

CBT For Anxiety

How CBT is delivered

CBT is available in a wide range of settings, as well as hospitals or clinics. It can be offered in individual sessions with a therapist or as part of a group. It is sometimes provided in the form of written or computer-based packages. This may be combined with flexible telephone or face-to-face appointments to check progress and help overcome any barriers to putting into practice what you have learned. Different ways of delivering CBT have made it more accessible to people with busy lives, and has also reduced delays in getting help.

Finding a therapist

CBT is available on the NHS. If you feel that CBT may be helpful, then you should first discuss it with your GP. Private therapists are also available. Before starting CBT, it is recommended that you check that your therapist is accredited by BABCP. To find details of BABCP accredited therapists visit www.cbtregisteruk.com

About BABCP

BABCP stands for the British Association for Behavioural & Cognitive Psychotherapies. It has been the lead organisation for CBT in the UK and Ireland since 1972. BABCP members work in the NHS, social care, education and universities. BABCP also provides accreditation to those who practise CBT in the NHS and privately. It is widely recognised by health and social care employers, training institutions and health insurance companies. BABCP believes that accreditation is important in protecting the public and raising the quality of CBT.

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What is CBT?

CBT, or Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, is a talking therapy that has been proved to help treat a wide range of emotional and physical health conditions in adults, young people and children. CBT looks at how we think about a situation and how this affects the way we act. In turn, our actions can affect how we think and feel. The therapist and client work together in changing the client's behaviours, or their thinking patterns, or both of these.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a very common problem. About five per cent of the population will suffer from anxiety symptoms that are present for most of the time.

Here are some of the features of anxiety symptoms:

- Changes in physical sensations, such as palpitations, sweatiness, shaking, dizziness or nausea
- Changes in thoughts, such as increased worrying, fretting about the risk of possible harm, fainting or even death
- Changes in behaviours, such as greater unease and restlessness, avoiding specific situations or places
- Changes in emotions, such as fear, desperation or a drop in mood

There are different types of anxiety problems. Anxiety can be very general and some people find that they worry for most of the time about many different things. Others are frightened about specific things, such as animals, heights, flying, germs, social situations or enclosed spaces. This form of anxiety is known as a phobia. Some people have extremely distressing and short bursts of anxiety when they worry that they cannot breathe, or will faint. This is known as a panic attack.

There is no single cause of anxiety. For some people, anxiety appears to run in the family. For others it can begin after a big life change, such as bereavement, having a baby or losing a job. Many people who have physical health problems, such as heart disease, breathing problems or pain, also experience high levels of worry and anxiety.

CBT works

There is a great deal of research evidence to show that CBT works effectively in treating anxiety and panic attacks. This research has been carefully reviewed by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

NICE provides independent, evidence-based guidance for the NHS on the most effective ways to treat disease and ill health. CBT is recommended by NICE for the treatment of anxiety disorders.

CBT can be used if you are on medication which has been prescribed by your GP. You can also use CBT on its own. This will depend on the difficulty you want help with.

How CBT is used to treat anxiety

You and your therapist will discuss your specific difficulties and set goals for you to achieve. CBT is not a quick fix. It involves hard work during and between sessions. Your therapist will not tell you what to do. Instead they will help you decide what difficulties you want to work on in order to help you improve your situation. Your therapist will be able to advise you on how to continue using CBT techniques in your daily life after your treatment ends.

Some of the aims of CBT in treating anxiety and panic attacks are:

- Teaching about the nature of anxiety and correcting misunderstandings that symptoms such as palpitations are dangerous
- Learning techniques to tackle unhelpful thoughts which happen particularly when someone is very anxious
- Exploring the features of worry and finding techniques to reduce the impact of worrying
- Finding positive techniques to tackle social situations that are being avoided
- Learning relaxation techniques to reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety