

## Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

### **What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and how can it help me?**

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, often called CBT, is a way of thinking. It assumes that people contribute to their problems and symptoms by the way they perceive, appraise, and interpret their problems.

CBT helps people become more **aware** of thoughts, feelings, behaviors.

It helps people examine the **accuracy** of their thoughts and perceptions.

It helps people develop more realistic and balanced ways of thinking and acting.

### **Goals of CBT**

- Modify automatic negative thinking patterns
- Reduce excessive emotional reactions
- Modify self-defeating behavior patterns
- Improve the quality of key relationships

CBT can help to wire new neurological activity in the brain. It can help retrain the brain by practicing new thoughts and behaviors one day at a time.

CBT helps people think, feel, act, and relate in healthier ways.

### **Basic Principles of CBT**

- Thoughts are not facts
- Don't believe everything you think
- Look for proof
- Increase positive self-talk
- Examine the evidence
- Dispute and debate
- Question and challenge
- Restructure

### **Questions to ask yourself to help challenge your negative thoughts or self-talk:**

- Am I falling into a thinking trap, e.g. *catastrophizing* or *overestimating danger*?
- What is the evidence that this thought is true? What is the evidence that this is not true?
- Have I confused a thought with a fact?
- What would I tell a friend if he/she had the same thought?
- What would a friend say about my thought?
- Am I 100% sure that \_\_\_\_\_ will happen?

- How many times has \_\_\_\_\_ happened before?
- Is \_\_\_\_\_ so important that my future depends on it?
- What is the worst that could happen?
- If it did happen, what could I do to cope with or handle it?
- Is my judgment based on the way I feel instead of facts?
- Am I confusing “possibility” with “certainty”? It may be possible, but is it likely?
- Is this a hassle or a horror?

### **The ABC Model**

- A major aid in cognitive therapy is what Albert Ellis (1957) called the **ABC Technique of Irrational Beliefs**.
- The first three steps analyze the process by which a person has developed irrational beliefs and may be recorded in a three-column table.
- **A - Activating Event or objective situation.** The first column records the objective situation, that is, an event that ultimately leads to some type of high emotional response or negative dysfunctional thinking.
- **B - Beliefs.** In the second column, the client writes down the negative thoughts that occurred to them.
- **C - Consequence.** The third column is for the negative feelings and dysfunctional behaviors that ensued. The negative thoughts of the second column are seen as a connecting bridge between the situation and the distressing feelings. The third column C is next explained by describing emotions or negative thoughts that the client thinks are caused by A. This could be anger, sorrow, anxiety, etc.
- Ellis believes that it is not the activating event (**A**) that causes negative emotional and behavioral consequences (**C**), but rather that a person interprets these events unrealistically and therefore has an irrational belief system (**B**) that helps cause the consequences (**C**).