

A number of treatment options are available to people diagnosed with depression or related illnesses. Psychotherapy, sometimes referred to as “talk therapy,” uses communication to help bring about positive changes in feelings and behaviors. One form of psychotherapy is called cognitive-behavioral therapy, or CBT.

What is CBT?

CBT is a well-established, scientifically-based approach proven to be effective in the treatment of depression. Three out of four people show significant improvements after participating in CBT. CBT can be used alone or in combination with medication.

How does CBT work?

Cognitive-behavioral therapy focuses on the present, rather than on past history, to help people recognize and modify unhealthy thought and behavior patterns. These patterns can interfere with functioning and/or make depressive symptoms worse. CBT often involves regular sessions with a trained therapist who assigns exercises that people can practice daily on their own.

During CBT, the therapist works with the person to:

- **Identify and correct the inaccurate thoughts that may precede depressed feelings.** Since people with depression often experience distorted, negative thoughts about themselves or their situations, working to recognize more accurate information about the person’s experience can help individuals gain a more realistic picture of the present and the future.
- **Encourage the person to take part in enjoyable activities.** It is common for people with depression to stop participating in pleasurable activities or

hobbies because they may assume those activities will no longer be enjoyable - this can create a cycle of feeling depressed, avoiding activities, and then feeling even more depressed. In CBT, the therapist works with the person to break this cycle by promoting a gradual increase in participation in pleasurable activities.

- **Improve problem-solving and coping skills.** The problems of daily life can seem too much to handle for someone living with depression. During CBT, the therapist can provide instruction and guidance to help the person develop better problem-solving strategies.

For more information:

- University of Michigan Depression Center
- 1-800-475-MICH or 734-936-4400
- <http://www.depressioncenter.org/toolkit>

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