children access their emotions and understand all levels of their behaviors.

Lewis, K., Amatya, K., Coffman, M., & Ollendick, T. (2015). Treating nighttime fears in young children with bibliotherapy: evaluating anxiety symptoms and monitoring behavior change. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 30. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/science/article/pii/S0887618514001790>

The University of Illinois at Chicago led a study centered around the *effects of Bibliotherapy on treating nightmare and night time anxieties in children*, and how the behaviors associated with nighttime fears and nightmares can be assessed and managed through the use of Bibliotherapy. This study focused around the normalcy of youth and children have nighttime fears and nightmares and how severe behaviors can interrupt the normal functions of a child and their family when not properly intervened upon. Bibliotherapy has been introduced as a growing form of intervention in conjunction with CBT, a usual

first line of treatment with anxieties, because of its accessibility to families and its use of relatable characters in stories to help children and youth work through their fears. This study aimed to incorporate behavior monitoring and tracking over four weeks combined with reading aloud from a set book by parents every night, weekly checks in with a therapist, and incorporating games during the story time process that included finding toys in the dark to racing to turn off the lights.

The results from this study showed benefits of bibliotherapy on the self-efficacy of children experiencing nighttime fears and nightmares, and shed light on the effectiveness of a home-based treatment option that combined a creative outlet for children with the involvement and support of their parental figures. This study found that an at home intervention of bibliotherapy may be an effective first line defense in the treatment of mild to moderate anxiety issues faced by children before moving on to more intensive treatment options such as weekly therapy sessions or more intensive CBT.

Pola, A., & Nelson, R. (2014). The impact of bibliotherapy on positive coping in children who have experienced disaster. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 48(4), 341-344. Retrieved from: <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=d3a90eb9-1264-4250-b744-1209c71989f4%40sessionmgr102>

Temple University published a study focused on *the impact of bibliotherapy on positive coping in children who have experienced disaster* which focuses on how children can use bibliotherapy to overcome disaster-related trauma and increase their skills surrounding coping and emotional regulation. This study looked at how bibliotherapy can be beneficial when treating a child following a disaster, because though there are guidelines on what books/stories to utilize with a child, there is also a great deal of flexibility so that a story or character can be tailored to the child or what they experienced. There is an emphasis in the study surrounding utilizing various partners who can assist the bibliotherapy process, such as teachers and librarians utilized for helping to pick books that are at a child's comprehension level while also putting a classic psychological twist on the intervention.

Literature surrounding this journal article study focused on emphasizing that bibliotherapy should most likely not be the only treatment option being utilized for helping a child work through a disaster, but can be used successfully in conjunction to help teach empathy, self-efficacy, personal and social adjustments, positive outlooks on the future and life, and emotional recognition. Discussions surrounding the story line and characters, especially ones had out loud between a child and therapist where children can talk through a plot line or how they may or may not relate to a character.

Scogin, F., Fairchild, J. et al. (2013). Cognitive bibliotherapy and memory training for older adults with depressive symptoms. *Aging & Mental Health*, 18 (5). Retrieved from: <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=3eea0478-fa5a-434f-a9f2-391f494929c5%40sessionmgr103>

The University of Alabama, MIREEC, and Stanford University published a study aimed at looking at *cognitive bibliotherapy and memory training for older adults with depressive symptoms*. As bibliotherapy has gained traction with treating depressive and anxious symptoms in children, this intervention can also be important for older adults who often undergo symptoms of depression and memory loss complications which can be written off as part of old age instead of as a symptoms of a large issue treatable through literature and bibliotherapy. This study looked at the effects of using CBT as a model for treating depression combined with the use of books and literature, as well as specific memory training modules that also incorporated reading and books into the training process. Memory scales and depression symptom scales were also incorporated to measure symptoms and behaviors displayed throughout the treatment process.

Findings from this study showed that though solid support from findings was lacking for the combined memory training and CBT, there was a reduction in depressive symptoms for older adults who underwent CBT with the combined use of literature in the CBT process.