Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Program for Depression and Anxiety

Depression is one of the most common mental health problems affecting adolescents. In addition to feeling sad, irritable, and depressed for weeks or months at a time, symptoms can also include feeling worthless and hopeless, having frequent thoughts about death or more serious thoughts about harming or killing oneself. Depression can involve the loss of enjoyment or interest in activities, changes in eating and sleeping habits, and trouble concentrating. Depression typically leads to significant interference with daily aspects of life, such as declining performance in school, isolation from friends, and increasing withdrawal, and conflict with family members.

Anxiety is a common negative emotion that involves feeling nervous, scared, afraid, or worried. Usually we feel anxious when we think something bad is about to happen. Although everyone experiences anxiety, some adolescents begin to feel so anxious or worried that they experience significant levels of distress that become disruptive to their daily lives. The anxiety can be focused on specific situations or events or a general worry about many different things. This level of anxiety is often accompanied by frequent anxious or worry thoughts and physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, rapid breathing, headaches, and muscle tension. It can also lead to a behavioral pattern of avoidance of situations or events that cause high levels of worry and anxiety, which often negatively affect involvement in school and relationships with peers and family.

Currently, there is more evidence available to support the effectiveness of a treatment approach called cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to treat children or adolescents with a wide range of psychological difficulties than for any other treatment approach. CBT has been shown through research studies to be effective at treating anxiety disorders and depression. CBT is usually a short-term, time-limited treatment that focuses on teaching clients specific coping skills to address the current problem. CBT differs from other therapy approaches in that it focuses on the ways that a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are connected and affect one another.

Services

The Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Program at UCSF is currently offering a variety of services for teens and young adults, in both individual and group formats.

Individual

Teens and young adults seeking treatment for depression or anxiety may be treated by one of our core staff members in an individual therapy setting. Patients will be thoroughly evaluated at the outset of treatment to ensure the appropriateness of CBT, and will also be evaluated periodically throughout treatment to systematically assess progress. Individual CBT typically
consists of psychoeducation about diagnoses and treatment, collaborative goal setting, and both cognitive and behavioral strategies, to address symptoms and prevent future relapse. Depending on the age and presentation of the patient, parental involvement is often a key component of treatment. Patients are also expected to do homework as part of their treatment, to help generalize skills and strategies learned in session to their real lives.

Group

We are currently offering 3 groups for teens and families:

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Depression (12 weeks; Tuesdays 3:30-5 p.m.)**

This group is designed for teens ages 13-18 who either have a current diagnosis of major depression or dysthymia, or who have previously met criteria for either of these diagnoses. The group utilizes the BRIGHT curriculum which has been adapted specifically for teens. Topics addressed include psychoeducation on CBT and depression, identifying and changing thoughts, improving relationships to improve mood, and changing behavior to support mood. Patients are required to have an individual mental health provider (either at UCSF or in the community), and be willing to sign a release for communication between therapist and group leader. Currently enrolling new patients.

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Social Anxiety (8 weeks; Tuesdays 3:30-5 p.m.)**

This group is designed for teens ages 13-18 who meet criteria for social anxiety disorder, or have symptoms of anxiety that significantly impair their functioning in social and/or academic settings. This group utilizes evidence-based principles and practices for treating social anxiety, relying heavily on graduated exposure. Topics addressed in group include psychoeducation on CBT and social anxiety, principles of exposure therapy, weekly group exposure activities and instruction around various cognitive coping strategies. Currently enrolling new patients.

**Psychoeducation Workshop for Parents of Teens and Young Adults with Depression (First Tuesday of the month; 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.)**

This one-session educational workshop is designed for parents of young people ages 13-26 who have been diagnosed with major depression or dysthymia. The workshop provides information on symptoms of depression, how parents can help and treatment options. In order to attend, all parents must have a teen or young adult who is currently registered as a patient at UCSF.

**Core faculty and staff**

- Lauren Haack, PhD
- Allison Libby, PsyD
- Ashley Maliken, PhD
- Natalie Todd, PsyD
Appointments

For an appointment, please call our intake and referral service at (415) 476-7000.

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