What Are the Different Therapies for Bipolar Disorder?

by BECKY WICKS

Understanding the Therapies for Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder is a severe and enduring mental health condition that is likely to require treatment while the illness is active.

There are many types of therapies for bipolar disorder, and each person will react to each kind of treatment differently. It is important to not become disheartened if you feel one type of therapy is not working for you; it could be that something else is more suited to your needs.

The main types of therapies for bipolar disorder (aside from medication) are:

- Psychotherapy
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT)
- Cognitive analytical therapy (CAT)
- Humanistic therapy
- Family therapy
- Couples therapy

Let’s take a look at each therapy individually.

Psychotherapy

This is a form of talking therapy, and involves talking to a trained therapist. It aims to help you to look at your thoughts and feelings, and to change your negative habits into more positive strategies.

There may be the opportunity for group therapy with this kind of treatment, which could potentially help you discuss your feelings and worries with other people going through similar issues as you, and they may shed some light on your condition that you may not have previously seen.

Group therapy is completely confidential, as is any other kind of therapy that you enter into. The only time confidentiality would be breached is if it were deemed you were a risk to yourself or others.

CBT

This treatment is based on both cognitive therapy and behavioral psychotherapy. This means that it aims to help you discover your beliefs and ideas, and how these might be causing negative emotional problems in your life.

Your therapist will encourage you to think about strategies to change these behaviors and will help you implement them. There is usually homework assigned with CBT, so keep that in mind if this is the type of therapy you wish to

opt for.

CAT

This therapy discusses events and experiences that may have occurred during your past in order to help you understand your current thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

After these discussions, you will be encouraged to write them down and work with your therapist in order to look into any patterns that might have emerged, which you will then attempt to change and adapt to be more positive.

Humanistic Therapies

These therapies involve thinking about your strengths and recognizing who you are as a person. They aim to help you improve your self-awareness and self-esteem.

Some examples of humanistic therapy include person-centered counseling, which creates a safe space where you are able to talk about yourself and recognize your ability to change, or transpersonal psychology, a procedure that uses tactics such as medication in order to help you make sense of your existence.

Family and Couples Therapy

These therapies focus on relationships and working together to fix issues that might be arising. The therapist will promote healthy units, and involve such exercises as group discussions.

Most of us find talking through issues with our friends and family helps to alleviate what we are feeling and process what we might be going through. Worries can play heavy on our minds, and having someone to unload onto can be a great help.

Talking therapy works along the same lines, however you are discussing your problems and worries with someone who is trained to listen and in helping you discover ways to overcome your thoughts and behaviors.

Aside from the main types of therapy listed above, there are other types of therapy you could consider, such as mindfulness therapy and creative therapy such as painting, theatre, art and dance, which aims at helping you discover your feelings through methods that you find more freeing.

One of the most important things to consider when you are thinking about stepping into any form of talking therapy is the therapist. If you do not have a positive and strong relationship with your therapist it is likely that the treatment will not have the best impact.

There are multiple types of professionals able to provide therapy, some examples of which include:

- Psychiatrists
- Psychotherapists
- Counselors
- Psychologists

Ensure your therapist is a member of an accredited and professional organization. This will guarantee your protection from negative behaviors and help you receive the best care.

Before you consider going into talking therapy and go looking for a therapist, there are some questions you should ask yourself:

- **What kind of therapy would suit me?** Think about your lifestyle, the commitments you would have to make. For example, CBT is very intensive and requires a lot of input. Alternatively, you may wish to approach something on a more humanistic basis, as this fits in with your lifestyle better.

- **What kind of therapist would I work best with?** Think about age, gender, professional interests and experience.
- **How much money am I willing to spend?** Consider travel costs and the cost of each session. You do not want to hit financial difficulty just as you are starting to make discoveries and important changes in your life.

Once you have chosen a therapist, think about the following questions after your first session:

- Do you feel comfortable talking to them?
- Would you be able to trust them?
- What is your gut instinct?

There are a lot of factors to consider if you are starting therapy, or even thinking about starting it, and it is important that you work through these in order to make a decision. Therapy may not be for everyone, but for a lot of people it can help improve quality of life and change negative behavior.