


# Age Appropriate CBT for Older People

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# Financial Disclosures

I have no financial relationships to disclose.

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# Age Appropriate CBT for Older People

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Professor Ken Laidlaw, PhD.

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# Age Appropriate CBT


## Plan

What is normal ageing and why does it matter when applying CBT with Older People?

Review of efficacy data for CBT with older people

Overview of cognitive and emotional development later in life

Age Appropriate CBT with older people, what is it?



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# Normal Aging in the US?

## Unprecedented demographic change

In 2008, the population age 65 and older was 52 million in 2018 & is projected to reach 95 million in 2060.  
Numbers aged 85+ years will >double from 6.5m in 2019 to 14.4 m in 2040 (123% increase)  
93,927 people aged 100+ years alive in 2018.

## Aging is experienced differently by the genders.

Men are more likely to be married and living in family home (72% vs 49%).

## Most older Americans live in the community.

1% aged 65-74 live in care homes rising to 7% for those aged 85+ years

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Source: AoA, May 2020

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# Normal Aging: Challenging Stereotypes

## Depression is NOT an outcome of Old Age

Rates of MDD is less prevalent in OP compared to Working Age Adults (Fiske et al. 2009; Lim et al. 2018).

## MH does not have parity of esteem in later life

MH problems are often seen as secondary to physical health problems (Frost et al. 2019; Petit et al. 2017).

## When asked Older People value Psychotherapy as a treatment option.

Understanding older people's preference for treatment is complex (Hair et al. 2020)



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## Review of Evidence.

### Depression in later life

Excess rates of mortality for untreated depression in older people. Depression in later life may be more chronic and with high rates of physical comorbidity, older people with depression may be seen as challenging cases for some therapists (Pocklington, 2017). Depression is often under-recognised but older people do well in treatment.

### Older People do well in with CBT when they can get it.

In IAPT in the UK 80% of older people completing a course of treatment show a reliable improvement compared to 72% for adults aged 18-64.



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## Efficacy of CBT with Older People?

CBT is the most systematically evaluated form of psychological therapy with older people and undoubtedly (from RCT, MA data) it is an efficacious treatment for late life depression (Cuijpers et al. 2014), the anxiety disorders (Hall et al. 2016) and for depression/burden in dementia caregivers (Sheung-Tak et al. 2019).

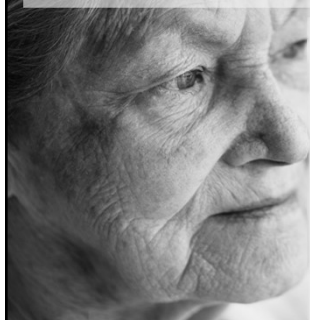
Evidence from the UK (IAPT) suggests older people receiving CBT report better outcome (64% vs 51%) and lower attrition than WAA (61% vs 47%) – NHS Digital (2020).

Meta-analyses confirm no age-difference in outcome. *Psychotherapy*: Cuijpers et al. 2020; *Anxiety Disorders*: Kishita & Laidlaw, 2017.



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## Efficacy of CBT: Can we do better?



The evidence hasn't kept pace with global changing demographics.

Access to CBT for older people is still not equivalent to that of WAA and oldest old rarely access IAPT

Older people often meet healthcare professionals who are more comfortable focusing on physical problems rather than mental health difficulties. (Frost et al. 2019).

Our RCT data rarely includes O-o in studies.

Our oldest-old need access to CBT that is developmentally appropriate. Cohort values, comorbidity, complex, respectful and collaborative.

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## Cognitive & Emotional Development

### People are living longer

As people age they report better emotional stability and experience better emotional regulation skills (Cartensen et al. 2011; Sims et al. 2015).

There is a positivity bias for past recall in non-depressed older people Mather & Cartensen, 2005; Reed et al. 2014).

Despite challenges of ageing there is an ageing paradox evident (Lohani & Iacowitz, 2014).

Well-being (Happiness and Life Satisfaction) is a U-shaped curve (Blanchflower, 2020).

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## Age Appropriate CBT?

Age appropriate CBT has 4 elements:

Conceptualisation/Cohort values



Attitudes to Ageing



Optimal Ageing (SOC)



Wisdom (timelines)



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## Making use of life experience (wisdom) in CBT?

### What is wisdom?

*It is multi-dimensional, linked to better health & well-being and may be something that can be increased (Jeste & Lee, 2019).*

*Elements of wisdom (Meeks & Jeste, 2009) may include: value relativism, prosocial concerns, Emotion regulation, fundamental pragmatics, uncertainty tolerance, ability to be reflective.*



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### Age Appropriate CBT?

Outcome could be improved, by taking account of Wisdom enhancement/self-acceptance to empower older people and foster self-acceptance.

Wisdom enhancement aims to encourage individuals to use their own life data to identify their resilience and the psychological growth that develops after dealing with adversity and overcoming challenges in life.

Wisdom enhancement may be a form of schema change.



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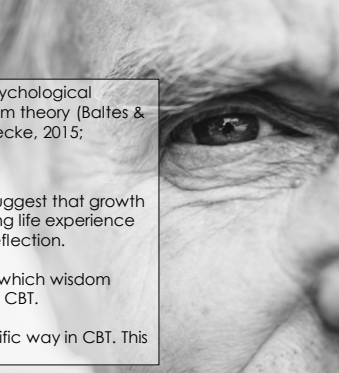
### Lifeskills in CBT

Using lifeskills to enhance psychological wellbeing is based on wisdom theory (Baltes & Smith, 2008; Freund & Hennecke, 2015; Staudinger & Gluck, 2011).

Weststrate & Gluck (2017) suggest that growth in wisdom after a challenging life experience may arise because of self-reflection.

Timelines are the means by which wisdom enhancement is enacted in CBT.

Timelines are used in a specific way in CBT. This is not narrative-based CBT.




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### The Idea of lifeskills in CBT is a very simple one



Asking people to reflect on difficult life experiences in structured way can help them develop a more elaborated account of their recall and be useful in addressing strategies for current problems in the here and now.

Recognises the different developmental context separating the client and therapist.

Consider the client to have expertise you (therapist) do not necessarily possess. As the client has lived longer than the therapist they may have **lifeskills** to draw upon in therapy as a resource for overcoming problems in the here and now.

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### What can timelines add to CBT?

Timelines provide therapists with a tool to achieve a focused reappraisal of past experiences.

Timelines encourage individuals to use concrete examples of lifeskills to enable re-appraisal, acceptance, problem-solving and attentional deployment to effect change, at any age.

Timelines encourage the client to focus on a factual review of events from their life.

Timelines encourage people to become more self-compassionate, accepting & to recognize their personal resilience in the face of difficult circumstance.



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### How are timelines useful?

Timelines can be useful as a way of recognizing strengths and internal resources in our clients.

Timelines can be useful to therapists to encourage therapists to expect change, even in the most discouraging situations.

They can be useful as a way of assessing the meaning or impact of a situation.



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### Are timelines in CBT useful?

Geraldine is 69 years old, and lives on her own. Married for 38 years her husband died after a short illness. They weren't able to have children. She has also outlived most of her friends and her family.

You have just started seeing her for panic disorder (she hyperventilates) as she has not been responding to medication. You see very good initial progress.



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### Are timelines in CBT useful?



7 months later, things have improved. She says that some days she notices, "Ooh, I feel a lot better [psychological] now!"

4 weeks later, I feel pretty useless. Don't think I will get out of this, not with this gammy leg."

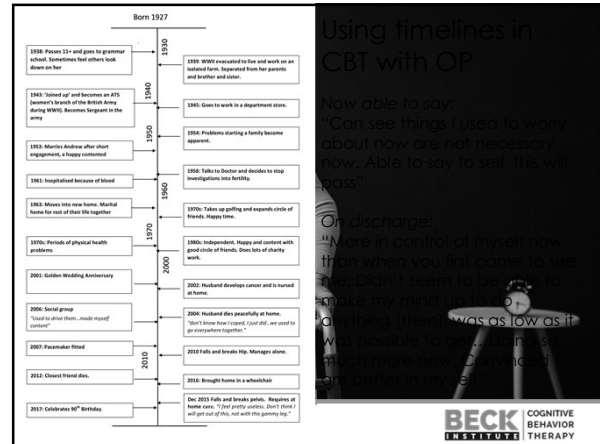
"Walking inside? Feel quite happy, confident as anything."

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### Using timelines in CBT with OP

Now able to say: "Can see things I used to worry about now are not necessary now. Able to say to self, this will pass!"

On discharge: "More in control of myself now than when you first came to see me. Didn't seem to be able to make my mind up about anything then! Was as low as it was possible to be. I was a mess. I was a mess. I was a mess."



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### Making use of timelines in CBT?

Step one: Develop a timeline (homework)  
Acknowledge strengths and resilience



Step Two: Consider specific experiences from the past that evoke some emotion – *Examine them as factually as possible.*

Step Three: When examining past experiences agree certain rules apply:

- Reflection rather than blame – Shame is not helpful or constructive
- No hindsight bias – Assess on what was known at the time.

Step Four: Ask client is there a time in your life when you coped with adversity?

Step Five: Can these skills/competences in handling ambiguous situations help the client deal with their current problems?

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### Key Socratic Questions to use when reviewing a timeline...

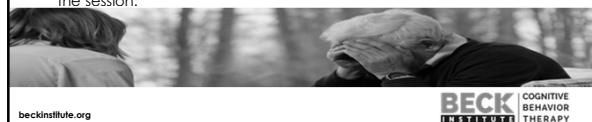
| Task                                   | Socratic Question   |
|--|---|
| Facial reappraisal of event            | Looking back on that event now, what does it tell you about yourself when you think about how you managed?  |
| Enhancing sense of internal resources  | If you could somehow go back in time, as you are now and talk to your younger self, what would you say to your younger self about how you coped?  |
| Learning from the past                 | Have you been in a similar position in the past? If so how did that turn out? How might this help you manage your current problems?   |
| Challenging negative narrative of self | Pick an event from the timeline. Ask, "If someone would have told you x was about to happen, how would you have predicted how you would cope... Looking at that event now, what did you actually do?" |
| Self-Acceptance                        | In the past, in times of crisis how, and in what way, has being self-critical in the midst of a crisis been helpful to you.   |
| Reappraisal of self as a survivor      | Looking back at this timeline, what do you learn from dealing with setbacks? What does that tell you?   |

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### Introducing a timeline...

- Introduce as a homework task and say it is a way of gaining a better understanding of the person.
- Note you recognize they have dealt with a number of challenges across their life
- You want to ask the person to list good and bad things that have happened to them.
- There may be things we are proud of and things we regret, as it is not possible to live a life free from regrets or not having made mistakes. *Normalise and rationalize as you talk.*
- Encourage self compassion by saying, **all we have lived through (good and bad) has made us the person we are today.**
- Remind your client if they feel emotions are being 'stirred' up by completing a TL, they should stop and bring what they have done into the session.



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### Timeline task?

Consider one of your clients. Can you construct a timeline for them?

Think: what is the person's story about, what matters and what was overcome?

What events stand out and what sense do you make of these events in terms of how you might describe your client?

What elements may be important in evidencing psychological growth?

Can you think how this timeline can be used to help your clients in the here and now?



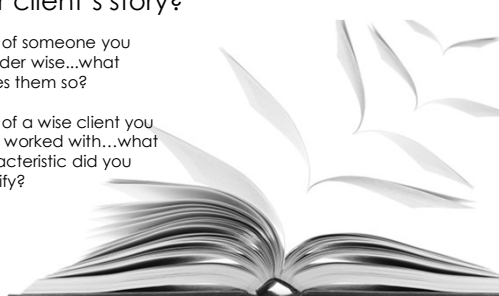
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Everyone has a story...What's  
your client's story?

Think of someone you  
consider wise...what  
makes them so?

Think of a wise client you  
have worked with...what  
characteristic did you  
identify?



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