

Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy:


Interventions to Address Body Image Concerns with Eating Disordered Clients



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Westwind Eating Disorder Recovery Centre



private residential eight bed facility
emphasis on evidence based modes of therapy
individualized and collaborative
home like setting

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Learning Objectives

1. Learn about the significance of body image concerns as the core cognitive psychopathology of eating disorders.
2. Learn Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy approaches to body image concerns.
3. Learn strategies to address the over-evaluation of weight and shape with eating disordered clients.

Disclosure: Nothing to disclose or identify as a potential conflict of interest that could be perceived as influencing the presentation.

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Evidence Based Treatment

Cognitive Behavior Therapy:
Recognized as the leading treatment approach with the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)

Acceptance Commitment Therapy:
Research demonstrates effectiveness with Anxiety disorders, Eating Disorders treatment a logical extension of research findings

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Outline

Significance of body image in recovery

Strategies to address body image concerns:

1. Motivational enhancement
2. Challenge shape checking
3. Challenge body avoidance
4. Cognitive restructuring and selftalk
5. Practice mindfulness and acceptance

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Significance of Body Image in Recovery

Over-Evaluation of Shape and Weight and Their Control:
The judging of self-worth largely, or even exclusively, in terms of shape and weight and the ability to control them
* A dysfunctional scheme for self-evaluation

Body Shape Dissatisfaction:
Dislike of one's appearance or body. This is common, unlike over-evaluation of shape and weight.

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Significance of Body Image in Recovery

- Core cognitive psychopathology in eating disorders
- Predictor of treatment outcome, contributing to relapse

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Significance of Body Image in Recovery

Diathesis-Stress Model of Relapse

ED Relapse

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Strategies to Address BI Concerns

1. Motivational Enhancement

Ego-syntonic – body as identity
Evaluation of self based on weight and shape

Strategies to Address Motivational Enhancement:

- Aid clients in identifying the costs vs benefits of living this way
- Highlight the discrepancy between them by exploring values

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Decisional Balance

	Short term benefits	Long term benefits	Short term costs	Long term costs
<i>Continuing to evaluate my self worth based on my shape and weight</i>	<i>Keep to my diet Something to focus on Part of my identity</i>	<i>Maintain my weight Feel better about my body Meet someone</i>	<i>Miss out on activities Hurts my family & friends</i>	<i>Increases anxiety and feeling depressed when not living according to my values</i>
<i>Separating my self worth from my shape and weight</i>	<i>Spend time doing activities I value and enjoy</i>	<i>Feel better about myself and living out my values Meet someone</i>	<i>experience scary things in recovery like eating fear foods</i>	<i>Gain weight and be unable to accept my body What if I fail at recovery?</i>

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Current Self Evaluation

Aspects most important to me when evaluating my self worth:

- shape, weight and eating
- school performance
- being a good friend
- piano skills

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Future Self Evaluation

How I would like to feel about myself in the future:

- shape and weight
- being a good friend
- school performance
- piano skills
- travel
- developing my spirituality

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Highlight Discrepancy Values Narrative Journal Activity

- Family:** What type of sibling do you want to be? What type of parent do you want to be? How do you want to interact with your family?
- Friends:** What type of friend do you want to be? What does it mean to be a good friend? How would you behave toward your best friend? Why is friendship important to you?
- Romantic relationships:** What is your ideal relationship like? What kind of partner do you want to be in an intimate relationship with? How would you treat your partner? What type of relationship would you like to have?
- Leisure:** What type of activity do you enjoy? What type of activities would you really like to engage in? Why do you enjoy them?

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Highlight Discrepancy Values Narrative Journal Activity (continued)

- Spirituality:** This domain does not necessarily refer to organized religion. Is faith or spirituality important to you? If so, what makes this an important part of your life?
- Health:** Write your values related to maintaining your physical well-being. How do you take good care of yourself? How would you like to take good care of yourself?
- Education:** Why is learning important to you? Are there any skills you would like to learn?
- Career:** What do you value about your career? Financial independence? Helping others? Interacting with others? An intellectual challenge? Prestige? What type of work would you like to do?

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Strategies to Address BI Concerns

2. Challenge Shape Checking

- Repeated ritualistic monitoring of several aspects of the body

Types of shape checking can include:
 Looking in mirror or reflective surfaces
 Measuring body parts with tape measure or hands
 Pinching or touching body parts
 Assessing the tightness of clothing or accessories
 Looking down at one's body
 Excessive weighing
 Viewing photos to compare past body to current body
 Comparing ones body with others

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Shape Checking

Goal:
 Help clients gain awareness of their shape checking as it happens in the moment, and learn to think first before doing the checking behavior

Strategies to Address Shape Checking:

- Help clients gain awareness of their checking through tracking and self-reflection
- Educate about the negative consequences
- Help clients gain insight about the function of the checking behaviors
- Help clients engage in pro-active activities to counter shape checking

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Shape Checking Tracking Record

Checking Behavior & Time	Location	Comments
Looked at stomach and thighs in mirror (2 mins)	Work bathroom	Feeling like I'm wider than the other women in the office
Looked down to see if my stomach is sticking out past my breasts when sitting (1 min)	At restaurant	Just ate a challenging dessert, feeling really full
Looked at old photos of myself from when I was thinner (10 mins)	In my home office	Trying to work on an assignment, feeling fat and like I lost the achievement of my old body
Kept looking at my sisters stomach muscles at the gym while working out together (30 mins)	gym	I'm feeling like my stomach is so flabby, my sister looks great
Touching my stomach to feel it over my jeans (3 mins)	At home	I don't know how I can accept my body like this!

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Questions for Self Reflection

- What am I looking for?
- How likely am I to see an objective accurate reflection?
- What factors might influence what I see?
 - Mood
 - What / when I last ate
 - Time of day
 - What I'm wearing
 - Menstrual cycle
- How might checking impact me negatively?
- How do I usually feel after checking / how am I likely to feel this time?

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Adverse Effects of Shape Checking Aids in Maintaining Body Dissatisfaction:

- Decrease body satisfaction
- Focus / selective attention on disliked aspects of appearance - increasing preoccupation and enhancing a negative cognitive bias towards one's shape
- Increases the prominence of perceived flaws which would have otherwise gone unnoticed, what one looks for one will find

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Pro-Active Activities to Counter Shape Checking

Can Include:

- Make clothing choice ahead of time and change without a mirror
- Get rid of clothing that does not fit or has served as a "goal"
- Eliminate access to media sources of comparison such as:
 - internet sites
 - magazines
- Eliminate old photos used to compare current body to past body

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Strategies to Address BI Concerns 3. Challenge Body Avoidance

Types of body avoidance can include:

- Avoiding looking in mirror or reflective surfaces
- Avoidance of the scale
- Choosing clothing to hide ones body regardless of discomfort (sweaters in summer weather)
- Covering disliked body parts
- Avoiding viewing photos of self
- Avoiding touching ones body for selfcare activities (showering etc.)

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Body Avoidance

Clients often move to body avoidance as shape checking becomes too anxiety provoking.

Strategies to Address Body Avoidance:

- Educate about the negative consequences of body avoidance
- Aid clients in exposure activities
- Aid clients in managing anxious thoughts

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Adverse Effects of Body Avoidance Aids in Maintaining Body Dissatisfaction:

- Sustains anxious critical thoughts about ones appearance in the absence of knowledge about ones actual appearance
- Inhibits opportunities to learn coping skills and increase confidence in anxiety management
- Prevents opportunities to learn new information / perspective about the body
- Impairs functioning, valued activities, social activities and physical intimacy
- Inhibits ability to gain trust in ones body and gain relief from feared outcomes

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Graded In Vivo Exposure

1. Develop hierarchy of feared or avoided situations to be challenged.
2. Order the list from most anxiety provoking to least anxiety provoking.
3. Give each item a rating from 0 (no anxiety) to 100 (extreme anxiety.)
4. Begin with the least anxiety provoking item.
5. Move to the next item once the previous challenge has been conquered and anxiety during exposure is no greater than a rating of approximately 20.

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Body Image Exposure

Hierarchy of Challenge Activities:	Anxiety Rating
1. Wear swimsuit from change room to pool area with no towel around waist.	100
2. Attend a swimming outing with friends.	90
3. Wear fitted jeans out to a social get together.	75
4. Go shopping for new jeans.	60
5. Step on the weigh scale facing forward.	55

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Guidelines for Effective Exposure

- Pre-planned
- Frequent
- Prolonged – monitor anxiety levels
- Eliminate safety behaviors that could diminish effectiveness
- Anticipate possible challenges and use cognitive strategies to prepare
- Address thoughts after completion

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Affirmations for Anxiety Management

- I am capable of tolerating this feeling.
- This feeling will pass.
- I can choose to act despite my thoughts.
- Being willing to face anxious situations gives me opportunity to gain evidence that my body can be trusted!
- My willingness to face anxiety shows my strength.

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Strategies to Address BI Concerns

4. Cognitive Restructuring and Self Talk

Goal:

Help clients think more realistically, moderate extreme emotion and interrupt maladaptive behaviors

Strategies to Address Cognitive Restructuring and Self Talk:

- Educate about the negative consequences
- Teach clients about identifying errors in thinking, reframing thoughts and alternative perspectives
- Aid clients in gaining experiential evidence to refute their beliefs through the use of behavioral experiments

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Fat Talk

Negative interpersonal communication about one's physical appearance, eating and physical activity

Often manifests during social interactions as self-disparaging comments about one's:

- Current or future weight:
"I'm so fat."
- Eating:
"I shouldn't be eating this."
- Body shape:
"My legs look so big in these jeans."

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Adverse Effects of Thinking Errors

- Sustains body dissatisfaction with faulty thinking remaining unchecked
- Accurate self perception is minimized with belief in the bodies malleability – self-critical body thoughts increase as clients are led to believe their body is malleable and should be able to conform to idealized standards
- Fat talk positively predicts body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness

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Thinking Error

Emotional Reasoning

“ I feel fat therefore I am fat.”

- Thoughts and feelings are not facts
- Work on identifying the emotion

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Body Displacement Theory

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    graph LR
      A[stressful situation] --> B[FAT]
      A --> C[ineffective defective unlovable]
      B --> D[solution: restriction]
      B --> E[solution: excessive exercise]
      C --> F[solution?]
    
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Thinking Error

Mind Reading

“ My friend has not replied to my invite. He must be thinking I’m fat and disgusting.”

- Challenge with other possibilities
- broaden perspective

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Original Perspective

Situation:
Friend has not replied to invite

Thought:
He must be thinking I’m fat and disgusting.

Strength of Belief: 75%

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Broadened Perspective

- having a bad day
- distracted
- doesn't like me
- didn't receive the message
- thinks I'm fat and disgusting

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Behavioral Experiments

- Allows clients try out changes in behavior in a systematic fashion vs just change the behavior.
- Can be used to test existing beliefs about one’s body, while developing more adaptive beliefs.
- Helps clients gain concrete evidence to evaluate the accuracy of their cognition

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Steps for Effectiveness

1. Establish the current belief – help clients to identify it in a way that is specific and allows it to be tested
2. Rate the strength of the belief
3. Establish an alternative belief
4. Rate the strength of the alternative belief
5. Mutually establish the behavior to be taken to test the two beliefs – help client choose a method that is challenging yet manageable, discuss potential obstacles that could nullify it
6. Mutually establish a time frame and number of times to be tested – doing the test more than once will aid in eliminating exceptional circumstances
7. Review the outcome
8. Revisit and re-rate each belief

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Case Example

Current belief and it's strength:
 “If I get dressed up and go out with my friends I won’t have fun and will be distracted the whole time with negative body thoughts.” (100% belief)

Alternative Belief and it's strength:
 “If I keep practicing dressing up and going out with my friends I can have fun even if I have some negative body thoughts, and my thoughts can diminish in intensity and frequency.” (10% belief)

Potential obstacles and solutions:
 drink alcohol when out with friends to curb anxious thoughts – tell one friend of plan not to drink for support and accountability

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Monitoring Sheet

Week	Behavior Change	Outcome	Current Belief	Alt. Belief
1	Pool hall with 3 best friends	Did not enjoy myself at all, but saw a guy there I used to date and kept having thoughts he was judging my body	100%	10%
2	Pool hall with 3 best friends	Wore “safer” clothes, had a lot of thoughts of feeling fat and uncomfortable but also had moments of not thinking about my body and laughed	85%	10%
3	Pool hall with 3 best friends	Wore a tight fitting shirt I was pretty anxious about, noticed I had multiple periods of not thinking about my body and had a pretty good time	50%	25%
4	Pool hall with 3 best friends	Similar experience to last time out, wore a challenging skirt, it was really nice to hang out and not be in my head the whole time!	35%	51%

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Strategies to Address BI Concerns

5. Practice Mindfulness and Acceptance

Can be practiced as an alternative to cognitive restructuring when a thought is believed 100% and is highly resistant to being challenged.

Strategies to Practice Mindfulness and Acceptance:

- Teach clients how these principles can be applied to their thoughts, emotions and physical sensations
- Teach clients about becoming a neutral observer

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Mindfulness and Acceptance

Therapeutic interventions for managing thoughts, emotions and physical sensations

Mindfulness:

- A tool to increase attention to one’s experience in the present moment, while letting go of judgment (thoughts)
- An alternative to attempting to avoid or control our thoughts or emotions which is ineffective

Acceptance:

- Requires willingness to observe and experience the moment

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Cognitive Defusion

- Facilitates acceptance
- Noticing a thought as a thought rather than fusing to a thought as literal truth
- Allows for behavior choices to be experientially based vs based on thoughts as truths

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The Power of Thoughts

Powerful:

- A false belief that is often fused with
- “Worrying will change the outcome of my future.”
- “I feel fat therefore I am fat.”

Powerless:

- Thoughts alone can not change one’s external experience, behavior is also required
- Example – thinking really hard about opening the door to escape – was it enough to accomplish the task?

The Stance of the Neutral Observer

1. Observance of the thought: awareness of thoughts
mindfulness
2. Taking a non-judgmental stance:
“I’m having the thought that people are judging me.”
vs “People are judging me.”

The Stance of the Neutral Observer

3. Acceptance:

“It’s to be expected that I have thoughts about others judging me, as I’m working through this in my recovery.”

4. Defuse vs engage:

allowing thoughts to pass by
you are not your thoughts
choosing behavior based on values vs attempting to control or avoid the thought, feeling or physical sensation such as hunger or fullness

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