

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Anxiety and Panic

A Patient Resource



What is CBT?

Cognitive behavioural therapy, or CBT, is a process to help change the way you feel by taking a close look at how you think and behave.

CBT involves learning how to identify and understand your thoughts and behaviours. When automatic, unhelpful thoughts are challenged, the related behaviours and emotions can also change over time. This requires commitment and quite a bit of work, but it can help bring lasting improvement to your mental health and overall wellbeing!

How does CBT work?

Brains have a very complex job. They store memories, feel emotion, internalize thoughts, and send out a lot of information. This process is responsible for your actions and for the way you experience life.

There are MANY factors and life experiences that can interrupt how your brain does its job. When this happens, you can get stuck in patterns of unhelpful thoughts that drive your brain pathways into a rut.



Therapy helps you identify the negative thoughts and behaviours that keep your mind stuck in a rut and helps you explore how they may have been formed in the first place. This prevents the ruts from getting deeper and allows you to start getting unstuck. **By learning how to reframe thoughts to be more realistic and by challenging unhelpful behaviours, you form new roadways in your brain that are better to travel on.** You can also learn to care for yourself with the same gentleness and kindness you show to others. This takes courage and time, but it is often a necessary step to getting back on the road to a healthy and fulfilling life.

Many people find the help of counsellors or therapists useful in finding a way forward on the road to recovery and wellness.

See page 2 for ways to find help.



Your therapist can help make a plan that works best for you. CBT can involve:

- Identifying and challenging unhelpful thoughts
- Learning how your body experiences anxiety
- Using grounding or relaxation techniques
- Becoming aware of things that make anxiety worse (e.g. unhealthy habits, social media, substance use)
- Gentle exposure to anxiety triggers rather than avoiding them
- Learning how to accept discomfort and move through it in healthy ways
- Making a plan to manage future stressors and difficulties
- Helping you become confident in yourself and your abilities

How effective is CBT?

CBT is one of the most effective treatments for anxiety and is recommended by clinical experts across the world. **Studies show that around half of people who complete CBT will overcome their anxiety disorder.** CBT is likely to work just as well as anti-anxiety medications, although response differs between people.

The benefits of CBT can usually be noticed after several weeks, but full recovery can take longer. Although it can be a slow process, the improvements from CBT often last for years. **Think of it like building new roads instead of temporarily patching up potholes.**

How do I do CBT?

CBT usually involves 8-20 sessions done weekly or every other week. Once you have learned new skills, have had a chance to practice them, and see positive changes in your life, it will be time for you to leave therapy and continue managing your anxiety on your own. Some people benefit from booster sessions once in a while after finishing the initial program.

CBT can be used with or without medications for anxiety. For some people, combining CBT with medications works better than using CBT alone. Other people may need to use a medication until their anxiety is improved enough so they can better participate in therapy.

How do I access CBT?

PAID COUNSELLING OPTIONS

- Find a professional counsellor/therapist that suits you (by referral from your health care provider or [searching directories](#))
- Low-cost access to virtual counselling is available via the [Affordable Therapy Network](#) (online)

DIGITAL/ONLINE THERAPIST-ASSISTED OPTIONS

- [Online Therapy Unit Wellbeing Course](#) (free for Saskatchewan residents 18+ yrs)
- [BounceBack by Bell](#) (free)
- [MindBeacon](#) (paid subscription)
- [Wellness Together Canada](#) (free)

FREE COUNSELLING OPTIONS

- Counselling services covered by Saskatchewan Health Authority via [Counselling Connect Sask](#) (online)
- Employee assistance or benefit plans

SELF-GUIDED OPTIONS

- Move through workbooks or digital apps at your own pace (e.g. [Mindshift App](#), [Kelty's Key](#), [Moodgym](#), [Centre for Mindfulness](#))
- [Taming Worry Dragons](#) manuals and workbooks for children, teens, and parents



Scan the QR code for a mental health toolkit with more detailed information and options.

Visit www.RxFiles.ca/tools for References & Resources used to create this handout.

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