



POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER Factsheet

August 2021

What are cognitive therapies?

Cognitive therapies are based on the theory that an individual's perception of a situation influences his or her emotional response to it. They aim to help people identify distorted thinking and to modify existing beliefs. Cognitive processing therapy is a type of cognitive therapy that involves psychoeducation, written accounts about the traumatic event, and cognitive restructuring to address beliefs about the event's meaning and its implications. Cognitive restructuring aims to facilitate relearning thoughts and beliefs generated from a traumatic event, to increase awareness of dysfunctional trauma-related thoughts, and to correct or replace those thoughts with more adaptive and rational cognitions.

What is the evidence for cognitive therapies for PTSD?

Moderate to low quality evidence found large improvements in PTSD and depression symptoms with cognitive therapy compared to no treatment or usual care, but there were no differences in symptoms when comparing cognitive therapy with exposure therapy.

Moderate quality evidence also found large improvements in PTSD and depression symptoms with cognitive processing therapy compared to no treatment or usual care, with these improvements being maintained for up to 12 months. Females showed greater improvements than males following cognitive processing therapy. When compared to active control conditions (mainly exposure therapies), the effect was small immediately post-treatment, but was not maintained at follow-up. Moderate to high quality evidence found a large improvement in negative, trauma-related cognitions immediately following cognitive processing therapy.

For more information see the technical table

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

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NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about PTSD and its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.