



## Cognitive Behavior Therapy

Anxiety and depression are handled differently by everyone. People respond differently to various types of therapy, such as medications, counseling sessions and/or cognitive-behavioral therapy, aromatherapy, or simply drinking tea in a quiet room. It's widely recognized that a few sessions of cognitive-behavioral therapy (or CBT) can be very helpful in treating the anxiety and depression that so many people experience.

However, many people don't have access to a CBT therapist—maybe none are close by, or they're not in the person's insurance network, or they're prohibitively expensive. There are multiple options for doing CBT without a therapist, including self-help books and internet-based treatments. According to multiple studies, on average, the self-help treatments were moderately helpful. In other words, people who did the treatment felt substantially better—maybe not like "a new person," but a noticeably less anxious or depressed version of themselves. The level of depression or anxiety will determine the amount of "self-help" that should be sought. One with severe anxiety and/or depression should not forego counseling with a professional until that professional (counselor/therapist, etc.) determines it is the right time.

Some self-help techniques and strategies for anxiety/depression are as follows:

- **Relaxation Strategies** – Learning how to relax your body can be a helpful part of therapy
  - Calm breathing – consciously slowing down to breathe (Breathe in 1...2...3...Exhale 1...2...3...repeat)
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation – systematically tensing and relaxing different muscle groups (this takes practice)
  - Listening to calm music
  - Meditation
  - Yoga and/or Massage
- **Realistic Thinking** – Effectively identifying negative thinking and replacing it with realistic and balanced thinking. Changing unhelpful thoughts to realistic or helpful ones is a key to feeling better.
  - I always screw things up, I'm such a loser. What's wrong with me? REPLACE the thought with...Everyone makes mistakes, including me – I'm only human. All I can do now is try my best to fix the situation and learn from this experience.
  - I can't do it. I feel way too anxious. Why can't I control my anxiety? REPLACE the thought with...It's OK and normal to feel anxious. It's not dangerous, and it doesn't have to stop me. I can feel anxious and still go to the party.



Know what you are telling yourself; pay attention to the way you think; challenge negative thoughts when necessary; pay attention to the shift in emotion when you get upset, evaluate the situation objectively, and come up with an alternative thought that is more balanced and realistic. Think of quick and easy-to-remember coping statements and positive self-statements ("I've been here before; I can do this" or "Today can be a good day"). Write down realistic thoughts or helpful coping statements and carry them with you.

- **Facing Fears: Exposure** – Gradually and repeatedly entering feared situations until one feels less anxious. Start small, and work your way up....baby steps.
- **Make as schedule of skills to work on weekly to help prevent a relapse**

It's a busy, hectic, sometimes really messed up world we live in, and everyone handles their individual situations differently. The acknowledgement for the need for help is the key. Whether one seeks the advice of another, or one does it on their own, peace of mind can return with the right techniques.

The following website was sourced and referenced for this article:  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/think-act-be/201609/therapy-without-therapist>  
<https://www.anxietybc.com/help-resources/cbt/self-help-cognitive-behavioural-therapy>

