

# COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR PSYCHOSIS

# WHAT IS PSYCHOSIS?



CBT is an evidenced-based, recovery-oriented therapy model that is used to treat Veterans with a variety of health conditions (e.g. depression, anxiety, insomnia, pain, and others). A core CBT premise is that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are related to each other (the cognitive-behavioral link).

Within a CBT framework, a situation or event in and of itself does not necessarily determine how people feel or behave, but rather, it is influenced by their interpretation. Thus, the way in which a Veteran thinks (about a situation or event) influences how s/he feels (emotions) and behaves (actions).



CBT for Psychosis applies the principles and techniques of CBT (e.g. collaborative relationship, goal oriented, educative; thought records, Socratic questioning, behavioral experiments, etc.) to treat Veterans with psychotic symptoms. CBT for Psychosis can help individuals learn skills to:

- Challenge delusional thoughts (e.g. reviewing the evidence, identifying alternative explanations)
- Examine their appraisal of hallucinations (e.g. how they think about the voices for individuals with auditory hallucinations).

CBT for Psychosis is a valuable tool for clinicians to help individuals learn skills to enhance healthy thinking and manage their symptoms more effectively.

Psychosis is a range of symptoms that includes experiencing hallucinations and/or delusions. It is seen most commonly in schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, and bipolar disorder.

Collectively, the four interventions described provide education about mental illness, management strategies for symptoms, skills training, and other recovery strategies. These clinical tools are best practices easily accessible, and can be implemented in a variety of settings.

We encourage you to consider psychotherapy as an important component of the treatment for Veterans with psychosis.

Please inquire about the availability of experts in these treatments at your local facility.

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#### For references and resources please see:

- **Social Skills Training:**  
[https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/training/social\\_skills.asp](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/training/social_skills.asp)
- **Illness Management and Recovery:**  
<https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA09-4463/PractitionerGuidesandHandouts.pdf>
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):**  
<https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Early-Psychosis-and-Psychosis>

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**SC MIRECC Website**  
<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn16>



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## A CLINICIAN'S GUIDE TO PSYCHOSOCIAL AND PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS FOR VETERANS WITH PSYCHOSIS



This brochure is designed to acquaint clinicians with psychosocial interventions that can be helpful in the treatment of Veterans with psychosis.

# MANAGING VOICES

(Behavioral Management of Auditory Hallucinations)

## Behavioral Management of Auditory Hallucinations

(AH) is a psychotherapy designed to provide Veterans with specific behavioral techniques to ameliorate distress associated with voices. The treatment primarily involves engagement in activities that assist the individual with disrupting the attentional focus given to AH.



Treatment involves at least nine sessions. The Veteran first learns how to track his or her AH content. This includes the circumstances in which the voices typically occur.

Subsequent sessions are devoted to teaching the Veteran specific behavioural techniques to reduce distress related to the AH.

Each session includes brief assessments for tracking distress associated with voice content since the previous session. The Veteran is explained the rationale for each new skill. To encourage use of skills (e.g., listening to music) outside of the session, the Veteran is provided practice worksheets.

# SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

## What Are Social Skills?

Social skills are the specific behaviours that people use while interacting with others. They enable individuals to effectively achieve their personal goals.

## What is Social Skills Training?

Social skills training is a set of psychotherapeutic techniques based on social learning theory that teaches social skills to Veterans. Social skills training involves five steps and can be done individually or in a group.

- Provide a rationale or help the Veteran to understand the importance of learning the skill
- Demonstrate (model) the skill in a role play
- Engage the Veteran in a role play
- Provide feedback to the Veteran and suggestions for improvement
- The Veteran is encouraged to practice outside of the session



## What Types of Social Skills Can Be Taught?

A wide variety of skills can be taught, depending on the Veteran's needs. Some of the most common skills include initiating and maintaining conversations, making requests of other people, expressing feelings, resolving conflicts, making friends, and being assertive.

# ILLNESS MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY (IMR)

IMR is a curriculum-based program that helps Veterans with serious mental illness learn about self-management techniques and develop individualized recovery goals. The program weaves together five key areas of evidence-based work for people with Serious Mental Illness (SMI):

- Psychoeducation
- Behavioral tailoring
- Relapse prevention training
- Coping skills training
- Social Skills Training

The curriculum uses these interventions through the course of 10 user-friendly modules which review information, strategies, and skills related to self-management. IMR is a flexible program which can be tailored to individual, closed group, or open group offerings.



IMR is developed by SAMHSA and is available for download free of charge at [samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov).