



Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

Introduction

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) work with young people up to the age of 18 who are experiencing mental health difficulties. This leaflet describes one of a range of therapies or 'talking treatments' which can help.

Young people seek help from CAMHS for many reasons, e.g. feeling unhappy, scared or confused. Sometimes these feelings become so strong that they start to cause difficulties and can even stop you from doing things that you normally enjoy. When you feel like this, one of the ways that you can start to feel better is by taking part in cognitive behavioural therapy (often called CBT).



Cognitive

is a word used to describe thoughts or thinking. Talking about your thoughts can help you to understand how you feel and the way you act.



Behavioural

is a word used to describe behaviour or how we act and the way we do things. Sometimes it helps to look at how we act in different situations (e.g. classroom, home) and around different people (e.g. parent, teacher, friend).



Therapy

means a method that is used to help someone feel better. Someone who provides therapy is known as a therapist.

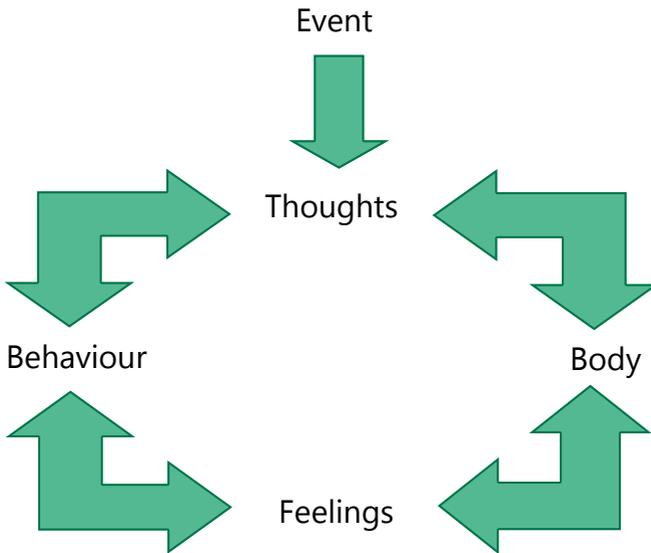
In CBT you and your therapist will talk about your thoughts, what you do and how you feel. Then together you can work out the best way to make changes and overcome difficulties.

CBT makes sense of problems by looking at beliefs and patterns of behaviour which you have learnt during your life so far. For example, you might believe that “People will not like me unless I am perfect”, or “People can’t be trusted not to hurt me”.

These beliefs may not cause any problems until some event ‘triggers’ them. For example, school stresses, parents separating, physical illness or growing up. These beliefs can then give rise to unhelpful negative thoughts and ways of behaving. These then make you feel anxious or depressed, or troubled.

CBT sees these negative thoughts and behaviours as important in keeping your problems going. For most of the therapy you will focus on what is going on now to keep your problems going, rather than looking at the past. For instance, if you are depressed you might be constantly overwhelmed by thoughts about how useless you are, how nothing is worth doing and so on. These thoughts then make it hard to do things, which reduce the chance for any fun or achievement. The stream of negative thoughts, together with a lack of fun or achievement, tends to keep you depressed. It goes round and round in a vicious circle.

Cognitive behavioural therapy diagram



This diagram shows the links between thoughts, feelings, body and behaviour.

CBT's approach to problems

While it may be important to look at why these problems started, CBT works on the 'here and now' and looks at how to break the 'vicious circle'. You and your therapist will work together to think of alternatives for the negative thoughts and other behaviours that you can do. The aim of this is to help you gain control over your situation.

Once you have control you can go back and look at the causes of the problem, which may help it to not happen again.

What to expect in therapy

If you and your therapist decide that cognitive behavioural therapy might be helpful for you, you will need to:

- agree on some goals which you would like to work on.
- meet with your therapist regularly, for example once a week or fortnight. Some of these sessions might include other family members.
- talk with your therapist about how you feel, how you behave and what you think about things.
- be honest and open, as therapists aren't mind readers and won't know what is wrong if you do not tell them.
- listen to your therapist. They will try to keep you on track with the agenda you have agreed and ensure that the focus stays on your goals.
- complete exercises that you and your therapist agree. This is also known as 'homework' which will consist of tasks like keeping notes of what happens, practising particular coping skills or trying out new ways of tackling problem.
- tell your therapist if there is anything you don't understand.

If you do this, you will learn to:



understand the thoughts you have, and find helpful ways of thinking.



discover ways of controlling your unpleasant feelings.



solve and overcome your problem.

Jargon buster:

Triggers: events, thoughts, feelings that have happened that can start negative thoughts and can lead to a vicious circle.

Vicious circle: a cycle of negative thoughts and behaviour and events that work together to maintain your mood.

Agenda: this is the list of things that will be discussed during the session and is set at the start of the session by the therapist and young person.

Homework: This is agreed on by the young person and therapist.

Practical information

There are usually between eight and twenty therapy sessions. Often we suggest an initial period of four or five sessions as a chance to see whether this kind of treatment suits you. A session will usually last between 30 and 60 minutes, probably once a week to start with.

Likely results of therapy

CBT is one of the best researched forms of therapy and the evidence shows that typically two thirds or more of people who have CBT get significant benefit from it. Research suggests that as with all treatments there is a small chance, perhaps 1 or 2%, of getting worse during treatment.

What if I'm not happy with my treatment?

In the first instance you need to talk to your therapist. Get support from a family member, friend or other health professional, if that will help you to say what you need to. If you cannot resolve the difficulties informally, then ask your therapist or another professional for a copy of the complaints procedure.

You can also get advice and support from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

Email:	PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk
Freephone:	0800 328 7971
Address:	Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Warneford Hospital, Oxford, OX3 7JX

Ask your therapist for the PALS leaflet which gives you further details of ways to contact them. When making a complaint try to be as specific as possible. Be clear about what you are unhappy with and what you want to achieve. If you cannot resolve the problem by talking to your therapist, put things in writing and keep copies if possible.

If you need the information in another language or format please ask us

Nëse ky informacion ju nevojitet në një gjuhë apo format tjetër, ju lutem na kontaktoni

आपनि यदि এই তথ্যাদি অন্য কোন ভাষায় বা মাধ্যমে (ফরমেট) পেতে চান
তবে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন

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Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are
part of the Children and Young People's Directorate

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