

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Skills to Help Yourself in Six Weeks

For many people who need help with overcoming depression, anxiety, OCD or other emotional, psychological or behavioral problems, Cognitive Behavior Therapy could be the answer. Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is suitable for anyone who is able to think and reflect on his or her thinking! Of course, this is trickier than it sounds but a good therapist can help you do this. Cognitive Behavior Therapy is particularly suitable for people who want to be active in helping themselves, as it actually teaches you tools and techniques to gain control over your problem. Many people find this a refreshing alternative to more traditional forms of counseling.

Unfortunately, (although this is changing), there are often a shortage of NHS Cognitive Therapists and you will often be put on a waiting list. If you are not working because of your depression or other problem or your ability to function in life activities is impaired, waiting is sometimes not an option.

The other choice you have to is to find a private therapist offering CBT services. Of course, there is the cost to consider and for some people weeks of expensive therapy is out of the question. CBT is a time-limited intervention (the average number of sessions required is usually between 5-15) and a good therapist will agree with you the number of sessions you are likely to require and work within this framework. This is regularly reviewed throughout the therapy process and more or less sessions may be needed, depending on your progress.

I am an occupational therapist, and I provide Cognitive Behavior Therapy in Edinburgh and via telephone consultations for people living in Hertfordshire. I believe that if you are motivated to help yourself (the will needs to be there, your therapist will support you in motivating yourself if you are depressed), if you feel you could help yourself if only you had the tools and if you are willing to practice techniques in between sessions, you can utilise Cognitive Behavior Therapy to begin the journey of recovery in as little as six one hour sessions.

In fact, I find that clients who agree to work within a six-session time-frame mostly learn the basic CBT techniques and how to apply them and are motivated by the knowledge that there is an ending to therapy. These clients will often make the most out of therapy sessions, taking an active part and practicing in between.

If you feel this approach would work for you, then you can suggest to a private therapist in your area that you would like to try to work within a six sessions time-frame. If you have a longstanding and more complex problem, then you may require longer-term input, your therapist will be able to advise you of this.

Here is an example of what clients learn on a six week 1:1 course at Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) Edinburgh:

Week 1: Introduction to CBT Model and how this relates to your problem. Recognizing the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behavior. Learning to monitor your thinking. How to identify of "Hot thoughts"

Week 2: Review of your thought diary and learning how to challenge your own unhelpful thinking, examining the evidence for and against your cognitions and identifying information processing errors. Learning to substitute rational adaptive interpretations for biased interpretations.

Week 3. Identifying underlying core beliefs (schema). Beginning to devise ways to challenge old negative beliefs and restructure new adaptive beliefs. Designing your own behavior experiments.

Week 4-6 Cognitive and Behavioral experiments and activities as decided by therapist and client to target client's specific difficulties. For example, learning relaxation and mindfulness techniques for anxiousness, graded exposure for avoidance, activity scheduling and activity logs to deal with inactivity and poor motivation. Self-esteem exercises and scheduling pleasurable activities for low mood.

Throughout the six week course at CBT Edinburgh, clients are required to supplement what is learnt during the sessions with homework activities and sometimes reading. Clients are usually required to keep a thought diary for the six weeks and this is reviewed along with other homework at each session.

About the Author

Karen is a mental health occupational therapist with a background in the NHS. She practices Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Edinburgh (CBT, Edinburgh) as well as NLP and Hypnotherapy Edinburgh. For more information visit <http://www.karenhastings.co.uk>

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