

Common questions about CBT

Doesn't CBT just lead to intellectual change without changing how you really feel?

No, the purpose is to TRANSFORM both emotions and perceptions of yourself and your life. It is designed to change how you THINK, FEEL and BEHAVE.

What kinds of problems does CBT work best for?

CBT is an excellent treatment for mood problems, such as depression, panic attacks, anxiety, phobias, anger, guilt and low self-esteem. Also, problems in daily life, such as personal relationship problems, rejection, criticism, putting things off and the fear of failure. CBT techniques can be extremely effective and work quickly, even without the use of medications.

Should people be happy all the time?

A great misconception about life is that you should try to feel happy all the time. However, negative feelings are frequently healthy and appropriate, and CBT theory suggests that sometimes it's better just to accept them until they pass and you feel better again. All Clarity's therapists are fully trained and experienced in the use of CBT for a wide range of problems. As well as Stress, Anxiety and Depression, which are the main issues that CBT is used for, it works extremely well for Phobias, Personality Disorders, Relationship Issues and Self Esteem problems.

How does CBT work ?

Firstly, by helping you to recognise errors in reasoning and thinking that causes problems or upsets. Secondly, by helping to correct these errors and to substitute more reasonable and helpful thoughts that will not result in unpleasant feelings or unhelpful behaviours.

Unhelpful thoughts that you experience might sound like this:

"If someone criticises me it means there's something wrong with me."

"I must always please people and live up to everyone's expectations."

"I am basically defective and inferior to other people."

Why is the way you think so important?

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy works on these three basic principles:

1. What we think about, both good and bad, effects and determines the way we feel and behave.
2. Emotional and behavioural issues result from unrealistic, irrational or negative thinking.
3. By challenging and altering this thinking, emotional and behavioural issues can be resolved.

What is the therapeutic process in CBT?

Firstly, the therapist and client work together closely to create a "map" or "model" of the problem, its causes and the factors that maintain it or make it worse. This is called a formulation, and explores life experiences, beliefs built as a consequence and the rules that are formed to live by as a result of the beliefs.

The formulation then goes on to lay out the critical incidents or triggers that cause emotional problems to occur, and the vicious cycles of negative thinking, distressing feelings and unhelpful behaviours that happen as a result.

What is the change process in CBT?

After working through the assessment phase using the formulation, the client and therapist then work closely together to:

Monitor the triggers and events that cause emotional distress

Identify and understand the unhelpful and irrational thoughts, beliefs & rules

Clarify the connection between thoughts, feelings & behavioural consequences

Check and reality test the thoughts & beliefs to find evidence to disconfirm

Balance, normalise and put current thinking into a new perspective

Identify alternative, more helpful strategies and coping mechanisms

Practice and experiment with the new strategies in a safe, supported way

Monitor the results of the new strategies, and adapt or improve them as needed

A simple summary of what CBT theory and therapy is all about...

What we think about affects our feelings & influences our behaviour

If we are thinking negatively, we can feel down, do less and complicate the negative thinking even more

Balancing negative and unhelpful thoughts is a good model for emotional health

Doing this in collaboration with an experienced therapist means you can learn and practice new strategies that can be utilised over and over again in life helping you to maintain better balance over the long term.