

Cognitive Restructuring

David A. Clark

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Abstract

Cognitive restructuring is the core therapeutic ingredient of cognitive therapy that was first introduced to the psychotherapy community by A. T. Beck and colleagues. This chapter provides a detailed breakdown and elaboration of cognitive restructuring and how it is implemented to effect symptom change. The nature of cognitive restructuring and its multifaceted therapeutic components are discussed. A critical review of the empirical research on its treatment efficacy is presented, as well as the evidence for cognitive mediation from component and mediation process research. It is concluded that cognitive restructuring is an effective treatment strategy for psychological disorders, especially anxiety and depression. However, superiority to other “less cognitive” interventions has not been demonstrated, even though the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring does occur by inducing cognitive change. Various research issues are raised that would advance a greater understanding of the mechanisms of change associated with cognitive restructuring. With greater knowledge of the change processes that characterize cognitive restructuring, clinicians will be better equipped to employ this powerful therapeutic intervention.

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