

# Introduction to Attachment-Based Family Therapy

High rates of adolescent depression and suicide present as a major international public health problem. Suicidal adolescents are often a daunting population for clinicians to work with given their high-risk. Of the few effective treatments for this population, many are often multi-modal involving individual and group therapy, medication, etc. An empirically supported family therapy for adolescents struggling with depression and suicide that requires only weekly sessions and which can be conducted on an outpatient, home-based, or inpatient basis is Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT). ABFT emerges from interpersonal theories suggesting adolescent depression and suicide can be precipitated, exacerbated, or buffered against by the quality of interpersonal family relationships. It is a trust-based, emotion-focused psychotherapy model aiming to repair interpersonal ruptures and rebuild an emotionally protective, secure-based, parent-child relationship. The therapy is trauma-focused while also being brief and structured. Treatment is characterized by five treatment tasks: a) reframing the therapy to focus on interpersonal development, b) building alliance with the adolescent, c) building alliance with the parents, d) facilitation conversations to resolve attachment ruptures and e) promoting autonomy in the adolescent.

In this workshop, Dr. Levy will use lecture and case studies to provide an overview of the theoretical principles, research support, and clinical strategies for ABFT. Dr. Levy will review how attachment theory, emotional regulation, and trauma resolution inform the delivery of this treatment approach. She will review the goals and structure of the five treatment tasks that provide a roadmap for delivering this interpersonally focused psychotherapy effectively and rapidly in community mental health.

## Target Audience

Psychologist      Social Workers      Counselors  
Teachers          Therapists          Case Managers  
Juvenile Judges      Addiction Counselors      Nurses

Course Level: Intermediate

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the theoretical foundation of ABFT
2. Discuss the empirical support for ABFT.
3. Describe the importance of parents being involved in safety planning.
4. Discuss the purpose of the five treatment tasks.
5. Describe the strategies used in the five treatment tasks

## Seminar Schedule

The webinar outline is attached. See the Live Webinar page for the start and end times.

## Outline

### OVERVIEW

DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE STATISTICS  
THEORY OF NORMATIVE FUNCTIONING

Secure Attachment & Emotion Regulation  
Authoritative Parenting  
Attachment in Adolescence  
Family as a Protective Factor

### THEORY OF PATHOLOGY

Insecure Attachment  
Attachment & Parenting  
Risk Factors for Insecure Attachment  
ABFT's Theory of Depression and Suicide

### THE SOLUTION

Earned Security  
Family as a Safety Net

### EMPIRICAL SUPPORT

Brief Review of Research Findings  
Dissemination

### CLINICAL MODEL

Treatment Manual  
Overview of 5 Tasks  
Family Safety Planning

### 5 TREATMENT TASKS

Task 1: Relational Reframe  
Task 2: Adolescent Alliance  
Task 3: Parent Alliance  
Task 4: Attachment  
Task 5: Autonomy Promoting

### Continuing Education Credit

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## The Presenter

Dr. Suzanne Levy is an internationally renowned licensed clinical psychologist and Co-Developer of ABFT. She is the Co-Owner of ABFT International Training Institute which was established in 2023. ABFT is a manualized, empirically informed and supported, family therapy model specifically designed to target family and individual processes associated with adolescent suicide and/or depression. Since 2007, Dr. Levy has been conducting ABFT training workshops and supervision for therapists nationally and internationally. She has presented regionally, nationally, and internationally on ABFT, emotion coaching, child and adolescent therapies, resilience, adolescent depression, adolescent development, and adolescent substance use. Along with her colleagues, Drs. Guy and Gary Diamond, Dr. Levy has written the first book on ABFT, Attachment-Based Family Therapy for Depressed Adolescents published by the American Psychological Association.

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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Laura Davie, LICSW, Tina Jenkins, Psy.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2028.

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