

Applied CBT

As we discussed in the earlier modules, unchecked automatic thinking can lead to depression, anxiety and addiction. We need to learn how to dispute our distorted automatic thoughts and replace them with new, alternative thoughts. Then we'll experience new and more functional emotions and responses. This can be the difference between suffering depression, anxiety or addiction, or being relatively free of the more crippling effects of depression, anxiety or addiction.

CBT is the “top-down” approach, meaning that it works with thoughts (in your head, therefore the “top”) which then positively impact your feelings and behaviors (body). CBT has been proven to be very effective for managing mind-generated depression/anxiety and addiction.

We recommend using a combination of CBT (top-down) and body-generated strategies (body-up), such as relaxation, exercise, meditation and other nervous system strategies on a regular basis to combat addiction. We also recommend peer and medical support, if required, and even exploration of different spiritual recovery modalities.

Let's explore an example of two ways of thinking about a failed test. You may think: “I'm worthless and stupid!” This could lead to feeling depressed and sad. You could dispute that belief by looking at the facts and change it to something like: “I'm smart, but I didn't study for this test. I can do better.”

Not everybody has every thought that we've highlighted in this module, but most people will be able to identify with some of them, whether they're addicts or not. The thinking of addicts does tend to be a little more distorted than the thinking of people who don't suffer from addiction, but many people learn and use CBT to alleviate emotional problems. Identifying and disputing distorted thoughts and beliefs allows us to live a happier life, unshackled by our habitual imprisoning thoughts and beliefs. CBT offers us a way out, if we want it.

CBT is only one arm of what we believe to be comprehensive treatment for addiction. In this module, you learn how to challenge or dispute your distorted automatic thoughts. There are three types of disputing you can employ once you become aware of a distorted thought.

1. Empirical disputing

Empirical disputing is where you ask yourself questions such as: “Where's the evidence which shows that my beliefs are true?”

2. Logical disputing

Logical disputing is where you ask yourself questions such as: “Is it logical to turn my desires into demands?”

3. Pragmatic disputing

Pragmatic disputing is where you ask yourself questions such as: “Have my beliefs helped me so far?” “Does this belief help me now?”

It is not enough that you simply see that a belief or thought is irrational when put to the test. You must find and practice an alternative, rational belief/thought. When you dispute your distorted automatic thoughts and replace them with new, alternative thoughts, you’ll see that over time you experience new and more functional emotions and responses.

Remember that beliefs are the “B” in the ABC cycle – i.e., your underpinning thoughts which can impact your feelings and behaviors.

Recommended videos

Five Steps to Eliminate Cognitive Distortions (Best Cognitive Distortions Treatment).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUZktFUKwCE&list=TLPQMTUxMjJwMTm1aqsPNQSPHw&index=7> (16:05)

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for Anxiety | Dr Keith Gaynor | Inspire Hope.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOvFrJttcLU> (18:47 mins)

Reflective Questions: Applied CBT

Core beliefs and supporting statements

1. Circle or checkmark the distorted automatic thoughts below that apply to you today:
 - I can't live without it.
 - Using is my most important need.
 - I'm weak.
 - I must avoid pain at all costs.
 - I need it — it helps me.
 - There's something wrong with me.
 - My needs are never going to be met if I depend on other people.
 - I don't have any choice — I can't say “no”.
 - I'll never get better – I might as well continue using.
 - I can't trust anyone – people are untrustworthy.
 - I have to be alert for danger at all times – the world is an unsafe place.
 - I'm afraid – I just pretend to be brave.
 - The bad things I've done are unforgivable.
 - People don't trust me.

- No-one will protect me.
- Others will always let me down.
- I'm helpless.
- I don't have anyone.
- I need to be in control – my life is out of control.
- I'm a victim – no-one cares about me.
- Life isn't fair.
- I can't change – I'm trapped.
- I can't cope.
- Life is full of stress and overload.
- I'm disrespected.
- I have nothing to offer.
- Others don't/won't like me.
- I'm inadequate, ineffective and incompetent.
- I don't deserve love or happiness.
- I'm unwelcome – nobody wants me.
- I'm uninteresting.
- My opinion isn't worth anything.
- I don't fit in.
- I'm just useless.
- I'm all alone.
- No-one cares about me.
- I'm unlovable and worthless.
- I don't like myself.
- I'm unsuccessful, a failure.
- Others are better than I am.
- I'm stupid.
- I must never get anything wrong.
- I'm guilty – it's always my fault.
- I must avoid disapproval from all sources – I need to please others.
- I'll be rejected or abandoned – no-one could love me as I am.
- I'm unimportant unless I get my own way.
- I'm weak or a loser if I can't defend myself.
- I'm a fraud – people will find out that I'm a fake.
- If you really knew me, you wouldn't like me.
- I'm confused – I don't know who I really am.
- I'm lost.
- Wherever I am, I don't like it.
- There's something wrong with me and/or the world.
- I must please people for them to like me – I need people to accept me.
- Arguing is wrong.
- People should always get along.
- I shouldn't bother anyone.
- I'm afraid of rejection.
- I have to do things for others in order to be loved.
- Saying "no" is selfish.

- ☐ I'll never live up to my parents' expectations – they think I'm a failure.
- ☐ I'm a loser – I'm not good at anything I do.
- ☐ I'm unattractive – I don't like the way I look.
- ☐ I have nothing to offer.
- ☐ Past events have ruined my chance of finding happiness.
- ☐ I'm needy.
- ☐ I'm deprived of things in my life.
- ☐ Things must be the way I want them to be.
- ☐ Life should be fair.
- ☐ I should always get what I want.
- ☐ The world owes me a living.
- ☐ I should be able to release all my anger — people should accept me as I am.
- ☐ My needs are never going to be met if I have to depend on other people.
- ☐ People are evil, greedy and out to get me.
- ☐ I won't succeed, so why bother trying?
- ☐ Success means being well off financially.
- ☐ I must be perfect – if things don't go perfectly, it's a disaster.
- ☐ I have to have all the answers.
- ☐ Things are either right or wrong.
- ☐ I can't allow myself to make mistakes.
- ☐ I'm better than others – my way is best.
- ☐ If I don't try, I won't be disappointed.

Source: <https://dylankerraddictiontherapy.com/2018/03/19/core-beliefs-in-addiction/>

2. Can you think of any other automatic thoughts you have that aren't listed in this extensive list? List them here.

3. Use the table below to journal and practice your own applied CBT skills.

Situation	Automatic Thoughts	Feelings	Cognitive distortion(s)	Challenge/Dispute	Alternate/ Replacement Thought(s) What would you say to a beloved friend?

Situation	Automatic Thoughts	Feelings	Cognitive distortion(s)	Challenge/Dispute	Alternate/ Replacement Thought(s) What would you say to a beloved friend?