



TRAUMA THERAPIES

COGNITIVE PROCESSING THERAPY

OVERVIEW

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) was developed in the late 1980s by Dr. Patricia Resick.

CPT is a form of cognitive-behavioral therapy developed specifically for PTSD by targeting the maladaptive thoughts that arise after trauma. It focuses on the 'stuck points' — beliefs and thoughts that prevent healing, such as guilt, shame, or self-blame.

For example, a survivor of assault may blame themselves for what happened. In CPT, they would learn to challenge that belief with evidence, ultimately recognizing that the trauma was not their fault.



HOW IT WORKS

Through structured writing and processing exercises, clients learn to recognize unhelpful beliefs, evaluate their accuracy, and replace them with healthier, more balanced thoughts. This process helps reduce trauma-related distress.

CPT involves four main components:

1. Education about PTSD and trauma responses.
2. Identifying 'stuck points' — beliefs that are inaccurate or harmful.
3. Challenging these beliefs through Socratic questioning and writing exercises.
4. Replacing unhelpful thoughts with balanced, realistic ones.

USEFUL TOOLS

IMPACT STATEMENT

Clients write about how the trauma affected their beliefs about safety, trust, power, control, esteem, and intimacy.

ABC WORKSHEETS

Record Activating events, Beliefs, and Consequences to examine thought patterns.

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Guided prompts to evaluate accuracy and helpfulness of beliefs.

THEMES

Safety, trust, power/control, esteem, and intimacy are revisited and reframed.

INTERESTING FACTS

- CPT has been adapted for both individual and group therapy.
- Research shows CPT reduces PTSD symptoms in as few as 12 sessions.
- CPT is one of the top therapies recommended for veterans and survivors of interpersonal trauma.

CONCLUSION

Cognitive Processing Therapy has been extensively researched and is recommended by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the American Psychological Association. It is especially effective for PTSD, depression, and related conditions, helping individuals rebuild trust, safety, and self-worth.

CPT empowers clients to challenge distorted beliefs and reclaim their lives. By shifting how trauma is understood, clients can heal and move toward resilience.