MORNEAU SHEPELL

What you need to know about iCBT

We all have that little voice in our head that constantly comments, approves, criticizes and forms conclusions. This is what's called self-talk or automatic thinking and it affects our decisions, actions, attitudes and most importantly, how we think and feel about ourselves. When that inner voice is optimistic, positive and kind, we have a good self-image and high self-esteem. As a result, we are likely optimistic, better able to solve problems, bounce back from adversity, and have healthy relationships with others. However, when that voice is pessimistic, negative, critical or even abusive, the opposite occurs. As a consequence, we may talk ourselves out of opportunities, set ourselves up for failure and expect little from ourselves and life, making us anxious and sad.

Changing our negative self-talk can help us better manage stressful situations, improve our confidence and self-esteem and enhance the quality of our lives. One way to do this is with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

Cognitive behavioral therapy
For several decades, CBT has been an effective tool in treating many mental health disorders, especially depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Today, it is the most common type of psychotherapy. It involves a mental health professional helping an individual become aware of inaccurate or negative thinking, seeing challenging situations more clearly, and developing more effective coping skills.

Negative space
We all experience negative thinking at times. These include:
- Emotional reasoning – "I feel like a failure so I must be a failure."
- Jumping to conclusions – "Claire hardly speaks to me. She obviously doesn't like me."
- All-or-nothing thinking – "If I can't do something perfectly then I'm not doing it."

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- Mental filtering – "Yes, I scored five goals but I totally screwed up three shots!"
- Over generalizing – "Nothing ever goes right for me!"
- Labeling – "I'm such a loser."

CBT tries to replace these with more realistic and healthy thinking and has been shown to not only retrain the brain but rewire it.

A new era
Technology has ushered in a whole new era of mental health care – and CBT. Many people remain reluctant to try traditional, face-to-face psychotherapy because of time constraints, illness, embarrassment, and fear of stigma. For those living in more rural or remote locations, having access to trained mental health professionals is difficult if not impossible. These barriers have been removed thanks to Internet-Delivered Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (iCBT).

iCBT
iCBT involves a trained mental health professional and a client communicating online and/or by phone. This can include email, text and in-app messaging, video, and more. In addition to counseling, people complete exercises and tasks, practice new skills, interact with resources including articles, videos, and audio (music or podcasts) from any location at any time. Unlike traditional psychotherapy, iCBT is more goal-oriented and short-term, making it highly effective for mild to moderate depression and anxiety or dealing with particular stressful life events.

iCBT has rapidly become the preferred option for people of all ages and backgrounds – but especially with Millennials. For a generation that has grown up with digital technology – social media, smartphones, video games, and instant access to information – iCBT fits their needs. It is flexible, customizable, portable and available 24/7.

This new way of delivering mental health care is also becoming increasingly popular with organizational leaders and employees. For managers, iCBT helps employees stay healthy, engaged, and at work. For employees, iCBT reduces stigma, fear and embarrassment and provides immediate, and private, access to care – no waiting for referrals or appointments and no taking time off work. Understanding that support is literally at their fingertips through a smartphone app helps people feel in control of their own mental health care.

The future of mental health care
iCBT has become so widely accepted that mental health organizations and Employee Assistance Programs are developing new technologies, interactive apps, and other digital tools to further enhance online mental health care, support, and therapy. Recently, online group therapy and specialized programs for children and youth have become part of many iCBT offerings.

Thanks to technology, people around the world can now access therapy, resources, and information whenever and wherever they like at little to no cost. iCBT is not only effective – it's empowering people to take charge of their own well-being. If you'd like more information on iCBT or would like to talk to a therapist online, contact your Employee Assistance Program.

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Workplace harassment: A manager's guide

Most managers know that abusive or inappropriate behavior can quickly turn even the most civil and harmonious workplace into a toxic, unhealthy environment that damages morale, productivity and in some cases, a company's reputation. Such behavior needs to be quickly and effectively addressed, however, because victimized employees often feel too intimidated or embarrassed to report incidents, it can be a tough issue for managers to identify and deal with.

What is harassment?

Harassment is a form of discrimination and bullying. It is defined as repeated and persistent behaviors (although if can also be one single incident if it is severe and has a lasting effect on someone), intended to torment, undermine, pressure, intimidate, frustrate or provoke a reaction from an individual. It includes:

- Spreading malicious rumors
- Insulting someone by word or behavior
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail
- Exclusion or victimization
- Overbearing or unfair supervision or other misuse of power or position
- Unwelcomed sexual advances: touching, standing too close, comments or "jokes", asking for sexual favors, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected
- Unwelcomed physical contact such as touching, patting, pushing, pinching or punching
- Displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials in print or electronic form

Dealing with a complaint

Employees don't always report abusive behavior because they fear the harassment will escalate, they won't be believed, nothing will be done or that they'll be viewed as complainers. When they do decide to address the situation, they may prefer to have an informal discussion with their manager first. It can be a difficult conversation, but there are several steps you, as a manager, can take to quickly resolve a potentially serious situation:

1. Let the employee know that he or she did the right thing in bringing the issue to your attention. Stress that you need to know about further harassment immediately and that you will do everything you can to ensure everyone's well-being. Ask the employee to be patient while you further investigate. Understand that the employee is likely to feel emotional: humiliated, embarrassed, scared, angry and/or resentful. Stay calm and continue to be reassuring, stating that he or she did the right thing in bringing the situation to your attention.

2. Ask the employee to tell you the whole story. Listen and write down dates, times, situations, witnesses, and anything else that seems relevant. Your notes may be needed if the situation persists and formal disciplinary measures are necessary. They may also provide a record of the actions *you* took to resolve the issue. If the situation involves threats, stalking or physical violence (including domestic disputes because they can spill over into the workplace), seek help immediately from HR, security, and/or the police.

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3. Inform your HR representative. Managers also need support. Your HR rep will provide further information on your company's harassment policies and how you can best investigate the matter. Be sure to keep HR informed during the process. If the situation does not improve, HR will need to begin formal disciplinary actions.

4. Talk to any witnesses. Ask open-ended questions so you get objective views and uncover any underlying issues that need resolving – lack of communication or sensitivity, different expectations, personal issues, perceptions of unfairness or unclear roles and responsibilities. Refer to your organization's harassment and bullying policy, HR advisors, union representatives, and your Employee Assistance Program for guidance.

5. Interview the accused harasser. You may find that the individual is unaware his or her behavior is inappropriate or unprofessional and in such cases, an informal discussion may resolve the situation. Clearly state the behaviors and actions you and the company expect from staff, what is considered harassment as well as the business and legal consequences.

   Expect a range of emotional responses from the accused. He or she may be shocked, angry, defensive or upset. Stay calm and non-judgmental. Assure the individual you're here to resolve the situation. Focus on performance and your organization's policies on business conduct.
6. Follow up regularly to ensure that no further incidents have occurred and that any underlying issues are being addressed. If the harassment continues, then a formal complaint needs to be made and the issue escalated according to your company's policy.

Creating a harassment-free zone
Managers can support their teams through their own actions and behaviors. For example:

- Be a role model. Demonstrate what your company expects from all employees.
- Take all complaints seriously and don't tolerate any inappropriate behavior.
- Publicize your organization's code of behavior and explain the consequences of harassment in workplace.
- Encourage all staff to attend diversity training (some organizations make this mandatory) – attend with them.
- Make people aware of the information, resources and support available through their Employee Assistance Program.
- Constantly monitor the atmosphere in your workplace. Watch for bickering, blaming, putdowns or derogatory jokes, cliques, teasing or sudden drops in productivity. Another sign of a potential problem is when employees come to you for information or clarification rather than talking to their colleagues.

Whenever a diverse group of people with different skill sets and varying levels of maturity, experience and communication styles work together, conflicts are inevitable. However, in a respectful work environment where professionalism is not only expected but demanded, serious disputes and inappropriate behaviors will be few and far between.

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