Cognitive Analytic Therapy Script

**What is it?**

Cognitive Analytic Therapy combines ideas from analytic psychology and cognitive psychology. It looks at past experiences and tries to understand why a person feels, thinks and behaves the way they do.

Therapists aid the person in problem solving and develop new ways of coping. The therapy programmes are tailored to the individual’s needs, taking in account their current situation and problems they’re dealing with.

Duration

Cognitive Analytic Therapy is time- limited and can last between 4 and 24 weeks but on average consists of 16 sessions, once a week.

**Foundations of CAT**

The foundation of cognitive analytic therapy rely on an empathetic relationship between the client and the therapist. The purpose of therapy is to help make sense of the client’s situation and uncover ways of making changes for the better.

Forming a trusting relationship between client and therapist is important at the start of therapy to allow the client to feel safe in opening up about their feelings and experiences. The analytic side of therapy involves the exploration of previous events and experiences that could link to current issues being faced.

The aim of the therapist is to help the client understand why events from the past could be effecting the client now and why things may have gone wrong in the past. After the therapist helps the client understand the implications of such experiences they will look at the ways the client is currently coping with their problems. They will then use techniques from cognitive therapy to help the client develop new tools to help cope more effectively, in a more healthy and beneficial way to their well-being.

**How does CAT work?**

Cognitive Analytil Therapy is considered a very active therapy type, and one in which the client as an individual ultimately has control. Inviting the client to observe their life from an objective standpoint and take part in what needs change, the therapy allows the client to have a say throughout every step of the process.

The therapy works by investigating any learned behaviours or beliefs from their past and whether or not they are contributing to their current difficulties. Cognitive analytic therapy aims to show the client how they can change such beliefs and help them focus on ways of making better choices in the future.

**What problems can CAT help with?**

Some CAT therapists work with people with eating disorders, those with addiction problems like drugs and alcohol, obsessional problems, anxiety, depression, phobias, psychosis, bipolar, and a number of therapists work with adolescents, older people and people with learning difficulties and in forensic settings.

CAT is mostly offered to individuals, but it can also be used effectively with couples, in groups and to help teams understand the system in which they work.

**Clarke, Thomas & James (2013)**

Research by Clark et al investigated the two groups, contrasting a group treated by a specialised intervention (which consisted of 24 sessions of Cognitive Analytic Therapy), and a group treated with a non- structured, non- specialised intervention (in this case, care from a community mental health team). The groups were observed for over 10 months and consisted of individuals with personality disorders.

CAT was found to be effective with participants with a range of personality disorders not just borderline personality disorder. Fifty- three percent of the participants in the non- specialised intervention group met symptom criteria for more personality disorders by the end of the study but no participants in the specialised group deteriorated in any way.

**Techniques used in CAT**

The reformulation letter aims to tell the patients story from the therapists point of view whilst attempting to identify recurrent patterns of difficulties. It also identifies how these may have been acquired as ways of coping and managing. Reading this letter, which the patient is encouraged to modify or correct, is usually a very powerful moment in therapy.

The therapist will work with the client to map out their problem patterns on paper. This can help the client develop their capacity to think about themselves and understand why they may repeat patterns which causes them distress and finds hard to stop.

The therapist will work with the client on looking at how they revise their patterns but the therapist will understand the difficulties involved in change. One of the strengths of CAT is that the letters and maps will help the client to continue working after the regular therapy sessions have finished.

**Distinguishing between CAT and CBT**

Both Cognitive Analytic Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy are both brief therapies with a limit on the number of sessions, both offer a focus on a limited range of goals and use similar ways of helping you keep track of your difficulties i.e. keeping a diary of problems to tackle therefore both therapies are often hard to tell apart in terms of their techniques.

The differences include; for CBT, people may have been referred to such therapy when diagnosed with anxiety, depression, OCD etc. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy also has specific, research proven ways of working with such clients using different techniques appropriate for their presentation.

Whereas, Cognitive Analytic Therapy works more interpersonally on relevant, jointly identified issues by creating a working relationship between client and clinician to; describe the issues affecting the client, aim to understand their origins in previous relationships and experiences, use the client- therapist relationship to reflect on progress – CAT doesn’t just focus on diagnosable disorders, it can work for people with elements of anxiety and depression or people who have a history of abuse, trauma or neglect.

**Summarising the Usefulness of CAT**

Video looks into what facilitates change and the effectiveness of CAT

Video: 41:20- 45:38