

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Q: What will be expected of me in CPT?

A: You will complete practice assignments that address the connection between your thoughts and feelings. These will include identifying problematic thought patterns that might keep you stuck. You may also be asked to do an exercise between sessions in which you write about your traumatic experiences and how they affected your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

### Q: Can CPT work for someone with multiple traumas?

Yes. Service members who have experienced multiple traumas experience significant improvements with CPT. By participating in CPT, individuals not only report a substantial decrease in PTSD symptoms, but some no longer meet criteria for a PTSD diagnosis.

### Q: Will I be able to handle doing CPT?

A: It is common for individuals with PTSD to have this concern. Many Service members with this same question have completed the treatment with success and gained benefits in their day-to-day life. It is important to discuss these concerns with your provider.

### Q: Who can benefit from CPT?

A: CPT has worked for a variety of individuals with different backgrounds and traumas. What you get out of CPT will be determined by the amount of work you put into the treatment.

## Who We Are

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences' Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP) trains military and civilian behavioral health professionals to provide high quality, culturally-sensitive, evidence-based behavioral health services to Service members, Veterans and their families.



U.S. Army photo illustration by Pfc. Paige Pendleton, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. PAO, Public domain, via DVIDS.  
<https://www.dvidshub.net/image/1041712/army-helps-soldiers-have->

# Cognitive Processing Therapy

*This brochure was adapted (with permission) from a Department of Veterans Affairs brochure on CPT.*

## What is Cognitive Processing Therapy?

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) is one of the therapies recommended by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is a type of cognitive-behavioral treatment that focuses on thoughts and feelings. CPT requires approximately 12 weekly sessions. Sessions are typically 50 minutes long when delivered individually and 90 minutes long when delivered in a group setting.

Recovering from traumatic events and managing symptoms of PTSD can be difficult. CPT establishes a deeper understanding of how the traumatic experiences changed the way you think about yourself and the world. CPT addresses the thoughts that might keep you “stuck” and get in the way of recovery. With CPT, you will focus on more effective ways of managing these thoughts and beliefs. In addition, you will recognize how your feelings and behaviors have been influenced and can change.

As a Service member, you can benefit from the effectiveness of CPT treatment for PTSD. CPT has been shown to be effective with a variety of people and traumatic events such as combat, sexual assaults, physical assaults, childhood trauma, or violent crimes.



**CPT is a short-term psychotherapy for treating symptoms of PTSD, which may include:**

- Reliving or re-experiencing the event through distressing thoughts, nightmares, and flashbacks
- Avoiding thoughts and reminders of the event
- Negative changes in beliefs and feelings, such as anger and irritability
- Feeling keyed up, which may lead to problems sleeping and concentrating as well as being easily startled

## What are the Goals of CPT?

One of the primary goals of CPT is to decrease the distress, emotional numbing, and avoidance behaviors related to the trauma. CPT will help you gain a better understanding of the symptoms of PTSD and ways treatment can help. CPT will help you feel less tense or “on edge” while you learn to identify and challenge problematic thinking. This will help reduce other problems such as depression, anxiety, and guilt/shame while improving your overall daily functioning.

## What Will I Be Doing in CPT?

Over the course of CPT treatment:

- You will learn about PTSD including its causes and symptoms, as well as the reasons symptoms persist.
- You will learn to identify beliefs about your trauma and work to change unhelpful thoughts.
- You will complete practice assignments or worksheets to help develop and apply the skills both in and out of sessions. These are skills that help you to manage your own thoughts and beliefs.