

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)

Making Sense of Trauma and Moving Forward

Experiencing trauma can change the way we see ourselves, other people and the world around us. Many people find themselves struggling with thoughts such as:

- *"It was my fault."*
- *"I can't trust anyone."*
- *"I'm never safe."*
- *"I'm damaged."*
- *"The world is dangerous."*

These beliefs are completely understandable after trauma, but they can continue to keep people feeling stuck long after the traumatic event has ended.

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) is a structured, evidence-based therapy designed to help people process traumatic experiences and develop healthier, more balanced ways of understanding what happened. It is one of the most effective psychological treatments for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

What can CPT help with?

CPT has been shown to be effective for people who have experienced many different types of trauma, including:

- Childhood abuse or neglect
- Sexual assault
- Domestic abuse
- Military trauma
- Serious accidents
- Natural disasters
- Other overwhelming or life-threatening experiences

How does CPT work?

Trauma can leave us with deeply held beliefs that continue to influence how we think, feel and behave. Sometimes these beliefs develop as a way of trying to make sense of what happened, but they may no longer be helpful.

During therapy, we work together to:

- Understand how trauma has affected your thoughts and emotions.
- Recognise patterns of thinking that may be keeping you stuck.
- Gently question beliefs that may no longer serve you.
- Develop more compassionate and balanced perspectives.
- Reduce feelings of guilt, shame, fear and self-blame.
- Build confidence in your ability to move forward.

The aim is **not** to erase what happened, but to reduce the power it continues to have over your life today.

What happens during therapy?

CPT is typically offered over **12 structured sessions**, although the pace can be adapted to meet your individual needs.

Throughout therapy you can expect to:

Learn about trauma

We begin by understanding how trauma affects the brain, body, emotions and thinking patterns. Many people find this reassuring, as it helps explain why they have been experiencing certain symptoms.

Explore your thoughts

Together we identify the automatic thoughts and beliefs that have developed since the trauma and consider how these influence your emotions and daily life.

Reflect on the impact of the trauma

Early in therapy, you will be invited to write an **Impact Statement**, describing how the traumatic experience has affected your beliefs about yourself, other people and the world.

Process the traumatic experience

Some versions of CPT include writing about the traumatic event in detail, while others focus more on exploring thoughts and beliefs without a written trauma narrative. We will discuss together which approach feels most appropriate for you.

Develop new ways of thinking

Using guided discussion and carefully structured questions, we examine beliefs that may be contributing to ongoing distress, such as excessive self-blame or feelings of permanent danger. The goal is to develop perspectives that are both realistic and compassionate.

Areas we often explore

Trauma can affect many aspects of our lives. During CPT we often work with beliefs relating to:

- Safety
- Trust
- Power and control
- Self-esteem
- Relationships and intimacy

Many clients notice positive changes in these areas as therapy progresses.

Between-session practice

Like many evidence-based therapies, CPT includes gentle practice between sessions. This may involve completing worksheets, questionnaires or reflective exercises that help reinforce the skills you are learning.

These activities are an important part of the therapy and help you begin applying new ways of thinking in everyday life.

Is CPT right for everyone?

CPT is highly effective for many people living with PTSD. However, not everyone is ready to begin trauma-focused work immediately.

Where appropriate, we may first spend time developing emotional regulation, grounding techniques and coping skills to ensure you feel safe and supported

before processing traumatic experiences. Therapy is always tailored to your individual needs, and we will decide together on the most appropriate pace.

A collaborative approach

CPT is not about telling you how to think. It is about working together to understand how trauma has shaped your beliefs and helping you develop new ways of making sense of your experiences that allow you to live with greater freedom, confidence and self-compassion.

My approach: Although CPT follows a structured framework, I integrate it with a compassionate, relational way of working. I recognise that healing from trauma is not simply about changing thoughts, but also about feeling safe, understood and supported. Therapy is always adapted to your individual needs, and we will move at a pace that feels manageable for you.

If you would like to discuss whether Cognitive Processing Therapy may be suitable for you, please feel free to get in touch.