

Belfast Cbt Services

Cbt for Generalized Anxiety/Worry

G.a.d is characterized by excessive and prolonged periods of worry. It has been described as a disorder of worrying. Individuals with G.A.D display chronic and repeated worrying which can last from minutes to hours. One of my clients described it aptly when she said that she would worry about two flies walking up a wall. These clients perceive worry as overwhelming and uncontrollable. The second characteristic of G.A.D is clients begin to worry about worrying. In this scenario clients find that worry becomes so uncontrollable that they wrongly begin to believe that they are going to go crazy, go mad, or that they are losing their mind. The origins of worry can usually be traced back to one of the clients Parents who was a "worrier" and their worrying developed in the child through modelling.

Clients often experience symptoms such as restlessness, being on edge, easily fatigued, difficulty with concentration, irritability, muscular tension, and sleep disturbance.

Worrying is the main feature of generalized anxiety disorder. In particular worrying that there loved ones will come to harm in some way, worrying about their health and perceived dangers, worrying about financial issues. Thinking usually becomes catastrophic and individuals constantly turn "mole hills into mountains". For example, a wife worrying because her husband is ten minutes late home from work, may start thinking... "what if he's had a car crash, "what if he's being mugged", "what if he's lying in a hedge and there is no one around" she rings his mobile and there is no answer. This reinforces her thoughts and they become even more catastrophic worrying herself sick. The husband walks in twenty minutes later having given a colleague a lift in his car!!

Altered Behaviours

In G.A.D the clients behaviour changes and tends to reinforce their worrying and keeps it going. They may avoid certain situations for fear of exaggerated dangers, they may overprotect their children and prevent them going to certain places in order to prevent perceived dangers and to help control their worrying. They may constantly ring children and spouses in order to reassure themselves that everything is all right.

Altered Emotions

Unfortunately, in generalized anxiety disorder when the symptoms last for much of an individual's day people can feel desperate. Sometimes their mood can drop. This can lead to recurrent depression where it never seems to go away completely. Constant incessant worry grinds the individual down and at times depression is never to far away.

TREATMENT

Cbt is likely to include the following:

1. Teaching about the nature of anxiety, including the physical symptoms. Any misinterpretations that such symptoms such as palpitations are harmful or dangerous can be corrected.
2. Exploring the extreme and unhelpful thoughts that happen particularly when the sufferer is very anxious. Learning techniques to balance some of these biased thoughts.
3. The features of worry can be explored and techniques tried to lessen the impact of worrying.

4. Where many situations are being avoided they will be looked at. The therapy will attempt to reintroduce these into the life of the sufferer. This is done gradually in small steps and only when the client feels ready to try.

5. Sometimes the therapy may include training in relaxation techniques to reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety.

6. Where depression has become a feature of the person's problem this can also be treated using CBT.

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