

Sample Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Syllabus With Embedded Deliberate Practice Exercises

APPENDIX



This appendix provides a sample one-semester, three-unit course dedicated to teaching cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). This course is appropriate for graduate students (master's and doctoral) at all levels of training, including first-year students who have not yet worked with clients. We present it as a model that can be adopted to a specific program's contexts and needs. For example, instructors may borrow portions of it to use in other courses, in practica, in didactic training events at externships and internships, in workshops, and in continuing education for postgraduate therapists.

Course Title: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Theory and Deliberate Practice

Course Description

This course teaches theory, principles, and core skills of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). As a course with both didactic and practicum elements, it will review the theory and research on emotion, psychotherapy change processes, and foster the use of deliberate practice to enable students to acquire 10 key CBT skills.

Course Objectives

Students who complete this course will be able to

1. Describe the core theory, research, and skills of CBT
2. Apply the principles of deliberate practice for career-long clinical skill development
3. Demonstrate key CBT skills
4. Evaluate how they can fit CBT skills into their developing therapeutic framework
5. Employ CBT with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds
6. Describe the ways in which CBT is an evidenced-based practice

Date	Lecture and Discussion	Skills Lab	Homework (for next class)
Week 1	Introduction to cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) theory, history, and research; process and outcome research	Lecture on principles of deliberate practice; deliberate practice research	Tolin (2016, Chapter 1); Dobson and Dozois (2019, Chapters 1–3)
Week 2	Developing a CBT working alliance; providing a treatment rationale	Exercise 1: Explaining the Treatment Rationale for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy	Tolin (2016, Chapters 5 & 6); Persons (2012, Chapter 6); Exercise 1
Week 3	Developing a CBT working alliance; establishing treatment goals	Exercise 2: Establishing Goals	Castonguay et al. (2010); Tolin (2016, Chapter 7); Persons (2012, Chapters 6 & 8); Exercise 2
Week 4	Negotiating session agendas	Exercise 3: Negotiating a Session Agenda	Persons (2012, Chapter 10); Exercise 3
Week 5	Assigning and reviewing between-session activities (i.e., homework); integrating experience monitoring within and between sessions	Exercise 4: Assigning and Reviewing Between-Session Activities	Kazantzis et al. (2005, Chapters 1–4); Exercise 4
Week 6	Working with cognitions	Exercise 5: Working With Cognitions	Tolin (2016, Chapters 13–17); Exercise 5
Week 7	Working with behaviors	Exercise 6: Working With Behaviors	Tolin (2016, Chapters 8–12); Exercise 6
Week 8	Working with emotions	Exercise 7: Working With Emotions	Tolin (2016, Chapters 18 & 19); Persons (2012, Chapter 4); Exercise 7
Week 9	Midterm paper due, self-evaluation, skill coaching feedback	Transcript Session or Mock Session	Reading and exercise identified by mock or real session
Week 10	Flexibility within fidelity	Exercise 8: Adherence Flexibility	Persons (2012, Chapters 11 & 12); Dobson and Dozois (2019, Chapter 13 by Norcross et al.); Exercise 8
Week 11	Identifying and responding to therapeutic alliance ruptures	Exercise 9: Responding to Therapeutic Alliance Ruptures	Eubanks et al. (2018); Constantino et al. (2010); Holtforth and Castonguay (2005); Exercise 9
Week 12	Identifying and responding to client resistance	Exercise 10: Responding to Client Resistance	Aviram et al. (2016); Westra and Aviram (2013); Westra et al. (2016); Westra and Constantino (2019); Exercise 10
Week 13	Transdiagnostic CBT principles and strategies	Exercises 5–7: Working With Cognitions, Behaviors, and Emotions	Boswell (2013); Barlow et al. (2017); Dobson and Dozois (2019, Chapter 16 by Norton et al.); Exercises 5–7
Week 14	Working with difficult clients; managing negative reactions	Exercises 8–10: Adherence Flexibility, Responding to Therapeutic Alliance Ruptures, and Responding to Client Resistance	Castonguay et al. (2010); Wolf et al. (2013, Chapter 2 by Leventovsky & Rosmarin, & Conclusions & Guidelines); Exercises 8–10
Week 15	Final paper due, final exam, self-evaluation, skill coaching feedback	Transcript Session or Mock Session	None

Format of Class

Course time is split evenly between learning CBT theory and acquiring CBT skills:

Lecture/Discussion Class: Each week, there will be one Lecture/Discussion class for 1.5 hours focusing on CBT theory and related research.

CBT Skills Lab: Each week there will be one CBT Skills Lab for 1.5 hours. Skills Labs are for practicing CBT skills using the exercises in this book. The exercises use therapy simulations (role-plays) with the following goals:

1. Build trainees' skill and confidence for using CBT skills with real clients
2. Provide a safe space for experimenting with different therapeutic interventions, without fear of making mistakes
3. Provide plenty of opportunity to explore and "try on" different styles of therapy, so trainees can ultimately discover their own personal, unique therapy style

Mock Sessions: Twice in the semester (weeks 9 and 15), trainees will do a psychotherapy mock session in the CBT Skills Lab. In contrast to highly structured and repetitive deliberate practice exercises, a psychotherapy mock session is an unstructured and improvised role-played therapy session. Mock sessions let trainees

1. Practice using CBT skills responsively.
2. Experiment with clinical decision making in an unscripted context.
3. Discover their personal therapeutic style.
4. Build endurance for working with real clients.

Homework

Homework will be assigned each week and will include reading, 1 hour of skills practice with an assigned practice partner, and occasional writing assignments. For the skills practice homework, trainees will repeat the exercise they did for that week's CBT Skills Lab. Because the instructor will not be there to evaluate performance, trainees should instead complete the Deliberate Practice Reaction Form, as well as the Deliberate Practice Diary Form, for themselves as a self-evaluation.

Writing Assignments

Students are to write two papers: one due at midterm and one due at the last day of class. Some possible topics for the papers are as follows:

- exploration of one aspect of CBT theory, research, or technique
- a partial transcript of one of the trainees' therapy cases with a real client, with discussion from a CBT perspective

Vulnerability, Privacy, Confidentiality, and Boundaries

This course is aimed at developing CBT skills, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills in an experiential framework and as relevant to clinical work. This course is not psychotherapy or a substitute for psychotherapy. Students should interact at a level of self-disclosure that is personally comfortable and helpful to their own learning. Although becoming aware of internal emotional and psychological processes is necessary for a therapist's development, it is not necessary to reveal all that information to the trainer. It is important for students to sense their own level of safety and privacy. Students are not evaluated on the level of material that they choose to reveal in the class.

Multicultural Orientation

This course is taught in a multicultural context, defined as "how the cultural world-views, values, and beliefs of the client and therapist interact and influence one another

to co-create a relational experience that is in the spirit of healing" (Davis et al., 2018, p. 3). Core features of the multicultural orientation include cultural comfort, humility, and responding to cultural opportunities (or previously missed opportunities). Throughout this course, students are encouraged to reflect on their own cultural identity and improve their ability to attune with their clients' cultural identities (Hook et al., 2017). For further guidance on this topic and deliberate practice exercises to improve multicultural skills, see the forthcoming book *Deliberate Practice in Multicultural Counseling* (to be published by the American Psychological Association [APA]).

Confidentiality

Due to the nature of the material covered in this course, there are occasions when personal life experience may be relevant for the learning environment. You will not be required to share personal experiences (see below), but you might consider doing so when you are comfortable. Additionally, to create a safe learning environment that is respectful of client and therapist information and diversity and to foster open and vulnerable conversation in class, students are required to agree to strict confidentiality within and outside of the instruction setting.

Self-Revealing Information

In accordance with the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (APA, 2017), students are **not required to disclose personal information**. Because this class is about developing both interpersonal and CBT competence, following are some important points so that students are fully informed as they make choices to self-disclose:

- Students choose how much, when, and what to disclose. Students are not penalized for the choice not to share personal information.
- The learning environment is susceptible to group dynamics much like any other group space, and therefore students may be asked to share their observations and experiences of the class environment with the singular goal of fostering a more inclusive and productive learning environment.

Evaluation

Self-Evaluation: At the end of the semester (Week 15), trainees will perform a self-evaluation. This will help trainees track their progress and identify areas for further development. The Guidance for Trainees section in Chapter 3 of this book highlights potential areas of focus for self-evaluation.

Grading Criteria

As designed, students would be accountable for the level and quality of their performance in

- the Discussion classes
- the Skills Lab (exercises and mock sessions)
- homework
- midterm and final papers
- a final exam

Required Readings

Aviram, A., Westra, H. A., Constantino, M. J., & Antony, M. M. (2016). Responsive management of early resistance in cognitive-behavioral therapy for generalized anxiety disorder. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 84*(9), 783–794. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000100>

- Barlow, D. H., Farchione, T. J., Sauer-Zavala, S., Murray Latin, H., Ellard, K. K., Bullis, J. R., Bentley, K. H., Boettcher, H. T., & Cassiello-Robbins, C. (2017). *Unified protocol for transdiagnostic treatment of emotional disorders: Therapist guide* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Boswell, J. F. (2013). Intervention strategies and clinical process in transdiagnostic cognitive-behavioral therapy. *Psychotherapy*, 50(3), 381–386. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032157>
- Castonguay, L. G., Constantino, M. J., McAleavey, A. A., & Goldfried, M. R. (2010). The therapeutic alliance in cognitive-behavioral therapy. In J. C. Muran & J. P. Barber (Eds.), *The therapeutic alliance: An evidence-based guide to practice* (pp. 150–171). Guilford Press.
- Constantino, M. J., Castonguay, L. G., Zack, S., & DeGeorge, J. (2010). Engagement in psychotherapy: Factors contributing to the facilitation, demise, and restoration of the therapeutic alliance. In D. Castro-Blanco & M. S. Carver (Eds.), *Elusive alliance: Treatment engagement strategies with high-risk adolescents* (pp. 21–57). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/12139-001>
- Dobson, K. S., & Dozois, D. J. A. (Eds.). (2019). *Handbook of cognitive-behavioral therapies* (4th ed.). Guilford Press.
- Eubanks, C. F., Muran, J. C., & Safran, J. D. (2018). Repairing alliance ruptures. In J. C. Norcross & B. E. Wampold (Eds.), *Psychotherapy relationships that work: Evidence-based responsiveness* (3rd ed., pp. 549–579). Oxford University Press.
- Holtforth, M. G., & Castonguay, L. G. (2005). Relationship and techniques in cognitive-behavioral therapy—A motivational approach. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 42(4), 443–455. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.42.4.443>
- Kazantzis, N., Deane, F., Ronan, K. R., & L'Abate, L. (Eds.). (2005). *Using homework assignments in cognitive behavior therapy*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis.
- Persons, J. B. (2012). *The case formulation approach to cognitive-behavior therapy*. Guilford Press.
- Tolin, D. F. (2016). *Doing CBT: A comprehensive guide to working with behaviors, thoughts, and emotions*. Guilford Press.
- Westra, H. A., & Aviram, A. (2013). Core skills in motivational interviewing. *Psychotherapy*, 50(3), 273–278. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032409>
- Westra, H. A., & Constantino, M. J. (2019). Integrative psychotherapy for generalized anxiety disorder. In J. C. Norcross & M. R. Goldfried (Eds.), *Handbook of psychotherapy integration* (3rd ed., pp. 284–302). Oxford University Press.
- Westra, H. A., Constantino, M. J., & Antony, M. M. (2016). Integrating motivational interviewing with cognitive-behavioral therapy for severe generalized anxiety disorder: An allegiance-controlled randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 84(9), 768–782. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000098>
- Wolf, A. W., Goldfried, M. R., & Muran, J. C. (Eds.). (2013). *Transforming negative reactions to clients: From frustration to compassion*. American Psychological Association.

Supplemental Readings

- Beck, J. S. (2005). *Cognitive therapy for challenging problems: What to do when the basics don't work*. Guilford Press.
- Castonguay, L. G., & Beutler, L. E. (Eds.). (2006). *Principles of therapeutic change that work*. Oxford Press.
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- Constantino, M. J., Goodwin, B. J., Muir, H. J., Coyne, A. E., & Boswell, J. F. (2021). Contextual-responsive psychotherapy integration applied to cognitive behavioral therapy. In J. C. Watson & H. Wiseman (Eds.), *The responsive psychotherapist: Attuning to clients in the moment*. American Psychological Association.

- Davis, D. E., DeBlaere, C., Owen, J., Hook, J. N., Rivera, D. P., Choe, E., Van Tongeren, D. R., Worthington, E. L., & Placeres, V. (2018). The multicultural orientation framework: A narrative review. *Psychotherapy, 55*(1), 89–100. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000160>
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- Leahy, R. L. (Ed.). (2003). *Roadblocks in cognitive-behavioral therapy: Transforming challenges into opportunities for change*. Guilford Press.
- Martell, C. R., Dimidjian, S., & Herman-Dunn, R. (2010). *Behavioral activation for depression: A clinician's guide*. Guilford Press.
- Miller, S. D., Prescott, D., & Maeschalck, S. (2017). *Reaching for excellence: Feedback-informed treatment in practice*. American Psychological Association.
- Safran, J. D., & Muran, J. C. (2000). *Negotiating the therapeutic alliance: A relational treatment guide*. Guilford Press.
- Swift, J. K., & Greenberg, R. P. (2015). Foster the therapeutic alliance. In J. K. Swift & R. P. Greenberg, *Premature termination in psychotherapy: Strategies for engaging clients and improving outcomes* (pp. 137–147). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14469-010>
- Westra, H. A., Norouzian, N., Poulin, L., Coyne, A. E., Constantino, M. J., Hara, K., Olson, D., & Antony, M. M. (2020). Testing a deliberate practice workshop for developing appropriate responsivity to resistance markers. *Psychotherapy*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000311>