**Open Questions in CBT**

Think of your Open Questions in CBT moving from broad and non-directive, to strategic and directive over the course of a conversation. Use broad Open Questions early on to get the facts of the problem/situation (and to agree on a definition of the problem/situation). Use Guided Discovery to help the client recognize links between their thoughts, behaviors, emotions and the situations in which they come up. Socratic Questioning and Cognitive Restructuring invite the client to look critically at specific aspects of their own beliefs and habits of thought that may be contributing to their depression and/or anxiety.

The Questions below progress roughly from Broad Early Questions, through Guided Discovery, Socratic Questioning and Cognitive Restructuring. The divisions between the lists are rough.

**Broad, Early Questions**

“What brings you in?”

“What problem should we talk about?”

“What has been bothering you the most?”

“Tell me about it.”

“How are things with X?”

“Tell me more.”

“Tell me more about that.”

“How does this connect to why you are here?”

“What do you mean when you say X?”

“What else?”

“What else should we talk about?”

“What other parts are there to this?”

“That’s one piece of it. What else is there?”

“What other problems or concerns are there?”

“What is an example of X?”

“What part of this should we focus on?”

“What goals do you have for therapy?”

“Those goals sound great. I’m wondering, how might we make these goals more specific?”

“What part of this is most important?”

**Guided Discovery –** How does this situation show up in your thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and what do you want to do about it?

“What do you make of this?”

“What does this mean to you?”

“Where does that leave you?”

“Where do you go with this?”

“What’s most important in this?”

“What do other people say about this situation?”

“How do you cope with this?”

“How did you feel?”

“What were you thinking?”

“What was going through your mind?”

“What did you say to yourself?”

“What do you guess you were thinking about?”

“What else went through your mind?”

“How did that thought make you feel?”

“How would you feel if you believed something else?”

“What were you feeling in your body?”

“What did you do after that?”

“What did you feel like doing after that?”

“What is an alternative way of viewing this situation?”

“If this comes up again, what could you tell yourself?”

“What other situations does this remind you of?”

“When does this happen?”

“What other times do you feel this way?”

“How does this pattern show up in other parts of your life?”

“If this is true, what does it say about you?”

“What does this mean about you?”

“If this is true, what’s the worst thing about it?”

“What’s so bad about that?”

“What does this success say about you?” (affirming)

“What does your ability to cope say about you?” (affirming)

“What does the fact that you made it through say about you?” (affirming)

“What should you do about the situation?” (problem solving)

“Is the problem more in your thinking or your behavior?”

“What do you want to remember from our session today?” (end of session)

**Socratic Questioning** – Let's scrutinize your way of thinking.

“What would you tell a friend if they were in this situation?”

“How does believing this affect you?”

“If this is true, what’s the worst that could happen?”

“What’s the best that could happen?”

“What’s the most likely outcome?”

“What’s the most realistic outcome?”

“What’s the most realistic way to look at this?”

“Is there a more helpful way to look at this?

“How do you define X?”

“How bad/unlovable/incompetent are you compared to other people?”

“What makes you more X, Y, or Z when compared to others?”

“Why “should” you be different?”

“What is important to you in this?”

**Cognitive Restructuring** – Let's change your way of thinking.

“What thought would you like to examine?”

“How does your view of the situation square with the facts?”

“What is the evidence that this is true?”

“What evidence is there that this is not true?”

“What are the facts of the situation?”

“What is the evidence on the other side?”

“What other evidence is there?”

“How much did you believe this at the time?”

“How much do you believe it now?”

“How sure are you that this is true, from 0 to 100?”

“How strong was your feeling from, 0 to 100?”

“What would Judge Judy/a scientist conclude from the facts of this situation?”

“What assumptions are you making?”

“What could you assume instead?”

“How does this belief help/hurt you?”

“What are the consequences of believing this?”

“What are the good/bad things about believing this?”

“Where did this belief come from?”

“If this happened, how would you cope?”

**Behavioral Experiment**

“How could we test this?”

“What do you predict will happen?”

“What does your depression/anxiety brain predict will happen?”

“What other things could happen?”

“How will we interpret the different outcomes that may occur?

“What will it mean if X/Y/Z happens?”

“How do you predict you will feel if you do X?”

“How did you actually feel when you did it?”

**Behavioral Activation**

“How do you spend your time?”

“When you do X activity how do you feel?”

“When you’re feeling depressed/anxious, what do you do?”

“How has your change in behavior since the depression affected how you respond to challenges in life?”

“What activities did you used to do which gave you a sense of achievement/pleasure that you are no longer doing?”

“How aligned are your daily activities with your values?”

“What activities used to give you a sense of accomplishment or pleasure?”

“How do you predict you will feel if you do X?”

“What did you learn from behavior monitoring about how your behaviors and mood are related?”