

# Research on the Counselors' Heart to Heart Talks in Depressed College Students in the Light of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

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**Abstract:** With the rapid development of higher education in China, the group of college students has been expanding year by year, and the proportion of depression patients has also increased. This article focuses on exploring how to use cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to better provide feasible strategies for college counselors to cope with depression during heart to heart conversations with college students. By establishing trust relationships, evaluating student status, developing intervention plans, and understanding cognitive patterns, CBT technologies such as psychological education technology, cognitive reconstruction technology, and behavioral intervention are used to improve students' mental health status and increase their level of hope, improve their ability to adapt to life and self-confidence, reduce the risk of suicide, and safeguard the growth and success of college students.

**Keywords:** Counselor; Cognitive behavioral therapy; Heart to heart talks; Depressed college students

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College counselors shoulder the heavy responsibility of ideological and political education and cultivating well-rounded talents in the higher education system, and are also the first line of defense for mental health education of college students, which is crucial for students with depressive tendencies. Higher education aims to cultivate talents with solid knowledge and skills, and more importantly, to shape socialist successors with physical and mental health and comprehensive development. In 2015, Feng Shiping's research found that the proportion of depression symptoms among college students was 11.02%. Therefore, utilizing cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to efficiently identify and intervene in students with depression is crucial for counselors.

## 1. Cognitive behavioral therapy

Cognitive behavioral theory is the theoretical foundation of cognitive behavioral therapy. Cognitive behavioral theory, as a theory derived from the continuous inheritance, development, and integration of cognitive theory and behaviorist theory in the field of psychology, can address issues such as rationality, thinking processes, and problem-solving. During the treatment process, this theory focuses on the evaluation, regression, belief system, and expectations of the seeker, with a focus on exploring the impact of these cognitions on emotions and behavior, in order to intervene in crisis cases. Cognitive behavior theory mainly uses dominant language as a means of communication, using techniques such as emotional support, indirect suggestion, behavior correction, and clarifying internal dialogue to correct the incorrect cognition of the client, aiming to help the client establish a correct cognitive world and self rational thinking ability, and guide their behavior.

## 2. The theoretical connection between cognitive-behavioral therapy and heart to heart talks between counselors and students with depression

Heart to heart talks are the fundamental means of counselor work, especially playing a key role in psychological crisis intervention. According to 1200 questionnaires distributed by 8 universities in Shaanxi, compared to daily heart to heart talks, the satisfaction of counselors and students with psychological counseling talks has increased, with student satisfaction increasing by nearly 30%. Therefore, for students who encounter obstacles in their daily lives, psychological counseling conversations are more recognized. Depressed college students often face problems such as communication barriers, psychological damage, low self-identity, and lack of future planning. This disease is characterized by low mood, lack of pleasure, and physical symptoms. The course of the disease is

long and prone to recurrence, with an annual recurrence rate of up to 37.51%. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), by establishing trust relationships and adopting an understanding exposure intervention model, involves conversation therapy to help students break and reconstruct cognition, thereby alleviating symptoms and preventing extreme behavior.

### **3. Suggestions for counselors to use cognitive-behavioral therapy in heart to heart talks with students with depression**

#### **3.1 Establish a good trust relationship**

In cognitive-behavioral therapy, establishing good relationships is seen as the cornerstone of effective treatment. In the construction of the counselor team in Order No. 43, counselors should strive to become life mentors for college students to grow and become healthy friends. Therefore, before conversation therapy, the counselor needs to establish trust with the students. During the treatment process, they should play a dual role of diagnosis and education, using techniques such as exposure and empathy to deepen the relationship.

#### **3.2 Assess the current situation of students**

College students are in a critical period of forming personal beliefs and are susceptible to various influences. If lacking appropriate guidance, it may be detrimental to its healthy development. Due to the fact that depression, a silent killer, is not easily detected in daily life, counselors should use psychological assessment results to identify and focus on high-risk individuals. For students with depressive symptoms, such as absenteeism and low spirits, they should be guided to face negative emotions, use trust relationships to guide communication, and evaluate their level of depression. For moderate to severe patients, it is recommended to seek medical treatment reasonably and remove the sense of shame. For mild to moderate patients who are unwilling to seek medical treatment, support should be provided through counselor talk and school psychological counseling, and special attention should be paid to daily work.

#### **3.3 Develop a crisis student intervention plan for individual cases**

For depressed students, their etiology often stems from incorrect cognition. Cognition, as a medium of emotions and behavior, its abnormalities can lead to psychological and behavioral problems. When formulating intervention plans, it is necessary to comprehensively understand the basic situation, growth background, psychological state, crisis events, social support, and cognitive behavioral patterns of students. Through home school cooperation, it can gain a deeper understanding of students' personalities, feelings, and emotional states, and identify the causes of depression. Based on known information, counselors should use cognitive-behavioral therapy to customize different intervention strategies for different students.

#### **3.4 Cognitive intervention**

For depressed students, counselors need to use cognitive-behavioral therapy to customize individual intervention plans. Depressive tendencies are often accompanied by incorrect and distorted cognition, leading to negative emotions and suicidal thoughts. Counselors should patiently guide and encourage students to actively face life challenges.

##### **3.4.1 Psychological education technology**

After establishing a good trust relationship, when facing diagnosed students, attention should be paid to their medication treatment situation. A treatment alliance should be established through conversations, and psychological education techniques should be used to explore their psychological problems and explain the causes through questioning and explanation. This will help students understand the working principle of psychological therapy and enhance their confidence in self-healing.

##### **3.4.2 Cognitive reconstruction techniques**

Counselors need to identify the cognitive patterns of depressed students through extensive observation and multiple communication, identify erroneous cognition, and use cognitive reconstruction techniques to comfort and guide students, using Socratic questioning, thinking record sheets, identify automatic thinking, modify automatic thinking, behavioral experience, role-playing, and record thinking changes to assist students in identifying automatic thinking and core beliefs, and understanding the generation of negative emotions, challenging and adjusting unreasonable beliefs, guiding them to replace negative thinking with healthier and more positive cognition. After individualized intervention, this method of cognitive reshaping can help students change negative thinking patterns, promote the formation of positive attitudes, and cope with life challenges.

#### **3.5 Behavioral intervention**

Counselors can guide students to adopt behavioral intervention methods such as mindfulness breathing, music relaxation training, and homework after changing their cognition. Mindfulness breathing is a deep relaxation technique that requires being in a quiet

environment and lying down, observing the breathing process and bodily sensations, objectively paying attention to any discomfort or emotions without evaluation. This helps to shift attention, reduce anxiety and stress, and enhance current awareness. Music is also an effective treatment method, and soft music should be chosen with a volume maintained below 60 decibels to create a peaceful atmosphere and achieve the effect of relaxing the mind. In addition, by assigning homework such as recording automatic thinking, emotional experiences, and behavioral experiments, students can practice and apply therapeutic techniques in their daily lives, consolidating their learning outcomes.

#### **4. Conclusion**

CBT provides counselors with an effective way to deal with the problem of depression among college students. By establishing trust, assessing the current situation, understanding cognitive patterns, customizing crisis intervention plans, changing negative perceptions, and implementing individual interventions, counselors can effectively solve the problems and provide supports for the growth and development of college students.

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