

A Peaceful Mind

A Newsletter from Palo Alto Therapy

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www.PaloAltoTherapy.com

Anxiety
Stress
Depression

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: A Therapy That Works

by Ernest S. Schmidt, LCSW

Do you struggle from the “common colds” of mental health—depression, anxiety, worry, sadness, or unexplained fatigue? Have you tried traditional counseling or therapy, but did not improve to your satisfaction? If so, consider using cognitive behavioral therapy, a form of therapy that is proven to help these problems quickly and without the side effects of medication.

What Is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is an evidenced-based psychotherapy often used to treat depression and anxiety. In brief, CBT is a proven type of talk therapy that focuses on helping you change your behavior and thoughts to positively affect your mental health. CBT is not like the traditional form of psychotherapy, which tends to be free flowing and can lead to endless talking with no action. Instead, CBT is focused, structured, goal oriented, and requires you to put forth effort, all in a supportive environment. This form of therapy uses therapy homework, teaching and practicing of skills, and measuring/monitoring of symptoms.

Who Can Benefit from CBT?

CBT is considered the treatment of choice for anyone who struggles with anxiety and/or depression, but without the side effects of medications. Anxiety in particular is especially treatable with CBT. Social nervousness, panic attacks, general day-to-day worry, and even obsessive compulsive disorder all respond exceptionally well with this specialized form of therapy.

What Are the Benefits of CBT?

1. **It works quickly:** With its practical emphasis on actions and exercises

you can do right now, CBT brings relief much faster than traditional psychotherapy. Without proper therapy, you can struggle for years with no relief.

2. **It is effective:** In treating anxiety and depression, CBT is as effective or in many cases more effective than medication, considering therapy’s lower relapse rates and absence of side effects. Once you try it you will likely wish you had known about it sooner.

3. **It offers empathy, support, and empowerment:** Very often, when you struggle with symptoms of anxiety or depression, you are overcome with guilt, shame, and other difficult emotions. You need time with a professional who will listen to you and address your concerns. Experienced and qualified CBT therapists balance their meetings to provide the right amount of personal support, teaching, and implementation of skills. CBT empowers you by teaching skills you can use to support yourself even when relapses occur. You learn that there is a way out and your emotional struggles can be overcome.

Locate a Qualified Therapist and Find Hope

You may not realize there are effective methods for depression, anxiety, and worry in addition to or as an alternative to medication. Perhaps you feel hopeless because you’ve been told that your mental health problem is a chronic condition and you’ll just have to manage the symptoms. But relief is possible with the right therapy—CBT. By working with a CBT therapist, you will be paving the way to overcome your emotional struggles, and finding hope. See for yourself by meeting with a qualified cognitive behavioral therapist in your area. ❀

10 Things to Say to Yourself

Often, the things we say to ourselves we wouldn’t think of saying to another person. We blame, shame, call names of the meanest sort, nag, belittle and bully ourselves through self-talk. What if, instead, we were gentler with ourselves, asked ourselves questions and listened to the responses? What if we treated ourselves as we treat a best friend, someone we love dearly? Here’s a Top 10 list of loving things to say to yourself.

1. **What do you feel?** Listening for the response is like taking our emotional temperature.

2. **What do you need?** Pay attention to your needs, they’re about caring for yourself.

3. **Good job!** Congratulate yourself on a job well done, whether it’s mowing the lawn, writing a poem or cleaning the bathroom.

4. **I apologize.** Saying “sorry” for the wrongs we’ve done ourselves can be the first step in healing.

5. **Let’s play.** Lighten up and have some fun. Listen to what comes up when you suggest play.

6. **Breathe.** Breathing helps relieve tension, gives us that moment we sometimes need to center and ground ourselves.

7. **I forgive you.** To have closure and to move on, we often need to forgive ourselves.

8. **Let go.** Release worries, resentments, anger and fears to make room for growth.

9. **Be present.** Staying aware of the moment keeps us feeling truly alive.

10. **I love you.** We say it to others, why not say it to ourselves? Say it again. ❀

A Letter From

Ernest S. Schmidt, LCSW

Founder, Palo Alto Therapy



One of the barriers you may encounter when considering counseling are your feelings of shame or embarrassment. You may believe that your anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem is some sort of personal weakness that should be hidden from view. This mindset often leads to further isolation and sometimes hopelessness.

As counselors, we see this quite regularly and sometimes experience this in our own personal lives. On the other hand, we also experience what happens when you share this part of yourself with others.

One of my mentors, David Burns, M.D., the author of the best-selling book *Feeling Good*, often talks about how discussing your personal hurdles is what brings people closer together. Not only do I find this to be true, but when you speak about your struggles in counseling you also open yourself up to the proven solutions to resolve them.

There is no doubt that it does require courage, but the payoff is worth it! Call us at 650-461-9026 to schedule an appointment or to request a free telephone consultation with any of our therapists to find out how we can be of assistance to you.

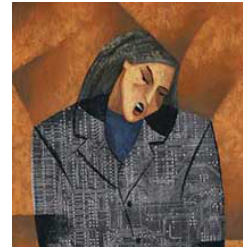
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info@paloaltotherapy.com.

How Well Do You Handle Worry?

At its essence, worry is a useful response, helping us anticipate—and avoid—danger by taking constructive action. But too often, worry becomes an endless loop that makes it hard to sleep, focus and perform, and stresses our physical systems. Take this Thriving Quiz to find out how well you handle worry.



True False

- 1. I keep my worries to myself. I'm afraid I'll burden others if I share my concerns. The problem is, then it builds up and I get really stressed.
- 2. I write about my fears in a journal. This takes some of the power out of them. After writing, creative solutions seem to just show up.
- 3. I lie in bed for two or three hours at night worrying, just hoping to fall back asleep. I feel tired all the time.
- 4. Getting involved with my family, friends, church, neighborhood, organizations, etc., gives me a sense of being part of something bigger than myself. When I do that, my worries seem to dissipate.
- 5. I face and take responsibility for problems and commit to a plan of action, rather than worrying about what might happen.
- 6. What really works for me when I'm feeling tense and nervous is to take a long walk, run, bike ride or work out. When I exercise more, I worry less.
- 7. When my worries spin on in an endless loop, I know it's time for a gratitude list. Focusing on the things I am grateful for is like turning my worries inside out.
- 8. My worries seem to come from nowhere, and they feel uncontrollable. When I'm in the grip of them, I feel incapable of coming up with any solutions.
- 9. I worry mostly about things that, in fact, have a very low probability of actually occurring—dying in a plane crash, going bankrupt, etc.
- 10. Rather than let my nighttime thoughts keep me from getting to sleep, I focus on physical sensations, such as the feel of the sheets and the warmth of my own body.
- 11. I try to catch my worrying as close to the beginning as possible. Then I take some time to relax, breathe deeply and get centered.
- 12. When I'm immersed in my worried thoughts, I have, but rarely notice, physical sensations such as speedy heartbeat, sweatiness and shakiness.
- 13. The more repetitive my worrying becomes, the more persuasive it seems.
- 14. I worry about others because I don't really trust that they can take care of themselves. I've noticed, however, that most of the time, they can.
- 15. When I'm concerned about something, I take action. Then I let go, trusting that I've done all I can do.

Shifting your worry to wonder opens up possibilities for curiosity and action rather than dread and immobility. Ask yourself: How will it all turn out? What can I do to make the outcome the best it can be? If you would like to work on worry, trust or any other concerns, please don't hesitate to call. 🌸

How to Succeed with Failure When All Else Fails

Had it not been for failure, humankind may never have known the magnificent Audubon bird paintings that gave rise to the Audubon Society or the inspiring music of Handel's Messiah, sung every year at Christmastime around the world.

It was only after John James Audubon's business failed in 1819 that he began traveling and painting birds. George Frederick Handel unleashed his creative genius after a night of deep despair over his failure as a musician (he lived in poverty and had suffered a stroke).

The world landscape is strewn with such stories of success rising from the ashes of failure. Yet failure tends to strike fear in our hearts like nothing else. There is so little tolerance for it in our culture and tremendous pressure to get it right every time, to be in control, to succeed and win.

But because we are human, we cannot help but fail. We suffer from failed relationships, failed marriages, failed parenting, failure at work, failure in health. And when we do fail, the wounds may penetrate so deeply into our psyche that we begin to think, "I am a failure," rather than "I failed." We might begin to make safe choices, to settle for less than we really want, out of fear of failure.

What would it be like to cast failure in a different light, to take it out of the darkness of disgrace and guilt, to remove the feeling of "disaster" associated with failure, to look for what it tells us about our well-being and our conduct in life? What enormous amounts of energy would be freed up? And for what?

"You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing that we call 'failure' is not the falling down, but the staying down," said silent-film actress Mary Pickford.

Open Door to a New Success

Like Audubon, a failure can be a lever to open the door to a richer, more authentic life. Many a radical transformation has had failure at its root.

Author Suzanne Falter-Barns says, "There really is no such thing as failure. There is only the rearrangement of plans and the surrender of ego. There is only the twist in the road we never expect."

Spark Creativity

Sometimes we need to be jolted out of our routine and back into the essential work of creating ourselves. Failure doesn't just clear its throat, it blows a trumpet in our ears and stirs up all the creative juices. We can't help but respond with passion and drive, as Handel did while

composing the Messiah.

Promote Risk-Taking and Change

Failure is a natural offshoot of adventure and risk-taking, and growth is a natural offshoot of failure. Great courage is needed to face real change. A great failure can be the influence that enables us to risk and change.

Getting Through It

In his book *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*, Thomas Moore writes: "If we could understand the feelings of inferiority and humbling occasioned by failure as meaningful in their own right, then we might incorporate failure into our work so that it doesn't literally devastate us."

Here are a few suggestions for working constructively (succeeding!) with failure.

Acknowledge your feelings of pain, humiliation and/or inadequacy.

Laugh, if you can. A little bit of humor goes a long way in learning to accept failure.

Acknowledge your responsibility. Don't deny the importance of the failure, but neither let it overwhelm you with guilt. Guilt isn't helpful; taking responsibility *is*.

Forgive yourself. Forgiveness doesn't take away the consequences or the memory of the failure, but it does soften the fall and clear a path for the next step.

Build a base of supportive people. Share the reality of your life. When you stop hiding shame and denying negative feelings, issues are quickly surfaced and resolved.

No self-recrimination. Replace "If only..." with "Next time..." to keep focused on the future.

Reflect. Seek not to blame but to search for the wisdom beneath the failure. With real curiosity, ask yourself these questions:

- How can this failure serve me?
- What have I learned and gained?
- How can I use this failure?
- How can I see it in a different way?
- What is positive here?
- What am I really trying to accomplish?

Expect to make mistakes again. Some organizations are now building in this expectation and experiencing the enormous potential for innovation, teamwork and achievement that is unleashed when the fear of failure is removed. Individuals can experience the same potential.

Ultimately, failure is not about loss, deficiency and flaws. It's about learning lessons and courageously moving on. It's about retaining hope and the instinct for joy. The lessons of failure make us wiser, stronger and more prepared for the rest of our journey, if we take them with us. ❁

"Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat."

—Theodore Roosevelt

What's That You Said?

The Fears that Prevent Us from Speaking Up



Do you value being seen and heard? Do you want to have truly successful relationships? Do you want to make an impact on others?

Then speak up!

Of course, for some people, that's easier said than done. You might prefer to train wild lions than tell another person what's really on your mind. But it is possible to develop an assertiveness connected to head and heart that clears the way for honest, empowered living—without being rude to others or surrendering to “nice-itis.”

“We all need to learn to dance in rhythm to the beat of our own soul,” writes Kelly Bryson in his book, *Don't Be Nice, Be Real: Balancing Passion for Self with Compassion for Others*.

Those who stay mum when they would be better off speaking their mind do so for a variety of reasons:

- **Fear of being rejected.** Any time you risk disclosing yourself, you become vulnerable. Communication skills, such as those taught in Non-Violent Communication (NVC) or Powerful Non-Defensive Communication (PNDC), teach how to combine

vulnerability with strength and compassion for powerful connections.

- **Fear of what you would tell yourself if you or any requests you make are rejected.** If you speak up and tell your officemate how much you would like to go out with her, you definitely risk rejection. But if you are rejected, does that *really* mean you're unlovable? Destined to a life alone? Or is that just a story?

- **Fear of hurting feelings.** Related to this is the belief that it is better to please others, even at your own expense. As Bryson points out, being Mr. or Mrs. Nice Guy or Gal is actually a form of violence to yourself and others, and an escape from a fully lived life.

- **Fear of “rocking the boat,” or upsetting the status quo.** The writer Muriel Rukeyser spoke to this fear in her memorable quote: “What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.”

- **Fear that you have nothing worth saying.** Years of poor self-image can lead to this.

- **Fear of sparking a conflict.**

If you have an abusive or volatile family history, you may have learned to keep quiet or be invisible to avoid confrontation. And yet the danger is that constant suppression of powerful feelings can lead to frustration and possibly aggressive or abusive behavior. As Rollo May writes in his book, *Power and Innocence*, powerlessness is the precursor to violence.

It is important to distinguish between being assertive and being aggressive. Aggression trespasses on another's boundaries without regard for feelings. Assertiveness, on the other hand, communicates feelings, thoughts and needs clearly and directly.

Speaking up after years of zipping your lips may not be easy. You may need to take baby steps—take classes or workshops, consult with a counselor, join an assertiveness support group. But the payoff is more effective relationships, genuine intimacy and, more than anything, an increased feeling of self-respect and empowerment. ✿

Call us today to get started: 650-461-9026

“I have more hope and a more positive attitude about the future because I gained a lot of tools and information that I can put to use to help me achieve the level I want to achieve.”
—Past Client

Palo Alto Therapy delivers children & adults a better quality of life through professional, sensible & honest counseling. As a results-oriented practice, we stand apart by specializing in the proven cognitive behavioral therapy (CBI) method to quickly effect change. Our counselors involve clients in setting goals & creating plans, while communicating how & why certain elements are beneficial.

We are direct, warm & accessible, creating a relaxed atmosphere for clear conversation & tangible results, even through difficult situations.

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