

Cognitive behavioral therapy in grief relief

Dr: Samira Boutabba*¹

. University of Badji Mokhtar-Annaba.Algeria

samar2017b@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This paper is an attempt to give an overview of the cognitive behavioral therapy which is a method adopted since the 1960's by A.Beck which is a talk therapy based on some techniques to help patients to overcome their psychological and mental problems. The basic principle of CBT is that emotions are difficult to change directly, so it aims at changing the thoughts and behaviors that are contributing to the negative emotions. These latter are the main cause of falling in or being overwhelmed by depression and prolonged anxiety.

Keywords: Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT); emotions; grief; negative; thoughts techniques.

الملخص:

يهدف هذا المقال الى كشف بعض خبايا وتقنيات العلاج السلوكي المعرفي، و عي طريقة نشأت في أواخر ستينيات القرن الماضي على يد أرون بيك، وهي طريقة تعتمد على الحوار وبعض التقنيات الأخرى من أجل مساعدة المرضى والأشخاص الذين يعانون من الاضطرابات النفسية في تخطي هذه العلة. ويعتمد العلاج السلوكي المعرفي على تغيير الأفكار السلبية التي لها تأثير سلبي على الانفعالات والمشاعر التي بدورها تؤثر سلبا على السلوك، وقد تؤدي بالأفراد الى الاستسلام الى الاكتئاب او الوقوع في غياهب انواع عديدة من الانهيار .
الكلمات المفتاحية: الافكار;الاكتئاب; الانفعالات ; الانهيار; السلوك ;العلاج السلوكي المعرفي; المشاعر; تقنيات.

¹ * The sender author. Samira Boutabba E-mailaddress: samar2017b@gmail.com

I. INTRODUCTION

Many people in this anxious world suffer from a huge number of negative emotions, which are fueled by bad experiments and hard events. These emotions will pave the way to negative thoughts, that will soon be reflected in the individuals' behavior, that can hardly be explained and understood by others. The negative behaviors will lead to anxiety and distress, so many individuals will get into a severe psychological problems which in turn will develop into hard recovering pathologies. Anxious individuals are exposed to many negative thoughts which were results of some bad past experiments or sudden hard events such as a loss of a job, a precious person divorce or any other bad problems that lead to mental disorder.

In the 1950's A.Ellis tried to cure people by ACT then A.Beck came in the 1960's with the cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) based on talk to help stressed and shocked people to identify their bad emotions and thoughts and try to change them. Bereaved people for example get influenced by several bad thoughts fueled by negative emotions, this can hardly be treated by CBT therapists; because grief is very hard feeling that touches and damages the individuals for a long time. CBT therapists have employed this therapy to help bereaved individuals in overcoming that.

This research would give an overview of CBT and try to give some solutions or techniques used by therapists to help patients deal with their emotional problems, we will focus on the tools and techniques used to treat grief, and give some alternative solutions. Additional means or methods will be given to help in therapy. This citation in Ellis's book: "Men are disturbed not by things, but by the view which they take of them" Epictetus in the enchiridion. (Ellis, 2011)

From this we can deduce that not only events and experiments could have an impact on the human life and behavior, also the view of people towards these events, which are the main cause of the setbacks "Too many people are unaware that it is not outer events or circumstances that will create happiness; rather, it is our perception of events and ourselves that will create, or uncreate positive emotions" (Ellis, 2011). By view we can imply thoughts and beliefs which play a pivotal role in modeling or shaping their negative feelings.

Distorted feelings lead people to destroy their lives by means of blaming themselves and others for their pitiful situation, rather than looking for solutions to get out of the depression, so many of them have recourse to therapists to help them with efficient tools to recover from these psychological pathologies. The most appropriate method for this kind of problems is cognitive behavioural therapy CBT, a therapy developed by A.Beck (an American psychiatrist) who devoted himself to scientific research to help people.

1. CBT definition :

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a type of psycho therapeutic treatment that helps people learn how to identify and change destructive or disturbing thought patterns that have a negative influence on behavior and emotions (Beck, 2011) "A theory that denies that thoughts can regulate actions does not lend itself readily to the explanation of complex human behavior" Bandura 1994.

As mentioned in this brief definition, many people are exposed to several problems ; or simply are victims of their past bad experiments, this would give rise to such negative thoughts or beliefs that have unconsciously a fatal impact on the individual's lifestyles. Scientists have divided the negative thoughts and beliefs into three categories, these beliefs should be identified by the patient first, then move to change them by the help of therapists who committed to find a final solution to these psychiatric problems.

It is worth mentioning that individuals must know or identify the thoughts before trying to treat or heal them. Here are the different thoughts and emotions as divided by scientists and psychologists:

1.1. Core beliefs : childhood experiences reflect negative views about :

- a. Oneself :individuals could lack self-confidence due to some bad past experiments or get a life long complex.
- b. The world : people can not trust others once they are disappointed by close friend or parents.
- c. The future :one could be pessimistic after a bitter emotional experiment, deception for example.He will never trust anyone or engage in another relationship.

1.2. **Dysfunctional assumptions** :focus on negatives

This involve negative thinking and feelings (negative perception of reality) “I can never trust people, they are all liars and cheaters” or “If i trust people, I will be deceived again”.

1.3. **Automatic Negative Thoughts** : ANT

Unvoluntary negative perception of reality leading to negative emotions for example a grieved person who lost his dear animal will never try to domesticate another one, because he fears the loss and the grief that would afflict him, he will hate all animals of the world.

2. **CBT principles** :

As we saw above, Ellis in 1950 pioneered behavior therapy in order to help patients to identify and challenge irrational thoughts, then A.Beck developed in 1960's the CBT,a therapy widely adopted today by scientists who approved and prove the accuracy of his theories. Then J.S Beck (A.Beck's daughter) came to had a tremendous impact on CBT and developed 10 principles to support its efficiency. Here are the 10 principles that would fit all patients according to J.S Beck (Beck, 2011):

- 1- CBT is based on an ever evolving formulation of patient's problems and individual conceptualization of each patient in cognitive terms : all data are gathered through sessions of the patient's situation in order to get a clear idea of the situation based on the patient's background since early childhood.
- 2- CBT requires therapeutic alliance: the therapist should show several human qualities in order to gain the patient's trust.
- 3- CBT emphasizes collaboration and active participation : both therapist and patient should work together in making the session efficient and fruitful.
- 4- CBT is goal- oriented and problem focused: goals should be set in order to evaluate thoughts that would oppose those goals to identify them easily.
- 5- CBT emphasizes the present: focus should be on the problem right now rather than searching the reasons or causes that led to it, the past should only be considered to modify core beliefs.
- 6- CBT is educative , aims to teach the patient to be their own therapist :helping the patient understand how do thoughts influence emotions and behavior, identify thoughts and plan for behavioral change.

- 7- CBT aims to be time limited : time is very important in treatment that can last from 6 sessions to years if necessary, depending on the nature of the problem.
- 8- CBT sessions are structured :sessions should be structured following a certain process, introduction, middle and final involving setting agenda, reviewing homework, eliciting feedback.
- 9- CBT teaches patients to deal with dysfunctional thoughts and beliefs : patients are guided to identify cognitions by questions and behavioral experiments to test their thinking .
- 10- CBT use techniques to change thinking, need and behavior : the therapists should select a variety of techniques to solve problems and change the patient's behavior .(Beck, 2011)

From the above we can deduce that CBT is fit and efficient for many problems such as anxiety, stress, anorexia, insomnia principal problems such as grief .

2.1. Grief definition:

grief is a reaction to the loss of something or someone important to the victim. It is a multifaceted reaction in that it has emotional, physical, cognitive, behavioral, social and philosophical dimensions. (Liz Kelly LCSW, 2022)

Many and several events can lead to deep grief, this would drive some individuals to real severe situation and mourning. The loss of my father had a very painful impact on my life, i thought the earth would stop turning. I could never imagine that i would do anything significant after that. I lost weight, i asked myself who would be proud of me whenever i do something in the future; I hated everything, i almost gave up planning to do anything. Nevertheless, i was told that even in heaven he would be proud of me so i decided to start replanning to accomplish the things i had begun before his loss in order to satisfy him "Concern should drive us into action, not into a depression" Horney.

3. CBT techniques and tools :

- 1- Cognitive restructuring or reframing :(Pietrangelo, 2019) you can see the events or the situation from a positive angle , this would help you to be optimistic and change your attitudes towards future.
- 2- Guided discovery : patient will be asked questions by therapists so that to help them in changing perspectives.

- 3- Exposure therapy : a gradual exposure to things that make the patient afraid or anxious or grieving, would help them overcome their negative feelings.
- 4- Journaling and thought records : writing negative thoughts and experiments will help in noticing the progress in the treatment.
- 5- Activity scheduling : planing for unbearable activities is good to make challenging decisions and overcome fear.
- 6- Behavioural experiments :prediction is a good step in the treatment since the patient will test if his anxiety was worthy or not.
- 7- Relaxation and stress reduction techniques : patient will be given some techniques and tools to lower stress.
- 8- Role playing: this would help in socializing and overcoming fears and becoming self-confident especially for children.
- 9- Successive approximation: breaking up big tasks into small tasks, this means achieving a huge goal bit by bit. (Beck, 2011)

Some psychologists attempted to explain the nature of grief and gave more detailed aspects of it so that individuals would understand it more and have relief

The psychology of Grief according to William Smith five symptoms are characterizing grief :

- 1- Physical symptoms : loss of weight, pale face, looking hopeless, eye bugs, looking pitiful are the main symptoms of a bereaved individual.
- 2- Cognitive symptoms (thoughts): grief leads to hopelessness, confusion and undetermination to complete things .
- 3- Emotional symptoms, guilt and hostility towards people, i could have been closer to my father, anxiety also is a key feeling accompanying any grief.
- 4- Interpersonal symptoms (isolation) : people tend to get alone to stay isolated for a long time because they miss the lost person so much, and they are afraid of forgetting him or her.
- 5- Lifestyle symptoms (changes in daily activities) : people missing others (lost of a precious person) rarely keep on doing things they used to do with them or for them,(i have not been cooking for almost three months). I can hardly go shopping and i hate going out meeting people.

After a sad event or unexpectedly loss of somebody or something. Grief is detailed into different stages to help the patient understand what is going on.

Grieving stages according to Kubler Ross :(Kessler, 2022)

- ✓ **Denial** : the loss of a person or a thing is not believed at all, his image comes to my mind from time to time. I still do not believe that i lost him forever.
- ✓ **Anger**: i get angry each time i feel his absence, everybody and everything is getting on my nerves until i fall in tears.
- ✓ **Bargaining**: individuals never admit the loss they keep on bargaining what if he could live for a few years again.
- ✓ **Depression** :quiet overwhelming emotions like sadness which will conquer all the other feelings leading the bereaved to opt for isolation.
- ✓ **Acceptance : (understanding)** After a long resisting period against disbelief, sadness and hopelessness, people finish by accepting the reality ; they are defeated. That's (the coup de grace), everyone is going strong that is what conciliates and make grieving people and try to satisfy their beloved lost persons where they are and committed to finish and fulfill their duties towards God, nation and relatives and friends .(Kessler, 2022)

4. Behavioral change for Grief relief therapy :

Types of Grief therapy and techniques :

1. Cognitive behavioral therapy : CBT tools for grief therapy include :
 - a. cognitive reframing or restructuring :this helps identify negative thoughts and change them.
 - b. Targeting behaviors :this involves addressing harmful behaviors and replacing them.
 - c. Developing a new narrative :this eases negative thoughts and feeling.
2. Acceptance and commitment therapy: ACT helps patients to accept negative emotions and situations this would ease and lighten pains, this might include accepting negative feelings and emotions ; overcoming difficulties.
3. Traumatic grief therapy: this kind of therapy deals with a grief caused by a loss of a precious person unexpectedly.

4. Complicated Grief therapy (CGT): this therapy may include acceptance and commitment therapy because this grief results in hopelessness and despair.
5. Group therapy: this therapy allows sharing feelings between members who suffer from the same painful experiences.
6. Art therapy: Art Activities can help patients to recover quickly and forget painful experiences like painting or drawing.
7. Play therapy: play therapy allows children to express well their feelings, it is the best way for them to ease their pain after a loss or a catastrophe. (Cully, 2008)

Grief is one of the most painful and long bearable things in life. It has an impact on every aspect of human's life, so people are asked to get out of the mourning atmosphere quickly. In Muslim culture mourning is only set during three days except for a widow who should stay at home for 4 months and ten days, this does not mean to keep crying the whole period ;because grief should be hidden in heart only not for ages of course.

In order to help people overcome their mourning or grief, I would suggest other additional things : they should invoke God for lost people. They should read Holy Quran because it has a great and magic effect on the mind and the wellbeing. Also they should practise sport or go for a walk with a pet or a friend. Moreover, they should donate for needed persons because it would ensure them what they are doing well to satisfy them.

5. Alternative tools for Grief relief :

- ✓ They should help other people to solve problems, this would make them feel useful.
- ✓ They should do mind exercises like reading, playing chess and cross words.
- ✓ They should take part in charity activities (helping poor or sick persons is very good for the mental and the physical health.
- ✓ They should have good memory for lost persons by keeping on good habits they had visiting relatives and friends.

Conclusion

Life is overwhelmed by positive and negative events. People differ from one another in dealing or facing these problems, some can show forbearing in front of them, others are weaker, fragile or more sensitive. They might fall in a mourning or anxious state that would lead them to fall in very sad mood, due to negative feelings and emotions ; all these factors could have a

catastrophic impact on their behavior. Scientists especially psychologists and psychiatrists have managed to find a way to help people deal with all these problems.

CBT was developed to give them a treatment to their pain, this therapy has known a big success and was scientifically adopted and exercised to help people. Therapists all around the world witness that it is an efficient and fruitful way in relieving in treating people's pains and problems.

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