

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR PSYCHOSIS

CBT is a recover-oriented treatment based on the idea that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are connected.



WHAT IS PSYCHOSIS?

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.

Hallucinations - Hearing, seeing, or feeling things that aren't there. A common example is hearing voices when nobody is around.

Delusions - Strong beliefs that are not true and seem untrue to others. For example, a person's belief that they have superhuman powers or that people are spying on them.

There are many treatments for Veterans with psychosis to help them achieve their recovery goals. This brochure describes some of the common, recovery-oriented therapies that may be available at your local VA. Our hope is that you can talk with your providers about the treatment options available to you.

For references and resources please see:

- **Social Skills Training:**
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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PSYCHOTHERAPY OPTIONS FOR VETERANS WITH PSYCHOSIS



Thoughts about events affect the way a person feels and behaves. CBT helps to:

1. Understand the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviors.
2. Identify and challenge false or unhelpful thoughts.
3. Develop more accurate and helpful thoughts.

CBT for Psychosis helps Veterans learn skills to improve healthy thinking and manage symptoms better. Healthier thoughts lead to more positive feelings and behaviors. Healthy thinking also helps people achieve personal goals and improves overall quality of life.

This brochure explains psychosocial interventions that can be helpful in the treatment of Veterans with psychosis.

MANAGING VOICES

(Behavioral Management of Auditory Hallucinations)

Managing Voices is a therapy that helps Veterans who hear voices manage the unpleasant voices they experience. They learn how to track the voices so that they can understand the voices better and know when they happen. Veterans also learn ways to distract themselves from the voices. As part of the treatment, Veterans are encouraged to practice what they learn regularly in their day-to-day lives.



Some of the strategies used include:

- Talking with someone
- Listening to music
- Watching TV
- Relaxation
- Keeping busy



SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

What is Social Skills Training?

Social skills help us interact well with people. Social Skills Training teaches Veterans how to share their feelings, thoughts and needs with others. Veterans also learn how to respond to other people's feelings, thoughts, and needs. Social Skills Training helps Veterans do more of the things they want and to avoid doing things that they do not want to do.

What to expect during a Social Skills Training group

Members spend group time practicing different social skills with other members and the group leader. Once they are confident in their new skills, they take the next step of using them with others outside of the group.



How Can Social Skills Training Help Veterans?

Before the first session, each group member meets with a group leader to identify his or her own personal goals to work on in group. With better communication skills Veterans can work on their relationships with friends, relatives, employers, and people they're interested in dating.

The skills help Veterans gain independence. Remember each Veteran sets their own goals and uses Social Skills Training to achieve them.

ILLNESS MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY (IMR)

IMR helps Veterans with serious mental illness to set and reach their recovery goals and self-manage their illness. IMR can help Veterans:

- Learn about mental illness and treatments
- Decrease symptoms
- Reduce relapses and re-hospitalizations
- Make progress toward self-defined recovery goals

What does it look like?

IMR is a flexible education program for a group or individual setting. During the sessions, Veterans learn:

- Recovery strategies
- Practical facts about mental illnesses
- Stress-Vulnerability Model and treatment options
- Building social support
- Using medication effectively
- Drug and alcohol use
- Reducing relapses
- Coping with stress
- Coping with problems and persistent symptoms
- Getting needs met by the mental health system

