

What is Cognitive Processing Therapy?

- A treatment for PTSD and related conditions
- Short-term therapy in an individual (50 minutes) or group (typically 90 minutes) setting occurring weekly or twice weekly.

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) looks at the impact a traumatic event has had on one's life and helps examine and change unhelpful thoughts and feelings related to the event, one's self, others, and the world. An important part of treatment is addressing ways of thinking that might keep an individual "stuck" and get in the way of recovery from symptoms of PTSD and other problems.

CPT is effective in treating PTSD across a variety of populations and types of trauma. CPT has worked well for individuals who have experienced combat, sexual, or childhood trauma, as well as other types of traumatic events.

Reflect. Redefine. Recover.

COGNITIVE PROCESSING THERAPY

CPT

For more information about whether CPT is right for you, please talk to your therapist.

National Center for PTSD
www.ptsd.va.gov



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Cognitive
Processing Therapy

Reflect. Redefine. Recover.

What are the goals of CPT?

Reflect.

- Improve your understanding about PTSD
- Examine the impact of the trauma on thoughts and feelings
- Decrease avoidance and emotional numbing

Redefine.

- Learn skills to evaluate thinking
- Consider alternative viewpoints of the trauma, oneself and the world.

Recover.

- Reduce your level of distress related to your memories of the trauma
- Reduce feelings of anxiety, anger, guilt and shame
- Improve day-to-day living

What will I be doing in CPT?

Over approximately 12 therapy sessions held weekly or twice weekly:

- You will learn to identify and challenge unhelpful thoughts through structured therapy sessions and take-home practice assignments.
- You will be asked to write about the impact of your traumatic experience(s).
- You may choose to write the story of your traumatic event(s).
- You will be asked to complete regular take-home practice assignments to apply what you are learning in therapy.
- You will learn skills to help you evaluate the evidence for your beliefs and consider alternative conclusions.



What will be expected of me?

You will be asked to complete take-home practice assignments that help identify thoughts and patterns of thinking that might be keeping you stuck in your PTSD. You will be asked to write about the impact of your trauma. You will be given the choice to write the story of your trauma to understand how it has affected your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. During CPT, you will learn to examine the evidence supporting what you have been telling yourself about the trauma, yourself and the world.

Does CPT work with multiple traumas?

Yes. CPT is very effective for individuals who have experienced multiple traumas. You will be asked to focus first on your traumatic experience that is bothering you the most. Then, the focus can shift to other traumas as needed.

For whom does CPT work the best?

CPT has worked for a wide range of individuals. Ultimately, those who are motivated and put a

lot of work into CPT will get the most out of the therapy.

Will I be able to handle CPT?

Many who have this initial concern are able to successfully complete this treatment and enjoy significant improvements. While it may be scary to focus on the thoughts and feelings related to your trauma, it is important to remember it is a memory and that it is not happening now. You are encouraged to discuss any concerns with your therapist.

Can I participate in CPT if I have PTSD and a substance abuse problem?

Substance use and PTSD can be closely connected. Therefore, treating your PTSD may be an important part of your substance abuse treatment, even early in the recovery process. Please talk to your therapist about any substance abuse concerns and whether CPT may be a good fit for your treatment needs.

What is CPT in a group setting like?

Participation in a CPT group involves receiving treatment with other individuals who have also experienced trauma. The focus of the group will be on the ways in which your thinking has been impacted by the trauma and learning new skills. Specific details of each person's trauma are not discussed in group. Group CPT provides an opportunity for peer support and learning while going through treatment.

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