

Session Goals and Guidelines



■ Session 1

Goals

- Establish trust and rapport.
- Briefly acquaint client with cognitive therapy.
- Educate client about depression, the cognitive model (including the cognitive triad) and about the process of therapy.
- Normalize client's difficulties and instill hope.
- Discuss (and correct, if necessary) client's expectations for therapy.
- Gather information about client's difficulties.
- Use information to develop goal list.

Suggested structure

- Set agenda (provide rationale).
- Do mood check, including objective scores.
- Discuss client's presenting problem.
- Review history collected by referral source.
- Educate client about cognitive model of depression.
- Identify main problems, and set goals for treatment.
- Discuss and correct (if necessary) client's expectations for therapy.
- Educate client about depression.
- Assign initial homework.
- Provide final summary, and get feedback.

Suggested CBT interventions

- Focus on developing collaborative therapeutic relationship.
- Psychoeducation about CBT and depression.
- Initiate problem-oriented focus by developing goal list.
- Introduce homework and reinforce value of self-help.

Other interventions to consider

- Introduce concept of automatic thoughts (if client seems to rapidly understand cognitive model, and there is opportunity to demonstrate link between thoughts and emotions).
- Develop behavioral activation assignment.

Suggested homework

- Reading assignment such as *What Should I Know about Cognitive Therapy* or *My Degree is in Depression*
- Customized assignment

■ Sessions 2 and 3

Goals

- Solidify collaborative therapeutic relationship.
- Demonstrate understanding of basic cognitive model.
- Identify automatic thoughts.
- Use basic cognitive model to help client cope with significant problem.
- Initiate testing of automatic thoughts.

Suggested structure

- Obtain brief update and mood check.
- Fashion bridge from previous session.
- Collaboratively set agenda.
- Review homework.
- Discuss agenda items, and provide periodic summaries.
- Focus on cognitive behavioral interventions appropriate to phase of therapy and readiness of client.
- Assign new homework.
- Provide final summary and get feedback.



Session Goals and Guidelines • Abbreviated (continued)

Suggested CBT interventions

- Use Socratic questioning to prompt automatic thoughts.
- Begin testing of automatic thoughts.
- Introduce thought recording.

Other CBT interventions to consider

- Use brief behavioral intervention (e.g., behavioral activation).
- Initiate a brief problem-solving exercise. At this point in therapy, problem solving is usually limited to a brief intervention.
- Review and refine goal list.

Note

Therapist may elect to focus primarily on an extended behavioral intervention and may delay work on automatic thoughts if a major behavioral problem (e.g., intense psychomotor retardation) appears to need immediate attention or improvement before cognitive interventions will be successful. In this case, work on automatic thoughts may be reduced or moved to the next session.

Suggested homework

- Thought recording exercise (usually two-column exercise or first three columns of thought record)
- Customized assignment
- Behavioral activation, brief problem-solving exercise or both

■ Session 4 and 5

Goals

- Promote collaboration in therapeutic relationship.
- Learn methods of changing automatic thoughts, and apply to specific situation.
- Recognize cognitive errors.
- Use thought recording to change dysfunctional cognitions.
- Promote acting on a specific problem.

Suggested structure

- Obtain brief update and mood check.
- Fashion bridge from previous session.

- Collaboratively set agenda.
- Review homework.
- Discuss agenda items, and provide periodic summaries.
- Focus on cognitive behavioral interventions appropriate to phase of therapy and readiness of client.
- Assign new homework.
- Provide final summary, and get feedback.

Suggested CBT interventions

- Use Socratic questioning to prompt and test automatic thoughts.
- Explain and illustrate cognitive errors.
- Use thought recording procedures (typically a five-column thought record).

Other CBT interventions to consider

- Follow up on extended behavioral intervention (if used previously).
- Include cognitive interventions from sessions 2 and 3 if extended behavioral intervention emphasized in session 2.
- Use behavioral activation, conduct problem-solving exercise or both.
- Review and refine goal list.

Note

Therapist may elect to focus primarily on an extended behavioral intervention and may delay work on automatic thoughts if a major behavioral problem (e.g., intense psychomotor retardation) appears to need immediate attention or improvement before cognitive interventions will be successful. In this case, work on automatic thoughts may be reduced or moved to the next session.

Suggested homework

- Reading assignment or worksheet on cognitive errors
- Thought recording exercise (typically a five-column thought record)
- Behavioral activation, brief problem-solving exercise or both
- Customized assignment

Session Goals and Guidelines • Abbreviated (continued)

■ Session 6 and 7

Goals

- Promote collaboration in therapeutic relationship.
- Solidify client's ability to use cognitive techniques to change automatic thoughts.
- Help client learn to use behavioral methods to increase mastery and pleasure.

Session structure

- Obtain brief update and mood check.
- Fashion bridge from previous session.
- Collaboratively set agenda.
- Review homework.
- Discuss agenda items, and provide periodic summaries.
- Focus on cognitive behavioral interventions appropriate to phase of therapy and readiness of client.
- Assign new homework.
- Provide final summary, and get feedback.

Suggested CBT interventions

- Use Socratic questioning and thought recording (and other cognitive procedures) to focus on a specific problem(s).
- Promote understanding of automatic thoughts and cognitive errors with exercise performed in session or by reviewing homework.
- Introduce activity scheduling or other major behavioral intervention suitable for client's problems.

Other CBT interventions to be considered

- Follow up on extended behavioral intervention from previous sessions.
- Use cognitive interventions from session 4 and 5 if extended behavioral intervention emphasized in session 4 and 5.
- Try behavioral activation.
- Practice problem solving.
- Review and refine goal list.

Suggested homework

- Thought recording and related procedures
- Activity schedule with mastery and pleasure recordings
- Customized assignment.

■ Session 8 and 9

Goals

- Promote collaboration in therapeutic relationship.
- Solidify client's ability to use cognitive techniques to change automatic thoughts.
- Employ behavioral methods to effect change.
- Review and update client's goal list.

Session structure

- Obtain brief update and mood check.
- Fashion bridge from previous session.
- Collaboratively set agenda.
- Review and refine goal list.
- Review homework.
- Discuss agenda items, and provide periodic summaries.
- Focus on cognitive behavioral interventions appropriate to phase of therapy and readiness of client.
- Assign new homework.
- Provide final summary, and get feedback.

Suggested CBT interventions

- Use Socratic questioning and thought recording (or other cognitive procedures) to focus on specific problem(s).
- Use activity schedule for behavioral change, or use alternative behavioral procedure.
- Introduce graded task assignments if applicable or follow-up on GTA if used in previous session.

Other CBT interventions to be considered

- Problem solving.

Session Goals and Guidelines • Abbreviated (continued)

Note

If extended behavioral procedures are assessed to be of minimal value to client at this time, therapist may devote portion of session to introducing concept of schema or to testing schemas.

Suggested homework

- Thought recording and related procedures
- Customized assignment
- Graded task assignment or other behavioral exercise, if applicable

■ Session 10 and 11

Goals

- Promote collaboration in therapeutic relationship.
- Solidify client's ability to use cognitive and behavioral change technique.
- Recognize underlying schemas (attitudes, beliefs, assumptions).

Session structure

- Obtain brief update and mood check.
- Fashion bridge from previous session.
- Collaboratively set agenda.
- Review homework.
- Discuss agenda items, and provide periodic summaries.
- Focus on cognitive behavioral interventions appropriate to phase of therapy and readiness of client.
- Assign new homework.
- Provide final summary, and get feedback.

Suggested CBT Interventions

- Use Socratic questioning, thought recording (and other cognitive procedures) to focus on specific problems(s).
- Follow up on graded task assignment or other behavioral intervention if used in previous session.
- Use psychoeducational procedures or Socratic questioning to teach client concept of underlying schema, or identify and examine schemas if previously introduced.

Other CBT interventions to be considered

- Practice problem solving.
- Review and refine goal list.

Note

If client still has moderate to severe anhedonia, lack of energy or poor concentration, therapist may elect to delay work on schemas and continue to focus on behavioral interventions or automatic thoughts.

Suggested homework

- Thought recording and related procedures
- A written list of schemas
- Patterns of automatic thoughts and possible schemas
- Customized assignment

■ Session 12 and 13

Goals:

- Promote collaboration in therapeutic relationship.
- Utilize schema change procedures.
- Solidify client's ability to use cognitive and behavioral change techniques.

Session structure

- Obtain brief update and mood check.
- Fashion bridge from previous session.
- Collaboratively set agenda.
- Review homework.
- Discuss agenda items, and provide periodic summaries.
- Focus on cognitive behavioral interventions appropriate to phase of therapy and readiness of client.
- Assign new homework.
- Provide final summary, and get feedback.

Suggested CBT interventions

- Use Socratic questioning, thought recording (and other cognitive procedures) to focus on specific problems.
- Identify and examine schemas.

Session Goals and Guidelines • Abbreviated (continued)

Other CBT interventions to be considered

- Follow up on behavioral interventions if used in previous session.
- Practice problem solving.
- Review and refine goal list.
- Use Socratic questioning and psychoeducational procedures to introduce client to concept of schemas (if not done previously).

Note: All clients should have a basic introduction to schemas by Session 14 at the latest.

Note

If client still has moderate to severe anhedonia, lack of energy or poor concentration, therapist may elect to delay work on schemas and continue to focus on behavioral interventions or work on automatic thoughts.

Suggested homework

- Schema list review
- Examining evidence or listing advantages and disadvantages of schemas
- Alternatives to dysfunctional schemas
- Customized assignment

■ Session 14 and 15

Goals:

- Promote collaboration in therapeutic relationship.
- Fully implement schema change procedures.
- Introduce relapse prevention techniques.

Session structure

- Obtain brief update and mood check.
- Fashion bridge from previous session.
- Collaboratively set agenda.
- Review homework.
- Discuss agenda items, and provide periodic summaries.
- Focus on cognitive behavioral interventions appropriate to phase of therapy and readiness of client.

- Assign new homework.
- Provide final summary, and get feedback.

Suggested CBT interventions

- Use Socratic questioning, thought recording (and other cognitive procedures) to focus on specific problem(s).
- Identify and examine schemas; list alternative schemas and develop assignments to practice new schemas.
- Use cognitive behavioral rehearsal or other CBT procedures to help client spot and manage potential triggers for relapse.

Other CBT interventions to be considered

- If client still has moderate to severe anhedonia, lack of energy or poor concentration, therapist may elect to delay work on schemas and continue to focus on behavioral interventions or work on automatic thoughts.
- Practice problem solving.
- Review and refine goal list.
- Use Socratic questioning and psychoeducational procedures to introduce client to concept of schemas (if not done previously).

Note: All clients should have a basic introduction to schemas by Session 14 at the latest.

Suggested homework

- Schema change assignments as in sessions 12 and 13
- CBT rehearsal in vivo
- Problem solving
- Customized assignment

■ Session 16

Goals

- Solidify gains from treatment.
- Reduce risk of relapse.
- Encourage continued use of self-help.
- Set goals for future.

Session Goals and Guidelines • Abbreviated (continued)

Session structure

- Obtain brief update and mood check.
- Fashion bridge from previous session.
- Collaboratively set agenda.
- Review homework.
- Discuss agenda items, and provide periodic summaries.
- Review methods of changing automatic thoughts, behavioral techniques and methods of changing schemas.
- Develop methods for managing triggers for relapse (use cognitive behavioral rehearsal if indicated).
- Set goals for future.
- Provide final summary, and get feedback.

Suggested CBT interventions

- Review of course of therapy; check for understanding of basic CBT concepts and procedures.
- Reinforce importance of continued use of CBT self-help techniques.
- Develop customized plan for using CBT to help reduce risk of relapse or reach future goals.

Other CBT interventions to be considered

- Use CBT procedures to focus on a specific problem that is still unresolved or is creating significant distress.
- Assist client with examining alternatives for further treatment or access to community resources if indicated.

Suggested homework

- Regular therapy folder review
- Thought recording and other CBT procedures
- Practice problem solving.

■ Session 16

Goals

- Solidify gains from treatment.
- Reduce risk of relapse.

- Encourage continued use of self-help.
- Set goals for future.

Session structure

- Obtain brief update and mood check.
- Fashion bridge from previous session.
- Collaboratively set agenda.
- Review homework.
- Discuss agenda items, and provide periodic summaries.
- Review methods of changing automatic thoughts, behavioral techniques and methods of changing schemas.
- Develop methods for managing triggers for relapse (use cognitive behavioral rehearsal if indicated).
- Set goals for future.
- Provide final summary, and get feedback.

Suggested CBT interventions

- Review of course of therapy; check for understanding of basic CBT concepts and procedures.
- Reinforce importance of continued use of CBT self-help techniques.
- Develop customized plan for using CBT to help reduce risk of relapse or reach future goals.

Other CBT interventions to be considered

- Use CBT procedures to focus on a specific problem that is still unresolved or is creating significant distress.
- Assist client with examining alternatives for further treatment or access to community resources if indicated.

Suggested homework

- Regular therapy folder review
- Thought recording and other CBT procedures

Adapted from Wright, Beck, Schrodtt, Basco, Albano, Raffield, Steiner, Evans, & Small (1997).
Treatment Manual for Cognitive Therapy (CT-9). Unpublished manuscript.