

How CBT can Help Anxiety

Treating Anxiety with CBT

Everyone gets worried sometimes, but if you have generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), worries and fears are so constant that they interfere with your ability to function and relax. You may worry excessively about things that are unlikely to happen, or feel tense and anxious all day with no real reason. Anxiety may take a physical toll, too. Your body aches, you can't sleep, and you're exhausted all the time. The good news is that generalized anxiety disorder is treatable. One of the most successful treatments is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

What is generalized anxiety disorder?

Generalized anxiety disorder involves anxiety and worry that is excessive and unrelenting. This high-level anxiety makes normal life difficult and relaxation impossible. If you have generalized anxiety disorder you may worry about the same things that other people do: health issues, money, family problems, or difficulties at work. But you take these worries to a new level.

Whether you realize that your anxiety is more intense than the situations call for or believe that your worrying is protective in some way, the end result is the same. You can't turn off your anxious thoughts. They keep running through your head, on endless repeat.

CBT for generalized anxiety disorders

CBT is one type of therapy that is particularly helpful in the treatment of generalized anxiety disorder. Cognitive-behavioural therapy examines distortions in our ways of looking at the world and ourselves. Your therapist will help you identify automatic negative thoughts that contribute to your anxiety. For example, if you repeatedly imagine the worst possible outcome in any given situation—you might challenge this tendency through questions such as, "What is the likelihood that this worst-case scenario will actually come true?" and "What are some positive outcomes that are more likely to happen?"

CBT can help you learn how to monitor your anxiety, including what triggers it, the specific things you worry about, and the severity and length of a particular episode. This helps you get perspective, as well as track your progress.

Through CBT, you learn to realistically evaluate and alter the thinking patterns that contribute to generalized anxiety disorder. As you challenge these negative thoughts, your fears will begin to subside. CBT also teaches you to test the beliefs you have about worry itself, such as "Worry is uncontrollable" or "If I worry, bad things are less likely to happen."

Instead of avoiding situations you fear, CBT teaches you to tackle them head on. You may start by imagining the thing you're most afraid of. By focusing on your fears without trying to avoid or escape them, you will begin to feel more in control and less anxious.

Key Words: Anxiety, Anxiety Symptoms, CBT, GAD, Anxiety Treatment

Contact Stephen Giles MSW, RSW if you need more information at: www.stephengiles.ca

Psychotherapy & Counselling 176 St. George Street, Toronto, ON. 416-500-2066

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