

# Brief A.R.T. as Focussed Psychological Strategy (Medicare, Australia)

*Brief Affect Regulation Therapy: a Focussed Psychological Strategies service, under the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing 'Better Access to psychiatrists, psychologists, and general practitioners through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (Better Access) initiative.'*

A range of evidence based strategies have been approved for use by allied mental health professionals utilising the FPS (Focussed Psychological Strategies) Medicare items.

As outlined in the MBS book, Focussed Psychological Strategies services also include psycho-education, cognitive behaviour therapy intervention, such as exposure, relaxation training such as controlled breathing and muscle relaxation training and skills training such as problem solving, anger management and stress management. Brief Affect Regulation Therapy utilises these interventions.

## *Psycho-education*

Brief A.R.T. provides clients with psycho-education on anxiety, depression, dissociation, stress and trauma; on the regulation of dysthymic and euthymic affects; on setting positive life goals; on understanding the aims of psychotherapy. Delivery is by utilizing emotions charts and with a comprehensive client guide.

## *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*

Exposure techniques: Brief A.R.T. uses exposure to the fight, flight, freeze stress responses through exercises that include cognitive recall of past stress experiences. De-conditioning occurs by pairing these cognitive exercises with physical relaxation training exercises.

## *Relaxation Training*

**Controlled breathing:** Brief A.R.T. utilizes controlled breathing to calm down arousal triggered by recall of stressful experiences.

**Progressive muscle relaxation training:** Brief A.R.T. utilizes proprioceptive exercises to access autonomic nervous system stress responses, including Jacobsons Progressive muscle relaxation training and stretching exercises.

## **Skills Training**

Problem solving skills: Brief A.R.T. promotes problem solving through counselling, positive goal setting and by increases cognitive analysis through stress management.

**Anger management:** Brief A.R.T. assists clients with the vital first step to emotions management, namely correctly identifying emotions and differentiating emotions, such as anger, fear, guilt, apathy, isolation. It offers clients comprehensive language skills to describe emotions accurately; a procedure for reduction of the stress of experiencing emotions; and techniques for releasing inappropriate emotions and for gaining control over emotions, plus expression in more appropriate ways.

**Stress management:** Brief A.R.T. teaches clients simple practical stress management skills that can be used as self help strategies to manage the fight, flight and freeze stress responses. Psycho-education on stress, including the impacts of nervous system maturation on stress controls, is an important component.

To find out more about Focussed Psychological Strategies services, under the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing 'Better Access to psychiatrists, psychologists, and general practitioners through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (Better Access) initiative' and Continued Professional Development requirements go to:

### **The Australian Psychological Society (APS)**

**Phone:** (03) 8662 3300

**Website:** <http://www.psychology.org.au/>

### **The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW)**

**Phone:** (03) 9642 2519

**Email:** [mentalhealth@aasw.asn.au](mailto:mentalhealth@aasw.asn.au)

**Website:** [www.aasw.asn.au](http://www.aasw.asn.au)

### **Occupational Therapy Australia**

**Phone:** 1 300 AUST OT (682878)

**Email:** [cpd@ausot.com.au](mailto:cpd@ausot.com.au)

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