

Effectiveness of Psychotherapy With Children and Adolescents: A Meta-Analysis for Clinicians

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How effective is psychotherapy with children and adolescents? The question was addressed by meta-analysis of 108 well-designed outcome studies with 4-18-year-old participants. Across various outcome measures, the average treated youngster was better adjusted after treatment than 79% of those not treated. Therapy proved more effective for children than for adolescents, particularly when the therapists were paraprofessionals (e.g., parents, teachers) or graduate students. Professionals (with doctor's or master's degrees) were especially effective in treating overcontrolled problems (e.g., phobias, shyness) but were not more effective than other therapists in treating undercontrolled problems (e.g., aggression, impulsivity). Behavioral treatments proved more effective than nonbehavioral treatments regardless of client age, therapist experience, or treated problem. Overall, the findings revealed significant, durable effects of treatment that differed somewhat with client age and treatment method but were reliably greater than zero for most groups, most problems, and most methods.