

WHAT IS COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (CBT)

CBT is based on a model of understanding emotional problems that sees a relationship between thoughts, emotions and behaviours. The way we think impacts the way we feel and behave; the way we behave impacts how we think and feel, and the way we feel impacts the way we think and behave.

Here's what CBT offers:

- A new way of understanding your problem
 - When you have been dealing with your problem for a long time, you may have come to understand it – and cope with it – in a way that contributes to keeping the problem going (for example, a common reaction to repeated over-use of alcohol and/or drugs is guilt and shame; those emotions can trigger the urge to use more, and the cycle continues).
- New skills to address your problem
 - To help you change your problem, I will help you develop new skills that will help you change the thoughts, feelings and behaviours that contribute to the problem. The therapy sessions will focus on developing new ideas about your problem. You will then test out those ideas on a day-to-day basis between sessions. Be prepared: CBT involves homework. Not the reading/writing kind (although there may be some of that), but testing out – behaviourally - new ways of understanding and dealing with your problem.
- The ability to become your own therapist
 - Because you are practicing therapy 7 days a week (not one hour a week in the therapist's office), CBT is a time-limited form of therapy; the goal is not to make you dependent on the therapist, but to learn how to be your own therapist. I don't 'practice' therapy on my clients; I teach them how to practice the therapy on themselves. CBT is all about active collaboration; your input will be extremely valuable right from the start of therapy. I am the expert when it comes to understanding your problem in a new light; you are the expert when it comes to how you experience your problem.
- Is based on the "here and now"
 - Does our developmental history impact how we operate today? Absolutely. CBT distinguishes what triggered the problem from what maintains the problem; in most cases they are not the same. If I'm afraid to ride a horse since falling off as a kid, I can't change the falling off, but I can change the avoidance that is maintaining the fear. The "here and now" tenet of CBT philosophy is another reason why daily practice is so important; you can find the therapy hour very interesting, but if it doesn't change your problem in the here-and-now, then presumably its not helping you reach your goals.