

Simplifying Non-Pharmacological Treatments for Chronic Pain: Cognitive behavioural therapy

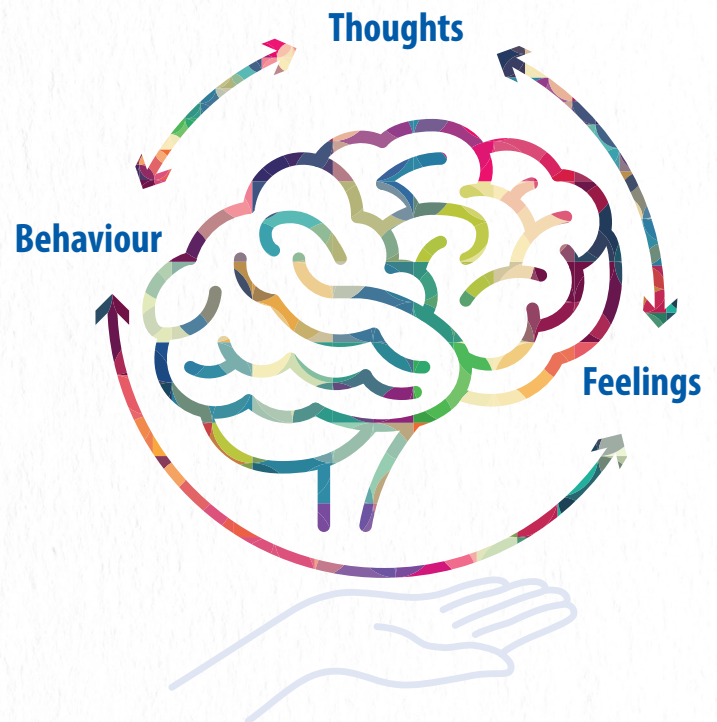
For patients with chronic pain, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)¹:

- Is centred on the idea that our thought patterns and deeply held beliefs about ourselves and the world around us drive our experiences
- Helps them evaluate the accuracy of their negative thoughts and beliefs (cognitive distortions)
- Shifts their thinking away from the pain and focuses on more positive aspects of their lives to change the way their bodies respond to anticipated pain and stress

The five steps of CBT

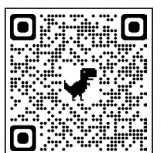
Family physicians can guide patients through CBT using these five steps.¹

1. Identify a problem	<p>Describe something you want to do, stop doing, or avoid doing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I often cancel outings with friends because I am in pain.
2. Identify feelings and emotions	<p>Write down how you feel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry, sad, frustrated, abandoned, depressed.
3. Recognize the beliefs behind your thoughts	<p>List your cognitive distortions, such as absolutes and imposed limits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm never going to be able to do what my friends do. • I must be a terrible friend.
4. Identify positive alternative behaviours	<p>Formulate positive, rational responses based on your experiences. Practice is key. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What outings can I do when I'm having a good day? • How long can I stay out before my pain flares? • Where can I go that is comfortable?
5. Evaluate your approach	<p>Re-rate your feelings and beliefs. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened when I went out with friends for a short period of time? • Did I feel better? • What could I do differently to make my experience even more positive next time?



Interested in learning more? Visit <https://cfpclearn.ca/> to view the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)'s four-part webinar and podcast series on non-pharmacological treatments for chronic pain. The CFPC has certified this Self-Learning series for up to four Mainpro+® credits.

¹ Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Cognitive behavioural therapy web page. 2021. <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/cognitive-behavioural-therapy>. Accessed March 23, 2021.



Scan the QR code with your smart phone to go to <https://cfpclearn.ca>.