

Diagnostic and Behavioral Assessment in Children and Adolescents

A C L I N I C A L G U I D E

edited by

Bryce D. McLeod

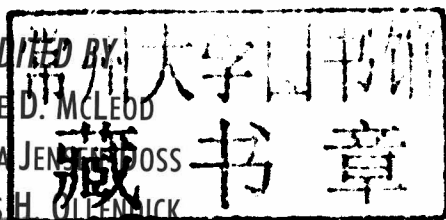
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Diagnostic and Behavioral Assessment in Children and Adolescents

A CLINICAL GUIDE

EDITED BY
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**Diagnostic and Behavioral Assessment
in Children and Adolescents**

To our families, with love

To Rose, Isabela, and Gabriela

—B. D. M.

To Brian, Abby, and Matthew

—A. J.-D.

*To Mary, daughters Laurie and Kathleen,
sons-in-law David and Billy, and
grandchildren Braden, Ethan, Calvin,
Addison, and Victoria*

—T. H. O.

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Preface

The evidence-based practice movement has had an enormous impact on the field of clinical child and adolescent psychology over the past two decades. This movement has primarily focused on promoting evidence-based treatments. However, more attention has recently been paid to the importance of evidence-based assessment—defined as an approach to clinical evaluation that utilizes science and theory to guide the assessment process (Hunsley & Mash, 2007)—and to the central role assessment plays in informing the treatment process.

A goal of the evidence-based assessment movement is to develop and promote a set of guidelines to steer assessment research, practice, and training. Recent publications have sought to delineate guidelines for assessment practices (e.g., Hunsley & Mash, 2008); however, until now few resources have been available for training the next generation of clinicians in the application of these new guidelines. The purpose of this book is to fill this gap. Specifically, the main goal of this book is to illustrate how and when diverse diagnostic and behavioral assessment tools can be used to inform each step of treatment, from intake to termination.

The development of this book began in 2007, when the first editor (Bryce D. McLeod) was asked to develop a graduate assessment course based on emerging trends in the field. The overarching goal was to introduce students to the principles, knowledge, skills, and values embodied within the evidence-based assessment movement (see Hunsley & Mash, 2008). The course was to cover the theory and practice of diagnostic and behavioral assessment, including the conceptual underpinnings and major methods associated with these assessment approaches, in order to teach students how diagnostic and behavioral assessment approaches can be used in tandem to guide diagnostic formulation, case conceptualization, treatment selection, treatment planning, and monitoring of treatment progress and outcome. Ultimately, the course was designed to help students learn

how to critically apply evidence-based assessment strategies to guide clinical work from intake to termination.

The three editors corresponded about the course as it was being prepared. During this correspondence, we discovered that few courses covering these materials were being taught at other universities. Furthermore, it became evident that no textbooks then available focused on both diagnostic and behavioral assessment approaches or showed how these approaches could be used together to inform diagnostic formulation, case conceptualization, treatment selection, treatment planning, and treatment progress and outcome monitoring. Following discussions among us about the need to fill this gap, we decided to put together this volume. We hope that it will address a critical training need in the field.

ORGANIZATION OF THE VOLUME

This book is organized into two sections. In Part I, “Fundamental Issues,” the historical, theoretical, and conceptual underpinnings of the diagnostic and behavioral assessment approaches are presented. Emphasis is placed on providing readers with the background they will need to know when and how to apply different diagnostic and behavioral assessment tools throughout treatment. Chapter 1, “Overview of Diagnostic and Behavioral Assessment,” sets the stage for the following chapters by presenting the assessment principles that are used to guide the selection, use, and interpretation of assessment methods with children, adolescents, and their families. Chapter 2, “Diagnostic Assessment,” and Chapter 3, “Behavioral Assessment,” focus specifically on the theory, methods, and issues related to diagnostic and behavioral assessment tools, respectively; they also describe how these methods are typically used to inform the treatment process with children and their families. The final chapter in Part I, “Case Conceptualization, Treatment Planning, and Outcome Monitoring,” provides a practical guide for readers to use when applying the principles of diagnostic and behavioral assessment to generate a case conceptualization that can guide the treatment process. In this chapter, two sample cases are presented. These sample cases are used throughout the remainder of the book to help illustrate how the different assessment concepts, strategies, and tools can be applied in clinical practice.

In Part II, “Assessment Tools,” we present the key diagnostic and behavioral assessment tools typically used to inform the treatment process from intake to termination. Each chapter provides a description of its assessment method, the theory underlying the method, psychometric properties of the method, and implications for using the method in treatment planning and outcome evaluation. Each chapter also describes how its assessment method might be applied to the sample cases presented in Chapter 4 of Part I. Readers working with children and adolescents in a

variety of settings will find the guidance provided in this section sufficiently detailed to cover the use of these assessment methods with a wide range of young clients. The chapters provide details on the rationale and the principles underlying each type of assessment tool, in order to help ensure that readers are well equipped to use these methods with the populations they serve.

The final chapter in the volume, “Diagnostic and Behavioral Assessment in Action,” is designed to demonstrate how the themes and methods presented in Parts I and II can be utilized in clinical practice. Namely, we demonstrate in Chapter 15 how the various diagnostic and behavioral assessment methods can be used to inform the treatment process and develop a case conceptualization. We also apply the concepts presented in Chapter 4 to the two sample cases and share the case conceptualizations for both. Overall, we think we have produced a volume that will be highly informative and clinically useful.

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Part I

FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES

Overview of Diagnostic and Behavioral Assessment

Bryce D. McLeod, Amanda Jensen-Doss, and Thomas H. Ollendick

“Assessment” is the process by which information is gathered, interpreted, and used to produce a clinical description of an individual (Hunsley, 2002). In clinical practice, assessment of the individual can help inform the treatment process from initial intake to progress during treatment until termination. Indeed, assessment techniques can be used for a variety of purposes in psychotherapy, which include (but are not limited to) diagnosing disorders, informing treatment planning, building a case conceptualization, and monitoring and evaluating treatment outcomes. When assessment is used to arrive at an accurate description of the individual, then the treatment itself is presumably made more efficient and effective. However, a clinician needs to use the “right” assessment tools during the different phases of treatment to produce an accurate description of the individual. No single assessment technique can be used to guide every phase of treatment. Instead, a clinician must rely upon a number of tools pulled from both the diagnostic and behavioral assessment traditions.

The time is ripe for a book focused on using assessment to inform treatment. The past two decades have witnessed the rise of the evidence-based assessment movement, which has focused attention upon assessment training and practice (Ollendick, 1999). “Evidence-based assessment” is defined as an approach to clinical evaluation that utilizes science and theory to guide the assessment process (Hunsley & Mash, 2007). A goal of this movement is to develop and promote a set of assessment guidelines to direct research, structure training, and inform clinical practice.

Assessment is a complex process, and the assessment literature is voluminous. In the past, the large number of instruments and practices has made it difficult to compare instruments and to select psychometrically sound assessment tools. To address this problem, Hunsley and Mash (2008) outlined psychometric criteria for judging assessment tools and organized the assessment literature around particular disorders. These efforts represent important advances for the field, as it is now easier for clinicians to identify psychometrically strong assessment tools for routine clinical use.

Despite these recent advances, research on how best to employ and interpret assessment tools to improve treatment is lacking. Very few studies have examined the validity of assessment tools across different populations, or have considered whether incorporating assessment into treatment can improve treatment outcomes (Hunsley & Mash, 2007; Youngstrom, 2008). This means that there is little empirical evidence to guide the assessment process during treatment.

The goal of this book is to provide readers with the knowledge and skills needed to guide the assessment process from intake to termination. Other resources are available to help readers identify particular assessment tools for specific disorders (see Hunsley & Mash, 2008). Our purpose here is to cover areas of knowledge—such as the basics of psychometric theory; the connection between assessment and treatment; and the assessment of target behaviors and other key factors (cognitive, affective, behavioral, contextual)—that are needed to use assessment tools effectively over the course of treatment (Krishnamurthy et al., 2004). We also cover key skill areas, such as target behavior identification, case conceptualization, and tool selection and interpretation, which are relevant to using assessment tools to inform treatment. To gain the right combination of knowledge and skills, clinicians are advised to take graduate-level courses in developmental psychopathology, developmental psychology, psychometric theory, child and family intervention, and culture and diversity, as well as in evidence-based assessment.

TRENDS IN ASSESSMENT TRAINING AND PRACTICE

Assessment in clinical practice falls clearly under the domain of psychology. However, assessment does not presently represent a central focus of the field (Youngstrom, 2008). The past two decades have witnessed an explosion of treatment research resulting from the evidence-based practice movement. These efforts have generated a number of treatments for a wide range of youth emotional and behavioral problems (Barrett & Ollendick, 2004; McLeod & Weisz, 2004; Weisz, Jensen-Doss, & Hawley, 2005). However, research on assessment has not kept pace. As a result, assessment and treatment have become disconnected processes (Youngstrom, 2008).