

## **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**

If you asked the same audience, who amongst them has been able to successfully change what they wanted to change, you are unlikely to get an impressive response.

Change is difficult.

In particular, changing our diets and lifelong eating habits, increasing our level of physical activity, keeping an eye on our salt intake, not eating too much of this, eating less of that – it is all a tall order.

It involves a complete change in mindset. It means you need to learn to change the way you think, in order to change your eating problems.

Cognitive behavioural therapy is a treatment that aims to change the way people feel by altering the way they think and behave. There can be a vicious circle between situations, your thoughts, your feelings and your actions. CBT helps to address this vicious circle by helping you to change how you think (“Cognitive”) and what you do (“Behaviour”). CBT focuses on present and current problems and difficulties, and not so much the past. CBT is a treatment recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) as well as the Royal College of General Practitioners.

There is evidence that CBT can help with a wide range of mental health problems including anxiety, addiction, depression, panic, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder and eating problems, such as overeating as well as under eating.

There is plenty of well-researched evidence to show that the majority of dieters regain weight after a period of time. This may simply be because we do not get taught the tools to maintain weight at the lower levels!

CBT can help to make sense of overwhelming problems by breaking them down into smaller areas, making it clearer and easier to see how they are interconnected and how they may affect you. These areas are:

- A situation – a problem say e.g. a stressful day at work. From this can follow:
- Thoughts – have people ignored me; am I a failure?
- Feelings - of frustration or depression
- Physical feelings – feeling pucky, having the urge to eat
- Actions – reaching for the biscuit tin.

Each of these areas can affect the others. How you think about a problem can affect how you feel physically and emotionally. It can also alter what you do about it.

A leading London psychiatrist said: “CBT works at solving people’s problems in the here and now. Part of it is teaching people to become their own therapist, giving them techniques they can use themselves.

If you are interested in CBT as a therapy for lifelong eating problems discuss it with your GP. Anybody who offers CBT should be fully trained and qualified in the therapy. For more information contact: British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies: [www.babcp.com](http://www.babcp.com) or the Royal College of Psychiatrists at [www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk).