



Do you feel inadequate or unlovable?

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can help

– CRSH therapist, Chris Hanson, LMSW

"I'm different; I don't fit in."

"I'm not good enough to be accepted by those I admire."

"If people see the real me, they will not accept me."

I see many LGBTQIA clients who struggle with their identity; who fear acceptance; who are full of self-criticism and negativity.

For some, the tendency toward negative thinking is related to core beliefs. LGBTQIA individuals may feel inadequate or unlovable, and, as a result, negative feelings are commonplace and expected. Core beliefs, first developed in childhood, are deeply ingrained and are repeatedly reinforced through old coping patterns.

Before any change can happen, it is important to establish a safe space for clients to explore their feelings so they can begin to feel comfortable articulating them.

I encourage clients to do homework - to record what is going on when negative thoughts surface. This is the beginning of the awareness phase - to recognize those feelings and begin replacing them with positive ones.

I ask clients to give me three negative statements about themselves, and then replace those statements with positive ones. Next, I encourage clients to tune into their inner voice when those negative feelings surface, and immediately switch those statements to positive ones. This step must be practiced repeatedly so negative feelings eventually will be replaced with reasonable, positive thoughts and feelings. In addition, I find childhood imagery can be an

effective tool in helping LGBT clients understand their identity, especially when they are struggling with the coming out process. I suggest they remember a time when they were sad, and encourage them to talk about those feelings and how they are impacting their thoughts and feelings today. Often, going back in the past to their inner child can heal wounds from the past and provide the pathway to becoming more confident with who they are today.

I also work with clients to help them understand expectations in their relationship. What is the relationship they have, what does it mean to them, and are they being true to that?

Finally, I work with clients to create their own goals. Through the use of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), we concentrate on a person's views and beliefs about their life; and focus on replacing ways of thinking and living that do not work with ways that do by giving people more control over their lives.

CBT can help an individual break free of the remnants of destructive core beliefs and the problems they cause. Cognitive behavior therapy will help a person develop strategies and skills to achieve their goals.

Ultimately, through cognitive behavioral therapy, clients will feel good about themselves again and regain the confidence they lost. They may change the way they act, the way they feel, the way they think or the way they deal with problems.

For more information on this topic, or to make an appointment with a therapist, please contact The Center for Relationship and Sexual Health at (248) 399-7447.