

Tips For Getting the Most Out of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

1. **The idea behind cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** is that you have acquired strong (“core”) beliefs about yourself and the world. These beliefs may not be accurate, but they affect how you feel about yourself and others. Inaccurate thoughts cannot be true.
2. **CBT teaches you to observe your own thoughts** and then to evaluate or test how true those thoughts might be. You may decide to keep a list that explains why some of your inaccurate thoughts cannot be true.
3. **Your CBT therapist will help you learn to evaluate your thinking** and ask, “What was going through my mind when I felt that particular emotion?” Your therapist will ask you to write down what you were thinking as well as what feeling followed your thoughts. If you can learn to change your thinking, your emotions will also improve!
4. **Your CBT therapist may tell you that negative beliefs about yourself**, your world, and your future (“I am worthless”) may be causing you to have negative feelings and behaviors or depression. Many times how you see yourself, particularly when you are depressed, is very different from how others see you.
5. **Your CBT therapist may help you challenge your beliefs** by teaching you how to identify negative “core” beliefs. For example, you may believe that “Nothing ever works for me.” To challenge such “black and white thinking” you might learn to look for times when it is not true. For example, “Sometimes things don’t work for me, but last week when I asked for time off, my boss gave it to me.”
6. **Talk with your CBT therapist** about what is most helpful to you in learning to think and act differently. Let your therapist know what homework is most helpful to you.
7. **CBT requires that you practice what you learn.** As you get in the habit of challenging negative beliefs, you will begin to automatically think more realistically and positively about yourself, others and the world.
8. **Your CBT therapist may recommend that you start writing down** what you do every day as well as what you were feeling with each activity. After a while, you may learn to reduce some of the activities that lead to negative emotions and increase the activities that lead to positive emotions.
9. **Set realistic short-term goals.** Focus on your strengths to achieve those goals. Your CBT therapist will remind you that you have many strengths. You will soon begin to recognize some of your strengths on your own!
10. **You may participate in CBT, either individually or in a group setting.** CBT is generally a time-limited way to help you learn skills to manage your thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

*Your CBT
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