

meaning it takes parts from all of the main schools. What this means to us patients is our therapists will be able to use lots of different tools to help us in our endeavour to understand ourselves.

*you can bring about
lasting change*

Before you start therapy you will be assessed, this means meeting your therapist to see if you can work together, and it gives you a chance to ask any questions you might have.

I remember when I first started therapy, I was scared of what my therapist might "do" to me, and I was so concerned with what CAT was and refused to let her alongside me. CAT focuses a lot on the therapeutic relationship, and anything this might bring up for you will be looked at, as it is a magnified version of what happens in other relationships you have in your life.

It's a funny kind of set up really, your therapist won't talk about their own personal lives, but that's because the therapy is for you. There is also no contact outside of sessions which last for 50mins. Your session will always be on the same day and at the same time each week. The relationship you have with your therapist is an important part of the process, and in time you will grow to trust the relationship and what it stands for. CAT is a time limited piece of work and can last for 24 weeks there is then a follow up each month for 3 months. And yet even though this all seems rigid and calculated in my experience my therapist has provided me with the most sincere, honest and caring relationship I have ever experienced. There are limitations to what she can offer me, but what she can offer me is a place and space to look at myself and try to make sense of my inner world so that it holds less power over my life, with her alongside supporting me and helping me to look at things in different and new ways.

The structured and boundaried relationship that CAT creates means that your therapist will be able to look at your life with you, without getting hopelessly lost, in a place where he/she can be of no help to you. After getting to know each other normally around the fourth session, your therapist will work with you on a "reformulation" of your life so far. Your therapist will write you a letter, in it will be a snapshot of how things are for you and what the difficulties in your life are, as you have shared with your therapist. It will describe patterns and problems which you feel stop you from getting to ~~you~~ where you want to be in your life, and your therapist may set some goals around these so that the work you do in therapy has clear direction, as it is a time limited piece of work.

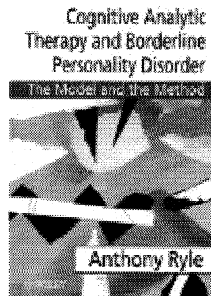
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During therapy your therapist will use maps and diagrams as a way of thinking about cycles you get into, this is done with you in the sessions and can be added to as therapy progresses. You can then take the map away with you each week and use it to see if there is a pattern to how you relate with people in your life. In my experience the maps provide a new way of thinking about my life, almost like I can observe my behaviour and the behaviour of others. The map also lets me understand why this behaviour is happening.

Towards the end of therapy, your therapist will spend time with you looking at the goals you set at the beginning and you both talk about how well therapy has or hasn't worked for you. On the last session you will both read each other a "Goodbye" letter. This is because ending any relationship is difficult, but the therapeutic alliance you have both worked so hard to create can be difficult, as you feel unsure about embracing your new life without the weekly

support of a therapist. There will then be a follow up appointment monthly for three months after.

In my experience real therapy is pure unadulterated hell. As I said before you really want to have to change for you and in order for it to work you must make a real commitment. CAT certainly doesn't have all of the answers, but will help you to work out what is right for you. There were times when I really wanted to quit, but I stuck with it and I am glad that I did. Change doesn't happen overnight but CAT can help you to begin.



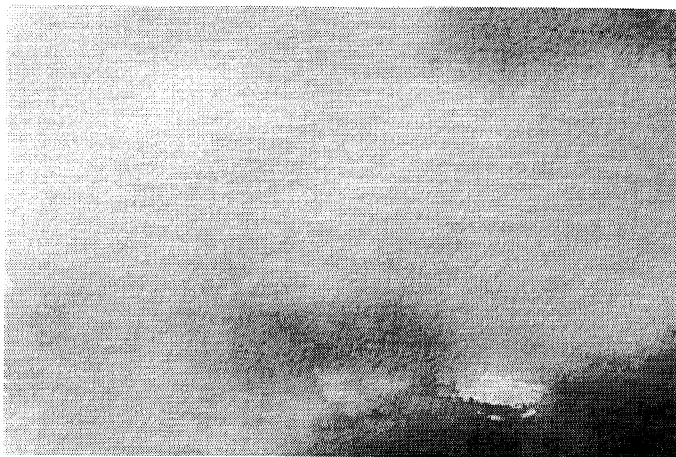
http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/0471976180/ref=as_li_tf_il?ie=UTF8&tag=acatonline-21&linkCode=as2&camp=1634&creative=6738&creativeASIN=0471976180 I hope that reading this has helped you feel less unsure about CAT and starting therapy. And I hope you find the courage to embrace therapy in a way that has real meaning. And I hope therapy helps you to continue on your journey in life in new ways. You cannot change your past, or cure the pain completely, but you do have the power to take control of your life and get to where you want to be, and therapy really can help you to start over with a different perspective of yourself and your life.

I wish you success in your therapy journey.

A suitable case for treatment: CAT and diabetes

Geoff Woods

Geoff has given permission for us to use his story.



I was first diagnosed with type 2 diabetes 10 years ago. After trying to lose weight almost all of my adult life I suddenly lost around two stones for no apparent reason - something was wrong. After talking to a couple of health conscious friends I was still none the wiser. Did I feel overly tired? No! Did I go to the loo a lot? No! So I quickly ruled out the possibility of diabetes. As a last resort I visited my GP who after a couple of tests discovered I had sky-

high blood sugar levels. It was a couple of years after first being diagnosed with diabetes, and after trying to control the illness first with diet, then with tablets, that my nurse said that I really should start injecting insulin. I'm sure I looked depressed - I was dreading this. My nurse must have noticed how down I looked and suggested I might benefit from a course of CAT. I agreed it was worth giving it a try.

The therapy began - the first hour seemed to last about ten minutes, and I can remember thinking while I was walking home from that first session that we didn't touch on my diabetes. I realised later we were looking at the bigger picture, and at some point in the therapy I realised it was making me think much more deeply about myself.

So, my diabetes had been handed to me by 'the great spirit' at a time in my life when everything was going wrong. I had just lost a very (up till then) successful photography business. I had also lost a very beautiful house to the bank, and my child and her mother left to move to Brighton. I was left on my own in a city once full of friends, to try and survive in a field of ghosts.

During the time of my therapy I started to move and work in the world of filmmakers. This, for anyone who is not aware, is a minefield of the world's most screwed up people, most of whom have located themselves in Brighton. Consequently one of the first things I remember therapy addressing was how to avoid 'self-sabotage', especially in the company of people in this industry. The fruits of the therapy were immediately apparent when I was on the verge of walking out on a feature film production as director of photography. Needless to say, I'm now extremely glad I didn't. I began to see how self-sabotage did not serve me. Even though the feelings to do the same today are just as strong, I can handle them much better. I have to now find a balance between walking away from every situation that I feel is unjust or makes me angry, but without letting people walk over me. And I believe what I have learnt has contributed to the fact that I am now a

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writer/director/producer of my first feature film.

I can't remember at what stage in the therapy we tackled the issue of diabetic control or rather the lack of it, but I do remember slowly realising the major importance of food. Now I must say at this stage that food has never been a big deal in my life. I have never been into junk food. However, as I was now taking insulin, what I ate, how much I ate, and when I ate became very important to me. I just thank God I never had a sugar craving!

It seems to me now that the structure of CAT was working so well that I could not tell (moment by moment) whether it was my well-being or my aspirations that were being addressed. Essential seeds were sown - I learnt a lot about myself - about day to day management, as well as the long term. About my position in the small world and my place in the big world. Understanding my depression and handling it were part of the solution.

A real life example might help to illustrate this. A couple of weeks ago I was about to film two major scenes of my film. The night before I had a meeting with my sound engineer and first assistant director. After they left, an overwhelming wave of self doubt and depression swept over me. But I knew how to handle it, respecting my body I ate good food, respecting my mind I got some quality sleep using a technique I have learnt, knowing that in the morning I would be the strongest man in the world. I was and everything was fine.

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The dubious attribute of having a so-called creative mind comes with all sorts of non-optional extras, which if controlled can be a wonderful thing. If not, they may just destroy you. I have had many friends who have destroyed themselves. Couple this mind with a degenerative illness, and being a single parent, you can really do with help sometimes. Especially in my case, every now and then, you have to stop writing your new film script or studying the latest movements in art.

And look after your teenage daughter, be there for her for a long time.

And look after myself.

What Are CAT Sessions Like?



- You will usually meet for between four and 24 weekly sessions, typically sixteen, but this will be agreed between you and the therapist.
- The first few sessions are the '*reformulation phase*'. You have the opportunity to speak openly and in confidence about what is happening in your life, about your own personal history and life experiences.

As well as things going wrong in your life there are always some things that have gone right. The therapist will encourage you to name what works well and what areas have given you happiness and satisfaction so that you do not feel you are the sum total of the parts where things haven't gone well.

- You may be asked to complete a questionnaire called '*The Psychotherapy File*' which divides commonly experienced difficulties into *Traps, Dilemmas, Snags, and Unstable States of Mind*. Examples are given within each grouping such as: "I act as if 'either I keep feelings bottled up or I risk being rejected, hurting others or making a mess'." There may be other questionnaires to help you look at mood shifts or symptoms. All these papers are ways of helping to focus accurately on exactly what sorts of thinking or behaving contribute to things going wrong.
- After the first session you may agree with the therapist to monitor a particular symptom or mood.
- At around session 4/5 the therapist will read to you a '*Reformulation letter*' which is a written account of the understanding shared between you and the therapist about the problems that have brought you into therapy, how you have tried to cope with them, and what you are trying to change by coming into therapy.
- The therapist will work with you to map out your problem patterns on paper. This can help you develop your capacity to think about yourself and understand why you may repeat patterns which cause you distress but find hard to stop.
- The active therapy that continues works towards helping you build recognition of the patterns of relating, thinking, acting and feeling that you want to change. The therapist might suggest ways of monitoring these patterns in between sessions, and you and he or she will look out for these patterns happening within therapy itself. CAT is an open and 'up-front' form of therapy, where the therapist shares their thinking with you explicitly. There are no hidden theories or secrets in CAT. The therapist is actively involved in treatment, and will encourage you to be the same.
- The therapist will work with you on looking at how you revise your patterns but they will understand the difficulties involved in change.

CAT is an open and

One of the strengths of CAT is that the letters and maps will help you to continue working after the regular therapy sessions have finished.

- CAT recognises that finishing therapy can be difficult, especially if endings in your life have been difficult in the past. The last three or four sessions are used to think back over the course of therapy and at the ending of this therapy relationship. The therapist will write a 'goodbye letter' and will invite you to do the same.
- You will usually be offered a follow up appointment at two-three months after the end of your regular appointments.

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New Website For ACAT

At Midnight on 18th August 2011 we launched the new version of ACATonline.

We hope you like all the improvements we've made and are looking forward to hearing your feedback about it. Please send your comments to support@acat.me.uk [<mailto:support@acat.me.uk?subject=Feedback%20about%20the%20new%20ACAT%20website>] or maddy.jevon@acat.me.uk [<mailto:maddy.jevon@acat.me.uk?subject=Feedback%20about%20the%20new%20ACAT%20website>]



Complete Redesign and Rebuild

The site has been rebuilt completely from scratch over the past months, with lots of new functionality, new design elements and lots of new public information sections and resources being added.

We've paid particular attention to making everything easy to find and simple to use.

As well as using the top navigation bar to find information on the website you can also use the "Search the Website" box at the top of any of the pages. Type in your search term and click on the button and we will return a list of matching pages that might be of interest.

If you've registered with ACAT before, or are a current Member, then your login will work as normal. Just click on the link at the top right of the page to "Log In To ACATonline" and fill in the form.

Glitches and Snags

With such an enormous redevelopment there will probably be a few glitches that emerge when the site is being used by real visitors and members of ACAT.

If you are unlucky enough to encounter a problem, firstly we're sorry for the inconvenience, and secondly, **please do get in touch and tell us about it.** We will try and fix most problems within just a couple of working days, if not sooner.

Send any errors and problems to support@acat.me.uk [<mailto:support@acat.me.uk?subject=I%20Encountered%20a%20Problem%20with%20the%20ACAT%20Website>] and we'll get onto it pronto!

More Information and Tips and Tricks

We will publish some more stories in the coming days and weeks to help you get the most out of the website. We'll introduce some of the new features and functions that make this redevelopment so significant and substantial. We will also give you pointers for where to find all the things that were on the old site, just in case they're not obvious when you first look around.

Team Effort

This new site has been the work of a large team of people who have contributed in various ways to its success. In addition to us geeks who've recoded and redesigned the whole caboodle, there have been many contributors who've written articles, provided references, shared ideas and provided feedback along the way, all encouraged, cajoled and coordinated by Maddy Jevon, ACAT's development officer.

Published by Jon Sloper on 18th Aug 2011

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