

LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

Your guide in wellness and mental health

How CBT Can Help You Reach Your Goals

Setting goals is easy but following through on them... that's usually the hardest part. Whether you're working on improving relationships, advancing in your career, or managing stress - it's common to feel stuck between setting goals and following through. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) offers practical tools that can help bridge that gap. While CBT is typically known for addressing concerns like anxiety and depression, it can also be powerful for personal growth and goal achievement.



At its core, CBT is based on the idea that our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are interconnected. The way we *think* about ourselves and our situations directly influences how we *feel* and *act*. Sometimes we struggle to reach goals not because we lack motivation or ability, but because unhelpful thought patterns get in the way. CBT helps us identify and change these patterns so we can move toward our goals with clarity and confidence.

For example, imagine someone who wants to start exercising regularly but keeps putting it off. A CBT-based approach might begin by exploring the thoughts that fuel procrastination, such as "I'll never stick with it anyway" or "I'm too tired to start today." Can you imagine how thoughts like these can lower motivation, make us feel discouraged, or lead to procrastination? Now imagine how we might feel after challenging and replacing those thoughts with more balanced ones like, "It's possible I won't be perfect at sticking with it, but any effort I make still counts as progress." or "Maybe I don't have the energy for everything today, but I can do one small step." Over time, practicing these new ways of thinking can lift our mood, increase motivation, and help turn small, consistent steps into lasting change.

In addition to new ways of thinking, CBT also teaches strategies for modifying our behavior to help us stick with goals long term. For example, when committing to a goal like exercising more, people commonly get stuck waiting for a spark of energy and motivation to arrive before they'll feel ready to act. But the motivating feelings they are waiting for will likely only arrive *after they get started*, not before. To overcome this dilemma, we can apply the CBT strategy *behavioral activation* which guides us to push ourselves to start before we "feel like it" with small, bite-size actions that generate energy and encouragement. We replace the expectation that "I'll exercise when I feel like it" with the expectation that "once I just get started, I'll feel great."

Ultimately, CBT empowers us and helps us build more self-awareness, discipline, and confidence – all essential ingredients for achieving meaningful goals. By learning to manage our thoughts and behaviors intentionally, we are not just changing habits; we also can start to reach goals that once felt out of reach.

Get Started Today

If you'd like to learn more about the tools introduced here or your overall mental health and wellbeing needs, you can take a quick mental health assessment by scanning or visiting learntolive.com/partners and entering access code **MMHG**. Learn to Live is available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.

