

## Resources

'Change for the better' by  
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Therapy (ACAT):  
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# Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT)

**This is one of a series of information  
leaflets on psychological therapies for  
service users. The therapy is described,  
what it involves, and the kinds of problem  
it may be helpful for.**

## **What is Cognitive Analytic Therapy? (CAT)**

CAT is a form of brief one to one psychotherapy usually occurring over 8 - 24 sessions.

Therapy involves trying to understand how we currently cope with emotional distress and difficulties in relations with others. The meetings will involve the therapist writing a letter to the service user and using diagrams to describe unhelpful patterns of behaviour and to find alternative ways of responding to these difficult situations.

### **What to expect**

CAT is an active therapy. You will normally be expected to keep a diary and to do some homework between sessions. There will be some filling in of questionnaires at the beginning of therapy.

- The therapist will help you to recognize patterns of behaviour and to understand where these have come from. They will do this by paying attention to how you are in the sessions, past events in your life and how you reacted to them, and the way that you are in your current everyday life
- The therapist will write a letter to you to try to sum up the main patterns and the targets of therapy
- The therapist will also use diagrams to describe the main patterns of behaviour, thinking and feelings that the service user wishes to change
- You and the therapist will jointly agree upon the main targets for the therapy
- You and the therapist will look for alternative patterns of coping. Over time you will attempt to change the way you react, replacing the old patterns

- At the end of therapy, the therapist will write a letter to you to offer their thoughts about the therapy and you will be encouraged to give your own feedback to the therapist
- There will be a follow up session after the end of the main therapy to assess the effects of the therapy.

### **Who may benefit from CAT?**

- CAT is widely applicable across a range of difficulties such as depression, anxiety and relationship problems. In particular it has been used to work with hard to help problems such as eating disorders and personality disorders. NICE recommends consideration of CAT in Anorexia Nervosa
- It is useful for clients who have become stuck in unhelpful patterns of behaviour or relationships, and where other therapies have come up against a block
- You need to be motivated to engage in therapy and prepared to some extent to explore your childhood experience.