

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Many treatment options can help people living with depression and related conditions. One common approach is talk therapy (psychotherapy), which uses guided conversation to support emotional healing and positive behavior change. A widely used and effective type of talk therapy is **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**.

What is CBT?

CBT is a form of talk therapy that helps people change unhelpful thoughts and behaviors. It's a well-established, research-based treatment proven to help with depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions. About three out of four people notice a meaningful improvement after CBT. It can be used alone or in combination with medication.

How does CBT work?

CBT helps you focus on what's happening in your life now instead of the past. It helps you notice patterns in how you think and act that may worsen symptoms or affect your daily activities. You'll usually meet with a trained therapist who helps you learn and practice new skills between sessions.

During CBT, the therapist works with you to:

- **Recognize and challenge unhelpful thoughts.** People living with depression or anxiety often have negative or distorted thoughts about themselves, others, or their situations. By learning to identify and replace these thoughts with more accurate and balanced ones, you can begin to see yourself and your future more clearly.

- **Rediscover enjoyable activities.** When you're depressed, it can be difficult to do the things you used to enjoy. Avoiding these activities often deepens sadness and isolation. CBT helps you gradually reintroduce small, meaningful activities to boost your mood and rebuild motivation.
- **Build problem-solving and coping skills.** Everyday problems can feel overwhelming when you're struggling with a mental health condition. CBT provides tools to help you manage challenges more effectively and feel more in control of your life.

CBT works best when you actively participate, both during sessions and by practicing new strategies on your own. Over time, these skills can help you manage symptoms and respond to challenges in healthier ways.

For more mental health educational resources, visit depressioncenter.org/toolkit.

This document provides general educational information developed by the Eisenberg Family Depression Center. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Please consult your health care provider if you have questions about your health or treatment options.