

Information om psykoterapi

For adults

Information about **PSYCHOTHERAPY**



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This brochure is about psychotherapy. It is intended for people like yourself, who are having psychiatric treatment in Region Midtjylland, and for your relatives.

The brochure describes what psychotherapy is and how different mental health disorders can be treated with psychotherapy.

We hope this brochure will help you to learn more about psychotherapy.

Kind regards

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WHAT IS PSYCHOTHERAPY?

Psychotherapy – also called talking therapy – is used to treat a wide range of mental health disorders.

In some cases, psychotherapy may be the only type of treatment a person needs. In other cases, psychotherapy may be included as part of the treatment on an equal footing with medication.

Two main directions

There are many different types of psychotherapy. For treating adults, there are two main directions: cognitive behavioural therapy and psychoanalytic psychotherapy (from here on: cognitive therapy and psychoanalytic therapy).

DID YOU KNOW...?

Psychotherapy should almost always be included in the treatment of a mental health disorder.

Both types of therapy may be offered as individual therapy or group therapy.

A course of cognitive therapy usually takes less time than a course of psychoanalytic therapy. People usually have 10–20 sessions of cognitive therapy, whereas a course of psychoanalytic therapy may last anything from a few months to several years.

WHAT IS COGNITIVE THERAPY?

In cognitive therapy, you work with your therapist to understand and change inappropriate thoughts and actions that may contribute to developing, aggravating or maintaining your illness. Cognitive therapy is a joint, investigative project between you and your therapist.

Cognitive therapy is based on your current problems. Your therapist may well

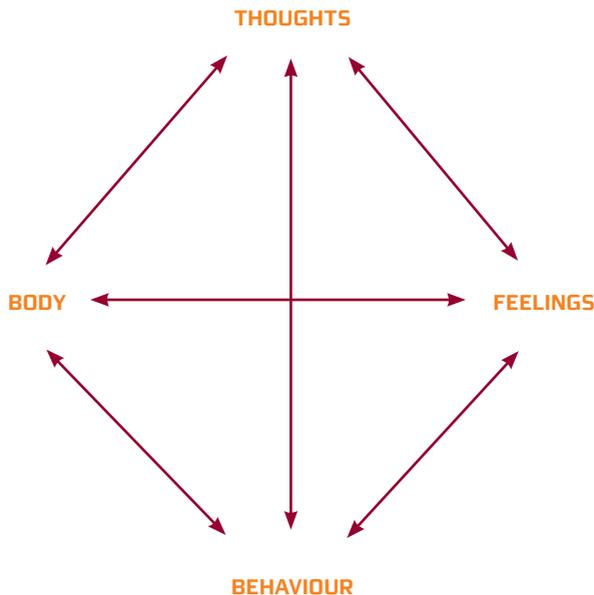
probe events from earlier in your life that may be significant in relation to how you feel today. The amount of discussion of past experiences varies. For some people, this is not a major part of the treatment.

WHO CAN GET COGNITIVE THERAPY?

You will usually be offered cognitive therapy if you have anxiety or OCD. However, cognitive therapy may also be used to treat other mental health disorders,

such as depression, bipolar disorder, personality disorders, psychotic illnesses or substance abuse.

THE COGNITIVE DIAMOND



The cognitive diamond is a model used in cognitive therapy. The model shows how thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and behaviour affect each other in all situations.

This is usually appropriate, but it may also lead to problems – e.g. in the example below:

Example:

A man with panic attacks is worried about having a heart attack. The anxiety mainly occurs in situations he cannot walk away from. One morning, on the bus, he thinks: “What if I have a heart attack?” This **thought** gives him a **feeling** of anxiety, together with **physical symptoms** such as perspiring, palpitations and chest pressure. The man perceives this as a sign of a heart attack, which makes the anxiety and the physical symptoms worse, and this in turn reinforces his thoughts that this could be a heart attack. In the end, the man rushes off the bus several stops before he planned to (**behaviour**). After that, he does not dare travel by bus. There are many other things he does not dare to do, because they produce the same symptoms.

Working with the cognitive diamond

Taking the cognitive diamond as a starting point, you and your therapist work on analysing current issues in your life.

The purpose of the analysis is to better equip you to identify inappropriate (negative) thoughts and actions in particular situations.

Based on this, you can then work towards making your thinking more realistic and

helpful (alternative thoughts), and your actions more appropriate.

When your thoughts and actions become more appropriate, your mental and physical discomfort (symptoms) will be reduced. This happens automatically, because thoughts, actions, feelings and physical sensations are always closely intertwined – as shown in the cognitive diamond model.

WHAT HAPPENS IN COGNITIVE THERAPY?

Cognitive therapy may be individual or in a group. When you begin therapy, you will be assigned a designated therapist who will continue working with you throughout the entire process. He or she will usually use some of the methods described below.

Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation is usually the first part of your treatment. In psychoeducation, you learn about your disorder. You find out more about the causes of the disorder, your symptoms, the progression of the disorder and your treatment options.

Listing issues and objectives

After psychoeducation, you will usually work with your therapist to produce a list of problems and goals. The list must include your most troublesome problems and symptoms. Based on the list, you will jointly set some specific therapeutic goals. These goals must be realistic in

DID YOU KNOW...?

Many people experience a kind of relief when they find out that their symptoms are due to a well-described disorder, and that there are other people who have the same disorder. This often reduces the feeling of shame that a lot of people have.

relation to the time you both have available, and they must lead to a significant reduction in your issues.

The main purpose of the list of problems and goals is to give you and your therapist a common understanding of what you are working towards. Having specific goals also makes it easier to see the improvements that are happening along the way.

Example:

A man who avoids travelling by bus because of panic attacks could have a goal of starting to travel by bus in the mornings again.

Treatment diary

At the start of therapy, you and your therapist will work towards gaining an overview of the scope of the issues you both want to work with.

For example, you can keep a diary of the situations in which your problems arise, and how you react in those situations. This makes a good starting point for planning the next sessions.

Analysis and restructuring

Analysis and restructuring is one of the basic methods of cognitive therapy. The purpose is to teach you, in particular situations, how to identify and distinguish between your thoughts, behaviour, physical sensations and feelings.

It often emerges that your thoughts are excessively negative and pessimistic.

Example:

A young woman with depression is convinced that her friends no longer like her. When she is with them, she focuses only on signs that they are fed up with her. This focus causes her to ignore her friends' support and care towards her. She becomes even sadder and starts to isolate herself.

Restructuring her thoughts and starting to focus on the fact that her friends want to help her will enable the woman to recognise signs of this. She will be better able to receive help from her friends and avoid isolating herself. Changing her thoughts in this way may help the woman to become less sad.

CHARTS

In therapy, you and your therapist will usually work with charts, lists or tables. These provide a useful overview of the issues you are both working on, and the methods being used. When the therapy has concluded, you can use the written material to continue working with these methods yourself.

Therefore, you can work on “restructuring” your negative thoughts into more realistic and helpful (alternative) thoughts.

If you change your thinking – as shown in the cognitive diamond – you will also be able to change your behaviour. In this way, you will also have fewer unpleasant feelings and physical sensations (symptoms).

Many of our thought and behavioural patterns have been established since childhood and are therefore deeply embedded. You cannot change these types of patterns overnight. Often, people have to work intensively on them for an extended period.

Homework

When you have cognitive behavioural therapy, you will find you are given homework to do between therapy sessions. The homework usually arises from things you have been working on in your therapy. The homework gives you new knowledge that you can use in your next therapy session.

Example:

A man with panic attacks who avoids travelling by bus could be set homework to try to travel by bus for one stop before the next therapy session.

Exposure Response Prevention Therapy

Exposure Response Prevention Therapy (ERP Therapy) is used particularly with anxiety disorders and OCD. When you are exposed to non-dangerous situations that produce anxiety, the body automatically responds in such a way that the anxiety diminishes if you remain in the situation. At the same time, thoughts of this being a dangerous situation will be dispelled.

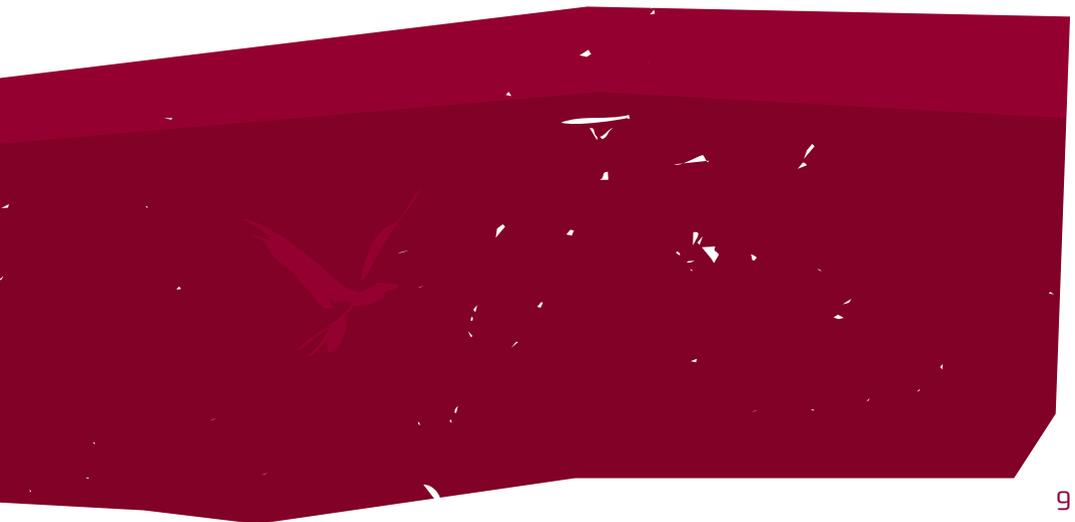
Example:

A woman with OCD is afraid of bacterial infection. As soon as she returns home after being out, she changes all her clothes and takes a long shower. Her homework is to leave her home at least once a day (**exposure**). When she gets home, she must slowly learn not to change her clothes and take a shower (**response prevention**). This can be done gradually so that, little by little, she spends less time in the shower and does not change her clothes. Eventually, she will find her anxiety and discomfort from not showering will lessen. This will also free her up to spend more time away from home.

What happens next

At the end of therapy, you and your therapist will work on preventing your symptoms from returning. Together, you will summarise what you have worked on and what changes and goals you have achieved.

Based on this, the two of you can create a plan for what you yourself can work on alone, and what you can do to avoid your symptoms coming back.



WHAT IS PSYCHOANALYTIC THERAPY?

Psychoanalytic therapy is talking therapy in which a free-flowing, open dialogue between you and your therapist forms the basis of learning more about you.

The purpose of this therapy is to gain a deeper insight into the patterns, thoughts, feelings and actions underlying the difficulties (symptoms) you have.

Through this, you will gradually gain a better understanding of the causes of your feelings and actions.

Once you understand why you think and act as you do, you will be better able to work on changing the thoughts, feelings and actions that are inappropriate for you.

WHO CAN GET PSYCHOANALYTIC THERAPY?

You may be offered psychoanalytic therapy if you have a personality disorder, e.g. a personality disorder characterised by anxiety or emotional instability (borderline).

Psychoanalytic therapy may also be used to treat anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder and various types of psychosis.

Purpose of psychotherapy

There are many different reasons to have psychotherapy, and the purpose of the therapy may also change during the process.

One goal could be to reduce or eliminate symptoms such as depression or anxiety. Another could be to better understand yourself and your conflicts, or to learn to get on better with other people.

Other goals could be to do better at accommodating and dealing with feelings, or having more joy and fewer conflicts in your life.

Not all goals will be achieved through therapy. For example, no one lives entirely free of feelings of sorrow, or entirely without complicated relationships with other people. On the other hand, therapy may provide greater insight into yourself and in that way give you more courage to deal with life's challenges.

DID YOU KNOW...?

A psychologist or a doctor specialising in psychiatry will assess what treatment suits you.

INDIVIDUAL THERAPY OR GROUP THERAPY?

Psychoanalytic therapy is offered both as individual therapy and as group therapy. The treatment may last anything from a few months to several years.

Individual therapy

When you have individual therapy, you and your therapist will explore your difficulties in depth. You will discuss previous experiences and look at their significance in terms of your present difficulties.

In individual therapy, you will usually work with problems related to your relationships with two or three other people. For example, there may be issues with attachment or separation, or loss and crises in different phases of life.

Group therapy

When you attend group therapy, there is less of a focus on what happened in your past. Instead, the focus is on what is happening here and now in the group, and on what the feelings and thoughts that come up along the way may reveal about an individual participant in the group.

Group therapy is suitable if you need to work on your relationships with other people.

The purpose of both group therapy and individual therapy is to give you an opportunity to learn more about yourself and your relationships with others.

WHAT HAPPENS IN PSYCHOANALYTIC THERAPY?

Before starting treatment

Before starting a course of psychotherapy, you will have a chat with your therapist about whether psychotherapy is right for you. In order to benefit from psychoanalytic therapy, it is important that you are motivated to work on yourself.

If you both decide that you should start a course of psychotherapy, you will generally also agree on the number of sessions you will need.

The first therapy session

It is natural to be a little nervous before your first therapy session, but try to arrive with positive expectations.

In therapy, your therapist will greet you and initiate the conversation about you and the challenges you face.

During the first few appointments, you will agree on the purpose and progression of the therapy. This is to ensure that you both agree on what you are working towards.

What happens next

Throughout therapy, you participate directly in probing your issues and exploring how you can work to resolve them. The role of the therapist is to support you throughout this process.

At the start of therapy, you will usually feel relief at being listened to and understood. However, as the process continues, it might become difficult or even terrifying for you to have to work on yourself so intensively.

Together with your therapist, you might recognise patterns in yourself that can take time to accept, understand and deal with. It is hard work. But if you overcome the difficulties, it can be a huge release for you.

You may find that energy and effort previously tied up with the problems in your life can now finally be released.



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