

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Skills Group: Physician & MOA Information

[Last Updated October 2, 2018]

Are your patients struggling with...

- Sadness or depression
- Worry, nervousness or anxiety illness, pain, or health problems
- Insomnia
- Guilt or shame
- Grief and loss
- Family or work conflict
- Relationship stress
- Transitions

Our MSP-covered, physician-led CBT skills program could help.

What is the CBT Skills Group?

As human beings, stress and pain are inevitable in life. But sometimes the way we respond to distress makes matters worse. We don't have a choice about which curve balls life will throw at us, but we do have a choice about how we respond.

In the CBT Skills program, we take a look at how the mind works, bringing mindful awareness to our patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving. In doing so, we become more aware of our choices. We also practice skills that help us cope with intense emotions, cultivate more helpful thinking, and make choices that move us in the direction of what is truly important to us.

The course material draws on concepts from neuroscience, mindfulness, and cognitive behavioral therapy to teach skills that may help you build a sense of empowerment and begin to cultivate a relationship with yourself that is kind and insightful.

The Vancouver Division of Family Practice is providing funding for a pilot of the successful **Victoria CBT Skills Groups Program** which has had:



- funding from the Shared Care Committee and the Victoria Divisions of Family Practice in March 2015, and now has 9 physicians offering regular groups
- nearly 350 physicians from Victoria and South Island making referrals
- more than 1800 patients participate, with now up to 25 groups offered every three months throughout the year
- satisfaction ratings of 92%, with 95% of participants saying they would recommend the program to a family member or friend
- scales of symptom severity consistently showing changes with large, or very large effect sizes over 8 weeks

Who is the course for?

- A screening PHQ9 questionnaire is required, with score 18 or lower

Who can you refer?

Adults 17.5 years or more (for patients 76 and over, a MOCA score is required along with the completed referral form) with:

- Depression - currently or in the past
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Chronic medical conditions associated mental distress or preoccupation
- Adjustment disorder (stress resulting in impairment):
 - Loss of a loved one
 - Relationship stress
 - Parenting stress
 - Job change or distress
 - Financial stress
 - Life transitions

Who does not fit well?

Although some patients with the following may personally benefit from the group, their interactions with the group may make it difficult for others to participate. We depend on you NOT to refer patients with:

- Cluster B personality disorders or strong traits (borderline, narcissistic, histrionic, antisocial)
- High severity of any of the illnesses listed above



- Trauma history and a high potential for becoming destabilized
- Cognitive impairment
- Active psychosis, mania, or impairing substance use

These individuals should be referred to individual or group therapists who can better manage their complexity; either through Island Health MHSU Intake, or private therapy.

What is the course like?

Each series consists of 8 weeks of 90-minute sessions, facilitated by a specially trained family physician, psychiatrist, or both. There is also 10-60 minutes of home practice each week. The group medical visits are like an interactive classroom with up to 16 participants. The program involves skills training, not psychotherapy, so personal sharing is very limited, but each participant shares a brief report on their learning each week. Most people say this learning from other participants is the most powerful part of the course.

Groups sound terrifying, especially for people with anxiety!

For those reluctant to participate in a group, we have had extensive feedback from past participant telling us that although they initially felt anxious joining a group, they found it to be extremely beneficial to be in such a supportive environment and to learn that they were not alone in their struggles.

To learn more about others' experiences, you can read an article on our group interviewing past participants at:

https://issuu.com/divisionsbc/docs/vdfp_scope_magazine_volume_1_issue

What do past participants say about the groups?

"This course has been invaluable. I wish I could have learned these things earlier in life." - Participant

"Through the CBT Skills program I have learned simple approaches I can use to maintain more objectivity in situations where I could become anxious or overly



emotional. I have more ways to remain calm and feel more control over my moods/emotions." - Participant

"I feel more capable of managing and reducing my anxiety by using the concepts (and workbook) taught in the class. The group facilitator was compassionate and being with a group helped me feel less isolated and alone." - Participant

"It brought sunshine to the darkness. An oasis of companionship and sharing. Awakening and aha moments of triggers." - Participant

"I feel empowered that I direct my life, I have the power to control and change my thoughts behaviors and feelings, and I'm worth it to do so." - Participant

"Realization that I am not alone - everyone is going through something." - Participant

What do referring physicians say about the groups?

Family physicians who have referred notice impacts in:

- Improved skills of patients to manage their conditions
- Reduced reliance on medication
- Improved conversation/communication about mental health between physician and patient
- Ability to return to work, or be more effective in their jobs

What is the cost?

The cost of the workbook is \$35, and we ask patients to pay as they register. The sessions themselves are covered by MSP (and thus no direct cost to patients).

When and where are the courses?

The courses are run on various days and evenings in several locations within the region. Once a patient is referred, he or she will get an email outlining all the upcoming choices.

How can I refer?

First, a patient needs to decide if he or she has the time and energy to commit to attending all of the 8 weekly sessions. Each week also involves 10-60 minutes of practice at home

Then, the clinician can have the patient complete a screening questionnaire to rule out exclusion criteria (including ensuring that the PHQ-8 is under 18) to determine if the group is suitable.

The referral form can be found embedded in many EMRs, and will also be emailed to family physicians. Completed referral forms should be **faxed** to the number listed on the referral form.

Once referred and determined to be eligible, we will be in touch with the patient by email about the best series that works with his or her schedule.

****Referrals must have the patient's PHQ-9 score and email address to be processed.** We will return the referral if this information is missing. If the patient does not have an email, please indicate so on the referral.

What do participants need to know before they go?

The program's viability depends on a limited number of no-shows and dropouts.

You can help prevent this by exploring with your patient:

- Are they likely to be able to **attend** 7-8 of the 8 sessions?
- Are other life demands manageable, such that adding weekly 90 minute sessions and 5-30 minutes/day of home practice is **feasible**?
- Are they able to participate in the **group check-ins**? This involves 2-3 minutes of sharing on one's progress in applying CBT Skills, and is a requirement of the group medical visit. The program involves skills training, not psychotherapy, so personal sharing is very limited.

Direct patients to our website (www.divisionsbc.ca/vancouver/CBTskillsgroup), where there is more information and a video, vancouver@divisionsbc.ca or for general information call 604-569-2010.