



STEP-UP TRAINING DAY 1:

TRANSDIAGNOSTIC BRIEF BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

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INTRODUCTIONS

Dr. Robin Weersing



- Treatment developer
- Treatment and prevention of anxiety and depression in families

Dr. Araceli Gonzalez



- Treatment co-author
- Culturally competent interventions for internalizing disorders in youth, emerging adults, and families

What does STRESS mean to you





STRESS is . . .

- a *challenge* that calls upon resources

People *USE* the word differently

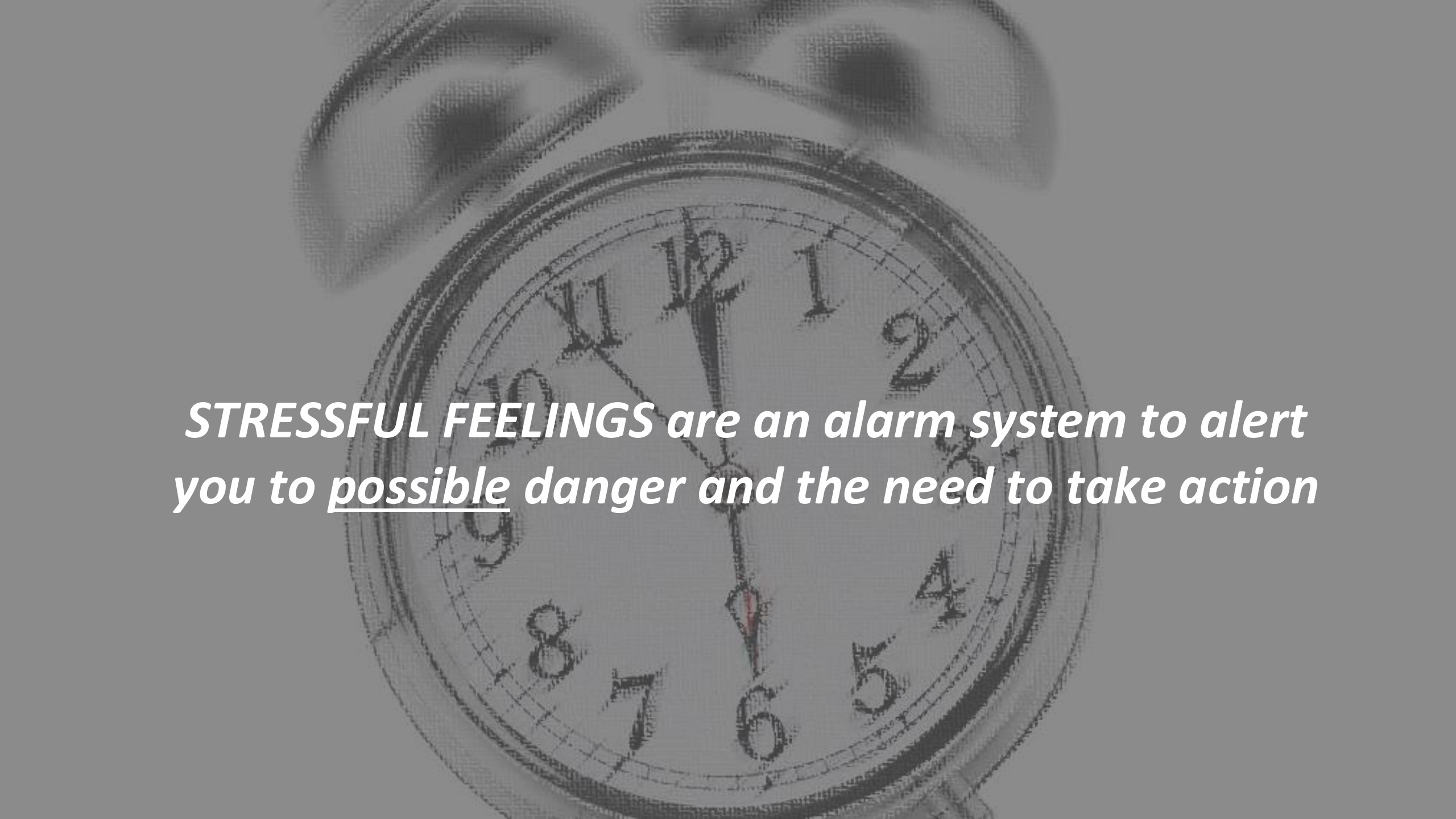
- a stressful event or stressor
- feeling stressed
- almost always used *negatively*



*Can feelings of
stress ever be
helpful?*

When?

When not?



STRESSFUL FEELINGS are an alarm system to alert you to possible danger and the need to take action

**STRESS can provide ENERGY,
MOTIVATION, and DIRECTION
when resources match
the challenge.**



Stress is a problem when it:

- Causes intense distress beyond the moment
- Leads to avoidance and withdrawal
- Interferes with required life tasks
- Impacts relationships
- Reduces joy



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- Causes intense distress beyond the moment
- **Leads to avoidance and withdrawal**
- Interferes with required life tasks
- Impacts relationships
- Reduces joy





AVOIDANCE

The fork in the road

Central mechanism for how stress and negative mood cycle into persistent anxiety and depression

Actively rewards escape behavior through short-term feelings of relief



STEP-UP ***transdiagnostic*** ***mechanism of action***

- Reduce **avoidance** of threatening stimuli / negative affect
- Increase **approach** to rewarding stimuli
- Technique of **graded engagement**

Do the things you “need and want to do” to have a rewarding life

STEP-UP Training Agenda

STEP-UP Training Agenda

Day One

- Overview
 - Research support
 - Study design
 - Treatment model
- Lesson 1: Stress and mood
- Lesson 2: Relaxation and pleasant activities
- Lesson 3: Problem solving

Day Two

- Lesson 4: Developing a Master Plan
- Lesson 5: Master Plan practice
- Lesson 6: Relapse prevention

Consultation calls

- Consult call for model consultation and research coordination

***STEP-UP
Research
Support***



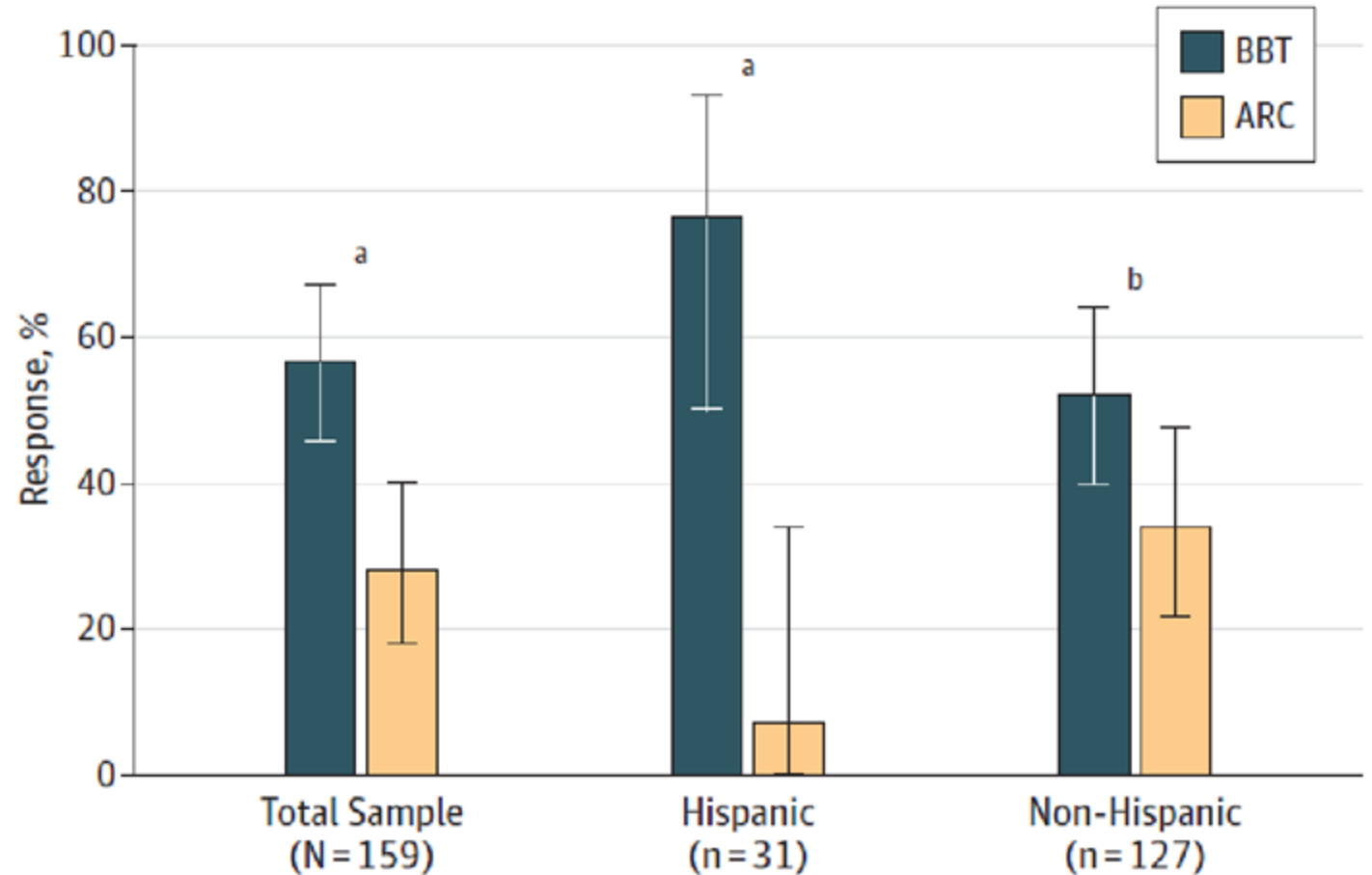
Overview of Treatment Development Studies

	<i>Completed studies</i>				<i>In progress</i>	<i>Future directions</i>
<i>Study Aim</i>	Treatment development	Efficacy – effectiveness	Translation to telehealth	Translation to CHC clinics	<i>Hybrid effectiveness–implementation</i>	Implementation
<i>Setting Sample</i>	<u>Primary care</u> Insured sample	Primary care Insured sample	Primary care Insured sample	Primary care <u>Safety-net sample</u>	<i>Primary care Safety-net sample</i>	Primary care Safety-net sample
<i>Modality Providers</i>	F2F Clinic staff	F2F Research staff	<u>Digital / telehealth</u> Research staff	Digital telehealth <u>CHC clinic staff</u>	<i>Digital telehealth CHC clinic staff</i>	Digital / telehealth CHC clinic staff
<i>Design</i>	RCT (N = 60)	RCT (N = 185)	Open pilot (N = 7)	Open pilot (N = 13)	<i>RCT Hybrid Type 1 (target N = 220)</i>	Hybrid Type 2

*Effective in prior
work?*

Effective and appears to reduce ethnic disparities

- Original BBT RCT
- N = 185
- Very effective overall
- Especially effective for Latinx youths



Error bars indicate 95% CIs.

^a $P < .001$ for comparison of BBT and ARC.

^b $P = .04$ for comparison of BBT and ARC.

***Effective across
multiple domains***

Functioning (CGAS, CGAS ≥ 70 , remission of all target diagnoses)

Anxiety (PARS, SCARED, SDQ emotion)

Depression (MFQ-P, SDQ emotion, *not* CDRS-R)

Suicide (MFQ index items)

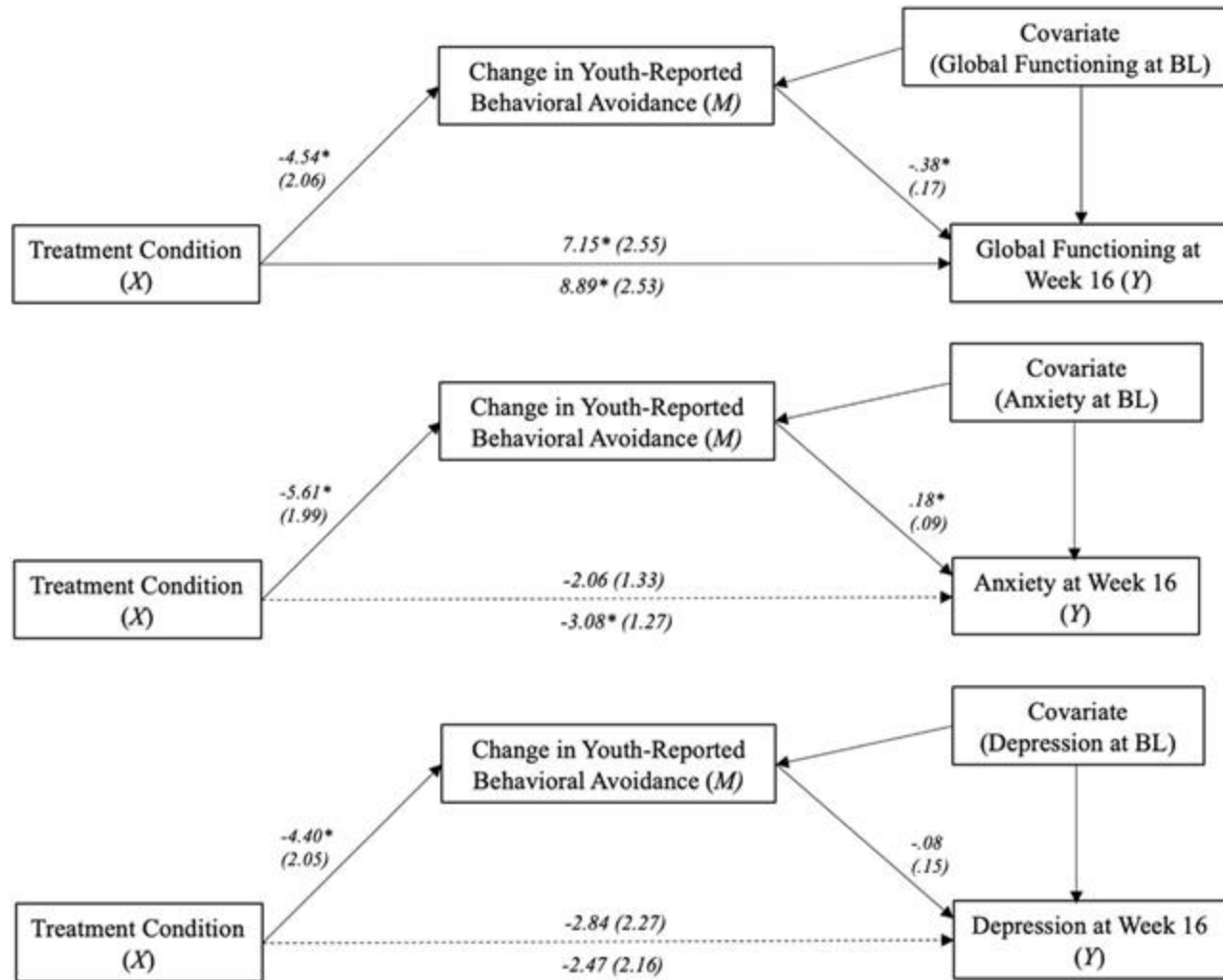
Externalizing symptoms (SDQ-P total, SDQ-P attention)

Parent-child conflict (in Latinx youths; in non-depressed youth)

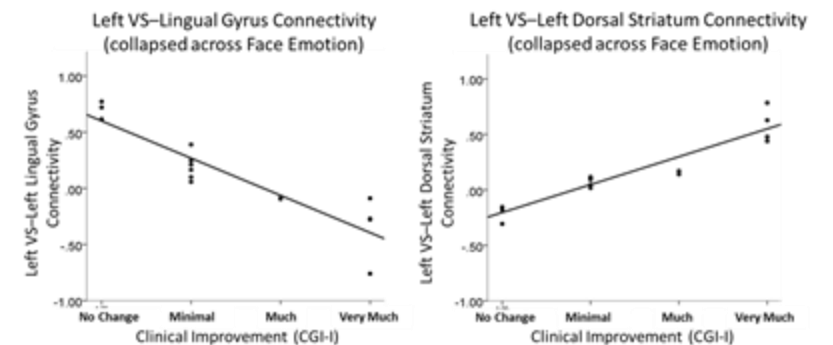
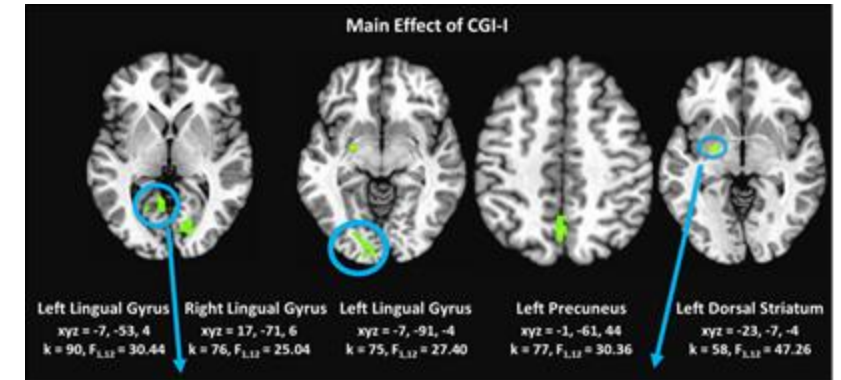
Peer problems (in depressed youth)

Cost-effective (QALYs, AFDs, cost-saving)

(Brent et al., 2020, *JAACAP*; Schwartz et al., 2021, *JAACAP*; Lynch et al., 2021, *JAMA Network*)



(Youth self-reported avoidance; Baca et al., 2023, *BRAT*)



(Reward processing; Schwartz et al., 2019, *Frontiers*)

STEP-UP
Study Design



Project Goal

To test the effectiveness of a brief behavioral intervention (STEP-UP) compared to assisted referral to community (ARC) mental health resources for underserved youths with anxiety and/or depression recruited from community health centers



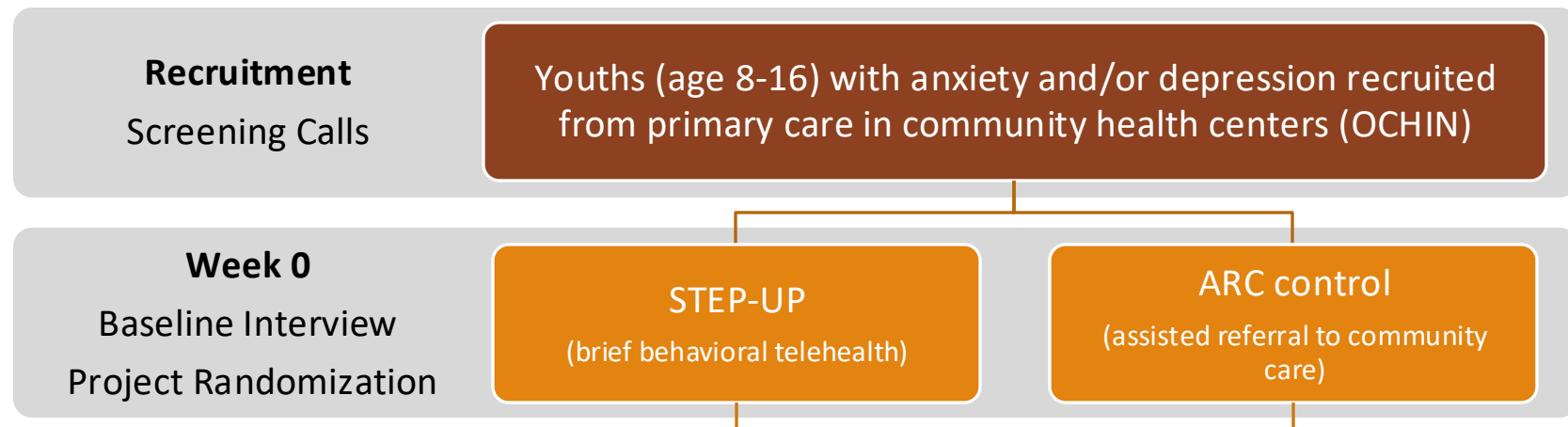
***Randomized
clinical trial
design***

Randomized clinical trial design

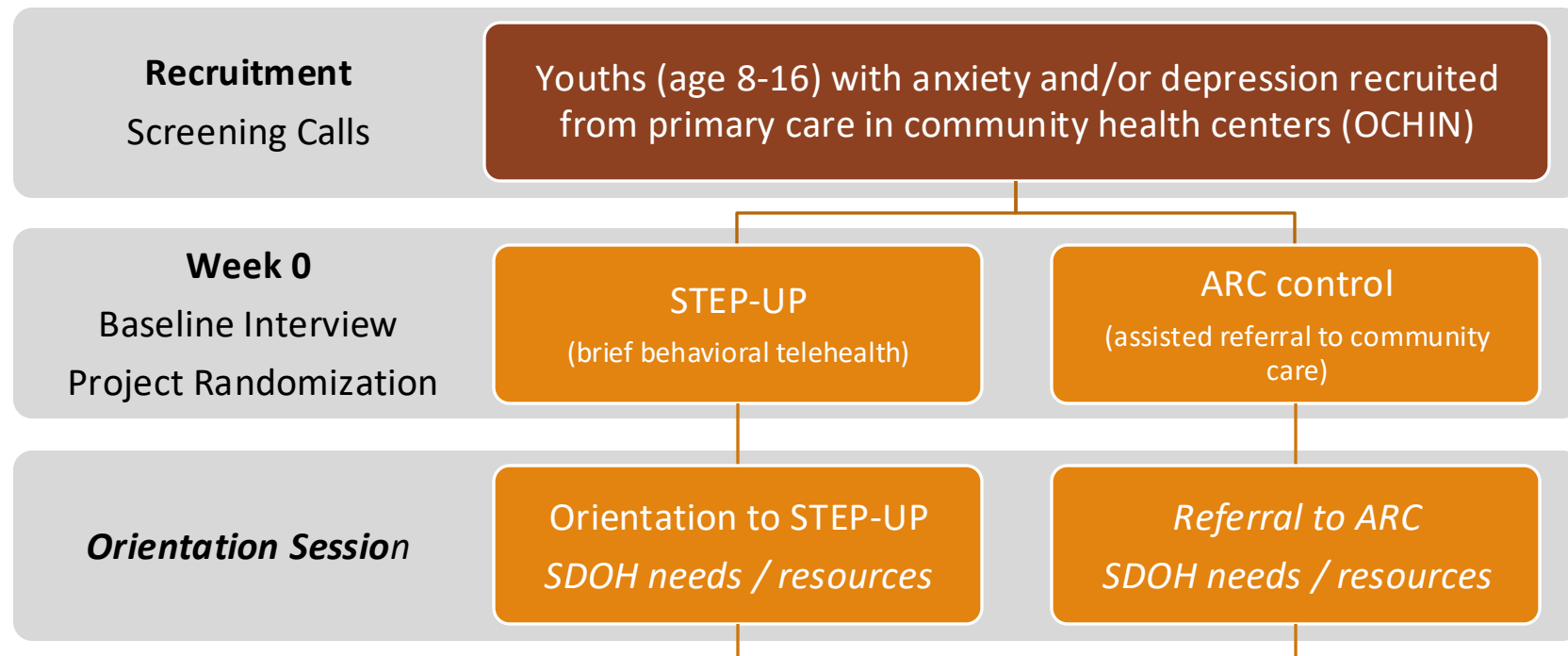
Recruitment Screening Calls

Youths (age 8-16) with anxiety and/or depression recruited from primary care in community health centers (OCHIN)

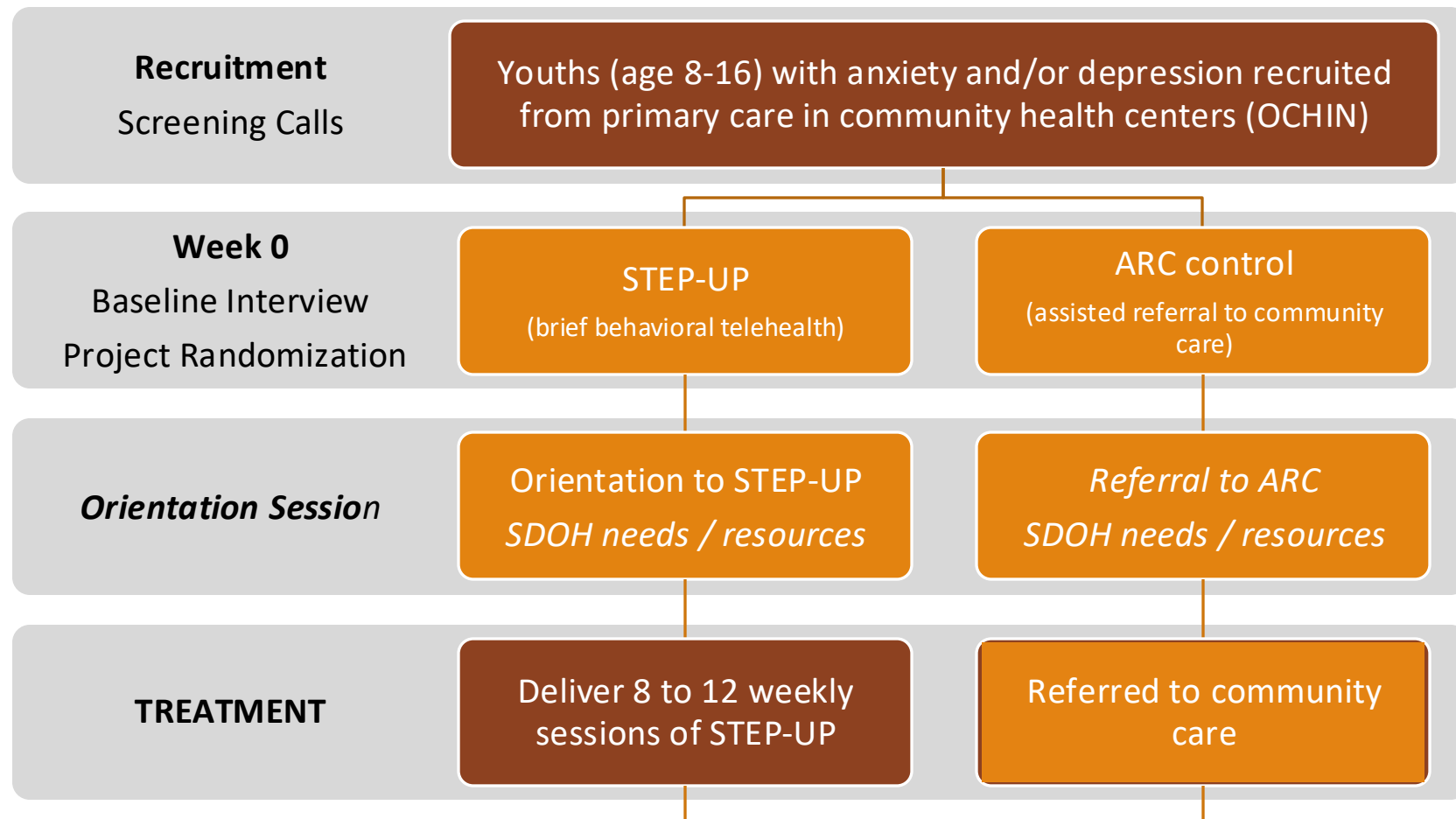
Randomized clinical trial design



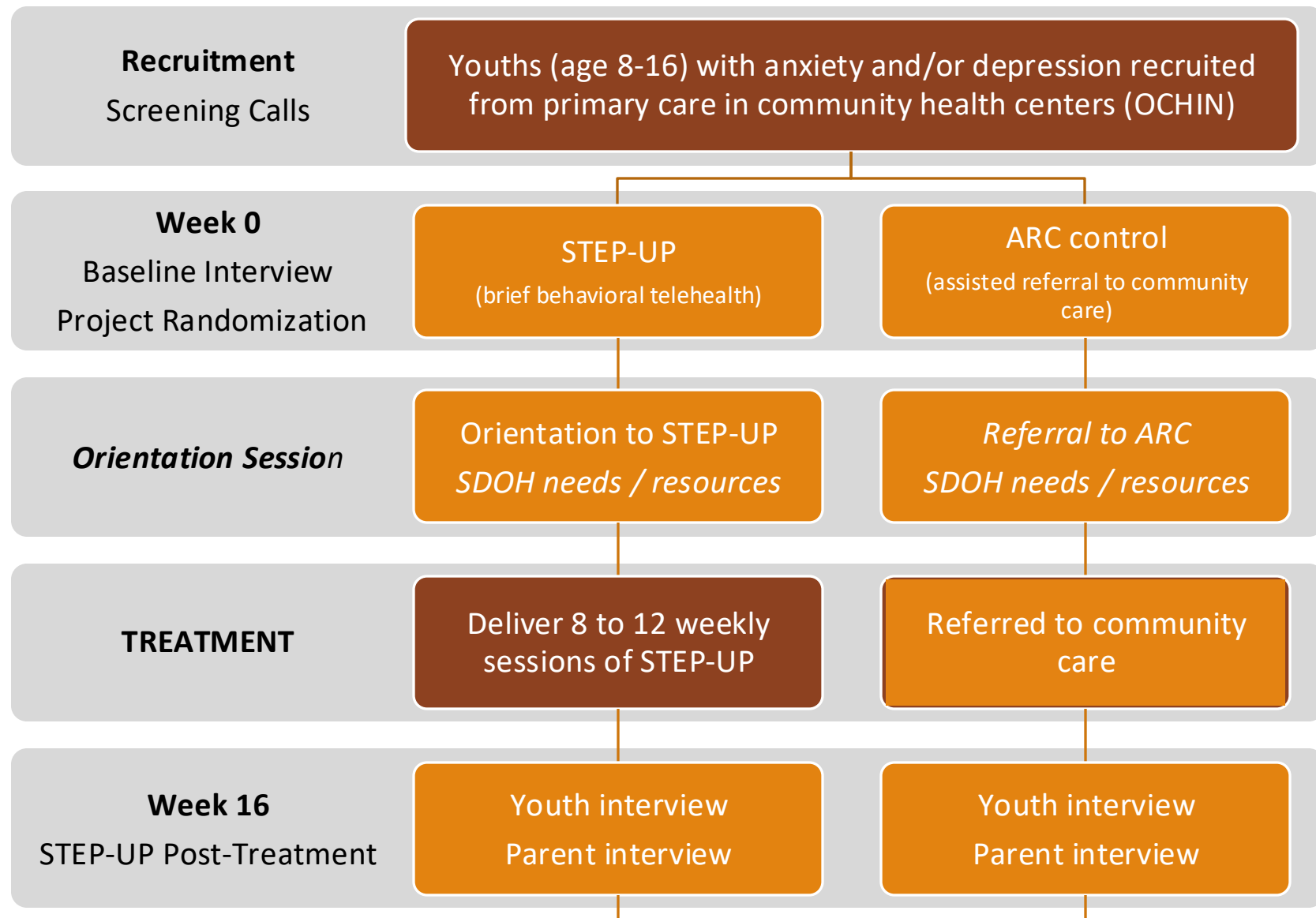
Randomized clinical trial design



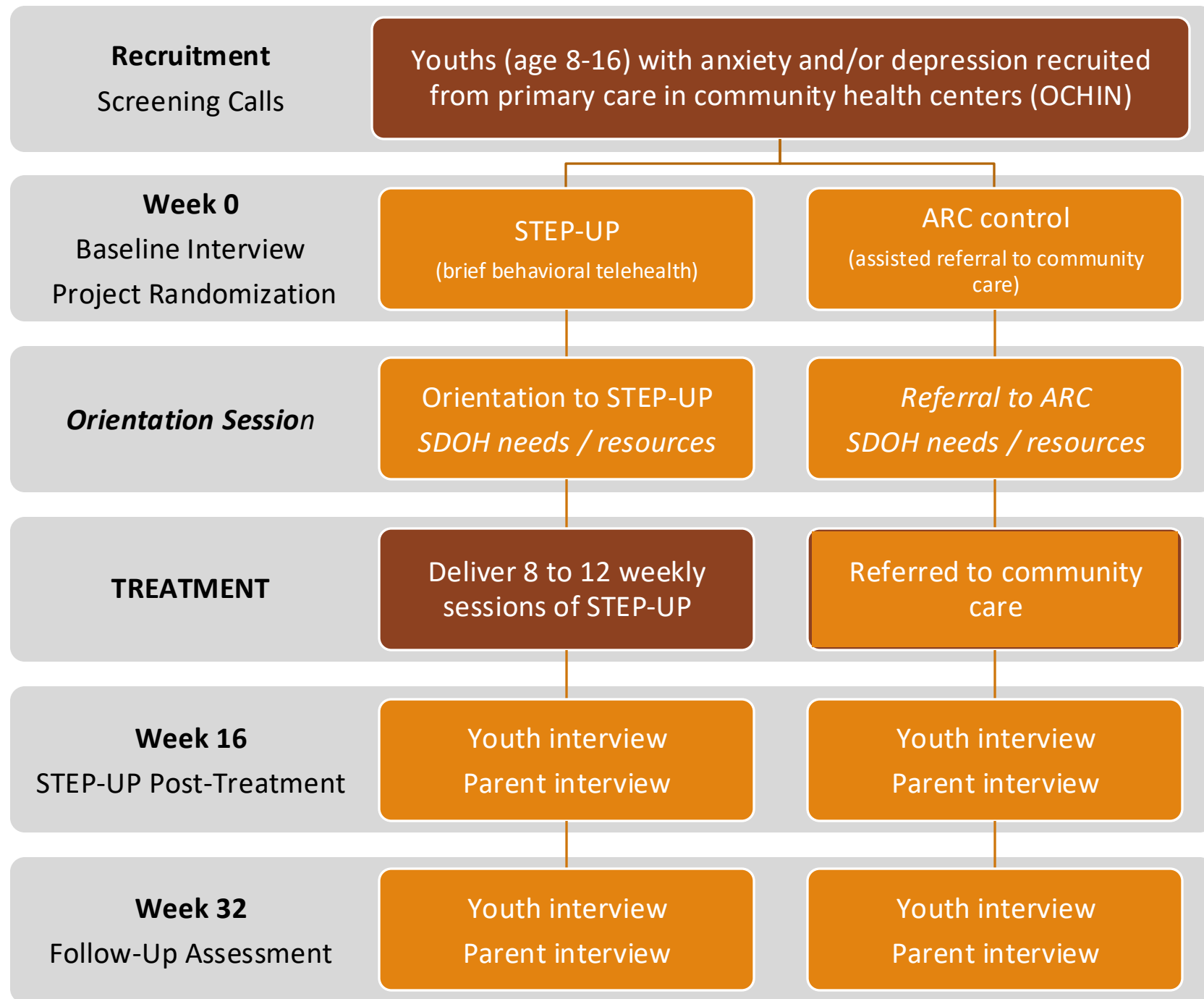
Randomized clinical trial design



Randomized clinical trial design



Randomized clinical trial design



Tasks and Roles

CASE FINDING

Youths identified through electronic health record and referral from clinic providers

ENROLLMENT

Research staff handles recruitment, consent, and study intake assessment

TREATMENT

Youth treated by clinic providers

OUTCOMES

Research staff conducts assessments

STEP-UP Therapist Tasks



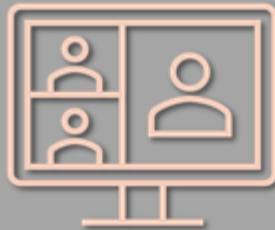
Conduct STEP-UP treatment

- 6 Lessons (8-12 weekly sessions in 16 weeks)
- 30-50 minutes each



Complete documentation

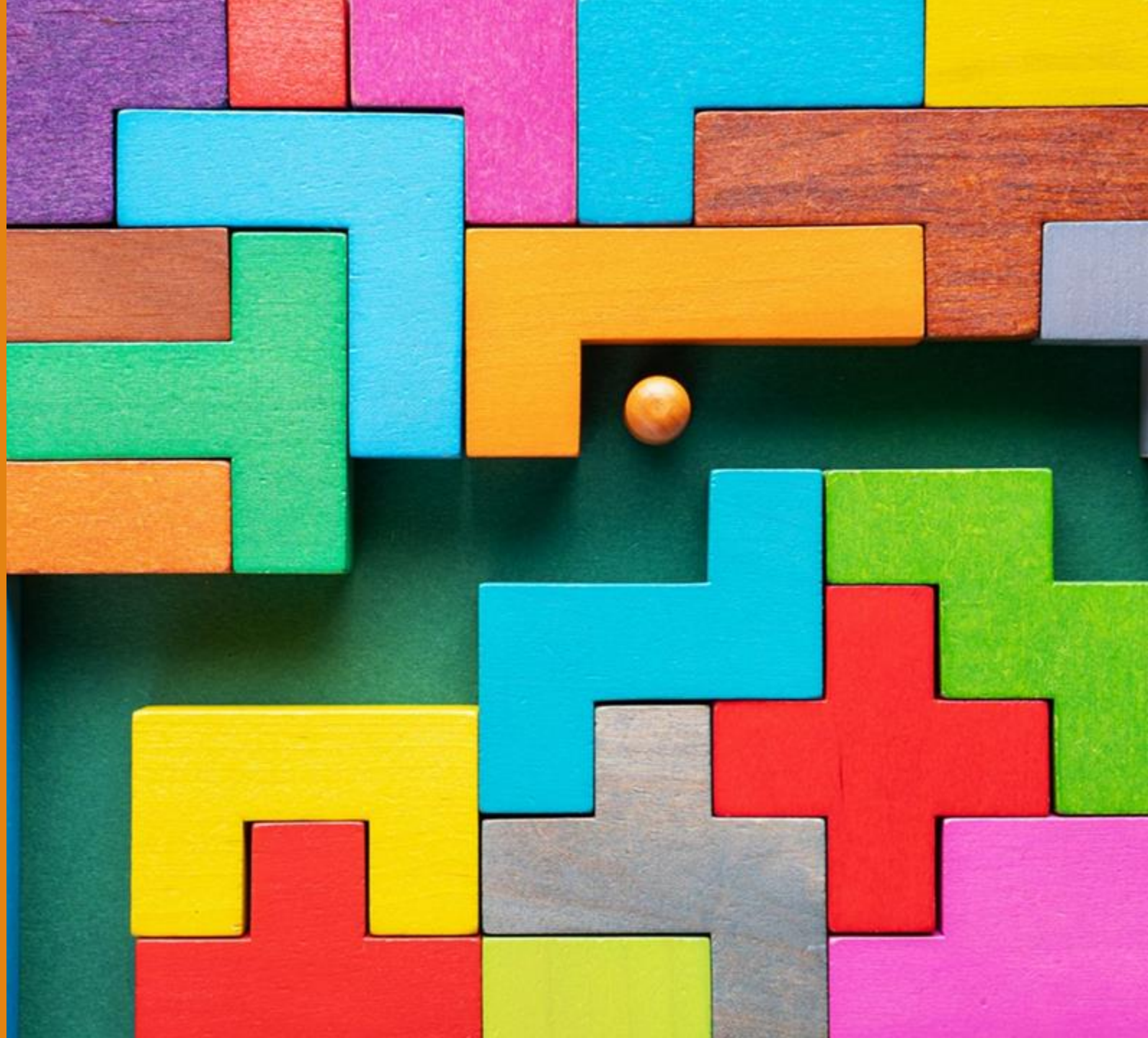
- Record and upload sessions
- Complete custom EPIC case notes



Collaborate on weekly call

- Participate in discussion of cases
- Consult on workflow and recruitment

*STEP-UP
Treatment
Model*



STEP-UP frequently asked questions

Format of STEP-UP?

- Sessions with therapist (telehealth)
- Companion website to support
- Need space / tech to participate

Length / time required?

- 30- to 50-minute telehealth sessions
- Weekly (or near weekly)
- 8 to 12 sessions total

Parent involvement?

- Useful!
- Weekly 10-minute check-in ideal
- Asked to support therapy “homework”

STEP-UP

Lesson

Sequence

Lesson	Session	Goals
1	1	WHAT IS STRESS? Psychoeducation, orientation to treatment
2	2	RELAXATION Deep breathing, PMR, guided imagery, pleasant activity scheduling
3	3	PROBLEM SOLVING Problem-solving as an active stress reduction and management strategy
4	4	MASTER PLAN Selecting core approach goal(s), demonstration activity
5	5-11	MASTER PLAN PRACTICE In-session practice of approach goals, planning out- of-session practice
6	12	KEEP IT GOING! Relapse prevention

Approach is the key mechanism

- Central to internalizing problems*
 - Core feature of anxiety is avoidance
 - Core feature of depression is withdrawal
 - Increasing approach also key in CBT and third-wave interventions
- Graded approach / graded engagement
 - Step-by-step way to get back to doing things we want and have to do
 - For anxiety, graded engagement = exposure
 - For depression, graded engagement = behavioral activation



“Doing the things we need and want to do”



STEP-UP aims to improve functioning

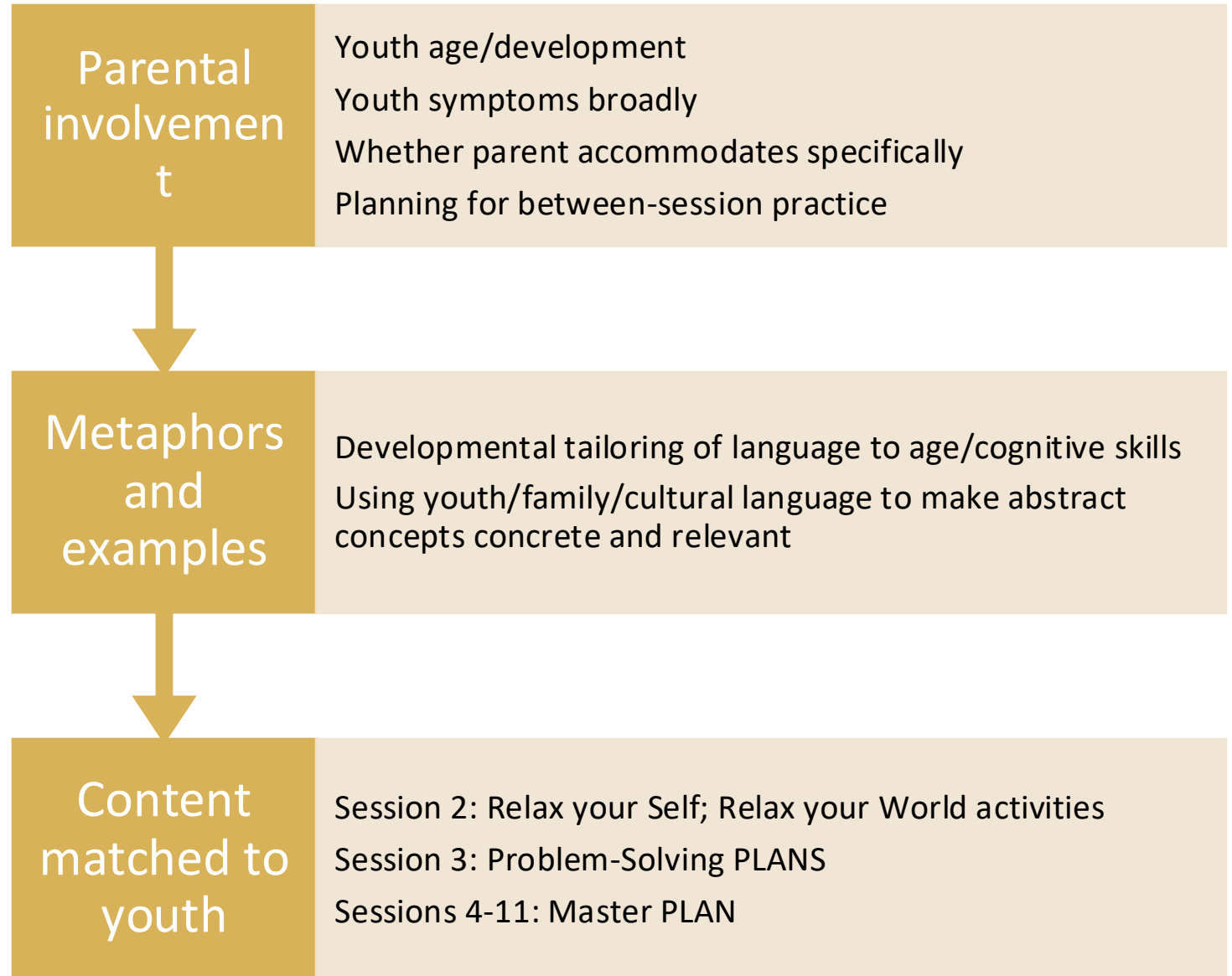
Anxiety or mood improvements often happen, but they are not the primary goal



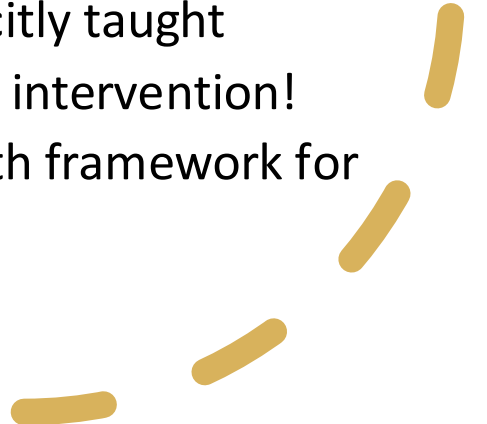
We do not focus on getting youth to “habituate”

Hard to habituate to low-frequency situations
There are some feelings we don’t “habituate” to

Flexibility within STEP-UP



What STEP-UP is and is not

- STEP-UP is . . .
 - Gentle yet firm approach
 - Non-judgmental, neutral, and concrete
 - “Doing the things we need and want to do” differs for each youth
 - Does not use but is consistent with third wave approaches (e.g., mindfulness, ACT)
 - Focused on impact of symptoms on youth functioning
 - Pre-session planning before EVERY session
 - STEP-UP is not . . .
 - CBT – cognitive restructuring is not explicitly taught
 - Talk or play therapy – this is a very active intervention!
 - Just about implementing – we teach youth framework for how to implement skills themselves!
- 



Tour of website

Lesson pages for use in session

Therapist pages for planning

Therapist cheat sheets

Lesson 1: What is Stress?

In this lesson:

- [Goal for the lesson](#)
- [Learn about STEP-UP!](#)
- [DISCUSS what is stress?](#)
- [DISCUSS avoid or approach?](#)
- [PLAN for next time](#)
- [Lesson Summary](#)



Lesson Pages

One page for each of the core lessons of STEP-UP

Designed to be used in-session as guide but NOT to be read word-for-word

“For next time” section for homework planning, emailed / texted to families

Youth / family also sign in post-session for homework exercises and review

Tips for Lesson 4



Lesson Cheatsheet ►



WHAT are the goals of Lesson 4?

- To help the youth identify one or two big goals for better mood and functioning
- To use these goals to develop specific Master Plan(s) with graded approach behaviors
- To try at least one step on the Master Plan before the end of session

Therapist Pages

Cannot be seen by families

One page for each of the core lessons of STEP-UP

Tips for implementing each lesson

Useful for pre-session preparation

Cheat sheet at top for download

LESSON 5 CHEAT SHEET

NOTE: Lesson 5 is repeated multiple times during care.

Goal

- To implement the Master Plan in session
- To foster between-session practice
- To guide cumulative progress in and out of session

Set agenda and review progress

- Review rationale for working on the Master Plan
 - *It helps to learn to approach and to "deal" with negative affect, rather than avoiding*
 - *Small steps are usually easier than big changes*
 - *Master Plans are lists of small steps to take you to big goals*
- Review specific between-session Master Plan homework
- Review any other homework (problem solving, relaxation practice, mood monitoring)
- If needed, use problem-solving to address challenges to between-session assignments

Discuss and revise Master Plan

- Review overall progress on plan
- Celebrate effort and progress, even if steps endured with distress
- Assess need for revisions to plan (e.g., add steps, assess need to develop secondary plan)

Practice in-session (~70% of session time)

- Identify one or more steps on the Master Plan to complete in session
- Use the same framework for each practice
 - *Pick a step to work on*
 - *Decide exactly what the exercise will include*
 - *Rate before starting (mood, expectations, somatic sensations – as appropriate)*
 - *Do it!*

Therapist Cheat Sheets

Single page summaries of
each lesson

Focuses on KEY content

Print and have to the side
during sessions

Navigating a STEP-UP session



Pre-session planning

Review content of new lesson
Review notes from last session
Have ideas ready (as needed)



Right before session

Print cheat sheet as outline
Connect to website
Make sure any “props” ready



During session

Set agenda/review week
Cover cheat sheet main points
Focus on engagement over sheets



After session

Email/text summary to family
Complete custom EPIC note
Upload session recording

Lesson 1:

*What is
stress?*



Lesson 1: What is stress?

- **WHAT** are the goals of Session 1?
 - To introduce STEP-UP
 - To learn about the stress alarm
 - To discuss the difference between avoiding and approaching problems
 - To assign mood monitoring
- **WHY** do we do Session 1?
 - To set appropriate expectations
 - To develop a shared understanding of stress
 - To understand how stress affects the youth
- **HOW** is Session 1 different from psychoed in single-disorder treatments?

Lesson 1: Content

Pre-session planning

Print Lesson 1 cheat sheet

Brainstorm how to link psychoeducation to youth symptoms reported in baseline assessment

1. Introduce treatment model and expectations
 - Short-term, skills-focused, practice between sessions
 - Plan for parental involvement
2. Introduce “stress as an alarm” to prompt action
 - Everyone feels stress (and anxiety/depression)
 - Stress is a call to action
 - Discuss adaptive versus maladaptive avoidance
3. Goal of treatment
 - Being able to do the things we want and need to do
4. Teach mood monitoring
5. Assign homework
 - Mood monitoring



How does Lesson 1 work for anxiety *and* depression?

- Use of family's language around stress and symptoms
- Information can be provided about internalizing cluster
 - Including prevention of sadness over time for youth with primary anxiety
 - Stress as a call to action/alarm
- Adaptive versus maladaptive avoidance discussed explicitly and linked to youth symptoms
- Goal of treatment: do the things we need and want to do
 - Not necessarily reduction in anxiety/fear
- Between-session practice – mood monitoring for all youth (even if primary anxiety)

MOOD MONITORING WORKSHEET

We want to help you understand the kinds of things that affect how you feel. For the next week, please write down some things you are doing and how you feel each day. Try to write at least one thing for each morning until lunchtime, one thing for each afternoon up until dinner time, and one thing for each evening. Use the **Mood Scale** to show how stressed you are feeling. A "10" would mean the most stressed you have ever felt and a "1" would mean the most calm and relaxed you have felt.

Day of Week	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Overall rating for the day

An example of a "1" (best) would be:

An example of a "10" (worst) would be:

Focus on the GOAL of an assignment versus any specific worksheet

Lesson 2:
Relaxation



Lesson 2: Relaxation and Pleasant Activities

- **WHAT** are the goals of Session 2?
 - To understand how stress can be a call to action
 - To learn relaxation and pleasant activity planning to manage stress
- **WHY** do we do Session 2?
 - To help youth make connections between arousal and their own symptoms of stress
 - To provide tools to manage both physical and mood symptoms
- **HOW** is Session 2 different from single-disorder manuals?

Lesson 2: Content

Pre-session planning

Print Lesson 2 Cheat Sheet

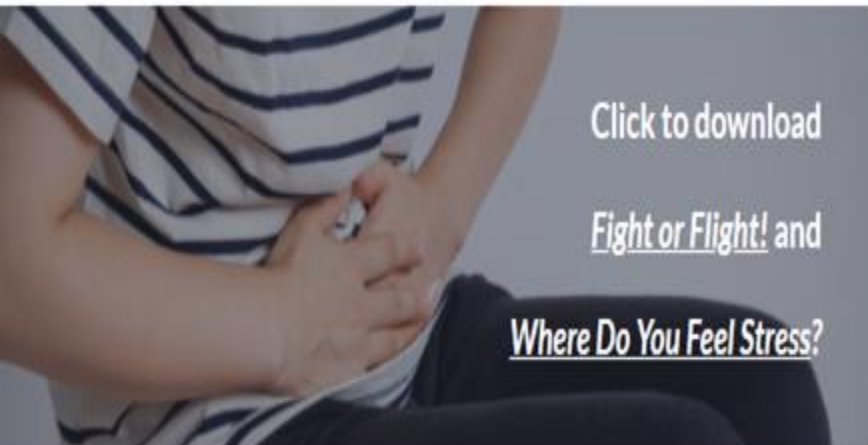
*Think about which “Relax Your Self” tools might fit best
(and which “Relax Your World” activities are feasible)*

1. Set agenda
2. Review previous session and between-session practice

3. Introduce Fight-or-Flight

Learn about why we feel stress in our bodies

Fight-or-flight is a call to action (alarm)



Lesson 2: Content

Relax your mind...

Where am I? (beach, meadow, woods, my room?)

What time of day is it? _____

What temperature is the air? _____

Am I with anyone? Who? _____

What can I hear? (birds, music, wind in the trees?)

What can I smell? (ocean, spring flowers, rain?)

What can I feel? (cool breeze, soft blanket?)



4. Teach at least one RELAX YOUR SELF skill
 - Relax your **breath** (belly breathing)
 - Relax your **body** (progressive muscle relaxation)
 - Relax your **mind** (guided imagery)
5. Provide rationale, demonstrate technique in session, and plan for repeated practice at home
5. RELAX YOUR SELF skill taught should map onto youth symptom presentation (see table at end)
7. Teach all youth to RELAX YOUR WORLD

Mood can be shifted by even little things

Lesson 2: Content



Relax your world...

On the lines below, list some relaxing or fun activities that you could do to make your life more stress-free.

Things I can do alone	Things I can do at my <u>friend's</u>
Things I can do with people	Things I can do at night
Things I can do at school	Things I can do quickly
Things I can do at home	A few of my favorite things

8. Brainstorm fun activities to be tried over the next week
 - Can be new activities
 - Can be things that have been fun / relaxing before
9. Worksheets provided to support brainstorming (“Relax Your World” “Ideas for Fun Activities”)
10. Parent input and permission may be needed to plan homework
11. Assign homework
 - Mood monitoring
 - Relax Your Self (at least 1)
 - Relax Your World



Prioritize and personalize Lesson 2 skills for each youth

BBT Tool	Skill	Description	Helpful for?
Relax Your Self (pick at least one)			
Relax Your Breath	Deep (diaphragmatic) breathing	Focus on slow, deep, paced belly breathing	- Acute distress (i.e., to calm feelings of fight or flight) - Somatic symptoms (e.g., hyperventilation, stomach aches)
Relax Your Body	Progressive muscle relaxation	Tense and relax various muscle groups	Somatic symptoms (e.g., tension headaches, body aches)
Relax Your Mind	Guided imagery	Using all five senses, use imagination to think of a detailed calm and relaxing scene.	- Worry and rumination - Sleep difficulties
Relax Your World (everyone)			
Relax Your World	Behavioral activation	Plan and engage in activities that are fun, relaxing, or evoke a sense of mastery and pride.	- Positive mood induction for all youth - Depressive symptoms, including anhedonia and irritability

Session 3:

*Problem Solving
PLANS*

Pros

Cons

Lesson 3: Problem- Solving PLANS

- **WHAT** are the goals of Lesson 3?
 - To learn skills for solving problems
 - To apply and practice problem-solving skills with a current stressful situation
- **WHY** do we do Session 3?
 - To provide a tool for managing stressful life events
 - To reduce the use of avoidance as a problem-solving strategy
- **HOW** do we move through Lesson 3?

Lesson 3: Content

Pre-session planning

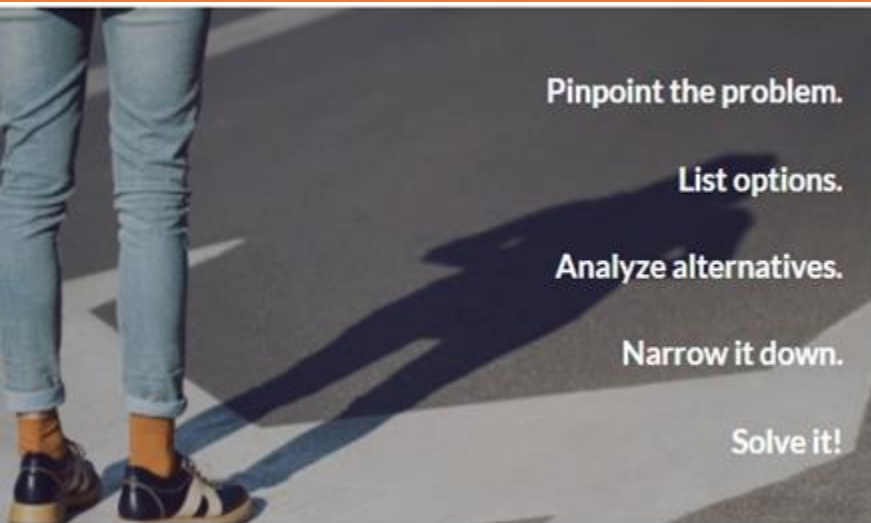
Print Lesson 3 cheat sheet

Pre-planning very important

Brainstorm potential problems in case youth gets stuck

Anticipate potential “off ramps”

1. Set agenda
2. Review previous session and between-session practice
3. Provide rationale for learning problem solving skills
Useful for hard to solve problems (complicated, very upset)
4. Provide overview of P-L-A-N-S
 - P – pinpoint the problem
 - L – list out different options
 - A – analyze alternatives
 - N – narrow it down and make a plan
 - S – solve it! And see if it worked!
5. Focus on problem definition (key example)





Focus on problem definition

The Case of the Missing Keys

P – Pinpoint the problem.

Start by stating the problem clearly and try to *pinpoint exactly* what it is about the problem that makes it an actual problem for you.

L – List out different options.

Next think of solutions, or *brainstorm*, as many ideas as you can about things you can do to solve the problem, even if the options seem silly. No judgement here.

A – Analyze alternatives.

Then, start to pick and choose between solutions. Choose two or three possible solutions and to list out the *pros and cons* for these ideas.

N – Narrow it down and make a plan.

Now, narrow your options down to one *solution to try*, based on the list of pros and cons you came up with, and to make a *specific plan* to put the solution into action.

S – Solve it! And See if it worked!

Finally, it's time to make it real. *Try out your solution!* Then, take a step back and *see if your solution worked*. If it did, great! If not, that is important information. You can use what you learned from the experience to go back to the start of the PLANS (or maybe just go back to N and try another option).

Lesson 3: Content

Problem-Solving PLANS Worksheet

P Pinpoint problem
L List out different options
A Analyze alternatives
N Narrow it down and make a plan
S Solve it! And see if it worked!

What's the problem?

Options? (even silly ones)

Analyze alternatives (pros and cons)

Option #1

Pros	Cons

6. Apply P-L-A-N-S to one of youth's problems
 - Pick a tangible problem which is current (or upcoming)
 - Ideally, pick a problem connected to anxiety / depression
 - Spend the majority of the time on P (pinpoint problem)
 - Other steps may be homework or worked on the following session
7. Assign homework
 - Mood monitoring
 - Problem solving homework (be specific on what step)
 - Additional relaxation / pleasant activities

Bullying Example



Pinpoint the problem:

*I don't know how to respond to the bully when he says something mean. I never say anything but then afterwards I feel horrible and go to the bathroom or nurse and I feel bad for the rest of the day. **Problem: what to do in the moment?***

List out options:

Do nothing, Relaxation (deep breaths), Skip recess, Punch him in the face, Call him a name, Make a joke, Switch schools, Walk away, Ignore him, Tell teacher

Analyze alternatives:

Respond with a joke AND/OR walk away and relax

Narrow it down:

Walk to bathroom, practice relaxation, hang out with nice kids [this becomes the PLAN for Action that youth tries between sessions]

See if it works:

It did! But I still feel bad and my mood sticks around...[next set of PLANS]

Lesson 3: Practice

Problem-Solving PLANS Worksheet

P

Pinpoint problem

L

List out different options

A

Analyze alternatives

N

Narrow it down and make a plan

S

Solve it! And see if it worked!

What's the problem?

Options? (even silly ones)

Analyze alternatives (pros and cons)

Option #1

Pros

Cons

Practice Pinpointing the Problem: “School sucks”

- Review case examples for Mateo and Angie
- Work together to try to pinpoint the problem for each of them
- How are their problems the same and different?

<u>Youth</u>	<u>What sucks?</u>	<u>How could we pinpoint the problem better?</u>
Mateo	• My best friend isn’t spending time with me • Spending lunch alone • I feel awful by the end of the day	?
Angie	• I’m away from my parents and worry about them • My parents don’t respond to my text • I freak out and don’t know what to do	?

Lesson 3: Common Themes

- Problem is avoidance / withdrawal
 - Solution is approach (leads directly into Lesson 4)
- Problem is uncontrollable stressors
 - How can youth/family use skills from Lesson 2 and adaptive coping?
- Problem is homework non-compliance
- Problem is “crisis of the week”



Lesson 3: Common Challenges

- Doing the work for the youth or getting pulled into giving advice
- Can't think of a problem?
 - Review mood monitoring or symptoms assessment
 - See Implementation Index for full examples (last resort)
 - What to do if child's problem is "too big" for one meeting?
- Difficulty pinpointing the problem?
 - See "tips" for prompts to get youth started (e.g., what part can you control, is the problem inside, is the problem avoidance)
- Blanking on solutions?
 - See list of questions on website (what have I tried, what would I like to do even if it's hard, etc.)

FOR NEXT TIME:

- Review Lesson 4 on website
- Brainstorm possible Master Plan targets for case examples (Mateo and Angie)

