

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY

Issues	Answers
General description	Cognitive behavioural therapy is a relatively focused psychotherapy for a wide range of psychological problems, including depression, anxiety, anger, marital conflict, fears and substance abuse or dependence. The focus of therapy is on how you are thinking (your “cognitions”) behaving, and communicating today, rather than on your early childhood experiences. Numerous studies have demonstrated that cognitive behavioural therapy is as effective as medication for depression, anxiety obsessions, and other fears. Furthermore, because patients learn self help in therapy they are often able to maintain their improvement after therapy has been completed.
Evaluation of patients	When you begin cognitive behavioural therapy, your therapist will ask you to fill out several self report forms that assess a range of symptoms and problems. These forms evaluate depression, anxiety, anger, fears, physical complaints, personality and relationships. The purpose of this evaluation is to gather as much information on you as possible, so that you and your therapist can learn quickly what kinds of problems you do or do not have and the extent of your problems.
Treatment plans	You and your therapist will work together to develop a plan of therapy. This might include how often you need to come, the relevance of medication, your diagnosis, your goals, skill acquisition, needed changes in the way you think, behave and communicate, and other factors.
What are therapy sessions like?	Some other forms of therapy are unstructured, but in cognitive behavioural therapy you and your therapist will set an agenda for each meeting. The agenda might include a review of your experiences in the previous session, your homework, one or two current problems, a review of what you’ve accomplished in this session, and homework for the next week. The goal is to solve problems, not just complain about them.
Self-help homework	If you went to a personal trainer at a health club, you would expect to get guidance on how to exercise when the trainer is not there. The same thing is true in cognitive behavioural therapy. What you learn in therapy is what you practice outside of therapy on your own. Research demonstrates that patients who carry out homework assignments get better faster and stay better longer. Your self-help homework might include keeping track of your moods, thoughts, and behaviours, scheduling activities, developing goals, challenging your negative thoughts, collecting information, changing the way you communicate with others and other assignments.