



What is Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT)?

A brief guide for clients seeking therapy

CAT stands for Cognitive Analytic Therapy. As its name suggests, it brings together understandings from cognitive psychotherapies (such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) and from psychoanalytic approaches into one integrated, user-friendly and effective therapy. It is a collaborative programme of looking at the way you think, feel and act; a programme which is tailored to your individual needs and to your own manageable goals for change.

In order to bring about change, CAT offers a way of:

- thinking about yourself differently.
- finding out exactly what your problems and difficulties are; how they started; how they affect your everyday life – your relationships, your working life and your choices of how to get the best out of your life.
- getting under the limitations of a diagnosis or ‘symptom hook’ (that is, understanding the reasons that underlie a symptom such as bulimia), by naming what previously learned patterns of thinking or behaving contribute to difficulties and finding new ways of addressing them within yourself.
- thinking about the importance of relationships in your psychological life. This includes the relationship you have with yourself, and the relationship you have with the therapist.

How long does therapy last?

A CAT therapy is a time-limited course, usually between 16-24 sessions – this is discussed and agreed with the therapist at the start of therapy. Each weekly session is for 50-60 minutes.

What sort of problems can CAT help with?

You might have problems that have been given a name by a professional such as depression; anxiety; phobia; obsessive compulsive disorder; or borderline personality disorder. You might recognise that you are suffering from unmanageable stress or that you self-harm, have problems with substance misuse or suffer with an eating disorder. You may have a pattern of difficulty in looking after yourself properly or unsuccessful or broken relationships. You might have long-term physical symptoms that have not responded to medical intervention.



Are there any side effects?

Any therapy can stir up painful memories and feelings; hopefully the work will help you come to terms with these and let go of some of the pain, but sometimes you may need to wait until your life is more stable before you have therapy. If you manage to make changes in therapy, other people may have to change the way they react to you and this can be difficult for some people and put a strain on relationships.

Where is CAT available?

CAT is organised in the UK by the Association for Cognitive Analytic Therapy (ACAT). ACAT is a member of the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapy (UKCP) and is a registered charity.

Members of ACAT adhere to a Code of Ethics and there is a formal complaints procedure to protect client.