

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY GUIDED SELF HELP

(CBT-GSH)

TREATMENT IN EATING DISORDERS



What is CBT-GSH?

Guided Self Help (GSH) is a manualised treatment by which a person with mild to moderate mental health difficulties is guided by a health professional through self-help program materials. It is a highly structured, client-centred intervention based on the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

In eating disorders, CBT-GSH is recommended as a first-line, evidenced-based psychological intervention with a goal to restore normal eating habits for adults (18+) experiencing mild to moderate presentations of:

- Bulimia Nervosa (BN)
- Binge Eating Disorder (BED)
- Disordered Eating

While there have been limited studies on CBT-GSH efficacy in young people, for older teenagers experiencing BED, BN or disordered eating it is a worthwhile first-line treatment option.

Who can deliver CBT-GSH?

Health professionals who are familiar with the treatment program and have ideally completed training can deliver CBT-GSH.

How long could treatment take?

The program takes approximately 10 to 20 sessions to complete. Sessions can be delivered face-to-face or online; weekly or fortnightly; and completed in 25-50 minutes per session. Sessions should be adjusted to suit the individual's treatment plan and progress, and are likely to be more intensive at the beginning.

What are the expected outcomes from effective treatment delivery?

For those who engage with and complete the program it is possible to:

- Move to a regular, healthy eating pattern
- See a reduction or cessation in eating problems including restriction, binge eating and/or compensatory behaviours

The client will learn techniques to:

- Change unhelpful thinking and behaviours that are maintaining the disordered eating or eating disorder
- Maintain the changes and better manage challenges now and in the future

Contraindications

CBT-GSH is not an appropriate treatment for presentations of:

- Anorexia Nervosa (AN)
- Atypical AN
- Evidence of precipitous weight loss at any size
- Very low body weight whereby the person would meet the criteria for AN Binge/Purge or Restricting type

Refer individuals on for a more intensive level of support or specialised treatment

Critical checks

CBT-GSH should not commence while any of the following are present:

- Medical instability - see: **RANZCP guidelines**
- Suicidal ideation or behaviours
- Psychosis
- Severe major depression
- Persistent substance misuse


Arrange a treatment team: GP, mental health professional and dietitian, before commencing CBT-GSH, or refer on for more intensive support or specialised treatment, when medical conditions in which eating can have a significant impact on health and safety are present e.g. diabetes, pregnancy


Considerations

- Ensure regular GP monitoring is in place - see: **CEED's Medical Monitoring Summary Chart**
- Commencement of the program is not advised if there is any anticipated interference with the program timeline for client or clinician e.g. major life events, holidays, inability to attend treatment


What are the recommended CBT-GSH program manuals?

These manuals may be purchased online for download or in hard copy:

 Cooper, PJ. 2009. Overcoming Bulimia Nervosa and Binge Eating 3rd Edition: a self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques. Robinson, London. Available in English and French.

 Fairburn, CG. 2013. Overcoming Binge Eating, 2nd Edition: the proven program to learn why you binge and how you can stop. Guilford Press: London. Available in English. First edition available in English and Spanish.

Free Online Resources:

 Centre for Clinical Interventions (CCI) Workbooks: Overcoming Disordered Eating Part A and B. Available in English. www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/For-Clinicians/Eating-Disorders

What are the key elements of CBT-GSH program manuals?

These elements are common to each manual and are worked through step-by-step:

- Monitoring eating
- Regular eating and meal planning
- Learning to intervene to prevent binge-eating
- Eliminating dieting
- Changing the mindset
- Maintenance plans and relapse prevention

The manuals provide psycho-education on BED or BN and also have built-in progress checks to ensure the client moves appropriately through the program.

What is the role of the health professional as a guide for CBT-GSH?

- Engage the person and family in a non-judgmental manner, establishing a good therapeutic relationship
- Support the person and their family to facilitate personal recovery, keeping client accountable and on track as they step through the manual
- Monitor the client's response to treatment
- Motivate the client towards recovery
- Ensure regular GP medical monitoring is in place
- Have foundational knowledge of eating disorders, the clinical features, common treatments and the individual experience of recovery
- Be familiar with the manual and session structure, setting clear expectation of treatment
- Determine if more intensive therapy is needed and refer on if/when necessary

When should a health professional refer on to more intensive and/or specialised treatment?

Progress should be reviewed at 4 weeks. If no changes in behaviour/s are observed or the client is not actively engaging in the manual, consider a step-up in psychological treatment to group or individualised CBT-E, and referring on for specialised treatment with an appropriately trained Mental Health Professional.

What are the next steps for the health professional to facilitate CBT-GSH?

For a client to achieve the best outcomes from CBT-GSH, the health professional must be confident in supporting the client through the manual.

Determine if CBT-GSH is an appropriate first-line intervention through eating disorder screening and assessment, and understand the needs and preferences of the client. Then, either:

Option 1 - Initiate CBT-GSH with your client

- Obtain and record client consent to commence CBT-GSH
- Have the client start reading one of the evidence-based CBT-GSH manuals

Practice point: What do I say to the client?

“Here is a resource designed for people who have expressed similar challenges as you’ve been describing, to help you make changes with food and eating and your feelings about that. This is something that we can work through together.”

- Schedule the next long appointment for a week’s time
- Inform them of after-hours mental health support and crisis contacts

Option 2 - Refer your client on for treatment

- Should you feel that you do not have the experience to guide and support the client through the manual, it is best to refer to a health professional with expertise in eating disorders who is trained to deliver CBT-GSH

Practice point: What do I write in the referral?

“Thank you for seeing patient XX. I am referring them to you as I feel they would benefit from guided self-help CBT (CBT-GSH) using one of the following program manuals <insert names of manuals> or another evidence-based treatment in the management of their binge eating disorder/bulimia nervosa. Thank you for keeping me updated on their progress.”

Screening and assessment

Screening questions can help detect the presence of an eating disorder and identify when a more comprehensive assessment is needed. Go to the NEDC website to access evidence-based screening and assessment tools, validated for use in primary and specialist care settings: nedc.com.au/eating-disorders/early-intervention/health-professionals/

These tools are recommended for use in the context of a trusting therapeutic relationship. They are not diagnostic and should not be used as the sole method of determining whether or not an individual has an eating disorder.

An aide to assessment and psychoeducation: Reach Out and Recover, ROAR is an online interactive tool to support people with eating and body concerns, and who feel distressed because of these concerns. This tool may help the person see the extent and impact of their problems and provide help with the next steps to take towards recovery. Designed for professionals to use with clients, or for clients to use on their own: reachoutandrecover.com.au/

Professional skills development

1. Obtain general knowledge of all eating disorders including BED, Other Specified Feeding and Eating Disorders (OSFED), BN and AN. View [NEDC's Introductory professional development modules](#).
2. Familiarise yourself with one of the evidence-based CBT-GSH manuals.
3. Seek out CBT-GSH training opportunities from the following organisations:
 - The Victorian Centre of Excellence in Eating Disorders (CEED): ceed.org.au
 - Queensland Eating Disorders Service (QuEDS): metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/rbwh/healthcare-services/eating-disorder
 - InsideOut: Institute for Eating Disorders: insideoutinstitute.org.au
 - headspace National: headspace.org.au
 - Centre for Clinical Interventions (CCI): cci.health.wa.gov.au
 - Western Australian Eating Disorder Outreach and Consultation Service (WAEDOCS) nmahsmh.health.wa.gov.au/services/statewide_WAEDOCS.cfm

Introductory eating disorders training

National Eating Disorders Collaboration, NEDC

Free access to five online professional development modules: nedc.com.au/professional-development/e-learning/

Introduction to Eating Disorders | Screening and Assessment | Medical Management | Nutritional Management | Recovery Focused Psychological Treatment

InsideOut: Institute for Eating Disorders

Access the following modules at insideoutinstitute.org.au/e-learning

The Foundations of Eating Disorders (free) | The Management of Eating Disorders in the Community | The Essentials: Training Clinicians in Eating Disorders

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MORE INFORMATION

Early intervention in eating disorders provides the best opportunity for a full recovery.

The NEDC's National Practice Standards for Eating Disorders (2020) outlines the values, attitudes, knowledge and skills required for Australian health professionals to respond to eating disorders successfully. Strengthen your skill set or find out about the skills you need to better respond to eating disorders in your work area.

Access the National Practice Standards for Eating Disorders online nedc.com.au/research-and-resources/nedc-publications

NEDC
info@nedc.com.au | www.nedc.com.au

Butterfly National Helpline for Eating Disorders
support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au | 1800 33 4673

