

How Does Brief Therapy Work?

Brief therapists argue that you can't make emotional pain go away simply by analyzing its causes. They believe that if you ruminate about old wounds, as you would in long-term psychoanalysis, you're more likely to talk yourself into believing that your problems are too deeply rooted to solve. Changing your behavior, they insist, is the most effective way to change how you feel about yourself.

Some proponents of traditional methods warn that short-term therapy is not a long-term solution: When you focus on symptoms rather than the underlying problem, the problem will reemerge in another form. But brief therapists counter that in solving one problem, most people are able to solve others as well.

Information about brief therapy:

Brief therapy generally takes only six to eight sessions. Even a single session sometimes makes a difference: In a study of 200 patients 78 percent reported that they'd gotten what they wanted from the therapy after just one session. In another study 80 percent of patients at one brief-therapy clinic felt they'd made significant progress after about five sessions; a year later almost all of them reported feeling better.

What is cognitive therapy?

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a relatively short-term, focused psychotherapy for a wide range of psychological problems including depression, anxiety, anger, marital conflict, loneliness, panic, fears, eating disorders, substance abuse, alcohol abuse and dependence and personality problems. The focus of therapy is on how you are thinking, behaving, and communicating today rather than on your early childhood experiences. The therapist assists the patient in identifying specific distortions and biases in thinking and provides guidance on how to change this thinking. Cognitive therapy helps the patient learn effective self-help skills that are used in homework assignments that help you change the way you think, feel and behave *now*. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is action-oriented, practical, rational, and helps the patient gain independence and effectiveness in dealing with real-life issues.