

## Psychological well being

It is becoming increasingly clear that we can improve medical care by paying more attention to psychological aspects of medical assessment with particular reference to the role of stress.

Positive health is often regarded as the absence of illness, despite the fact that half a century ago, the World Health Organization defined health as a 'state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. Several studies have suggested that psychological well-being plays a buffering role in coping with stress and has a favourable impact on disease course.

## Life events

Interdisciplinary strategy to explore areas where knowledge from psychosomatic medicine may aid in the prevention of specific diseases or help meet the emotional demands of patients.

The introduction of structured methods of data collection and control groups has allowed to substantiate the link between life events and a number of medical disorders, encompassing endocrine, cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, autoimmune, skin and neoplastic disease.

## Insufficient Coping

Life changes are not the only source of psychological stress. Subtle and long-standing life situations should not too readily be dismissed as minor and negligible, as chronic, daily life stresses may be experienced by the individual as taxing or exceeding his/her coping skills. Mc Ewen and Stellar proposed a formulation of the relationship between stress and the processes leading to disease based on the concept of allostasis and the ability of the organism to achieve stability through change. The concept of allostatic load refers to the wear and tear that results from either too much stress or from insufficient coping, such as not turning off the stress response when it is no longer needed.

**Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a talking therapy that can help you manage your problems by changing the way you think and behave.**

## How CBT works

CBT is based on the concept that your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and actions are interconnected, and that negative thoughts and feelings can trap you in a vicious cycle.

CBT aims to help you deal with overwhelming problems in a more positive way by breaking them down into smaller parts. You're shown how to change these negative patterns to improve the way you feel.

Unlike some other talking treatments, CBT deals with your current problems, rather than focusing on issues from your past. It looks for practical ways to improve your state of mind on a daily basis.

## Uses for CBT

CBT has been shown to be an effective way of treating a number of different mental health conditions.

In addition to depression or anxiety disorders, CBT can also help people with:

- Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Panic disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Phobias
- Eating disorders –
- Such as anorexia and bulimia
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- Sleep problems – such as insomnia
- Problems related to alcohol misuse
- CBT is also sometimes used to treat people with long-term health conditions, such as
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)

Although CBT can't cure the physical symptoms of these conditions, it can help people cope better with their symptoms.

## Pros and cons of CBT

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can be as effective as medication in treating some mental health problems, but it may not be successful or suitable for everyone.

## Some of the advantages of CBT include:

- It may be helpful in cases where medication alone hasn't worked
- It can be completed in a relatively short period of time compared to other talking therapies
- The highly structured nature of cbt means it can be provided in different formats, including in groups, self-help books and computer programs
- It teaches you useful and practical strategies that can be used in everyday life – even after the treatment has finished

## Some of the disadvantages of CBT to consider include:

- You need to commit yourself to the process to get the most from it – a therapist can help and advise you, but they need your co-operation
- Attending regular CBT sessions and carrying out any extra work between sessions can take up a lot of your time
- It may not be suitable for people with more complex mental health needs or learning difficulties – as it requires structured sessions
- It involves confronting your emotions and anxieties – you may experience initial periods where you're anxious or emotionally uncomfortable
- It focuses on the individual's capacity to change themselves (their thoughts, feelings and behaviours) – which doesn't address any wider problems in systems or families that often have a significant impact on an individual's health and wellbeing

Some critics also argue that because CBT only addresses current problems and focuses on specific issues, it doesn't address the possible underlying causes of mental health conditions, such as an unhappy childhood.