

What are the similarities and difference between counselling and CBT?

There are many similarities between counselling and CBT. For example, they are both types of psychological or talking therapies that take place in a private and confidential setting. Counsellors and CBT therapists will treat their clients with respect and refrain from judging or criticising them. Ultimately, counselling and CBT aim to help people to change in some way.

CBT is distinct from other counselling approaches insofar as it:

- Focuses on helping clients to appreciate the *link between their thoughts and beliefs about events in their lives and the way they feel*. Making this connection raises clients' awareness of the reasons why they feel and act in self-defeating ways.
- *Prioritises the clients' present problems* and focuses on finding ways in which they can be managed more effectively. Looking at the past can help understand how earlier life experiences have contributed to shaping current beliefs, behaviour and thinking but CBT uses this understanding to change things in client's lives *now* rather than dwelling on them.
- Emphasises the importance of *testing out the influence of negative assumptions and predictions against 'objective evidence in the real world* (e.g. helping a client who is anxious about public speaking to test the belief, "I will freeze and forget what I have to say", by preparing for and doing more public speaking to test out the validity of this prediction. Through this process the client has the opportunity to learn that forgetting what to say is not the end of the world, and that this is something they could learn to handle and still deliver a good presentation.
- Works in a *distinctly collaborative way*– developing a positive relationship with clients is seen as a necessary condition to successful practice, but in contrast to some other approaches (e.g. person centred counselling), this relationship it is not regarded as sufficient in and of itself to bring about change for most clients. In CBT, therapists and clients work together to form a good working alliance or partnership as a solid foundation upon which to understand the client's problems and negotiate the process by which they can reclaim their health and wellbeing.

Is generally more *action oriented* than counselling. CBT is very much about helping clients to do things differently in their day-to-day lives in order to break unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaviour. Through taking action clients become aware of their choices and capacity to take more control of their lives.

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