
WHAT IS CBT?

CBT Stands for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. It is used for a whole range of mental health problems and, increasingly, to develop the mental health and resilience of people who don't have any particular problem. It was originated in the United States by Aaron T Beck in the late 1970's and has developed since then. It is generally considered as the treatment approach of choice in the UK and other countries.

What will probably happen when you see your therapist is the following:

1. The therapist will ask you all about your problems, what brought you into therapy, and what you hope to get out of it. He or she will aim to become an expert on your problems!
2. The therapist will be particularly interested in all those things that are currently contributing to your problem, either directly or indirectly.
3. The therapist will formulate a plan for helping you, and may well work on developing this plan jointly with you.

At each of those three stages the therapist will be thinking in terms of five areas as follows:

- (a) What you do. That is, how you spend your time, and anything you do that may affect your problem, for better or for worse.
- (b) Physical factors, such as how you sleep, how you eat, and what exercise you take.
- (c) Your emotions. For example: sad or happy, worried or relaxed, irritable or laid back, feeling ashamed, feeling guilty, and any other 'feelings'.
- (d) Your surroundings. Sometimes this means your physical surrounds, where you live, where you work and so on. And sometimes it means the people around you, what friends you have, family, etc.
- (e) The way you think. Occasionally, it is not so much events themselves that bother us, but the

view we take of them. If this is the case then your therapist may try to help you take a different view of things.

What will sessions be like?

CBT sessions tend to be very straightforward and 'down to earth'. So, probably, you and your therapist will discuss things in a very open way, and talk about what might make things better for you. Some of these ideas might come from the therapist, some might come from you.

Then your therapist will probably suggest you try some of these ideas out and see how they go. Typically some ideas turn out to be good ones, and improve things for you. Equally, some ideas don't work so well, and so get dropped. In summary, therapy is normally best described as the two of you working together and trying things out so you find some good ideas that work well.

One of the great things about this is that it leaves you better off at the end of therapy, in that you will probably have acquired new skills that will stand you in good stead forever.

Finally, your therapist will be interested in measuring progress. He or she might do this in a very simple way with questions such as "how has your week been, out of 10?" or may involve questionnaire measures, which again tend to be reasonably quick, easy and enjoyable to fill in. In any event, your therapist will devise some way of measuring progress.

Summary.

In summary, CBT is one of the most widely used and successful approaches in the UK, hinges on you and your therapist discussing things openly together and trying out the ideas you produce. It usually results in improvements that the therapist will be keen to measure. Therapists are usually enthusiastic to ensure that you have a rewarding experience of therapy that stands you in good stead forever more.