

A Guide to

# Self Help and Taking Therapies



If you have been experiencing emotional difficulties, for example, avoiding things because you feel anxious; feeling so depressed that it interferes with your ability to cope with everyday life; or you are experiencing problems in your relationships, this booklet might help you decide how to take some further steps to overcome your problems. It informs you about 'Self Help' approaches and also gives you some information about 'Talking Therapies' what they are, who they are suitable for and how to access them.

## Self Help

Many people prefer to look to themselves to overcome their difficulties and there are a number of ways they can be helped to achieve this. Most of the materials used in self help are based on a 'cognitive-behavioural' approach, i.e. helping you to think and behave in more helpful ways to improve the way you feel. Evidence gained from research shows this can be an effective approach in overcoming many different emotional problems.

### Approaches to Self Help

- There are a wide variety of well written books available from bookshops and libraries providing help for a range of mental health problems. Your GP can help you decide which book is most suited to your needs. Your local library will likely stock one of the recommended titles.
- There is a range of self help booklets available at GP surgeries and libraries which include recommendations for additional reading and resources e.g. websites, that may be beneficial
- Some people prefer the idea of an 'evening class' learning about how to better manage stress. These classes usually run weekly for up to 6 consecutive weeks. There is no expectation to speak about personal problems but members of the class are given a lot of useful information and instruction on relaxation.
- Some people like the idea of self help but would prefer a trained worker to guide and help them with it. This is often referred to as 'Guided Self Help'. This would typically involve meeting with a Guided Self Help worker for approximately three appointments. The worker will be able to assess the difficulties experienced and suggest different avenues of self help including booklets to work through. Guided self help can also be offered in a group.

- Self help can also be available on the internet or on DVD or CD to use in your own time.
- Self Help groups are often available for specific types of problem including anxiety disorders, depression or alcohol abuse. These are often run by people who have experienced similar problems in their lives and create a supportive environment where people can share experiences and learn from each other.

It would be worthwhile discussing the self help option with your GP who could help you decide if this is the most appropriate approach and inform you of what is currently available in your area.

If you find your problems do not improve with self help, it is important to discuss other options with your doctor.

## **TALKING THERAPIES**

### **What are talking therapies?**

For many people experiencing emotional difficulties, talking treatments may be the most appropriate therapeutic choice. The opportunity to talk about your problems with a trained counsellor or therapist can help you achieve a better understanding of the nature of your problems and what keeps them going. It can also help you identify how to deal with your difficulties in a more helpful and constructive way.

Medication may also be prescribed by your doctor to help improve a number of emotional problems, for example, antidepressants. However, many people may prefer to choose a talking therapy. People may find additional benefits from adopting both approaches at the same time. Your doctor will help you decide what is best for you.

Therapy is usually offered on an individual basis, when you are seen on your own. For those who like the idea of a group, this option can also often be available.

The number of appointments or 'sessions' for individual therapy can also vary depending on the nature of your problems. For example, some people might be seen for up to six sessions over the course of a few weeks, whilst others are seen for many more, over a long period of time.

### **What are the different types of talking therapies?**

There are many different types of therapy. This booklet will focus on some of those recognised as useful by people working in Mental Health.

#### **Counselling**

By listening to your problems, a counsellor provides an opportunity for you to make sense of your current difficulties. People may choose to talk to a counsellor for just one session or for more sessions on a regular basis for several months. There are a number of counselling services available. Most charge a fee and some have a sliding scale, depending on earnings. Your doctor may also be able to suggest local counselling services for you to consider.

#### **Relationship Counselling and Family Therapy**

This type of counselling is for individuals or couples who are experiencing relationship difficulties. Counselling provides the opportunity to improve communication, begin to identify the problems experienced and explore ways of improving the relationship. In family therapy, the same process takes place involving the whole family attending together.



## **Individual Psychodynamic Psychotherapy**

Psychodynamic psychotherapy is a relatively unstructured talking therapy. By talking about your difficulties with a therapist you can learn things about yourself which you may or may not be aware of. You will also be helped to identify the things which may be causing or maintaining your problems or symptoms. Sometimes it is also helpful to make links with what has happened in the past. In this type of therapy the relationship with your therapist is used as another helpful way of learning about yourself.

## **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**

When people experience emotional difficulties and feel anxious or depressed, they often think in an unreasonable negative way about themselves, other people or the world around them. This in turn can affect how they feel (e.g. more anxious or depressed) and influence what they do (e.g. avoid or withdraw from situations). CBT is a structured therapy which has been shown to be beneficial for a range of emotional difficulties. It helps you to examine and change your thoughts (cognitive) and what you do (behaviour) to help you feel better. Therapy can be done individually or in groups. Sessions usually last for 30–60 minutes and usually involve a small amount of ‘homework’ between sessions. Many people gain benefit from treatment of between 6–20 sessions.

## **Problem Solving**

This is a practical approach which teaches people how to generate possible solutions to the problems faced in everyday life. It focuses on identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each solution with the aim of selecting the one which is likely to be most helpful. It can be provided in the context of guided self-help or other structured therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

### **Brief Solution Focussed Therapy**

This is a structured therapy, usually carried out over one to five sessions. Unlike most other talking treatments, therapist and client usually spend little time on the details and causes of the problem. The client is helped to define their own clear goals. Therapy focuses on finding the best way towards the goals in the briefest time possible. It helps the client to recognize their own strengths, resources and abilities. The focus will be on what the person is already doing to move in the right direction, and what this means about themselves. Therapy focuses on what is getting better and building on this.

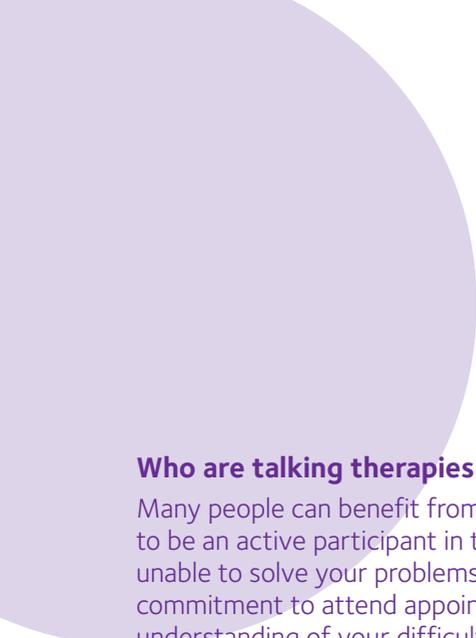
### **Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)**

Interpersonal Therapy is a semi-structured therapy which examines how problems in relationships contribute to emotional difficulties such as depression and vice versa. IPT primarily focuses on working and improving relationships with the aim of bringing about change, leading to improvements in mood, or other troubling symptoms. IPT is usually offered over the course of up to 16 sessions.

### **Group Therapy**

Many different types of therapy can also be available in groups. These are usually for up to eight to twelve people but numbers vary.

Although groups do not appeal to everybody, they do have many advantages. It can be very reassuring to learn that other people share similar problems to yourself and that you are not 'the only one'. Groups enable people to learn together about different ways of dealing with problems. Depending on the type of group, they can also provide very helpful opportunities to hear other people's views of the difficulties and concerns you express which can help you learn more about yourself.



## **Who are talking therapies suitable for?**

Many people can benefit from therapy. However, you have to be prepared to be an active participant in the process of change. Your therapist will be unable to solve your problems for you. Therapy requires your commitment to attend appointments, motivation to achieve a better understanding of your difficulties and depending on the type of therapy, a willingness to consider and try other more helpful ways of overcoming your problems.

Similarly, groups work best for those who are prepared to listen to others, talk about themselves in a group setting and to be supportive towards other group members.

If you feel you are able to make these commitments, talking therapies may be a particularly useful option for you to consider.

## **Do talking therapies work?**

There is a lot of research to show that talking therapies can benefit many people, but this may not be the case for everyone. Some people feel they have not gained any benefit at all, others feel they have made some improvement and others feel they have improved considerably. It helps to be clear about what you would like to achieve from therapy and be prepared to commit yourself and work alongside your therapist to achieve your goals.

If you are interested in finding out more about the scientific evidence base for all the talking treatments described above please refer to the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and Scottish Inter Collegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) websites listed at the end of this booklet.

## How can I find out about what is available?

Your doctor should be able to help you decide what may be best for you in your particular circumstances and what is locally available. Talking therapies are usually provided through a variety of local services and agencies including the NHS. There may be services available through local voluntary organizations. Private therapists and counsellors will charge a fee, but in some cases this will depend on what you can afford. If you choose to seek help privately it is always recommended to ask about a therapist's qualifications and training, particularly registration with a professional organisation. Local websites, for example 'Edspace' for the City of Edinburgh, may also provide information about local services. The following recommended organisations and contacts may provide additional useful information and help.

## Useful Organizations and Information Sources

### **British Associate for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP)**

The Globe Centre, P O Box 9, Accrington BB5 0BX

Tel: 01254 875277

Web: [www.babcp.org.uk](http://www.babcp.org.uk).

### **British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)**

1 Regent Place, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21 2PJ

Tel: 0870 443 5252

Web: [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk).

### **British Psychoanalytic Council**

Westhill House, 6 Swains Lane, London N6 6QS

Tel: 02072 673 626

Web: [www.bcp.org.uk](http://www.bcp.org.uk).

### **Scottish Institute of Human Relations**

172 Leith Walk, Edinburgh EH6 5EA

Tel: 0131 454 3240/1

Web: [www.sihr.org.uk](http://www.sihr.org.uk)

– Offering psychodynamic counselling, psychodynamic psychotherapy and a child and family service.

### **The Institute of Group Analysis**

1 Daleham Gardens, London NW3 5BY

Tel: 020 7431 2693

Web: [www.groupanalysis.org](http://www.groupanalysis.org)

– The main training centre for group therapists in the UK.

### **UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)**

Tel: 020 7014 9955

Web: [www.psychotherapy.org.uk](http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk)

2nd Floor, Edward House, 2 Wakely Street, London EC1V 7LT

– UKCP holds a voluntary register of professional qualified psychotherapists.

### **National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)**

Web: [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk).

### **Scottish Intercolleagiate Guidelines Network (SIGN)**

Web: [www.sign.ac.uk](http://www.sign.ac.uk)

– For information about the scientific evidence for therapies.

### **Edspace**

Web: [www.edspace.org.uk](http://www.edspace.org.uk)

– For up to date information on local mental health services in Edinburgh.

### **East Lothian directory**

Web: [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/documents/contentmanage/directory](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/documents/contentmanage/directory)  
– A directory of national and local East Lothian services.

### **Couple Counselling (Lothian)**

9a Dundas Street, Edinburgh EH3 6QG  
Tel: 0131 556 1527  
Web: [www.cclothian.btinternet.co.uk](http://www.cclothian.btinternet.co.uk)

### **Self help for depression and anxiety and related mental health issues**

Web: [www.livinglifetothefull.com](http://www.livinglifetothefull.com)

### **Interactive self help site for cognitive behavioural therapy for depression**

Web: [www.moodgym.anu.edu.au/](http://www.moodgym.anu.edu.au/)

### **Telephone Helplines**

#### **Breathing space**

Tel: 0800 83 85 87  
Web: [www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk](http://www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk)

#### **Samaritans**

Tel: 08457 90 90 90  
Web: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

*NHS Lothian, 2008  
Version 1*



Lothian – Psychological Interventions Network

