

This handout aims to help you understand more about what talking therapies involve, whether they are the right choice for you and how to access them. The handout also includes information about common talking therapies but does not cover all available treatments. Your GP can talk through other options with you.

What are talking therapies?

- Talking therapies are psychological interventions that help us to cope with mental health difficulties, stress, and difficult life events such as a bereavement.
- They usually aim to help us understand and/or change our thoughts and emotions.
- There are many different types of talking therapy, but they all involve working with a trained therapist. This may be one-to-one, in a group, online, over the phone, and/or with your family and/or partner.
- For some problems, one type of talking therapy may be better than another. Sometimes, a therapist may use a combination of different talking therapies when working with you.
- Different talking therapies suit different people, and you may need to try different approaches to find the best fit for you.

Myths & Facts

Below are 10 common myths about talking therapies, which we have debunked below:

1. ***“Therapy is just talking”*** – Whilst your therapist will talk with you about your difficulties, it is an interactive process. Your therapist and you will likely also learn and practice techniques and strategies with your therapist.
2. ***“The therapist will fix my problems”*** – Some talking therapies, like CBT, involve problem solving. However, therapy is collaborative, and you will *both* need to put time and effort into it to create change.
3. ***“Therapy works for everyone”*** – Everyone responds differently to treatments, whether they are for our physical or mental health. You may need to work with different therapist or try a different talking therapy to find the best fit for you.
4. ***“I will feel better immediately once I start seeing a therapist”*** – Therapy is not a ‘quick fix’ – for some people, talking about their difficulties can bring emotions to the forefront before they start to feel better.
5. ***“Therapists just listen”*** – As well as listening to you, your therapist will help you to understand your problems and/or make changes through many methods including talking together as well as learning and practicing techniques and strategies.
6. ***“Therapy is confidential”*** – Therapists will try to create a safe and confidential space in your sessions. They will need to break confidentiality if they are concerned for you or someone else’s safety. They will usually talk with you about this before sharing any information.
7. ***“I will have to stay in therapy forever”*** – Some people tell us they are worried they will not be able to cope without their therapist. Effective therapy involves working together to find better ways to help you cope with life and its future challenges.
8. ***“Needing therapy means I have failed”*** – Some people tell us they feel they have failed because they have not been able to tackle their mental health difficulties on their own. This is not the case, and we feel that asking for support is a sign of strength and courage.

Accessing Talking Therapies



Guided Self-Help

- Healthcare professionals may suggest trying self-help, such as apps/books.
- Guided self-help programmes involve working through a workbook or online course with the support of a therapist.
- Services like IAPT often offer guided self-help first for less severe problems.

NHS/Charity Services

- Healthcare professionals may refer you directly to a mental health service provided by the NHS or a charity.
- They will often suggest trying CBT first, as this talking therapy is effective for lots of mental health difficulties.
- Some services, such as IAPT, allow you to refer yourself (if you are old enough and depending on where you live).

Other Services

- You may also be able to access talking therapies through your school/college/university/employer or through private healthcare services.
- It is important that your therapist appropriately trained or 'accredited' – you can find this out by using the search tools below.

Self-help resources & books

<https://www.talkingchange.nhs.uk/resources> *and* <https://reading-well.org.uk/>

Accessing NHS & charity mental health services

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/nhs-voluntary-charity-services/nhs-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/>

Local NHS services for young people

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Mental-health-support-for-young-people/LocationSearch/1430>

Mind's guide on finding a therapist

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/talking-therapy-and-counselling/how-to-find-a-therapist/>

Find a CBT therapist

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists> *or* <https://www.cbtregisteruk.com/Default.aspx>

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

- CBT is a very common talking therapy, used to support people experiencing a range of difficulties affecting their mental health.
- It is evidence-based, which means researchers have evaluated how effective it is as an intervention for mental health difficulties.
- CBT is a form of therapy which assesses how thoughts and beliefs impact your emotions and behaviour. For example, I might interpret my low exam result as “I am worthless”, and this belief may trigger negative feelings which may be linked to certain behaviours (e.g., withdrawing from friends and family).
- CBT is typically a short-term, structured intervention with a set number of sessions – however, this depends on your own mental health and the service through which you are accessing it.

Understanding CBT

Below are some videos to help you understand more about CBT and what it involves.

Making sense of CBT
A video by Mind

<https://youtu.be/9c Bv FBE-c>

How does CBT work?
A video by PsychHub

<https://youtu.be/ZdyOwZ4 RnI>

What happens in CBT?

A typical CBT session may include:

- Deciding with your therapist what things you would like to work on in therapy, and what to work on in each session.
- Looking in more detail at the thoughts, emotions and behaviours that show up for you in response to difficult life situations.
- Working through exercises designed to pinpoint and challenge unhelpful thinking patterns and behaviours with your therapist.
- Learning new strategies and tools to help you cope and to solve problems e.g., relaxation exercises.
- Deciding on some exercises to work through between the therapy sessions e.g., keeping a thought diary to help you notice patterns or practicing new ways of doing things.
- Discussing what you have worked on in past sessions and your progress.

Acceptance-Commitment Therapy (ACT)

This talking therapy is based on the idea of accepting and managing things which you cannot change (e.g., the presence of pain or distress in your life) whilst making a commitment to behave in ways that create a meaningful life.

ACT sessions may involve:

- Learning mindful strategies to help you manage negative thoughts and feelings so that they do not have as much power over you (e.g., making space for challenging emotions, and letting them come and go, rather than struggling against them).
- ACT takes the stance that poor mental health is made worse by avoiding and trying to get rid of negative thoughts and feelings, so instead we should work on changing how we respond to these negative experiences and invest our energy into living the life we want to live.
- Working on understanding your personal values and allowing these values to direct your actions and bring life depth and meaning.

How can I access ACT?

- Some local NHS mental health services do offer ACT, though CBT is often the first talking therapy offered by the NHS – this depends on the specific service and what type of mental health difficulties you are seeking support for. There is increasing evidence that ACT is at least as successful as CBT as a talking therapy, and it has proven useful with a range of mental health conditions and experiences (e.g., stress, depression, panic, OCD).
- You can learn more about ACT through these useful self-help books:
 - “The Happiness Trap” by Russ Harris, 2007
 - “Get out of your Mind and into your Life: the new Acceptance and Commitment Therapy” by Steven Hayes, 2005

ACT information has been adapted from:

<http://www.awp.nhs.uk/media/69207/Acceptance%20and%20Commitment%20Therapy%20Leaflet.pdf> and <https://www.talkingchange.nhs.uk/acceptance-commitment-therapy-act>

Psychodynamic Therapy

- This talking therapy that attempts to get to the root causes behind mental health and relationship difficulties.
- Psychodynamic approaches assume that our early experiences in childhood affect us later in life, creating patterns that stay with us (e.g., in terms of how we handle difficult feelings) in our present.
- This talking therapy aims to help you fulfil your potential and move you away from what is limiting you.
- It can be used to support a range of difficulties (e.g., family or relationship issues, difficulty handling conflict or stress, anxiety, depression, addiction, eating disorders, self-harm etc).

A psychodynamic session is usually less structured than other talking therapies, but may involve:

- Being encouraged to speak freely about your current and past life
- Coming to terms with past traumas.
- Understanding links between things that happen in the past and present difficulties.
- Developing a strong relationship with your therapist where you feel understood and heard – the therapist may at times feedback their interpretations to you.
- Psychodynamic therapists may pay attention to the relationship between therapist and client to learn something about your relationship patterns.

How can I access psychodynamic therapy?

- Some local NHS mental health services may offer psychodynamic therapy, although it is most often offered as the first type of talking therapy except in specific services.
- Use the BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) search tool to find a private therapist - there are over 100 psychodynamic therapists in Guildford alone! <https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists>