

# Cognitive therapy key to tackling depression

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(PhysOrg.com) -- New research from The University of Western Ontario shows why people suffering from depression may have a far greater hope of finding lasting relief by receiving cognitive therapy, rather than simply taking antidepressants. Previous research has demonstrated that individuals treated with cognitive therapy have approximately half of the relapse rate of those treated with medication alone. Research published by Western's David Dozois provides clues as to why this might be the case. Dozois found that cognitive therapy actually reorganizes and changes the way thoughts are processed.

Dozois' findings are being released in the [Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology](#), published by the American Psychological Association. Dozois is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Western. He is cross-appointed with the Department of [Psychiatry](#) at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and he is also a practicing clinical psychologist.

Dozois explains that the way in which we perceive ourselves and characterize our interactions with others is usually based on core beliefs that have been ingrained since childhood. For example, we may believe, "I am a good and likeable person," or "I am useless and no one will ever care for me," or perhaps, "As long as I am approved and accepted by everyone, then I am valuable."

People receiving cognitive therapy learn skills that allow them to dig deeper into understanding thinking patterns that directly lead to their distorted perception of themselves, and furthermore, identifying how

that distorted perception was established.

Dozois says, “Cognitive therapy is unique in that it reorganizes how information is stored in our representations of self, and how it is accessed. Reorganization through cognitive therapy allows individuals to make logical judgments on self-worth and relationships, and form appropriate emotional responses.

“We can carry distorted core belief systems through our lives,” says Dozois, “and the vulnerability they cause may not really surface until something big triggers it, such as a significant failure or loss. Then [depression](#) can hit very hard.

“Anti-depressants help, and the depression may lift, but our research shows that cognitive therapy actually makes changes that go far deeper and give people tools to change thinking. This means the chance of falling into another depression in the future may be far less. In other words, anti-depressants are effective at suppressing symptoms, but it is cognitive therapy that offers curative benefits.”

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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