

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR DEPRESSION



INTRODUCTION

Everyone feels sad sometimes. School, friends, and family concerns can cause children and teens to feel down. Disappointments and challenges in life can also have an impact on mood. For some children, sad feelings can become difficult to manage. This can cause problems at home, school, and/or with friends. If this is happening for your child, they may be depressed. Working with your child's primary care team can help you assist your child in managing symptoms of depression.

Behavioral health specialists have worked hard to figure out ways to help manage depression. One of the most effective interventions is a type of therapy called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, or CBT. This type of therapy helps people with depression learn how to change their thoughts and behaviors in order to feel less sad and to cope when sad feelings do occur. The worksheets in this guide will help your child and your family try CBT strategies at home. There are tips for parents and activities for your child, which can be used with children across a wide age range. We find that the skills are most effective when used in order. All of the skills included in our guide are *evidence-based*, meaning they are strategies that have been tested and proven to be effective through rigorous scientific research. Many families have found these strategies to be beneficial; we hope they will work for you, too.

SKILLS & EXERCISES

Each of the skill handouts includes an explanation of the skill, a description of how it will help your family, and instructions for how to use the strategy at home. We've also included a list of common questions and concerns parents usually have about each skill, along with our answers. Work through the guide with your child and try out each new skill for about two weeks to see which fit your family best. See what's working and what's still challenging, then adjust as needed. Once you've found a set of skills that works for you, keep at it until the routine becomes second nature. It may be challenging at first, but the more you practice, the easier it will be to make these exercises and techniques a part of your daily life. Let us know how things are going and be in touch if you and your child need any additional support for depression management. Good luck!



Skill 1

Mood Tracking

These worksheets will help your child pay attention to their feelings, see how different situations impact their mood, and practice sharing their feelings with others.



Skill 2

Making Time for Fun

These worksheets will help you and your child plan time in their day for activities they enjoy and learn additional positive coping skills for improving mood.



Skill 3

Relaxation Skills

These worksheets teach simple skills and exercises that help increase feelings of calm and well-being. Make these skills a consistent part of your family's daily life to reduce stress for everyone.



Skill 4

Thinking Traps

These worksheets teach new ways to look at situations and suggest questions to ask in order to reduce negative thoughts and increase positive thinking.



Skill 5

Problem Solving

These worksheets help your child gain confidence and improve their mood by teaching strategies that help to 1) solve problems independently and 2) seek help when needed.