
COLLECTION

The Essentials of Applied Psychology

The Practical CBT Guide



Gildas Garrec

Cognitive-behavioral therapy practitioner

psychologieetserenite.com

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The Essentials of Applied Psychology
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Disclaimer: This book is a tool for information and personal development.
It is in no way a substitute for professional therapeutic care.

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INTRODUCTION — CBT, a Therapy You Practice

There is a persistent misconception that therapy essentially involves lying on a couch and talking about one's childhood for years. This vision, inherited from classical psychoanalysis, has shaped the collective imagination to such an extent that many people hesitate to seek help, convinced that they will have to explore every corner of their past before experiencing any relief.

Cognitive and behavioral therapies — CBT — offer a radically different approach. Not opposed to exploring the past, but resolutely focused on the present and on action. Their founding principle is strikingly elegant: it is not events themselves that generate our suffering, but the interpretation we make of them. Change the interpretation, and you change the emotion. Change the emotion, and you change the behavior. Change the behavior, and you change your life.

What Is CBT?

Cognitive behavioral therapy is a structured, scientifically validated psychotherapeutic approach based on identifying and modifying dysfunctional thoughts and maladaptive behaviors. It was developed in the 1960s by Aaron T. Beck for the treatment of depression, and subsequently extended to a considerable number of disorders: anxiety, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, eating disorders, addictions, chronic pain, insomnia, and many others.

What distinguishes CBT from other therapeutic approaches is its empirical and practical nature. Each session is built around concrete objectives. The therapist and the patient work together — this is called the therapeutic alliance — to identify the mechanisms that maintain suffering and implement strategies for change. Between sessions, the patient carries out exercises, behavioral experiments, and observations. Therapy is not confined to the office: it is lived every day.

The scientific evidence supporting the effectiveness of CBT is considerable. A landmark meta-analysis covering 409 clinical trials and 52,702 patients demonstrated its significant effectiveness in treating multiple psychological disorders (Cuijpers et al., 2021, PMC9840507). This evidence base makes it one of the best-validated psychotherapeutic approaches in the world.

Why This Book?

This book was born from a simple observation I make every day in my practice as a cognitive-behavioral psychotherapist: the clients who progress the fastest are those who practice between sessions. CBT is not a passive therapy. It is mental training, comparable to physical training. You can read every book on running — you will not run any faster until you put on your shoes and run that first mile.

This practical guide was designed as a true exercise companion. Each chapter contains concrete tools, worksheets to complete, and exercises to practice. It does not replace therapeutic follow-up — we will return to this in the conclusion — but it can serve as a valuable complement to ongoing therapy, or a first step for those who wish to understand and experience the mechanisms of cognitive and behavioral change.

How to Use This Book

I recommend reading this book in order, as each chapter builds upon concepts introduced in the previous ones. The first two chapters lay the theoretical foundations. Chapters 3 and 4 take you deeper into understanding your thought patterns. Chapters 5 and 6 introduce behavioral techniques. Chapter 7 opens the door to third-wave approaches. Finally, Chapter 8 guides you in building your own personal therapy plan.

For each chapter, you will find:

- Clear explanations of theoretical concepts
- Two fictional clinical case studies illustrating the mechanisms at play
- Two detailed practical exercises, with worksheets to complete
- Key points summarizing the essentials

Get yourself a dedicated notebook — your "CBT notebook." You will use it to record your observations, your exercises, your discoveries. This notebook will gradually become your most valuable tool: a living map of your psychological functioning and your evolution.

One last piece of advice before you begin: be patient with yourself. The thought patterns you are about to discover were built over years, sometimes decades. They will not transform overnight. But every exercise completed, every thought identified, every distortion spotted is a victory. And these small victories, put together, build deep and lasting change.

Happy reading, and above all, happy practicing.

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