# CBT and Medication: How Both Can Boost Your Healing Journey

Embarking on a healing journey can be nerve-racking, but we promise it’s so worth it. Using tools and treatments can be an effective way to work through mental health struggles. Two of the effective tools for treating mental health concerns are Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and psychiatric medications. Both of these can be used together to help people heal from mental health concerns and live fuller lives. Unfortunately, there is often shame associated with taking medication for mental health. However, there is nothing wrong with taking medications for mental health. Psychiatric medications were created and developed as a way to help people live better lives. Taking medications for mental health is just as valid as taking medications for physical health reasons. People need to remember and educate others.

**How CBT Helps with Mental Health**

[Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/patients-and-families/cognitive-behavioral) (CBT) is a type of therapy that teaches people how they can identify distortions in their thoughts. These thoughts are not helpful or true and can be reframed using CBT. This type of [therapy](https://beckinstitute.org/about/understanding-cbt/) also teaches how our thoughts, behaviors, and feelings all interact together. Some common types of [cognitive distortions](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470241/) include all-or-nothing thinking, mental filtering, discounting the positive, labeling, and mind-reading. By identifying distortions in a person’s feelings, they will be able to work with their therapist to reframe these thoughts and create more positive ones. Once a person reframes some of their negative thoughts, they will likely start to feel better and decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression. CBT is commonly used to treat depression, anxiety, OCD, and PTSD. While CBT can be used to treat other things, these are the ones that are the most common.

**How Medication Helps Mental Health**

Medication can be a helpful way to support a person’s mental health healing. Unfortunately, there are still stigmas against using medication for mental health. It is just as valid to use medication for mental health as it is for physical health. Nobody would ever deny a person with diabetes who needed insulin, however, medication for mental health can be seen as weak. We assure you that using medication for mental health is not weak. Seeking help for mental health struggles is incredibly brave, and this includes mental health medications.

There are a few different types of medications that can be used to treat mental health concerns. These mental health [medications](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-health-medications) include SSRIs, SNRIs, benzodiazepines, mood stabilizers, and in some cases, antipsychotics. SSRIs and SNRIs regulate chemical imbalances that people may have as a result of several factors. These chemicals affect mood, such as norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin. Benzodiazepines are used for sedation and to reduce seizures. Sometimes, Benzodiazepines (and beta-blockers) are used for the treatment of anxiety disorders. Mood stabilizers can be used for people who have mood changes as a result of bipolar disorder or other causes. These [medications](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/antidepressants/art-20046273) balance neurotransmitters within the brain and help the person struggling to regulate their moods. Medications are usually most effective when combined with talk therapy. While medications can help, they will not heal our traumas and negative thoughts. These things must be worked through in therapy with a licensed professional and will likely take some time to work through.

**CBT and Medication**

CBT and medication can be combined to help increase the effectiveness of both treatments. Cognitive behavioral therapy can be used to help people change their thoughts and, as a result, their feelings. With the help of CBT, people can learn to change the thought loops they tell themselves. When medication is combined with CBT, people have a greater chance of recovery because they are both working together to improve a person’s well-being.

Medication can help a person regulate their mood and make CBT therapy more effective because they are more open to the benefits of it. CBT can eventually reduce the need for using medications long-term to manage mental health symptoms. [Research](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15809408/) has shown that while the effectiveness of medication about other forms of treatment is debated, it is useful when combined with other forms of treatment and improves chances of recovery. Sometimes, a person might be doing the right thing by seeking treatment in the form of therapy or medication. However, if they have tried one of the treatments and are not seeing relief or improvement in symptoms, they may need to try adding another form of treatment to see results. There is nothing wrong with needing more treatment or tools to use on your healing journey. Healing is challenging and complex. It will not happen overnight and sometimes our methods need to be changed and redirected.

Specifically, CBT and medications can be used together in a variety of ways. While medications can be used to rewire thoughts and improve symptoms of mental health disorders, CBT can help patients learn long-term [coping strategies](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15809409/) to help maintain their recovery journey over the rest of their lives. By using the two together, there are even greater chances of recovery. For example, medication can be used to help someone relieve their symptoms of anxiety, such as their heart racing or shortness of breath. CBT can be used in therapy to teach patients how they can respond differently to things that make them anxious. This will help reduce anxiety symptoms over time. By using both CBT and medication, anxiety symptoms have a much greater chance of going away and staying away.

Combining CBT and psychiatric medications for the treatment of mental health conditions is usually recommended when a patient meets few factors. These factors include that their symptoms are chronic or life-threatening, they have tried therapy or medication separately and have had no relief. If a person has recurrent struggles with depression or anxiety, they might also be recommended to try combining CBT and medications for better symptom reduction and to increase the likelihood of long-term recovery. If someone is struggling to focus at work or school, they may be motivated to combine treatments to get faster results in their symptom relief. Everyone’s situation is a little different, and that’s always okay.

If you or someone you love is struggling with their mental health, this is your sign that you deserve to seek treatment. You deserve to live a life free of your mental health symptoms. Many different tools can be used. Even if you have tried a type of treatment and have not been seeing changes doesn’t mean you will never have relief from your symptoms. Recovery is possible, and we believe in you!

**Steps to Start Your Healing Journey**

If you feel like you are ready to start your mental health healing journey but are not sure where to start, don’t worry. We can help! We provide psychiatric medical management for clients who would like to add medication to their treatment plan. This management includes medication management and symptom management. We also use CBT as a part of our treatment for people who wish to start therapy. If you would like to work with us and see one of our online counselors, please [reach out to us](https://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/contact.php).

**References**

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