**Forensic therapy 101: Therapy recommendations, evidence-based resources,**

**& best practices (2015)**

**Subtitle: “How to not fumble the therapy ball”**

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*“Better to have died as a small boy than to fumble this football. ”*

*--John Heisman*

*The wisdom of (fictitious) Los Angeles attorney Mickey Haller:*

 *“You know what my father said about innocent clients?... He said the scariest client a lawyer will ever have is an innocent client. Because if you mess up and he goes to prison, it’ll scar you for life… He said there is no in between with an innocent client. No negotiation, no plea bargain, no middle ground. There’s only one verdict. You have to put an NG up on the scoreboard. There’s no other verdict but not guilty”*

*Levin nodded thoughtfully.*

*“The bottom line was my old man was a damn good lawyer and he didn’t like having innocent clients, I said. “I’m not sure I do, either”*

*--Michael Connelly, The Lincoln Lawyer*

Presenter: Thomas M. Brunner, PhD

*Thomas M. Brunner is President of Dr. Brunner and Associates, a forensic and clinical healthcare and consulting firm serving those in southern Arizona and beyond.  Dr. Brunner has been in practice since 2005, and is a recognized expert in forensic, child/adolescent, and assessment issues.  Dr. Brunner is the author of numerous book chapters and peer reviewed scientific journal articles, has been a keynote speaker, and is senior author of a psychological measure now adapted into 10 languages.  He has received awards for his research and professional contributions, including from the Arizona Psychological Foundation.  Dr. Brunner regularly works with court systems and private attorneys to provide defensible forensic assessment involving high conflict legal decision-making/parenting time, fitness for duty, disability, and general mental health evaluations.*

**Topic Index:**

What is forensic therapy and who does it?

Who does forensic therapy well?

The scientific status of psychotherapy treatment research – psychologist perspective

What are the “gold standard” psychological references for what is evidence-based?

One gap in the forensic assessment-to-therapy referral road

Best practice “close the gap” principles - forensic therapy recommendations

**Two examples of actual forensic therapy recommendations:**

**Example of an adult therapy handoff minimizing chance for fumble**

--Father should be court ordered to attend weekly individual psychotherapy with a licensed psychologist for not less than 36sessions, from this point forward. As stated above, this evaluator believes the father should immediately begin therapy and that this report should possibly not be released until the father has his first appointment scheduled with a therapist. Reasons for this are discussed above. The treating psychologist may decide if additional sessions are necessary to meet minimum therapeutic goals, which based on this report should include a) identification of the etiological factors contributing to the coercive/controlling style should be identified such that father can come to grips with the reality of the inappropriateness of his behavior and how he has evolved into this tendency, b) identification, practice, and habitual internalization of alternative strategies he can use instead of trying to over control those around him, c) identification of alternative coping strategies for him to handle stress. This process should also involve the father and therapist working to precisely articulate what the contributors are to his ongoing tendency toward irritability and volatility. If the father does not significantly and consistently participate in this treatment, they should be reported to the court, including a significant pattern of missed appointments and/or noncompliance with recommendations. Updates to the court should be made regarding this treatment, and should contribute to any further parenting time recommendations.

**Example of adult therapy directive for therapist regarding lingering issues that are outside the scope of the evaluation**

During this evaluation, the father denied that he had ever been suicidal. However, according to XXXX County Sheriff’s Department reports, it would appear the father had been suicidal in the past. And while one could argue this was approximately XX years ago, it is unclear the father has come to grips with the nature of what he has struggled with in the past. If one does not come to grips with things they’ve struggled with in the past, then issues about how long ago something happened may become less relevant than whether or not the person has learned to face the original issues that cause them to exhibit behaviors, particularly very significant behaviors such as statements about intentions to harm or kill oneself. This is more information that must be figured into the treatment the father should undergo such that the treating psychologist can determine to what degree the father has come to grips with his behavioral or emotional issues which significantly impact his parenting behavior.

**Bibliography:**

**AAFC-Guidelines for Court-Involved Therapy (2010):**

[**http://www.afccnet.org/Portals/0/PublicDocuments/CEFCP/Guidelines%20for%20Court%20Involved%20Therapy%20AFCC.pdf**](http://www.afccnet.org/Portals/0/PublicDocuments/CEFCP/Guidelines%20for%20Court%20Involved%20Therapy%20AFCC.pdf)

**How to interview a therapist - Tips:**

[**http://www.doctorbrunner.com/the-best-questions-you-can-ask-to-interview-and-choose-a-counselor-therapist-or-personal-consultantcoach/**](http://www.doctorbrunner.com/the-best-questions-you-can-ask-to-interview-and-choose-a-counselor-therapist-or-personal-consultantcoach/)

**Philosophy underlying Treatment Selection:**

--Edited by Catonguay, Louis & Beutler, Larry (2005). Principles of Therapeutic Change that Work (Oxford Series in Clinical Psychology).

--Beutler, Larry (2000). Prescriptive Psychotherapy: A Practical Guide to Systematic Treatment Selection.

**List of Most Evidence-Based Treatments**

--Adults:

--Official List of Empirically Supported Treatments (adults): <https://www.div12.org/psychological-treatments/> You may search by Disorder or by Treatment. You should read the “Treatment Home” section first.

--[Minors:](http://effectivechildtherapy.org/content/specific-treatments)

[**http://effectivechildtherapy.org/content/specific-treatments**](http://effectivechildtherapy.org/content/specific-treatments)

[**http://effectivechildtherapy.org/content/about-child-adolescent-symptoms**](http://effectivechildtherapy.org/content/about-child-adolescent-symptoms)

**Examples of Credible Evidence-based Resources**

--<https://www.div12.org/psychological-treatments/related-links/> Links from aforementioned website listing some best practices books