

# Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Skills Group: Participant Information

## Are you struggling with...?

- Sadness or depression
- Worry, nervousness or anxiety
- Illness, or health problems causing distress
- Insomnia (related to anxiety)
- Relationship stress
- Parenting stress
- Work stress
- Life transitions causing distress
- Loss causing distress

**Our MSP-covered physician-led CBT skills program could help.**

## Frequently Asked Questions (Click to jump to section).

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## What is CBT Skills Group?

As human beings, stress and pain are inevitable in life. But sometimes the way we respond to this distress makes matters worse. We don't have a choice about which curve balls life will throw at us, but we do have a choice about how we respond.

In the CBT Skills program, we take a look at how the mind works, bringing mindful awareness to our patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving. In doing so, we become more aware of our choices. We also practice skills that help us cope with intense emotions, cultivate more helpful thinking, and make choices that move us in the direction of what is truly important to us.

The course material draws on concepts from neuroscience, mindfulness, and cognitive behavioral therapy to teach skills that may help you build a sense of empowerment and begin to cultivate a relationship with yourself that is kind and insightful.

## Who is eligible to participate in the Vancouver program?

The Vancouver program is currently only offered to participants living in the City of Vancouver (with a family physician in Greater Vancouver) or participants with a family physician practicing in the City of Vancouver (but living outside of the City of Vancouver).

## What is the course like?

Each series consists of 8 weeks of 105-minute sessions, facilitated by a specially trained family physician, psychiatrist, or both. There is also 10-60 minutes of home practice each week.

The group medical visits are like an interactive classroom with up to 15 participants. The program involves skills training, not psychotherapy, so personal sharing is very limited, but each participant shares a brief report on their learning each week. Most people say this learning from other participants is the most powerful part of the course.

## Who is the course for?

Ask your doctor if the course is right for you.

The course may be for you if you struggle with anxiety, depression, chronic medical conditions with mental distress, insomnia, hormonal problems, guilt or shame, postpartum-related issues, or are dealing with a major life stressor.

## Who is this course not the best fit for?

We do have some criteria that outline who may not be ready for group at this time.

This group requires the ability to tolerate being in a group setting, the motivation to practice skills at home, and the ability to attend to group teaching sessions and home practice.

Often, when we are experiencing severe episodes of depression, mania, psychosis, or any difficulty with cognitive impairment (such as dementia or serious head injuries), it is too difficult to participate in a group like this. Similarly, if you struggle with immense difficulties regulating your emotions or being triggered by others (e.g. flashbacks, anger outburst, dissociation, or suicidal thinking), it may be important to work in a 1:1 setting on these symptoms or to join a group that specifically targets these symptoms (e.g. Groups offered at the sexual assault center or dialectical behavioral therapy).

Similarly, significant difficulties with substance use (to the extent that it would interfere with your ability to participate in the group and home practice) may better be served at your local alcohol and substance use center to target these behaviors.

## Groups sound terrifying, especially for people with anxiety!

For those reluctant to participate in a group, we have had extensive feedback from past participant telling us that although they initially felt anxious joining a group, they found it to be extremely beneficial to be in such a supportive environment and to learn that they were not alone in their struggles.

To learn more about others' experiences, you can read an article on our group interviewing past participants at:

[https://issuu.com/divisionsbc/docs/vdfp\\_scope\\_magazine\\_volume\\_1\\_issue](https://issuu.com/divisionsbc/docs/vdfp_scope_magazine_volume_1_issue)

## When and where are the courses?

The courses are run on various days and evenings in several locations within the City of Vancouver. Once you are referred and accepted into the program, you will get an email with a link for you to register in one of the upcoming classes.

## What is the cost?

The cost of the workbook is \$35. The sessions themselves are covered by MSP (and thus no direct costs to you).

## How can I sign up?

First, decide if you have the time and energy to commit to attending all of the 8 weekly sessions. Each week also involves 10-60 minutes of practice at home.

Then, discuss a referral from your primary care practitioner. He or she will have you complete a screening questionnaire to determine if the group is suitable for you.

## What happens after my doctor has referred me?

After we have received a completed referral form from your doctor, it will take about two weeks to process it. If you are eligible for the program, we will be in touch with you via email about the best series that works with your schedule. Registration is on a first come first serve basis.

## Who can I contact for further information?

Check out our website ([www.divisionsbc.ca/vancouver/CBTskillsgroup](http://www.divisionsbc.ca/vancouver/CBTskillsgroup)), [vancouver@divisionsbc.ca](mailto:vancouver@divisionsbc.ca) or call 604-569-2010.

What do past participants say about the group?

***"This course has been invaluable. I wish I could have learned these things earlier in life."***

- Participant

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***"Through the CBT skills program I have learned simple approaches I can use to maintain more objectivity in situations where I could become anxious or overly emotional. I have more ways to remain calm and feel more control over my moods/emotions."***

Participant

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***"I feel more capable of managing and reducing my anxiety by using the concepts (and workbook) taught in class. The group facilitator was compassionate and being with a group helped me feel less isolated and alone."***

- Participant

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***"It brought sunshine to the darkness. An oasis of companionship and sharing. Awakening and aha moments of triggers."***

- Participant

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***"I feel empowered that I direct my life, I have the power to control and change my thoughts, behaviors, and feelings, and I'm worth it to do so."***

- Participant

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***"Realization that I am not alone - everyone is going through something."***

- Participant