



## Recovery with CBT

A Brief Personal Perspective



*This is one woman's experience of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with a clinical psychologist in New Zealand. She sent in this story to share hope with people in our community who could be struggling to find what works for them.*

**First a brief history:** At 22 years old I was diagnosed with manic-depression or bipolar disorder, though I now believe I had an episode at 18 that was not diagnosed.

I have had many hospital admissions over the past 40 years mainly for depression and for my own safety: I was 9 years old the first time I seriously considered killing myself. Since then I have made two real attempts at suicide, one of them nearly proving fatal.

I've been treated with ECT (electro-convulsive "shock" therapy) and many drugs and have been under a psychiatrist most of my adult life.

I have been married for 43 years, have two adult children, neither of whom has shown any sign of mental disorder, and five grandchildren who I adore.

I am 62 years of age.

### What was CBT Like for Me?

About seven months ago I began CBT (Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy) with a clinical psychologist with whom I have a good rapport. I have learnt many techniques such as "challenging should and must statements", realising that as an adult I have set these strict standards for myself, keeping thought record sheets and being more self compassionate. A particularly good way I've found is the "What would you say to a good friend in this position?"

I've learnt about unhelpful thinking habits and counterproductive mindsets such as catastrophising (believing the worst thing will happen) and black-and-white thinking. I've learnt my own strengths and weaknesses. I've learnt good sleep hygiene. I have received many pages of printed material from my psychologist so I can refer to them at any time.

I have had approximately fifteen one hour sessions and feel it has done me enormous good. When I do some homework, theory exercises it reinforces the positive side of my life and positive thinking patterns. There was quite a bit of homework especially while I was learning these new ways of thinking.

I have learnt that I am not a bad person and I don't need to treat myself harshly. I have a disorder that disrupts my life briefly and occasionally and that's all.

I have found CBT very, very helpful. I was on the waiting list for about nine months and it was certainly worth waiting for. I do not think I would have done any better by going privately and could not have afforded to. The Hutt District Health Board provided a very good service.