
WHAT IS COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY?

Cognitive and Behavioural Therapy (CBT) uses a variety of ideas and techniques for addressing thinking and behaviour patterns in order to help understand, manage and overcome psychological problems.

Cognitive therapy is based on the view that *how we think* plays an important role in how we feel, behave and deal with situations in our daily life.

The way we feel and behave is influenced by the way in which we interpret events around us. But our automatic reactions may not reflect how things actually are; consequently the resulting emotions and behaviours can then be excessive or unhelpful.

For example, focusing on negative thoughts can set up a vicious circle with bad feelings and lead to depression. Fearful thoughts and beliefs about symptoms and situations can trigger panic and anxiety problems. In Cognitive therapy you learn to recognise these patterns and ways to question and challenge them.

Behaviour therapy is based on the idea that we learn from experience and the consequences of our actions. We tend to remember and repeat actions that help us get what we want or make us feel better and avoid actions that bring on bad feelings or other difficulties. Sometimes these patterns of behaviour can be unhelpful and perpetuate our problems.

For example, when feeling depressed it may seem sensible to keep to yourself and put things off that seem hard to cope with. But spending more time on your own when you are feeling down often makes things worse, as you will have little distraction or opportunity to gain confidence or support from others to help you feel better.

Similarly avoiding situations that worry you, or make you feel fearful may help you feel better in the short term, but in the long run, this keeps the problem going and prevents you from learning to cope more confidently with the situation. In behaviour therapy you will learn to recognise unhelpful patterns of behaviour and develop new ways of tackling problems to help you progress.

CBT can take place on an individual or group basis. It can be used to help any person irrespective of intelligence, insight or other abilities. CBT can be used on its own or in conjunction with medication, depending on the severity or nature of each client's problem.

What happens in CBT?

CBT is a practical treatment, in which therapist and client actively work together by:

- Identifying and agreeing a list of problems to work on.
- Agreeing a picture of how patterns of thoughts, behaviours and symptoms fit together to maintain problems.
- Although the past is acknowledged in understanding current problems, the focus of therapy is on addressing present difficulties rather than exploring the past.
- Practising and applying specific cognitive and behaviour therapy techniques and strategies both within the sessions and in every day life. This usually involves keeping a diary and practicing tasks or exercises daily.
- Monitoring progress made towards achieving goals set.

CBT is organised over an agreed number of sessions; this will vary depending on the nature of the problem. Sessions last for about one hour and are usually weekly or fortnightly. After completing the main treatment programme, a limited number of follow-up sessions are usually agreed to maintain the progress achieved.

What happens next?

Once you have read this information leaflet and made a decision as to whether you feel CBT is suitable for you, you need to complete the reply slip indicating whether you wish to be seen by the CBT service and return it in the envelope provided. You will then be sent a letter offering you an initial appointment, at which you will have the chance to discuss your problems with the therapist and decide together whether this approach is suitable for you. Because of the current demand for CBT, you will then be offered a place on the waiting list.

Where will I be seen?

CBT is available from the Centre for Psychological Therapies at Dawley and Chaddeslode House, Shrewsbury. Appointments at home, or elsewhere, may be arranged if required.

CBT is provided free through the NHS in Shropshire.

Confidentiality

After your first meeting, a summary letter of the assessment and plan of CBT will normally be sent to your GP and the person who referred you. In certain circumstances it may be necessary to share information with others most involved with your care and this will be discussed with you first.

If you have any questions or concerns about confidentiality please discuss these with the therapist.

If you would like to know more about CBT, you can contact the CBT Service

Dawley Centre for Psychological Therapies,
Doseley Road North,
Dawley,
Telford,
Shropshire TF4 3AL

Chaddeslode House,
130 Abbey Foregate
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Mental Health Services

Shropshire County 
Primary Care Trust

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This leaflet provides you with information about Cognitive and Behavioural Psychotherapy to enable you to decide if this service would be of help to you.

