

September 2022 VFW Post 683 Surgeon's corner

I have written about many of the common mental health problems facing veterans and started talking about treatment methods. The two methods discussed so far was the boxed breathing and the grounding exercise. This post will describe one of the treatment methods a therapist use to help veterans with their mental health problems. The Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, CBT, is a commonly used therapeutic method. CBT was developed by Aaron Beck and combined methods from behavioral therapy and cognitive therapy. Scientific research has found CBT to be an effective treatment method, and the VA provides mental health professionals and social workers training in the method. Here is a quote from VA clinicians helping homeless veterans:

“Clinicians report that teaching Veterans specific skills within the context of CBT helps their Veterans take a more active role in their recovery, overcome barriers to maintaining housing and, ultimately, reach their goals.” CBT is also used to help veterans with alcohol and drug problems, chronic pain, insomnia, anxiety, depression, acute stress disorder, PTSD, and many other mental health problems.

CBT helps the veteran reframe their ways of thinking when it is faulty or unhelpful. Unhelpful patterns of behavior leads to psychological suffering. CBT helps the client find better coping mechanisms, thereby relieving the veteran from symptoms leading to improved lives (APA, 2017).

CBT teaches the veteran how to recognize unhelpful thinking and behavior and to reconsider their thoughts and behavior based on reality, coping skills, and improved confidence. CBT also teaches veterans how to face fear and anxiety instead of avoidance, how to use role plays to help with difficult interpersonal interactions, and how to calm the mind. APA (2017) states: “CBT places an emphasis on helping individuals learn to be their own therapists”. In other words, helping the veteran to learn how to help themselves.

Resources:

If you are in distress, call or text 988

<http://veteranscrisisline.net>

https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/index.asp?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=search-va&utm_content=mental-health&utm_term=va%20mental%20health%20services&gclid=EA1aIQobChMIq6OkxcHx-QIVFA_nCh2KVg01EAAYAyAAEgIgjFD_BwE

References:

<https://www.va.gov/homeless/nchav/education/cbt.asp>

https://www.va.gov/PAINMANAGEMENT/CBT_CP/Veterans.asp

<https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/patients-and-families/cognitive-behavioral>

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