

## What is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)?

**CBT** is a form of Psychotherapy whereby you talk about:

- The type of thinking you have and how you perceive or think about yourself, the world and other people.
- How your thoughts affect your emotion, feelings and your actions (Behaviour).

It also helps you to identify unhelpful thinking patterns and behaviours; and work towards changing them so that you can feel better. CBT focuses on your “here and now” problems. Some other forms of psychotherapy place emphasis on the cause of the problems or difficulty; but CBT focuses on what keep the problem going and equip you with skills to improve your coping ability in dealing with the problem.

### What CBT can treat

CBT has been proven to be effective for the treatment of several conditions. Some of which are Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Panic Disorder, Phobias, Generalised Anxiety, Image problems, PTSD and Eating Disorder. There are also research evidences to supports its effectiveness in Low self-esteem, OCD, Chronic Pain, interpersonal issues, chronic pain, Health Anxiety, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Anger management Problems.

### How CBT Works

CBT will help you to understand and break down the overwhelming problem into small areas and show you how they connect to each other. These small areas are as follows:

**Situation** – The event, situation or difficult circumstances

**Thoughts** – Your thinking about the situation and what it means to you and about you.

**Emotion** – Your mood which is the outcome of your thinking.

**Body/Physical Reactions** – Feelings in your body

**Behaviours** – What you do in the situations.

## An example of how CBT is used is illustrated below:

**Situation** – You were invited to a house party by your close friend to celebrate his birthday. You decided to attend so as not to offend him. On getting there you found out that there are many people at the party and the following reactions occurred:-

	Unhelpful	Helpful
Thoughts	Everyone is looking at me; they can see I am an not sociable, I am inept	I have no evidence to know what others are thinking or that they are here specifically to stare at me; they are probably here to enjoy themselves
Emotions/Feelings	Anxious; Nervous	Feels confident with improved self esteem
Body Reactions	Heart racing, dry mouth, sweaty, choking sensations, feeling hollow	None - Feeling comfortable
Behaviours	Avoid eye contact, sitting in a corner alone, or make decision to leave the party	Approach people to interact with them, make eye contact and stay for the duration of the party.

The type of thinking you choose to believe will determine your reactions at the party. When we are distressed, it is normal that we jump into conclusions about everything around us and interpret situations to mean something about us.

CBT can help you to understand how these reactions link into each other to keep the anxiety going. CBT can help you develop skills to break this vicious

circle of unhelpful thinking, feelings and behaviour. Therefore, the aim is to get you to a point whereby you become your own therapist and work out different ways of dealing with your problems.

## Expectations with CBT

You can have CBT either individually or in groups. Whatever medium of delivery you choose the followings are the expectations of both the therapist and yourself:-

- ❖ You will usually meet with a therapist for between 6 and 20 sessions weekly, or fortnightly; this will be agreed after the initial assessment.
- ❖ Each session will last between 50 minutes and 1 Hour. Some sessions may need more than an hour but this will be discussed with you at start of therapy.
- ❖ The therapist will check that you are able to use CBT in the first 2-4 sessions; and that you are comfortable with it as well.
- ❖ The therapist will also ask you questions about your past life and background in order to help build a picture of the problem for your understanding. Please note that CBT concentrates on the here and now even though you may need to talk about the past to understand how it is affecting you now.
- ❖ You can decide with your therapist that you will like to deal with and the goals you want to achieve at the end of the therapy. You will be expected to form short, medium and long term goals.
- ❖ There will always be an agreement on what to discuss at each session.
- ❖ The work starts by breaking the problem down into different parts as above. To help this process, your therapist may ask you to keep a diary to identify your own individual patterns of thoughts, emotions, bodily feelings and actions.
- ❖ You and your therapist will look at your patterns and decide together if they are helpful or unhelpful; the therapist will then help you to work out how to change unhelpful thoughts and actions.
- ❖ Your therapist will recommend tasks for you to practise at home (Homework) to help with the changes.
- ❖ Your therapist can help with suggestions if any of the tasks seem too hard or don't seem to be helping.

# TherapyChoice

- ❖ The therapist will not ask you to do things you don't want to do - you can decide the pace of the therapy.
- ❖ One of the greatest advantages of CBT is that you can continue to practise and develop your skills even after therapy has ended. This makes it less likely for the symptoms to come back.

You can help yourself through:-

- Challenging your unhelpful thinking and behavioural patterns
- Practise your homework tasks
- Change your life and improve your confidence and self esteem