

CBT Skills Groups

MSP-funded
Learn practical skills
to build mental wellness

Taking steps toward
a healthier path for your life.

The difference
between
a stepping stone
and a stumbling block
is how you see it.

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 Group
program could help.

What is the CBT Skills Group Program?



As human beings, stress and pain are inevitable. But sometimes, the way we respond to distress can make 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 learn about how the mind works, while bringing mindful awareness to our patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. In doing so, we become more aware of our choices.

We also practice skills that help us to cope with intense emotions, to cultivate more helpful thinking, and to make choices that move us in the direction of what is truly important to us.

Course material draws on concepts from neuroscience, mindfulness, and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to teach skills that can help you build a sense of empowerment, and cultivate a relationship with yourself that is kinder and more insightful.

You will recognize your common patterns and pitfalls, and practice ways of stepping around them and building a fuller, more rewarding life.

What is the course like?

Each series consists of one 90–120 minute session per week for eight weeks. Sessions are facilitated by a specially trained family physician or psychiatrist, or both. Each week also includes a small amount of daily home practice. These group medical visits can accommodate up to 16 participants, who learn together in an interactive classroom environment. The program involves skills training rather than psychotherapy, therefore personal sharing is very limited. Each participant shares a brief report on their learning each week. Most people say that this opportunity to learn 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. You may be eligible if you struggle with anxiety, depression, chronic medical conditions with associated mental distress, or insomnia, or if you are dealing with major stress.

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

We do have some criteria that outline who may not be ready for a group at this time. This program requires the ability to tolerate being in a group setting, and to attend the sessions regularly. Participants must also be motivated to complete the home practice exercises.

Often, if you are experiencing a severe episode of depression, mania, psychosis, or cognitive impairment (such as dementia or serious head injury), it is too difficult to participate in a group like this.

Similarly, if you struggle immensely with regulating your emotions, or with being triggered by others (e.g. flashbacks, anger outbursts, dissociation, or suicidal thoughts), it may be important to work on these symptoms in a one-to-one setting, or to join a group that targets these symptoms specifically.

If you are struggling with substance use to the extent that it would interfere with your ability to participate in the group and in home practice, you may better be served at a designated alcohol and substance use centre that can target these behaviours.

Groups sound terrifying, especially for people with anxiety!

It is understandable that you may feel reluctant to participate in a group. You are not alone. We have received extensive feedback from past participants telling us that—despite initially feeling anxious about joining a group—they found it extremely beneficial to be in such a supportive environment, and to learn that they were not alone in their struggles.

To learn more about other's experiences, you may wish to read the *Scope Magazine* cover story about the CBT Skills Group program. Written by one of our facilitating psychiatrists, the feature includes comments from several participants who agreed to be interviewed about their experiences:

Type this shortened link into your web browser: goo.gl/gjFipw

What do past participants say about the group?

“This course has been invaluable. I wish that I could have learned these things earlier in life.”

“Through the CBT Skills program, I have learned simple approaches that 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 and emotions.”

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

“It brought sunshine to the darkness. An oasis of companionship and sharing. Awakening, and ‘aha moments’ of triggers.”

“I feel empowered that I direct my life. I have the power to control and change my thoughts, behaviours, and feelings, and I’m worth it to do so.”

What is the cost?

There is a small fee to cover costs of the workbook. The sessions are covered by MSP, and therefore are offered at no direct cost to you.

When and where are the courses?

The courses are run on various days and evenings in several locations within the region. Once you are referred, you will receive an email outlining all of the upcoming choices.

How can I sign up?

First, decide if you have the time and energy to commit to attending each of the eight weekly sessions. Recall that there is also daily home practice. Then, discuss a referral from your primary care practitioner. He or she will ask you to complete a screening questionnaire to determine if the group is suitable for you. If you are eligible, we will be in touch about the series that works best with your schedule.

For further information, please contact us:

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 **Vancouver**
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