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Step by step-summary of CBT-treatment

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The following are some steps that are used in cognitive behaviour therapy, and lead to improved control over the anxiety and the worry:

- Think about, and write down, which areas and situations the worry and the anxiety are mostly concerned with. Then write down what your goals are; what you want to achieve and where you want to get. Try to be specific and concrete, rather than general and abstract.
- Do different kinds of relaxation exercises and practice relaxation techniques. Learn to find appropriate meditative activities, for example, silent meditation or long walks.
- Investigate what triggers your anxiety. Be aware of, and take notes on your so called triggers (thoughts, events and situations), and make an estimation how severe the anxiety is in different situations (on a scale from 0 to 100).
- Learn to notice and challenge classical cognitive traps. One example of a cognitive trap is overgeneralization. A woman who overgeneralizes comes to the conclusion, after being turned down on the dance floor once, that she will never find a man. Another example is catastrophic thinking, which is characterized by always expecting the worst to happen. Yet another example is selective perception, which means that you only notice things around you that confirm your pet worry.
- Stop the behaviour that the anxiety causes. Often anxiety is reduced by different types of avoidant behaviour. That is why you can challenge the anxiety by attacking the connection between avoidance and anxiety. Examples of this can be to leave the house, to ask someone out, or to apply for an interesting job, even though the anxiety tells you not to.
- Make plans for specific moments during the day, when you occupy yourself with the anxiety and the worry completely. About half an hour a day, not just before going to sleep, may be enough. During that time you should not be disturbed and you should try to fully release your anxiety and worry. By doing so, you are learning what your specific worries look like, but the purpose is also to make them less dramatic by meeting them face to face. Furthermore, you should also establish some free-zones; times and situations that you keep entirely free from anxiety and worry.
- Practice realistic time planning, and practice handling and solving problems, as well as ranking problems by their priority.
- Learn to release and discover your emotions. People who suffer from GAD are often more occupied with their thoughts and ponderings than their emotions. They often have an unrealistic fear of feelings and do everything to keep them at a distance. One way to work with emotions is to sense how different emotions feel in the body, when and why they appear, and to also practice how to attach words to them.

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