# What to Know Before Starting Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (СВТ)

When a person is seeking treatment for their mental health, there are many different types of therapy approaches to choose from. Some approaches work better than others, depending on the mental health condition and the traits of the person seeking help. [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2024/09/cognitive-behaviora-therapy-depression.html) (CBT) is one of the most common approaches to mental health treatments and is proven to be incredibly effective in treating a variety of mental health conditions.

## What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a type of therapy that focuses on improving a person’s unhelpful thoughts and behaviors. This type of therapy teaches patients that their thoughts, behaviors, and moods are all affected by one another. CBT shows patients how they can improve their thoughts and behaviors to improve their mental health and well-being. The main components of CBT are recognizing and reframing negative thoughts, developing healthy coping skills, and practicing [behavioral activation](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/behavioral-activation). Behavioral activation is the practice of increasing the number of healthy, enjoyable behaviors that can improve a person’s well-being.

## What to Expect When Starting CBT

We understand that it can be scary to start therapy or a new approach to therapy. We will discuss several things to expect when starting CBT, to help our readers understand how helpful it can be.

* In most cases, the first session of [therapy](https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cognitive-behavioral-therapy/about/pac-20384610) will include therapists having patients give some information about their history and what they are struggling with specifically. Therapists may use assessments as a tool to learn more about their patients. This can help therapists understand their patients better and learn about what areas of their lives cause the biggest struggles. These can also provide therapists the information about their patients’ symptoms and how it is affecting their lives.
* In the first few sessions, therapists will work with their patients to help identify the unhelpful core beliefs they have about themselves. This will help therapists to understand how patients speak to themselves and how they feel as a result of their thoughts. These first couple of sessions can be used to identify unhelpful behaviors and track their consistency. These sessions help therapists learn about where their patients are in their healing journey and make a plan to help them improve their mental health.
* When a person is working through CBT, they will typically track their progress using goals that can be easily measured. Setting small, achievable goals can help people in therapy build their confidence in themselves. Progress can also be tracked by patients giving feedback to their therapist based on what is working for them and what is not.
* It’s important to remember that changing these thought patterns and behaviors can feel strange or uncomfortable. This is completely normal. Old thought patterns that have been with us for a long time are harder to change. It’s typical for our brains to put up some resistance when making changes in our thoughts and beliefs by using new [mental health treatments](https://sps.columbia.edu/news/brain-power-revealed-neuroscience-human-behavior).

## Best Practices for CBT

Like we have mentioned above, CBT is an incredibly helpful form of therapy. Below, we will discuss the different ways to get the most out of therapy sessions.

* **Practice:** In most cases, patients will engage in therapy weekly. However, the time in between sessions is just as important as the sessions themselves. Therapists may assign homework for their patients between sessions to help improve skills in between sessions. It can be difficult to practice skills outside of therapy sessions for a variety of reasons; however, it’s important to try. Working in between sessions will support quicker changes and mastery of skills taught in CBT. Practicing these skills weekly is helpful, but if patients want to make lasting changes in their lives, they will have to bring their skills into them.
* **Communication:** Communication between a therapist and a patient is an important part of the therapeutic relationship. Patients must be open and honest with their therapist if a specific skill isn’t working for them. It may be because they are not practicing the skill enough, but it also might mean that the skill isn’t the best fit for this specific patient. Proper communication helps both parties to be on the same page, which can improve how effective the therapy is in improving a patient’s well-being.
* **Patience:** We understand that when a person is dealing with mental health conditions, they want to try to work through their issues as soon as they can. However, making lasting changes takes time, and it’s important to be patient throughout the process. Changing unhelpful thoughts and behaviors takes time and effort. It’s important that people are gentle with themselves during the process of working through CBT.
* **Honesty:** When working through core beliefs or negative thoughts, some patients may be tempted to hold back because they are embarrassed or uncomfortable sharing. It’s completely valid to feel this way. It’s scary to share our deepest negative thoughts with another person. This is why choosing a therapist who is the right fit for each person is so important. Feeling comfortable and safe is an important part of using therapy to improve mental health.

## Finding a Therapist

[Finding the right therapist](https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/patients-and-families/finding-good-therapist) is one of the most important ways to prepare for starting therapy. Therapists have different approaches, personalities, and demeanors that may be suited for different types of people. Oftentimes, it takes a few tries for patients to find the right fit of therapist for them. It’s helpful to be patient and open-minded when trying to find a new therapist. In most cases, therapists are understanding if it isn’t the best fit. Thankfully, with advances and technology, people can also utilize teletherapists if they are unable to physically go to therapy. This can help people who are busy or may not have access to going to therapy in person. Finally, it’s helpful to find a therapist who specializes in or is trained in CBT. This can help to make sure they understand the evidence behind CBT and know the best ways to apply the skills it teaches.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a powerful form of mental health treatment that can help to improve all areas of a person’s life. This treatment teaches people how their thoughts, behaviors, and feelings are all connected and how they influence each other. By making changes to thoughts and behaviors, people engaging in CBT are more likely to experience well-being. To get the most out of CBT, patients can practice patience, communication, and honesty. It’s also imperative to practice skills in between sessions. Because CBT focuses on changing thoughts and behaviors, this is something that needs to be practiced daily in a person’s life. Finding the right therapist can be a process, but once a person finds the right fit, it will make all the difference. We understand that taking the first step to start therapy can be frightening, but knowing what to expect can be a helpful way to feel more confident starting this journey.

If you are interested in working with us in person or with an online counselor, please [reach out to us](https://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/contact.php). We are happy to help whenever you are ready to start your therapy journey.

**References**

<https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2024/09/cognitive-behaviora-therapy-depression.html>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/behavioral-activation>

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