



An Overview on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and its Theoretical Foundations

Nariko Katayama*

Department of Neuropsychiatry, Keio University, Tokyo, Japan

*Corresponding author: Nariko Katayama, Department of Neuropsychiatry, Keio University, Tokyo, Japan; E-mail: Katayama_nariko@keio.jp

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Description

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a type of psychotherapy that focuses on the way people think and behave, with the goal of changing negative patterns of thought and behavior that lead to emotional and psychological distress. CBT is a short-term, goal-oriented therapy that has been shown to be effective for a wide range of mental health conditions, including anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and eating disorders, among others [2].

Theoretical foundations of CBT

CBT is based on the idea that the way we think about situations affects how we feel and behave. According to CBT, negative thoughts and beliefs can lead to negative emotions and maladaptive behaviors, while positive thoughts and beliefs can lead to positive emotions and adaptive behaviors [3]. For example, if someone believes that they are disliked, they may feel depressed and avoid social situations, which can further reinforce their negative belief. In CBT, therapists help clients identify and challenge their negative thoughts and beliefs, replacing them with more positive and realistic ones [4].

The cognitive model of CBT also emphasizes the role of cognitive distortions in negative thinking. Cognitive distortions are irrational and inaccurate ways of thinking that can lead to negative emotions and behaviors [5]. Examples of cognitive distortions include all-or-nothing thinking (seeing things in black and white terms), overgeneralization (drawing broad conclusions from a single event), and catastrophizing (assuming the worst possible outcome). In CBT, therapists help clients identify and challenge their cognitive distortions, replacing them with more accurate and balanced ways of thinking [6].

Basic principles of CBT

The basic principles of CBT can be summarized in the acronym ABC:

A-Activating event: The event or situation that triggers a person's negative thoughts and emotions.

B-Belief: The person's interpretation of the event, which can be either rational or irrational.

C-Consequence: The emotional and behavioral response to the belief.

In CBT, therapists help clients identify the activating event, their beliefs about it, and the consequences of those beliefs [7]. Then, the therapist helps the client challenge their beliefs and replace them with more accurate and positive ones, leading to more adaptive emotional and behavioral responses.

Techniques used in CBT

CBT uses a range of techniques to help clients change their thoughts and behaviors. Some of the most commonly used techniques include:

Cognitive restructuring: This technique involves identifying and challenging negative thoughts and beliefs, replacing them with more positive and accurate ones [8]. Clients may be asked to keep a thought diary to track their negative thoughts and beliefs and to practice challenging them.

Behavioral activation: This technique involves increasing engagement in positive and enjoyable activities, which can improve mood and reduce symptoms of depression.

Exposure therapy: This technique involves gradually exposing clients to feared situations or objects, helping them to overcome their anxiety and fear.

Relaxation techniques: This technique involves teaching clients relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness meditation, which can reduce anxiety and stress [9].

Social skills training: This technique involves teaching clients social skills such as communication, assertiveness, and conflict resolution, which can improve interpersonal relationships and reduce social anxiety.

CBT has been extensively researched and has been found to be effective for a wide range of mental health conditions [10]. Numerous studies have shown that CBT is as effective as medication for the treatment of depression and anxiety disorders, and that it can produce longer-lasting effects than medication [11]. CBT has also been found to be effective for the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, eating disorders, and other mental health conditions.

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