

Stress Management: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an empirically supported treatment that focuses on patterns of thinking that are maladaptive. It challenges core beliefs or assumptions that are part of the perceptual filter people use to view the world.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPIES HAVE THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS:

1. CBT is based on the Cognitive Model of Emotional Response. It is based on the idea that our thoughts cause our feelings and behaviors, not external things, like people, situation and events. The benefit of this is that we can change the way we think to feel/act better even if the situation does not change.
2. CBT is Briefer and Time-Limited. Cognitive behavioral therapy is considered among the most rapid in terms of results obtained. The average number of sessions clients receive (across all types of problems) is only 16. What enables CBT to be briefer is its educational nature and the fact that it makes use of homework assignments.
3. CBT is a collaborative effort between the therapist and the client. Cognitive behavioral therapists seek to learn what their clients want out of life (their goals) and then help their clients achieve these goals. The therapist's role is to listen, teach and encourage, while the client's role is to express concerns, learn and implement that learning, by way of homework assignments and behavioral strategies.

4. CBT is structured and directive. CBT therapist has a specific agenda for each session. Specific techniques/concepts are taught during each session. It is based on the educational model. The goal of therapy is to help clients unlearn their unwanted reactions and to learn a new ways of coping with stressful situations. It seeks to challenge automatic thoughts.

5. CBT best fits with clients who are comfortable with introspection, and who readily adopt the scientific method for exploring their own psychology. It also requires a commitment to completing the self-help assignments. It requires the client to communicate clearly with the therapist any obstacles to compliance. CBT therapies have often proved especially helpful to clients suffering from depression, anxiety, panic and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Before deciding upon a CBT therapist, please consider the following questions:

- What are their credentials? (should be Master Level or above)
- What training/supervision have they had in CBT?
- How many years of experience using CBT?
- What are their specialties in mental health?

RESOURCES.

National Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists.