

Cognitive Therapy - Youth



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Cognitive therapy may be used for children who have depression, anxiety, behavior problems or alcohol and substance use. Cognitive therapy is based on the idea that how you think largely determines the way you feel. This therapy focuses on a child's thoughts that cause distress. Children learn that their negative thinking is not based on real facts. By correcting a child's negative thinking, their emotions and behaviors change as well.

How does this therapy work?

1. Child is trained to identify thoughts that make them feel anxious.
2. Child writes down these negative thoughts.
3. Child and therapist review the thought record and discuss whether the thoughts are accurate.
4. Therapist gives the child accurate thoughts to replace the negative ones.
5. Child practices replacing the negative thoughts with positive ones.
6. Children think more realistically and feel better as they learn to challenge negative or fear-inducing thoughts.

Example: Lia is 14 years old. Lately, she has been telling herself that she is not pretty enough to hang out with the "in" group at school. Lia's mother has noticed how much more her daughter worries and is concerned for Lia. She decides to take Lia to a therapist to help with her anxiety.

Lia tells her therapist all the negative thoughts that she has about herself. The therapist explains to Lia that these negative thoughts are not true and gives Lia some homework to do. She asks Lia to go home and start writing down all the negative thoughts that she is having. Her therapist also asks her to look at each of these thoughts and write down proof that these thoughts are true and then proof that they are false. Lia starts to notice that she has very little proof that her negative thoughts are true and that it is easier to find proof that the thoughts are false. Lia starts to believe that she can turn her negative thoughts in to positive ones.

At their next session, Lia and her therapist look at Lia's thought record. The therapist is pleased to see how well Lia has done with this homework and how she has started to talk differently to herself when her negative thoughts come. With practice, Lia starts to feel less anxious and much more positive about herself, in fact, Lia started having lunch with the 'in' group at school.

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