

# Managing Depression: Psychotherapy

When someone is diagnosed with depression, they may be prescribed a combination of medication and Psychotherapy or Talk Therapy to treat their condition. To get the most from talk therapy, it helps to understand how it works and what to expect.

*“We’re trying to return someone back to an active life.”*

In Talk Therapy sessions, you work with a trained therapist to explore and understand the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that may be fueling your depression.

*“My therapy was talking about my problems and what I was kind of feeling or experiencing every week. And then from there we would try to decide what I could do to help improve my self-confidence and self-worth.”*

Alex Langosch started therapy after being diagnosed with depression in high school. Like most people, Alex finds that therapy together with medication help with his negative feelings. For him, the two work better together than they do alone – but each person’s treatment plan is different.

*“You have the more traditional psychotherapy where people come in and kind of have a conversation about how did their week go and those kinds of things. And when we’re talking behavior therapy, it’s more of a teaching model.”*

The most common type of psychotherapy is CBT, or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. It focuses on how a person’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors interact to bring about symptoms of depression. Other types of psychotherapy include Interpersonal Therapy or IPT, which is centered around the relationships people have with others, and problem-solving therapy, which helps people with depression learn more effective problem-solving skills. In Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, therapists help patients become more aware of unhealthy patterns of thinking and behaving so they can make changes in their life to improve their condition.

*“If you’re sad or depressed, we’re going to kind of take a look at what sorts of thoughts you’re having that have generated sadness and what are you doing behaviorally that kind of reinforces that and kind of keeps this sad mood in place.”*

Jim Hill credits CBT with getting his life back on track after depression led to a suicide attempt in 1993.

*“Was very effective in helping you navigate through the difficulties that come up as a result of the stuff that has to be dredged up.”*

For Jim, that meant confronting childhood abuse at the hands of his father who also suffered from depression but was never treated. Jim’s CBT sessions helped him learn to cope with his troubled past and understand how it led to the symptoms of his own depression – isolation and extreme sadness.

*“To explore the actual nature of these experiences and begin teasing them apart and understanding how they fit into a much larger picture. For me, that was a very beneficial, helpful way of looking at it like I had never thought of before.”*

*“The ultimate goal of CBT is really no different than any other form of therapy or treatment and that is a significant reduction of symptoms. These things are going to impair someone in their social life, their*

# Managing Depression: Psychotherapy

*family relationships, at work or at school, and we're trying again to bring them back to functioning at a much higher level."*

You also learn helpful coping skills in cognitive behavioral therapy, such as relaxation exercises and stress management techniques. Alex found one coping skill to be very effective.

*"Making a list of things that I know are good about myself and that I know people like about me. And it just kind of reaffirms that there are things about me that you know are positive and that other people like about me as well."*

Attending therapy with loved ones can also help heal relationships and provide support. Sometimes it's those closest to you who notice changes in you first.

*"Speak up. If you see it, ask about it. Are you feeling ok? You seem a bit sad. Is there something going on?"*

Finding the right therapy is just like finding the right medication – it might take a bit of trial and error.

*"It's definitely a process. And just because I didn't have success with one therapist, I had to tell myself not to get discouraged. Once I found the one that worked with me, I stuck with him."*

*"You can regain your life. No matter how dark and distorted it becomes, you can regain your life. Treatment is worth it."*

If you think you need help with depression, reach out to a medical professional for assistance with that first step to treatment.