

Cognitive Behavioural Treatment (CBT) for Anxiety

Group Manual

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PRE-READING

****Read pages 3-10 prior to attending first group****

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Experience

- **Preparation** – Participation in any therapy can initially be a stressful and an anxiety provoking experience. Talking about particularly difficult experiences and daily events can sometimes evoke powerful emotions like sadness, fear, anxiety, or anger. As you express your feelings over time and you develop new skills, your ability to utilize effective strategies to manage previously overwhelming situations will improve. Establish realistic expectations of change, but have patience with your progress, as improvement does not always occur immediately.
- **Focus of Treatment** – Although you may have a number of different areas of concern that you are dealing with, this treatment will focus specifically on your anxiety. That doesn't mean that these other areas are not important. Rather, it is our experience that treatment is most effective by tackling one issue at a time. Once treatment for your anxiety disorder has been completed, you can talk to your therapist about where to get help for other areas of concern for you (e.g., depression, relationships etc.).
- **Session Format** – In CBT, sessions are structured. At the start of the session your therapist will set an agenda that provides an overview of how the time will be used in the session and what topics will be covered. You can also add items to the agenda. Following the agenda setting, your therapist will check in to see how you made out with any homework that was assigned over the previous week. Next, the therapist will present new information or work on new skills that have been presented. Finally, you will discuss your homework goals for the following week.

We recommend getting a **self-help book** on anxiety disorders to use in conjunction with this treatment. These books will also be helpful once treatment has finished so that you have something to refer back to. Useful books are:

Burns, D. (2006). *When Panic Attacks: The New, Drug Free Anxiety Therapy That Can Change Your Life*. New York: Broadway Books.

Greenberger, D & Padesky, C (2016). *Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think*. Guildford Press: New York.

Gyoerkoe and Wiegartz (2006). *10 Simple Solutions to Worry*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Patient Responsibilities

- **Confidentiality and Group Treatment** – If you are participating in a group treatment, it is very important to keep the identity of other group members private. Although it is fine to discuss the group with people you are close to, you should never discuss any information that would reveal the identity of specific group members (e.g., names, place of employment, etc.). By protecting others' privacy, you help to ensure that the group remains a safe and confidential space and that group members feel comfortable with self-disclosure.
- **Homework Completion** – Every session of CBT consists of learning new skills that build on each other. The skills need to be used and practiced regularly to increase the likelihood of change. The more they are practiced, the better the results. You should aim to practice your skills daily. This may require booking time into your busy schedule to make your treatment a priority.
- **Attendance** – 100% attendance is expected. If you cannot attend or will be late, please contact the therapist. Understandably, events outside of your control may occur that prevent you from attending, but please try to inform the therapist well in advance of any such situations. If you miss two or more sessions consecutively, we will need to determine whether or not you will be able to continue with the cognitive behavioural therapy sessions.
- **Participation** – By completing the exercises and sharing situations that you currently find difficult, you will help your therapist to better assist you.

Should you require emergency intervention, please contact the crisis supports in your area.

Call your local hospital and ask to speak to someone from the crisis department.

Counsellor Responsibilities

- **Confidentiality** – Maintaining the discussions in your therapy sessions in confidence is not only the law, but also important to an effective therapeutic relationship. The information obtained in your sessions will remain confidential. However, there are situations where your therapist would be obligated by law to break confidentiality:
 1. If the therapist learns that a child is at risk or is being sexually, physically, emotionally abused, or neglected. This information must be reported to the Children's Aid Society.
 2. If the therapist judges you to be at risk of harming yourself or someone else or believes that you are unable to take care of your basic needs.
 3. If it is learned that another registered healthcare professional has sexually abused a patient or made sexually inappropriate comments to a patient. Your therapist is required to report this information to the registered healthcare professional's governing college (your name would not be provided without your written permission).
 4. If a judge subpoenas your clinical record, we may be required to release information to the court.
- **Progress notes** – The therapist is required to keep records of the contact they have with you and include information about your response to treatment, any concerns, or issues. The information recorded in progress notes can be helpful in planning treatment strategies.
- The therapists will do their best to ensure that the expected material is covered each week and that the session stays on track.
- The therapist is responsible for providing the **highest quality of care** possible and keeping therapy appointments is a priority. Arrangements can be made to speak with your therapist regarding your treatment if any significant changes in your symptoms should occur.

The Principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) emphasizes the relationship between our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. When we change any one of these three components we can initiate a change in the others. CBT aims to help you worry less and increase the quality of your life. Listed below are 8 basic principles of CBT.

1. CBT will provide you with a new way of understanding your problem.
2. CBT will help you develop new skills to address your problem.
3. CBT relies on the active collaboration between the client and therapist.
4. CBT aims at helping the client become his or her own therapist.
5. CBT will help you become your own therapist by making therapy brief and time-limited.
6. CBT is based in the “here and now”.
7. CBT homework exercises are central elements of therapy.
8. CBT is a structured therapy with a structured format.

What Is CBT?

CBT, or **Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy**, is a psychological treatment that was developed through scientific research. That is, the components of CBT have been tested by researchers to determine whether or not they are effective and that they do what they are intended to do.

Research has shown that CBT is one of the most effective treatments for the management of anxiety. The good news is that although it is best done with a trained CBT counsellor, you can apply CBT principles at home to manage your own anxiety and conquer your fears.

What are the Principles of CBT?

CBT involves learning new skills to manage your symptoms. It teaches you new ways of thinking and behaving that can help you get control over your anxiety in the long run. There are a few principles that are important to understand when using CBT.

1. **CBT focuses on the here and now.**

An important principle of CBT is that treatment involves dealing with the symptoms that you are struggling with right now, rather than focusing on the cause of your problem. Although it can be interesting to understand how your anxiety developed, **just knowing why you have anxiety problems is often not enough to help you manage your anxiety.**

Here is an example: Imagine that you are terrified of dogs. Every time you see one, you run the other way, because you are convinced that all dogs are vicious beasts that will bite you. Now, if you wanted to understand why you are so afraid of dogs, you might eventually uncover that you were bitten by a dog when you were a child, which is no doubt the cause of your fear of dogs.

HERE'S THE PROBLEM: Knowing the cause, does not change the fact that you are terrified of dogs, running away from them, and thinking of them as vicious beasts that bite.

2. **CBT emphasizes the importance of homework**

Whether you are receiving CBT from a trained therapist or you are using self-help CBT techniques at home, homework is a key component. Doing homework for CBT basically means that from week to week, you will need to practice the new skills that you are learning and apply them to your daily life. And like the homework that you were given in school, you need to practice those skills everyday.

Why is homework so important?

Unless you practice the new strategies that you learn to manage anxiety, you will not use them very well, and you will probably forget to use them when you need them most - **when you are feeling very anxious**.

Learning the new ways to manage anxiety is a little like developing a new, healthy habit. If for example, you wanted to start exercising regularly, you would want to fit in a new exercise routine into your schedule. It would be difficult at first, but if you kept at it, that new routine would become a habit, and eventually a part of your regular activities. The same is true with CBT skills if you practice them every day, they will become a part of your daily routine.

The good news is that the more you use your CBT skills, the easier it gets, and the better you will become at managing your anxiety.

What To Expect When You See a CBT Counsellor

If you decide that you need some guidance in CBT and would like to see a trained CBT therapist, here are some other aspects of treatment that you can expect:

CBT is structured and educational

Treatment sessions in CBT involve learning new ways to think about and understand your symptoms. Because of this, sessions are structured so that you are usually reviewing the homework you did, learning new information and skills, and then developing a new homework assignment for the new session.

CBT is collaborative

Because you are learning new skills in CBT, therapy is very active. Both you and your therapist will be working on helping you to understand your symptoms and ways to manage them. You can expect to participate both in and out of session in order to see positive changes.

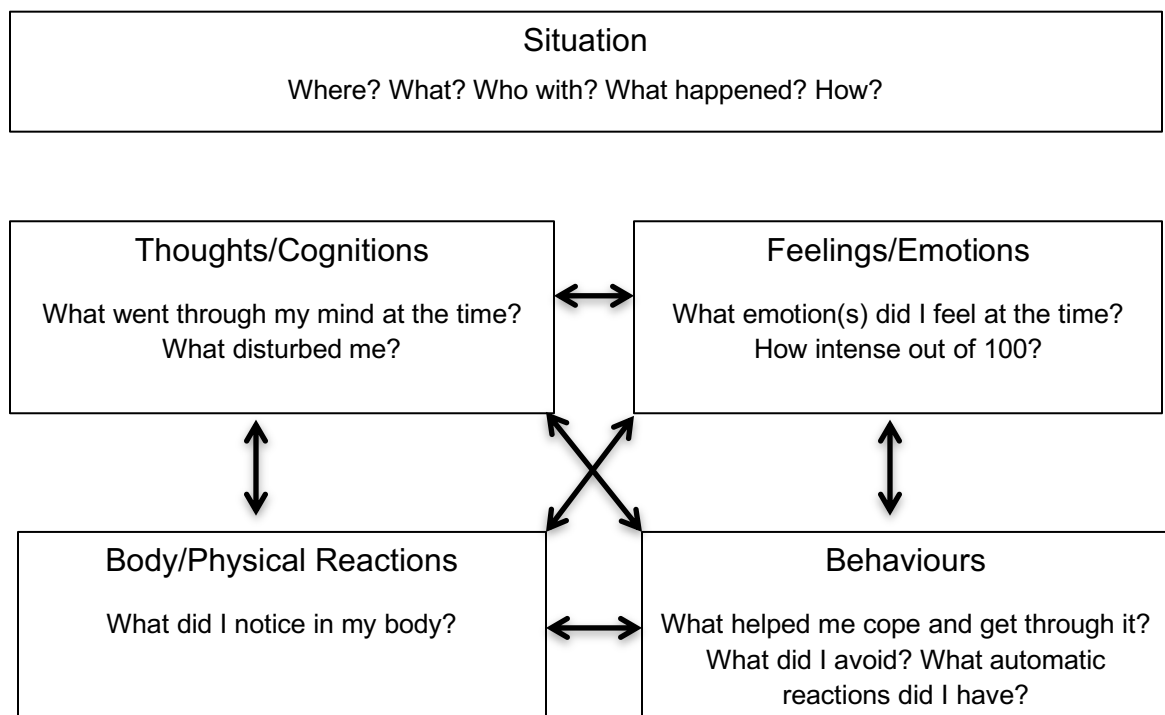
KEEP IN MIND: When it comes to CBT, you get out of it what you put in. If you don't put your best effort into managing your own anxiety, you probably won't get as much benefit from CBT as you could.

CBT is time-limited

People who go to see a CBT therapist to help them with their anxiety will usually have between 8 to 12 sessions. CBT is not supposed to be a life-long process. Rather, **you are learning to become your own therapist**. Once you have learned new skills; had a chance to master them and see positive changes in your life, it be time for you to leave therapy and continue managing your anxiety on your own.

What will I learn in CBT?

CBT involves learning how to change your thoughts (also called cognitions) and your actions (or behaviors), which is why it is called **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy**. It is easiest to explain cognitive-behavioural therapy using the **Five Factor Model** (Padesky & Mooney, 1990).



Returning to the example of a fear of dogs, imagine a **situation** where you are walking down the street and you see a dog. The first thing that you may notice is your **physical reactions** of your heart beating quickly and tense muscles. You then may have **thoughts** such as “I hate dogs”, “What if it bites me”, “I have to get out of here”. Some people may have images of a dog attacking them. The **emotion** someone is experiencing would be anxiety. You may then run to the other side of the street (**behaviour**).

However, someone who is an avid dog lover would act quite differently! Their physical reaction may be one of calm. The emotion that they would feel could be excitement because it is a breed of dog they have never seen before. The thoughts could be “What a beautiful dog!” “The owner is so lucky to have one” and “I really want to pet him/her.” The behaviour then would be walking up to the dog and petting it.

REMEMBER: One thing to notice in these two examples is that the situation did not change: but if you change your thoughts, then your feelings and actions change as well.

If we return to the first example, you might be able to reduce your fear of dogs if you either:

Change your behavior

By using exposure, you could gradually approach dogs rather than avoid them. Over time, your fear of dogs would be reduced, and you would probably learn that not all dogs bite. Exposure is one of the best tools at your disposal to face your fears and manage your anxiety in the long run.

OR

Change your thoughts (cognitions)

You might also change the triangle if you were able to challenge the thought that “All dogs bite”. For example, you might tell yourself that if all dogs were vicious and bit people, no one would have them as pets. When we feel anxious, our thinking tends to be overly negative, because it is completely focused on danger and threat; we don’t always see the whole picture.

If you are afraid of dogs, for example, when you see a dog you might only be thinking about how sharp his teeth look and not about whether he is on a leash or if his tail is wagging. Learning how to take a closer look at your thoughts, and coming up with more balanced and alternative thoughts, is another important tool for managing your anxiety.



KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. CBT, or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, is based on research – so we know it works!
2. CBT teaches you new ways of thinking and behaving.
3. Thoughts, feelings and behaviors are inter-connected, so if you change one, it has an effect on the other two.
4. If you change the way you think and behave, you can also change the way you feel.