

Case for TF-CBT following multiple traumatic experiences

Ruth is 36 years old. About 18 months ago she was physically assaulted. She is having vivid intrusive memories of this, and sought help from her GP. This is the first time she has accessed mental health services. She was seen by a psychiatrist in the assessment and treatment service / community mental health team. She reports this as being very unhelpful as 'he knows nothing about trauma, and just belittled me'. She is 'spiky' at assessment, questioning your training and experience, alternately raising her voice and falling silent and looking at her phone.

She describes, in a rapid and matter-of-fact way, a series of events through her life where she has been 'wronged and abused'. She was neglected in childhood by her mother, and her father died when she was aged six. She was sexually abused on a number of occasions by a friend of her mother's between ages 7 and 10.. At primary school, she had some friends but never had anyone to her home to play with. At secondary school, she was bullied for 'being weird'. She reported being 'serially abused' in personal relationships. She is working for the local authority, and describes herself as good at her job and has friends there, but that she is being bullied by her manager. She is about to take out a formal complaint against her.

She reports that she rarely drinks but smokes cannabis nearly every day. She says she has never tried to kill herself, and there are visible scars on her arms that she refuses to discuss in the first session.

Ruth has a number of physical health problems. These include 'a form of ME', which she has to manage carefully, and for which she believes work are not making appropriate adjustments. She also describes episodes when she feels 'spaced out' and 'out of it'. She associates this with her physical health but recognises they have increased in frequency and intensity since the assault.

Since her childhood, Ruth has been involved in the Scout movement. This was the place she found 'refuge' from home and could be herself. She has continued to work with the Scouts into adulthood, running a local group for children and leading expeditions. Ruth lives in a flat by herself with her dog. She has some good friends, especially through Scouts.

What further questions do you need to ask?

What hypotheses do you have?

Where might you start?