



# Untold Story Counseling Services

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## Understanding Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

### Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

*"While we cannot always control what happens to us, we can learn to recognize the thoughts and behaviors that influence how we experience those events."*

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#### What Is CBT?

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an evidence-based psychotherapy approach that helps people understand the relationship between their thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and behaviors. The core idea behind CBT is that it is often not the situation itself that causes distress, but the meaning we give to it. Our thoughts influence how we feel, and those feelings influence what we do. Sometimes these patterns become automatic and keep us feeling stuck.

CBT teaches practical skills to recognize unhelpful thinking patterns, respond to difficult emotions more effectively, and develop healthier behaviors that support long-term well-being.

Rather than focusing only on understanding problems, CBT also emphasizes learning strategies you can use in everyday life.

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#### What Can CBT Help With?

CBT is one of the most researched forms of psychotherapy and has been shown to be effective for many concerns.

CBT may be helpful for:

- |                                       |                    |                               |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Anxiety disorders                   | • Social anxiety   | • Life transitions            |
| • Depression                          | • Health anxiety   | • Relationship difficulties   |
| • Stress and burnout                  | • Chronic pain     | • Coping with chronic illness |
| • Panic attacks                       | • Insomnia         |                               |
| • Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) | • Low self-esteem  |                               |
|                                       | • Anger management |                               |

Your therapist will work with you to determine whether CBT is an appropriate approach based on your individual goals and concerns.

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#### How Does CBT Work?

CBT helps you become more aware of patterns that may be contributing to emotional distress.

Together, you and your therapist will explore:

##### Thoughts

How you interpret situations and the beliefs you hold about yourself, others, and the world.

##### Emotions

The feelings that arise in response to those thoughts.

##### Behaviors

The actions you take, including habits that may unintentionally maintain distress.

##### Physical Sensations

How stress and emotions affect your body, such as muscle tension, rapid heartbeat, or fatigue.

By understanding these connections, you can begin making intentional changes that support healthier emotional and behavioral responses.

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#### What Happens During CBT?

CBT is an active, collaborative form of therapy.



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Sessions often include:

- Identifying current concerns
- Exploring thoughts, emotions, and behaviors
- Learning practical coping strategies
- Practicing new skills during session
- Developing goals for between-session practice

Many people find CBT to be structured and goal-oriented while still allowing space to discuss important life experiences.

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## Common CBT Skills

Depending on your goals, your therapist may introduce skills such as:

- Identifying thinking patterns
- Challenging unhelpful beliefs
- Problem-solving strategies
- Relaxation and stress-management techniques
- Behavioral activation
- Exposure exercises for anxiety
- Assertive communication
- Emotion regulation skills
- Mindfulness practices

Skills are selected based on your individual needs rather than following a one-size-fits-all approach.

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## What Might I Experience?

As you begin practicing CBT skills, you may notice:

- ✓ Greater awareness of your thinking patterns
- ✓ Improved ability to manage emotions
- ✓ Reduced anxiety or worry
- ✓ Increased confidence
- ✓ Better problem-solving
- ✓ Healthier relationships
- ✓ More balanced thinking

Like learning any new skill, change often happens gradually through consistent practice.

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## Common Misconceptions

### "CBT is just positive thinking."

No.

CBT is not about pretending everything is okay or forcing yourself to think positively.

Instead, it helps you evaluate whether your thoughts are accurate, balanced, and helpful.

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### "CBT ignores emotions."

No.

CBT recognizes that emotions are important.

Rather than ignoring feelings, CBT helps you understand where they come from and how to respond to them in healthy ways.

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### "If I know my thoughts aren't true, they should disappear."

Not necessarily.

Many unhelpful thinking patterns develop over years.

Recognizing them is the first step, but changing them takes practice and repetition.

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## Is CBT Right for Everyone?

CBT is effective for many people, but no single therapy works best for everyone.

Some individuals benefit from combining CBT with approaches such as:



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- EMDR
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
- Mindfulness
- Narrative Therapy

Your therapist will work collaboratively with you to determine the treatment approach that best supports your goals.

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## How You Can Prepare

To get the most from CBT:

- Attend sessions consistently.
- Practice skills between appointments.
- Keep an open mind about trying new approaches.
- Notice situations that trigger strong emotions.
- Be honest about what is and is not working.

Real change often occurs through applying skills in everyday life, not only during therapy sessions.

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## The Goal of CBT

The goal of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is not to eliminate all negative thoughts or emotions. Instead, CBT helps you build the awareness and skills needed to respond to life's challenges with greater flexibility, confidence, and self-compassion.

Over time, many people experience improved emotional well-being, healthier relationships, greater resilience, and increased confidence in their ability to manage difficult situations.

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## Questions?

If you have questions about Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or whether it may be appropriate for you, please bring them to your next session. Your therapist is happy to explain the process, answer your questions, and help determine the treatment approach that best fits your goals.

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*Helping you become the main character in your story, not the experiences that have shaped it*