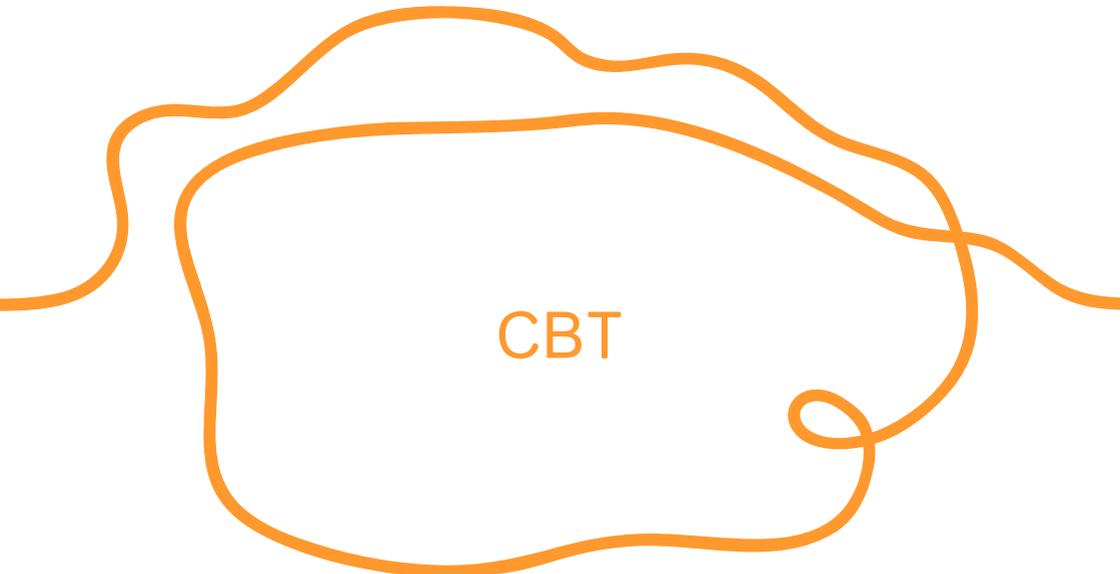


Making sense



CBT

Making sense of CBT

This booklet is for anyone who wants to know more about cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). It explains what it is, what it helps with, what happens during a session and how to find a therapist .

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What is cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)?

CBT is a type of talking treatment that focusses on how your thoughts, beliefs and attitudes affect your feelings and behaviour, and teaches you coping skills for dealing with different problems.

It combines cognitive therapy (examining the things you think) and behaviour therapy (examining the things you do).

👉👉 *CBT is learning to stop the cycle of negative thinking. I still have relapses now and it is the one tool that I use to get me out of the truly dark spots.* 👉👉

What's the theory behind CBT?

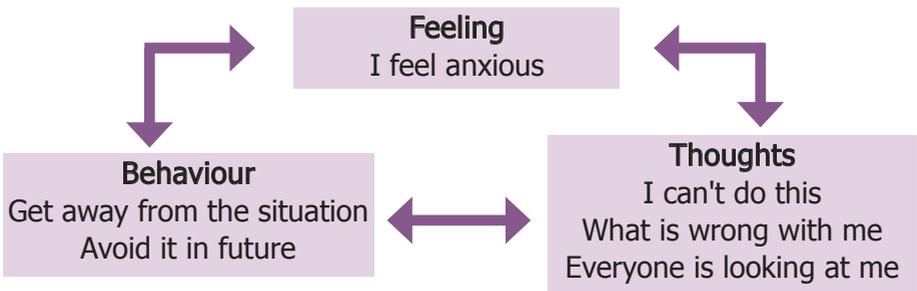
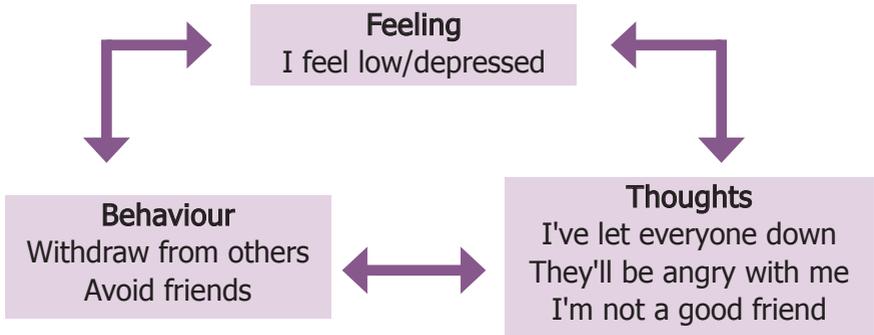
CBT is based on the idea that the way we think about situations can affect the way we feel and behave. For example, if you interpret a situation negatively then you might experience negative emotions as a result, and those bad feelings might then lead you to behave in a certain way.

How does negative thinking start?

Negative thinking patterns can start from childhood onwards. For example, if you didn't receive much attention or praise from your parents or teachers at school, you might've thought "I'm useless, I'm not good enough".

Over time you might come to believe these assumptions, until as an adult these negative thoughts become automatic. This way of thinking might then affect how you feel at work, university or in your general life.

If your negative interpretation of situations goes unchallenged, then these patterns in your thoughts, feelings and behaviour can become part of a continuous cycle. Here are two examples of how this cycle works for different thoughts and feelings.



How does CBT work?

In CBT you work with a therapist to identify and challenge any negative thinking patterns and behaviour which may be causing you difficulties. In turn this can change the way you feel about situations, and enable you to change your behaviour in future.

You and your therapist might focus on what is going on in your life right now, but you might also look at your past, and think about how your past experiences impact the way you see the world.

What types of problems can CBT help with?

CBT is a relatively flexible therapy that can be adapted to meet your particular needs. Evidence suggests it can be an effective treatment for a range of mental health problems, such as:

- anger problems
- anxiety and panic attacks
- borderline personality disorder
- depression
- drug or alcohol problems
- eating problems
- obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- phobias
- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- psychosis
- schizophrenia
- sexual and relationship problems
- sleep problems

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) particularly recommends CBT for depression and anxiety. There are also formal adaptations of CBT to treat particular mental health problems, such as phobias, PTSD and OCD.

●● *CBT got me through my chronic health anxiety disorder. It was a tough six months, but I still use the skills I learnt over 10 years ago to rationalise with myself.* ●●

CBT can also help you find new ways to cope with physical health problems, such as:

- chronic fatigue syndrome
- chronic pain
- habits or problems, such as facial tics
- general health problems

●● *My experience of CBT was very positive. I had one to one sessions, group sessions and it was also in my pain management course. It helped me write about my depression and express those feelings in my artwork.* ●●

Does CBT work without medication?

For some people CBT can work just as well as medication for treating problems like depression and anxiety disorders.

Depending on the symptoms you experience, your doctor might suggest that a combination of CBT and medication, such as an antidepressant, might be more effective for you. If you want to discuss whether CBT is the right treatment for you, you can talk to your GP.

👉👉 *I had CBT... when I had severe depression. It got me through a really tough time, from being suicidal and off work on long term sick [leave], to fully functioning again and now in a successful career. I found it worked really well in combination with antidepressants. It pulled me back from a very dark place and reintroduced structure to my life when I'd given up.* 👉👉

What should I expect from a CBT session?

How is CBT delivered?

CBT is usually a short-term treatment, so you wouldn't be expected to continue with the treatment for a long time. For example, a course of CBT might be delivered in 12 hour-long weekly sessions, spread across 12 weeks. These sessions might be delivered:

- individually – one to one with a therapist
- in a group – with other people who may have similar problems
- through a self-help book – you might complete exercises from a book
- through a computer programme

CBT should only be delivered by a trained health care professional. Refresher CBT programmes may be available if you have already completed a course of CBT (your GP may know more about options in your area).

Computerised CBT

There are some interactive CD-ROMs and online programmes that can help with depression, for example Beating the Blues and MoodGYM, as well as FearFighter for panic, anxiety and phobias. MoodGYM is available online and is free to use. To use Beating the Blues or FearFighter, you will need a referral from your GP or other service-provider.

How are sessions structured?

A typical structure of a CBT session may include the following:

- At the beginning of the therapy, you and your therapist may explore the problems you want to work on.
- When you have agreed which problems you want to focus on and what your goals are, you may start planning the content of sessions and talking about how you could deal with your problems.
- During the session, you might work through exercises with your therapist to explore your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This may be in the form of diagrams or worksheets.
- With CBT you are often given work to do in your own time, so the end of each session you might agree on some exercises to work on afterwards.
- At the beginning of your next session your therapist might start by going over the conclusions from your previous session, and discussing what progress you've made with any work you agreed to do.

 *I learnt things about myself, how to manage my thoughts and feelings, how to act upon them and how to deal with letting go of the illness and negative actions and behaviours that keep me from moving on.* 

What might I learn?

CBT teaches coping skills for dealing with different problems. You may learn ways of coping with different situations, thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Problem	Way of coping
Feeling anxious	You may learn that avoiding situations could actually increase fears. Confronting fears in a gradual and manageable way can give you faith in your own ability to cope.
Feeling depressed	You may be encouraged to record your thoughts and explore how you can look at them differently. This may help to break the downward spiral of your mood.
Sleep problems	You may learn to recognise the thoughts which make falling to sleep more difficult and learn to challenge these.
Long-standing problems relating to other people	You may learn to check out your assumptions about other people's motivation for doing things, rather than often assuming the worst.

👉👉 *It can be daunting when faced with a list of things you can't do, but CBT helped me to break up my goals into manageable chunks.* 👉👉

The therapeutic relationship

One to one CBT can bring you into a kind of relationship you may not have had before. CBT favours an equal, non-judgemental relationship between you and your therapist. They should seek your views and reactions to your experiences, which then shape the way your therapy

progresses. The collaborative style means that you are actively involved in the therapy.

This therapeutic relationship may help you feel able to open up and talk about things that are difficult or personal to you.

👉👉 *I was encouraged to try [CBT] again with a different therapist and have just had my 3rd session. I like the therapist and am getting on much better.....the therapist makes a BIG difference!* 👉👉

Is CBT right for me?

Although many people can benefit from CBT, not everyone finds it helpful. You might find that it just doesn't suit you, or doesn't meet your needs.

Before deciding to have CBT, it might be helpful to think about the following:

- **Is short-term therapy right for me?** If you have severe or complex problems, you may find a short-term therapy like CBT is less helpful. Sometimes, therapy may need to go on for longer to cover fully the number of problems you have, and the length of time they've been around.
- **Am I comfortable thinking about my feelings?** CBT can involve becoming aware of your anxieties and emotions. Initially, you may find this process uncomfortable or distressing.
- **How much time do I want to spend?** CBT can involve exercises for you to do outside of your sessions with a therapist. You may find this means you need to commit your own time to complete the work over the course of treatment, and afterwards.
- **Do I have a clear problem to solve?** You may find CBT is less suitable if you feel generally unhappy or unfulfilled, but don't have troubling symptoms or a particular aspect of your life you want to work on.

👉👉 *I found the first month so terrifying and draining because it dragged up things from the past that I never knew had impacted on me, but I stuck with it and it was worth it.* 👉👉

Comparisons with other types of short-term psychological therapy aren't clear-cut. Other talking treatments, for example psychodynamic therapy or interpersonal therapy, might also be effective. You can talk to your doctor about which treatment is most suitable for you.

👉👉 *I had previously tried this form of therapy when I was first diagnosed, which I didn't find helpful ... however the second time I tried it, it completely changed my life.* 👉👉

How can I find a CBT therapist?

Through the NHS

You might be able to access CBT on the NHS through the following ways:

- **Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT).** This is an NHS programme which can provide CBT as a treatment for various mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression. However, IAPT is not available in all areas and the waiting lists can be long. You can find out whether IAPT services are available near you through the IAPT website.
- **Your GP surgery.** Some counsellors and psychologists offer CBT on the NHS at GP surgeries.
- **Your community mental health team (CMHT).** Some nurses, doctors, occupational therapists and clinical psychologists working in CMHTs may also provide CBT.
- **Some NHS Trusts** have specialist therapy services.

Your GP may be able to give you information about local services.

👉👉 *I still get anxious but CBT helped me to gain insight and perspective. It was the start of my journey to recovery, though not the only part. I did a 6 week CBT course through IAPT.* 👉👉

Through the private sector

You may want to consider seeing a therapist privately – but be aware that private therapists usually charge for appointments. You can find a private therapist through:

- the **British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)**, which is a membership organisation and a registered charity that sets standards for therapeutic practice. The BACP has a 'find a therapist' directory of registered and non-registered therapists. The BACP also has guidance about choosing a therapist.
- the **British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP)**, which is an interest group for people involved in the practice and theory of behavioural and cognitive psychotherapy. The BABCP has a register of accredited CBT therapists. Therapists on the register have specialist skills and knowledge and have undergone relevant training and supervision.
- **The UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)**, which is a professional body for the education, training and accreditation of psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic counsellors. UKCP also has a register of psychotherapists who offer talking treatments privately.

Your therapist's qualifications

It's good practice for a therapist to be a member of a professional body, such as the BACP, BABCP, the UKCP or The British Psychological Society (BPS). You can ask them about their professional qualifications and training. You can also check these with their professional body.

For more information about finding a therapist, see our online booklet *Making sense of talking treatments*.

Useful contacts

British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP)

tel: 0161 705 4304

web: babcp.com

An interest group for people involved in the practice and theory of behavioural and cognitive psychotherapy. It has an online register of accredited CBT therapists.

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

tel: 01455 883 300

web: bacp.co.uk

A membership organisation and a registered charity that sets standards for therapeutic practice. It has an online directory of accredited counsellors and psychotherapists in the UK.

Fearfighter

web: fearfighter.com

Computerised CBT available free through some NHS trusts to help manage panic and phobia. You need a referral to use this site.

MoodGYM

web: moodgym.anu.edu.au

A free website where you can learn CBT and get help to learn how to deal with depression.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

web: nice.org.uk

Produces clinical guidelines for the treatment and management of eating disorders.

Samaritans

24-hour helpline: 08457 90 90 90

web: samaritans.org

email: jo@samaritans.org

Emotional support for anyone feeling down or struggling to cope.

United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)

tel: 020 7014 9955

web: psychotherapy.org.uk

A professional body for the education, training and accreditation of psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic counsellors. It has an online register of psychotherapists offering different talking treatments privately.

Further information

Mind offers a range of mental health information on:

- diagnoses
- treatments
- practical help for wellbeing
- mental health legislation
- where to get help

To read or print Mind's information booklets for free, visit mind.org.uk or contact Mind Infoline on 0300 123 3393 or at info@mind.org.uk

To buy copies of Mind's information booklets, visit mind.org.uk/shop or phone 0844 448 4448 or email publications@mind.org.uk

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(National Association for Mental Health)
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London E15 4BQ
tel: 020 8519 2122
fax: 020 8522 1725
web: mind.org.uk

Mind

We're Mind, the mental health charity for England and Wales. We believe no one should have to face a mental health problem alone. We're here for you. Today. Now. We're on your doorstep, on the end of a phone or online. Whether you're stressed, depressed or in crisis. We'll listen, give you advice, support and fight your corner. And we'll push for a better deal and respect for everyone experiencing a mental health problem.

Mind Infoline: 0300 123 3393
info@mind.org.uk
mind.org.uk

