

# Cognitive Behavior Therapy

## What is cognitive behavior therapy?

Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is a type of talk therapy that can help you change the way you think about certain things. It can also help you change behaviors that may be unhelpful or unhealthy. CBT works as well as or better than medicine to treat certain psychological problems.

## Who can benefit from CBT?

CBT can help you if you are anxious or depressed, if you have trouble coping with certain things that have happened to you, if you worry so much it interferes with your life, or if you have trouble sleeping, obsessive thoughts, compulsive acts, or eating problems. CBT can also help children who have attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder or autism.

## How does it work?

CBT is based on the idea that when an event occurs in your life, the way you think about the event sparks an emotion, then you may act in an unhealthy way in response to that thought or emotion. In CBT, your therapist may help you change the way you think about the event, change your actions after the event, or both. He or she can teach you how to challenge your thoughts and beliefs, increase the number of pleasant activities in your life, and guide you

through situations that make you anxious to change your response to them.

## Will I still need to take medicine?

If you have bipolar disorder (manic depression) or a condition in which psychosis is present (such as schizophrenia), you need to take medicine in addition to CBT. If you are so depressed that you hear or see things that others don't, or if you can't leave your house because you are so depressed, you also need to take medicine in addition to CBT.

## Are there drawbacks?

In CBT, you will be asked to do work outside of the treatment session. If you are not able to do this, you may benefit less from CBT. Your therapist may also want you to spend time with thoughts, situations, or feelings that make you anxious. This can be upsetting at first, but most people are less anxious in the long run.

## Where can I find a cognitive behavior therapist?

Your doctor

Academy of Cognitive Therapy  
<http://www.academyofct.org>

Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies  
<http://www.findcbt.org/xFAT/>

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**This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.**

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