

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I participate if I am recovering from a substance abuse problem?

A: Yes. Many people who have a history of problem drinking or drug use can participate as long as they have been stabilized. Please talk to your therapist about any concerns you have about substance abuse issues.

Q: What will be expected of me?

A: You will be asked to complete practice assignments that focus on the connection between your thoughts and feelings, as well as identifying patterns of thinking that might be keeping you stuck. You may also be asked to write about your traumatic experiences in detail in order to understand how they have affected your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Q: Does CPT work with multiple traumas?

A: Yes. CPT has been tested with veterans who have experienced multiple traumas. In many cases veterans have had a significant reduction in PTSD symptoms; in other cases, after completing CPT, some veterans no longer met criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD.

Q: Will I be able to handle doing CPT?

A: Many veterans who have this concern have successfully completed this treatment and report improvements in their daily lives. You may want to discuss these concerns with your therapist.

Q: For whom does CPT work best?

A: CPT has worked for veterans with a range of different problems. Ultimately, the amount of work you put in will determine what you get out of CPT.



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

Additional Resources:
National Center for PTSD:
<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/index.jsp>



Cognitive Processing Therapy CPT

What is Cognitive Processing Therapy?

- A cognitive-behavioral therapy (treatment that focuses on thoughts and feelings) for PTSD and related conditions.
- Approximately 12 weekly therapy sessions in either an individual (50 minute) or group (typically 90 minute) setting.

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

CPT provides a way to understand why recovery from traumatic events has been difficult and how symptoms of PTSD affect daily life. The focus is on identifying how your traumatic experiences changed your thoughts and beliefs, and how your thoughts influence your current feelings and behaviors.

An important part of the treatment is addressing ways of thinking that might keep you “stuck” and get in the way of your recovery from symptoms of PTSD and other problems.



Topics typically covered in Cognitive Processing Therapy:

- The meaning of the traumatic event(s)
- Identification of thoughts and feelings
- Trust Issues
- Safety Issues
- Issues of Power and Control
- Esteem Issues
- Intimacy Issues

What Are the Goals of CPT?

- Improve your understanding of PTSD
- Reduce the distress about your memories of the trauma
- Decrease your emotional numbing and avoidance
- Reduce feelings of being tense or “on edge”
- Decrease your depression, anxiety, guilt/shame
- Improve your day-to-day living

What Will I Be Doing in CPT?

Over the approximately 12 weekly therapy sessions:

- You will identify and challenge unhelpful thoughts through structured therapy sessions and practice assignments.
- You may be expected to write about traumatic events you have experienced.
- You will get information on common reactions to trauma.
- You will be asked to complete regular out-of-session practice assignments to apply what has been discussed in therapy.
- You will learn skills to manage your own thoughts and beliefs.

