

What is Cognitive Therapy?

From: Academy of Cognitive Therapy - www.academyofct.org

Cognitive Therapy is a *focused, problem-solving therapy* that has been shown in over 400 outcome studies to be highly effective for the treatment of many mental health problems such as depression, general anxiety disorders, panic, anger and marital distress. It has also been shown to be effective in the treatment of medical conditions such as chronic pain, hypertension, and fibromyalgia.

The therapist and client work together as a team to identify and solve problems, and therapists help clients to overcome their difficulties through *changing their thinking, behavior, and emotional response*.

Cognitive Therapy involves three primary activities:

- a) Education
- b) Skill Building
- c) Problem Solving.

During treatment, the client actively applies strategies learned to the problems which brought them to therapy.

From: National Association of Cognitive Behavioral Therapists: nacbt.org/whatiscbt.aspx

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is based on the idea that *our thoughts cause our feelings and behaviors*, not external things, like people, situations, and events. The benefit of this fact is that we can change the way we think and then feel/act better even if the situation does not change.

CBT is structured and directive.

Specific techniques are taught during each session. CBT focuses on the client's goals. We do not tell our clients what their goals "should" be, or what they "should" tolerate. We are directive in the sense that we show our clients how to think and behave in ways to obtain what they want. Therefore, CBT therapists do not tell their clients what to do -- rather, they teach their clients how to do.

The educational emphasis of CBT has an additional benefit -- it leads to *long term results*. When people understand how and why they are doing well, they know what to do to continue doing well.

Homework is a central feature of CBT.

If when you attempted to learn your multiplication tables you spent only one hour per week studying them, you might still be wondering what 5 X 5 equals. You very likely spent a great deal of time at home studying your multiplication tables, maybe with flashcards.