



# Cognitive-behavioural therapy

## Thinking (cognition)

What we think about things can also affect how we feel. For example, if you saw your GP in the street and said hello, how would you feel if they ignored you?

If you thought they just didn't see you, you might not feel anything. However, if you thought:

1. "They deliberately ignored me", you might feel annoyed
2. "They think they're too good to talk to me", you might feel angry
3. "Their eyesight or memory must be bad", you might feel sorry for them
4. "I'm not worth talking to", you might feel worthless
5. "They don't like me", you might feel rejected

In other words, what we think, and how we interpret situations, can make us feel worse. Thinking in a more helpful way can improve how we feel.

Your doctor or nurse can discuss CBT with you further. You may also want to visit [www.livinglifetothefull.com](http://www.livinglifetothefull.com)

Dr T E Julyan  
June 2007

## What is Cognitive-behavioural therapy?

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is a psychological therapy or talking treatment. It can help people with a variety of different problems – and they often enjoy it.

Medical research has shown it to be safe and helpful in:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Bipolar affective disorder (manic depression)
- Other psychological disorders

## What happens in CBT?

CBT usually takes place with a therapist (who could be a doctor, nurse, psychologist or other health professional). It can also be done on your own with self-help material.

Most patients have between 4 and 20 sessions of CBT. These take place every 1 or 2 weeks, and last around 1 hour. There will often be one or more simple tasks to complete in between sessions.

## Does it involve talking about your childhood or past experiences?

CBT focuses more on the “here and now”, and aims to find ways of dealing with current problems. It may sometimes be relevant to talk about the past.

Generally the patient sets the agenda with the therapist’s help. CBT aims to help patients to learn skills and techniques which they can use to help themselves.

## How does CBT work?

CBT works because what we think (cognition) and how we behave affects how we feel. It is not about doing anything “weird and wonderful” or “just thinking positively”.

### **Behaviour**

CBT can help to break cycles of unhelpful behaviour. For example, when we feel depressed we may stop doing things we usually enjoy, such as seeing our friends. But this is likely to make us feel worse, not better.

Changing our behaviour so that we do things we enjoy can start to make a difference to how we feel. This diagram may help to illustrate: