
CCDP Patient Experience: “Living with Complex Chronic Disease” Group

The CCDP treats illnesses and disorders that are sometimes considered invisible because our patients may not show an obvious physical ailment. Being diagnosed with an invisible illness poses challenges for patients and can sometimes be very isolating. How does someone describe an illness that isn't easy to see? For this reason, we offer group sessions to provide a safe space for patients to develop their own “thought wrangling tools” that assist with managing negative thoughts and emotions which can sometimes impede self-care.

The CCDP includes cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in group sessions in combination with *pacing and mindfulness tools*. CBT is a form of psychological therapy designed to shift a patient from engaging in negative thoughts to a more positive mindset that helps with their self-care. CBT is used to help patients with many different chronic diseases including diabetes and coronary heart disease. CBT and group work is one mode of treatment offered in the program and does not replace the need for medical intervention for patients in the program.

Patients who benefit from CBT may be having difficulty with issues around their illness such as:

- Acceptance;
- Feelings of being overwhelmed;
- Perfectionism;
- Difficulties setting or respecting personal boundaries.

BC Women's is committed to providing the highest quality of care to its patients. CCDP supports this commitment and identifies evidence-based therapies to meet the needs of our patients.

Recently, a CCDP patient shared a card that captures CCDP's philosophy about group:

*“Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass...
It's about learning to dance in the rain.”*

For more information about CCDP, please send us an e-mail at info@ccdp.cw.bc.ca

Patient testimonials:

- I recently attended the 10-week group, Living With ME/CFS, FM and Related Disorders... It had been recommended to me by another patient. I didn't know [the group leader], but from what I'd heard previously, I wondered about some of [their] beliefs around ME/CFS. After all, I had been sick with ME/CFS for 22 years and had experienced disbelief and psychological bias from many doctors I had seen. I didn't want to subject myself to that abuse again. However, I kept an open mind and attended [the] Family and Friends presentation, which described the scientific basis for these illnesses. From this positive experience, I decided to try out the group.

In the group, I expected to use the tools taught... including CBT, pacing and meditation, as coping skills in dealing with the unpredictability of my ME/CFS. I needed a way to understand how I reacted to my symptoms and how I could try to reduce my pain and suffering. I also wanted to be able to deal more effectively with other people and difficult situations in my life. The group helped me learn about all of these things, and much more.

[They] showed that [they] believe that ME/CFS is a real and serious medical illness. [They have] a deep understanding of what patients experience, both medically and psychologically. [They] did not present CBT, pacing or meditation as treatments to cure ME/CFS, only as ways to help reduce symptoms and support self care. [They were] a compassionate and sympathetic listener and added medical information as appropriate. [They] never discounted patients' feelings or their symptoms. [They are] also an excellent educator and group facilitator. [Their] group sessions were well planned with good learning materials. I learned more than expected and felt supported. I would highly recommend this group to others.

- KF
- Attending... Group for patients with chronic complex diseases... changed my life. Not only did I receive tremendous support from the group leaders and participants, I also gained many new coping tools and strategies that helped reduce my symptoms and my emotional distress. Even though it's been two years since I was in the group, I still benefit on a daily basis from what I learned... especially from the cognitive behaviour therapy tools [they] taught. In addition, the members of my group and I still keep in touch and have created a very special support network.
 - K.L
- I suffered with chronic pain for 10 years before being diagnosed or offered treatment. [They] provided a diagnosis and framework of support through group sessions that helped me find hope. I was reluctant at first because of all the misapprehensions I had of group therapy. The group sessions and CBT has been transforming in changing my feelings of hopelessness and negativity to that of

confidence that there are measures and practices such as CBT and mindful meditation that can set you on a path of healing.

My observations of group sessions were that we are all at different stages of handling our chronic conditions. We come from so many different familial, social and work backgrounds. We come to group with various fears and expectations. I attended a second session of group and noticed how far I had come in understanding and coping with chronic illness. I also saw how we need to honour and support each other in our individual search for wellness.

The best we can do for others with similar chronic illness is to encourage them to experience group sessions for themselves. These are such personal journeys of coping and healing. We don't need to complicate things by perpetuating fears and misconceptions.

- S.H.
- I had no life because of my pain and endless fatigue. Seeing others in group and knowing I was not alone not to mention the therapeutic, innovative techniques [they have] developed helped me regain some of my life back and has taught me how to deal with my illness. I am beyond grateful I participated in his program!
 - I.L.
- Group has been incredibly beneficial to me. It is a great way to learn about why this happens to us and what skills we can use to help ease the pain and plan our lives despite the chronic fatigue syndrome. It's wonderful.
 - L.P.
- My experience with the group sessions for patients with ME/CFS or Fibromyalgia was very positive. Not only did we discuss many options on dealing with our condition but I found just having interactions with fellow patients invaluable. My family attended the [Family & Friends Presentation] and was able to come away with more understanding and compassion for my condition. Having this chronic condition can be very wearing on someone and cause you to focus inwards on your pain and isolation. By learning mindfulness, pacing practices, and other techniques, we can learn to contribute to our own recovery process.
 - E.M
- I am thankful for the opportunity to attend the CBT group... I was initially skeptical of some of the topics covered in the group, like meditation. But I found all of the tools taught to be simple yet revolutionary in helping me manage my symptoms. They require some discipline, but when I use the tools I can get more done in the day with

less symptoms. Attending this group has substantially increased the quality of my life while living with ME/CFS and Fibromyalgia.

- H.C.
- I've benefited from your group CBT more than I can express. I've never felt comfortable with idea of attending such a group but I am so glad I went. I learned how to manage my conditions on a daily basis and the Mindfulness compliments that management. Now that is my way of life. I am much happier and feel so much better. Your groups are wonderful!
 - D.W.
- I found Group CBT to be extremely beneficial for me. Not only am I able to understand why and how I am feeling, but I can use the tools I have learned to minimize pain and anxiety. Helps bring control back into my life!
 - A.H.
- I truly want to thank you for all that you do for your patients. Last year I came to you after a serious relapse of my CFS and PTSD. I was at a lost as to why I was so unwell after being well for 3 years. You told me about the CBT group... I was unsure of how this would help, but I was desperate to feel better. Things were so bad I had to take leave from my job. My life was falling apart!

I was very nervous walking into the first session of 10 not really sure what CBT was, but it did not take long for me to understand and feel at ease. [They] walked us through what CBT was and how it could help support, along with other treatments, us manage our disease. Every week I would learn more and more things that helped me understand what I was going through and how I was not alone. I could not wait for the next meeting. I would do everything in my power to get there even on the worst days.

A big thing for me and something I am still working on is the guilt and grief that I was dealing with. My whole life I was a go go go type "A" person who only had an on button. The word "no" was not in my vocabulary! 5 years ago that changed for me, my family and friends who had grown to count on me as the go to person. Now at the age of 45 the life I had been living had to change. The CBT group was huge in helping me understand how and why my CFS and PTSD was in a crisis state. Without CBT I am not sure if I would even be getting out of bed today. The grief and guilt this disease brought with it was crippling me. Making it impossible for me to truly understand and except me diagnosis. I cannot thank [them] enough for the work [they] does for [their] patients and this disease. [Their] CBT program is a wonderful and must to any treatment plan for these conditions. CBT was and is a life line for myself and for many of the wonderful people I met.

- S.A.

- I have attended... CBT group... and my experience was very positive. It has given me more understanding about my condition and also tools to better manage it. I'm very grateful to have had this opportunity.
 - C.F.
- Hello fellow CCDP patients!

I have CFS, ILS, and MCS, with some FM pain here and there as well, and am a 3 on the functional capacity scale. I've attended the group at CCDP and I can't recommend it highly enough, for several reasons:

1) Because of my illnesses, my life is very isolated. Group provided social interaction in a safe (scent-free as well as benevolent) environment with people who, in many ways, understood my experience. I found the support and bravery and generosity of the people in my group to be invaluable and I looked forward to seeing them each week. Now that it's over, I very much miss the interaction and the camaraderie (and I will be lobbying for more group experiences after the holidays! :-)

2) I'd participated in a CBT group a couple years prior to entering CCDP and found CBT particularly helpful in dealing with depression and emotions that arose because of my illness, and in the havoc that my illness wreaked on my relationships. The CCDP group had a different focus. We only spent a couple sessions on CBT. These were a helpful refresher for me, and engendered some interesting and healing discussions amongst our group. The focus of CCDP group seemed to be more about sharing/discussing our experiences, bringing up issues and looking for solutions. We also worked with an OT about pacing and dealing with pain, how to live more mindfully, and how to decrease our suffering--things that I found incredibly beneficial.

3) The [group leaders] are amazing, skilled, experienced, compassionate, and generous individuals. I feel so lucky to have gotten to spend that much time with them, bounce strategies and issues off of them, and gain insight from their knowledge. I would jump at any opportunity to glean more from them!

4) This is more about the CCDP than the group itself, but I thought I'd share it. From what I've seen, people with CFS, FM, MCS, or chronic pain, or other central sensitivity syndromes may all have some common symptoms, but we present in different ways, different severities, and we are all different people who respond to different treatments. No one really knows how to cure us. They can only recommend things that have worked for some of us, to whatever degree. If someone says CBT didn't work for them, or had a bad experience with it, then ok. It didn't work for them. That doesn't mean you won't find it helpful. You are a different person in a different body. Same with certain prescription drugs, acupuncture, diet changes, or whatever.

In my experience, with CCDP, you get out of it what you put in. We get a whole bunch of free opportunities to meet with experienced, amazing professionals and try different healing methods. Why not take advantage of that while you can? Find things that work for you. Know that you did all you could to decrease your symptoms, decrease your suffering, and hey, maybe even stumble upon something that makes your life a heck of a lot better?

Good luck!

- F.L.
- When I attended the CBT Group... I thoroughly enjoyed it and especially found the pacing a huge help. [They] made us feel relaxed and [are] very easy to talk to. I would recommend everyone take the program.
 - P.T.
- I found the group sessions extremely helpful for me to manage my symptoms better and be more accepting of being ill. While the CBT aspect of the group sessions is most helpful for those who get frustrated or have negative feelings about their illness, everyone can benefit as it reinforces acceptance of the condition and reduces any potential negative feelings. The group sessions and CBT are not a cure, but they are helpful in reaching a better outcome in managing your illness.
 - D.R.
- ...Group sessions for men with ME/CFS provides a valuable combination of CBT, pacing and meditation, which in combination provide valuable tools to individuals suffering from this poorly understood condition. In British Columbia most GP's and specialists are not trained to recognize ME/CFS, nor can they provide constructive advice to patients with ME/CFS. While the complex chronic disease clinic tries to address a province wide need to help patients its long wait times mean that patients go for years before they can enter any programs there. So these group sessions... provide the ONLY tangible MSP covered help to individuals diagnosed with ME/CFS. The ten 90 minute sessions provide a variety of tools to the participants that improve their ability to cope with the condition and to avoid further deterioration of quality of life. The "family and friends information session" which complements the program is very valuable as it informs caregivers, friends and relatives of the patient on how manifestations of this disease are so different from most other conditions. Lastly the interactions and participation of the patients in the group is something that is highly beneficial and cannot be captured in a handout or a video presentation. I personally gained so much from the session that I would gladly participate again. Continued access to this program is essential to keep patients from deteriorating and crashing leading to painful and costly emergency room visits. It should be kept in mind that

according to the Merck Manual it is the only treatment modality for people suffering from this terribly underfunded condition.

- A.F.
- As a patient at Women's hospital CCDP, thank you for giving me the opportunity of being part of the "Living With Complex Chronic Diseases" men's group.

I have been ill for several years and like most others with CFS and FMS I have been to more than just a few physicians over the years in search real answers. As a result I was skeptical and resentful toward anyone recommending treatment involving CBT.

But, as I learned over the course of several weeks attending this course is that... CBT is not a cure, it is a tool... Pacing is not GET(graduated exercise therapy), it is about finding balance... and Mindfulness is not mind control but is acceptance.

Learning to live with illness is not easy, it takes practice.

I was also reluctant to join a group like this because I assumed it would be depressing. But, instead I realized that these like minded individuals offered me support, understanding and a sense of acceptance who no one else really could. I realized...it's not just me, and I'm not the only one!

This group is extremely fortunate to have [the] facilitators of these sessions. [They are] constructive and respectful of... patients and offers well thought input. [They have] a level of comprehension and understanding of this illness that few other doctors are willing to rise to...

- D.K.
- CBT: Harmful? Really? Fear has a way of influencing the quality of our lives. But we don't have to be bullied by it. Sometimes it takes courage to try something different. Support groups have been around a very long time and continue because it empowers people.

I sat in a room with others who face similar challenges and often received helpful information which I can choose to follow up or NOT. Most important to me was the compassion, the genuine empathy and the deep respect I felt. It wasn't that I just talked about my difficulties, we all really really listened to each other. I felt this was a good place, a safe place. However there are definitely rules and boundaries in place to guide us as well.

Try it, no one bites!!

- I.M.
- Attending the CBT group sessions... was key to me "getting my head around" what was going on with my condition.

Along with the practical tools used to limit self-defeating thoughts, and avoid catastrophizing etc., I found that I wasn't alone by meeting others with similar situations to mine with whom to exchange anecdotes and tips.

Finally, by attending weekly group sessions, it gave me another touch point with medical advisers beyond my usual appointments -- which provided an additional sense of confidence that I could improve.

- D.O.
- I want to take this opportunity to thank you for conducting the CBT program, that I participated in, from May to October in 2014.

Learning how to complete activity logs and then seeing patterns in my daily physical, mental and emotional energies has aided me in managing my available energy, thereby enabling me to accomplish more without total future energy depletion.

The program was also helpful in making me aware of my automatic negative thoughts (ANTS), LOL

I now see that a person must be made aware of their individual thought processes before realizing how their thoughts either help or hinder their well being.

I especially appreciate my introduction to "mindfulness" and meditation. This also has helped me to accept and cope with my chronic fatigue condition. I intend to practice mindfulness and meditation indefinitely.

This CBT program has definitely improved my quality of life and I would recommend it to anyone dealing with a chronic illness.

Thanks for your helpful program, keep up your good work/practice.

- R.M.
- Awesome
 - K.P.
- I want to tell you how much your group therapy has helped me. I found it to be enlightening and very interesting. I learned a lot from the rest of the group which I would have had no idea of, if it hadn't of been for these groups you put together. I learned how others coped with their illness and tried to apply it to fit my situation. If someone had a problem, we would all talk it out and see if we could come up with a solution. We learned how to meditate, which I still use today...

I would highly recommend them to anyone who has a chance to go. I cannot say

one bad thing about it, except that I wish I would join another one again...

I am coping so much better than I was. I am far from perfect but I am actually improving instead of getting worse. It... made me realize that I didn't need to live with the pain I was in.

Thank you for all your help

- L.C.

- I recently had the good fortune to attend group sessions for those with complex chronic diseases... As a person that has had ME/CFS for many, many years with little to no help from the medical community I was sceptical at best about the group sessions. I was pleasantly surprised by how helpful the group was for me. [They] made it very clear that there was at present no cure for our condition. What [they] did offer was a sympathetic ear and a group to feel accepted in (that is priceless!). [They] taught us that pacing, meditation and CBT could at least offer us a way to try to cope with the condition and manage as best we could to try to lessen the flares. It was nice to connect with others with the illness and share coping strategies as well as support one another.
 - T.Z.

- I attended the CBT group... and it has been a life changing experience. Although I was aware of some of the concepts taught in the course, there were many more that I didn't know. Most importantly, the concepts were not only taught but they were also practiced every week we had the class. The unique combination of teaching and practicing CBT resulted in a deeper learning experience that lasted beyond the end of the course. Thank to [the facilitators] and the CBT course I'm in much better health today that I've been in the last 14 years. I can finally have a sustainable work-life balance. I would recommend this course to anyone who has a true desire to improve their health. Thank you.
 - L.A.

- My experience in group was one of the best things that ever happened to me. I was able to feel supported and most of all educated about what is happening in my body. The chance to meet others of all ages, ethnicities, male and female who are experiencing the same hardships as I am was an eye opener to the fact that I am not alone. [The facilitators] are some of the most compassionate people I have come across in 17 years of living with fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue. I refer back to the information and notes I took during the class... on a regular basis. Without this class, I would still be under the misconception that this illness is "all in my head".
 - K.H.

- [The facilitators] worked tirelessly on the behalf of patient suffering with the debilitating illness of CFS. I attended his group therapy sessions and found them particularly helpful not just in the information... but in listening to other patients tell of their success stories. I learned what worked for them and what did not. It was worth my time and effort to go to group therapy. There are no easy answers for CFS at this time so listening to other people afflicted with this illness can be very beneficial.
 - J.S.
- I was fortunate enough to participate in [the] cognitive behavioural therapy and mindfulness group in 2014. [They] helped us learn how to apply some cognitive behavioural techniques and mindfulness-based stress reduction practices to improve our quality of life while living with chronic pain and fatigue. These techniques helped me immensely to begin to manage my symptoms better on a day-to-day basis. [They] also really helped me begin to develop a sense of acceptance about my illness so that I could start to get past the anger and frustration and gain some peace. This course was so empowering for me! I went from feeling helpless and hopeless about the incurable nature of my illness to seeing that I can learn to manage it better with the right tools. [They] helped me understand that it is possible to be happy in spite of living with debilitating illness. The other aspect of the course that was so helpful for me was the group participation. Each week I got to attend the group with several other people who also experience debilitating pain and fatigue and listen to their stories and have them listen to mine. I learned so much from hearing how other people deal with this. Through listening to others share their feelings, hopes and fears, I lost my terrible sense of isolation. I would certainly participate in this group for another cycle. I can't recommend this group enough to others living with chronic pain and fatigue. When most of the medical system is unable to provide us with adequate and effective care, [they] us the tools to live a better, more peaceful, more fulfilling life in the face of incurable illness.
 - M.B.
- When I was going, I did have a positive experience to deal with my illness and to have a support group that is supportive when you are ill.
 - R.I.
- During this group I learned some great tools in better helping me deal with the illness as well as improving my quality of life. I have tried a lot of different treatments for CFS/ME and can honestly say nothing has helped as much as this group.
 - N.T.

- The CBT workshops... have been invaluable in managing my fibromyalgia and brain injury. So much so that I traveled from Vancouver Island to go to them. They should be taken by everybody with an illness or disability, but more so when there is no immediate treatment or cure. The fact that ChangePain clinic touches on these topics in their workshops lends more credence to their benefits. I hope these workshops continue.

- R.C.

- To my fellow CFS/ME sufferers (and other similar patients),

The groups run by [the CCDP] have been the best treatment thus far in my 20 plus years dealing with CFS/ME. They are so much more than CBT, although that alone definitely has its own benefits dealing with the complexity of day to day living with these illnesses. This group covers everything you need to move forward; learning to live within your energy envelope, pain management techniques, mindfulness, diet, exercise, sleep, insurance advice, available resources, as well as camaraderie with fellow sufferers, there is nothing better. Using these tools to make small incremental improvements instead of hoping on a wish and a prayer for spontaneous remission have made my life one still full of gratitude, joy, and fulfillment despite the complications CFS/ME throws at me. You would be remiss to pass up the amazing opportunity that these groups provide. I felt SO lucky to have had the chance to participate and I don't know where I would be without it.

- A.K.

- I am a person, living with S.E.I.D., it has been several years now-diagnosed 7-8 years ago and I have to personally recommend attending a group series of meetings, in particular, if you are lucky enough to have access to anything organized and offered by... the Team of Professionals at Women's Hospital; please avail yourself of the services; I too was resistant initially due, as I am sure anyone with the disease has experienced: dysfunction and overall low energetic ability and malaise, The group meetings offer each individual a wealth of very articulate and extremely helpful information in addition to being a positive forum to interact and share in personal experiences re: living with a chronic disease. Even if you, like myself, are not a person inclined to always participate in group activities; I am certain it would only be beneficial for anyone-and by extension, their families and friends. In my opinion, the education and day to day management, 'energy envelope' and 'mindfulness' awareness development skills are in and of themselves worth attending offered group meetings; the mutually shared stories, symptoms and understanding are equally beneficial.

- S.K.

- I responded to someone's comment on Facebook yesterday; she was upset the CCDP is using CBT when all this stuff about the UK's PACE trial is making waves. I don't think everyone understands that PACE CBT is very different from the CBT [the CCDP] would teach any person with a chronic illness, the main difference being brainwashing versus coping strategy. Maybe a visible disclaimer on the CCDP website stating a position on PACE and how PACE-style GET & CBT are not comparable to appropriate GET and normal CBT would improve this hostile group's reaction?

CBT is very helpful for coping with being ill. It's a great thing to have in the toolkit when I'm feeling stressed or overwhelmed. It's not a cure, but it helps me get through the days a little easier, a little happier.

- K.B.
- For me the CBT group was most helpful. I was able to learn a lot about my condition and strategies to work through situations without aggravating symptoms. The support of other group members and the opportunity to be with people who 'get it' was invaluable. The mindful meditation part of the group added a structured relaxation component for me and helped me feel ok about needing that. I feel very lucky to have been able to participate and made the connections I did.
 - D.
- The CBT classes... have helped tremendously with providing the essential tools to manage my pain on a daily basis. The classes also helped me understand the "Why" and with the information from a scientific proven background, it gave me a little relief to know that it was not me who was responsible for what was happening.

The group sessions also gave me a sense of relief that I was not "alone" and that I was able to use the class in a manner to network and reach out to people with similar issues I was dealing with.

The information that was given out on our weekly visits also helped my spouse and family members better understand my conditions and limitations, and this in turn gave me the strength to focus on the "healing aspect" that these classes offered. In no way did I ever look at this class as a "Cure" that would be too unrealistic, but I looked to it as a means to assist me in my daily living.

- J.P.
- I took the CBT course two times. The second time to try and fine tune some of the skills learned in the first session. By learning these skills, such as living within your "energy envelope", I was able to have more productive days, fewer crashes, less brain fog, and climb up one to two levels on the functional capacity scale.

It doesn't mean I haven't crashed, had horrid days, or had bad brain fog. It's just more predictable and I'm more in control of ME/CF than it is of me (most of the time).

- G.V.
- I found the CBT series not just provide me with knowledge and skills to cope with my health challenges but also benefit from the sharing of other participants who are in similar situation.
 - Y.T.
- I attended the group... when... I had been newly diagnosed with CFS and had many questions about what it was and how I could help improve my symptoms. The group sessions provided the forum for this and much more. I was able to talk to other patients about strategies that had worked for them to decrease their fatigue. I found the deep breathing techniques that we were taught very helpful. I attended nearly all the group sessions that I could and found them very useful in understanding what is known about CFS and how to best cope with it. Many thanks to [the CCDP] for running these group sessions.
 - T.L.
- I am thankful to have been part of the weekly group as I feel [the facilitators were] sincere, knowledgeable and helpful in giving me some basic tools to help me understand and better cope with the difficulties and uncertainty of my illness.
 - J.C.
- I attended every session of... "Living with Complex Chronic Diseases" group and found the experience to be very beneficial and positive. At the most basic level it was reassuring to be surrounded with others who share the same condition as me and provided a level of moral support that could not be achieved if one were meeting on a purely individual basis. [They] created a supportive and welcoming environment and personally helped me to better manage and cope with my daily struggles using the CBT techniques. [Their] professionalism, ability to facilitate the group, dedication to the session material and compassion helped me navigate some very challenging and difficult times and I would readily sign up to attend the session again. In short, I can honestly say that I would be in a far worse place if I hadn't attended the session and I feel that I have been provided some of the necessary tools to help manage my life on a day to day basis.
 - G.A.
- I found the group really helpful. After being newly diagnosed with fibromyalgia the group helped me learn ways to manage my pain and take care of myself. Being in

the group with others who were going through similar stuff was helpful it made me feel like I wasn't alone.

- C.S.
- The group CBT made me realize that even though each of us were experiencing different things, I am not alone and I am supported.
Thank you for your help.
 - S.T.
- Personally, I feel that my condition improved after attending the group sessions. I learned that it was OK to have such health problems and found comfort knowing that I was not the only one. I learned to overcome crash days by pacing my daily life and using meditation instead of medication to help with my pain. Relief was felt knowing that others were experiencing the same feelings as well as the same symptoms that I was. Comments by others in the group were encouraging and made me aware that there was hope and serenity for my future instead of simply pain, anxiety and depression. I strongly recommend this group to anyone that is experiencing chronic pain, fibromyalgia or any similar illnesses.
 - S.B.
- Having completed the CBT. The following are comments based on my experience:
 - I can understand these peoples comments if the group in the past was used as a "CURE". It's not a cure but it would be a helpful (and essential in my opinion) component for living with any Chronic condition. The key point I understood was that it was essential to learn ways of not only managing the symptoms but especially the "negative thought" process that is involved with such chronic conditions. Negative thoughts increase one's emotional suffering which will make the symptoms and condition worst. I can say for certainty negative thoughts increase significantly when you are not feeling well for a long time and the light at the end of the tunnel is dim or non-existent.
 - Chronic conditions generally imply a cure or full cure may not be possible. The CBT tools are likely to increase your chances and level of recovery, and if full recovery does not materialize they will enhance quality of life.
 - Finally, my experience strongly supports the position that you don't need to even be sick to benefit from the CBT teaching. I saw the following program on PBS the other day that focused on controlling Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTS) to improve brain health.

<http://danielamenmd.amenclinics.com/join-me-on-the-psychiatrists-couch/>

 - J.R.

- I am very grateful that I accepted your offer to attend group. I knew from attending sessions with my psychologist that I needed all the help I could get in learning how to accept and cope with my condition and was eager to see what a group setting could offer. I didn't really know what to expect and was actually overwhelmed (in a good way) by how incredible supported and cared for I felt being in that room with you and those amazing women, and how gratifying it felt to reach out and help them whenever I could.

I learned so much in group - most importantly how to be kinder to myself by breaking negative thought-habits and how to put into practice that acceptance is not giving up. I've come so far in my ability to cope since that first day of group. And every day since the final session, I continue to use the things I learned and know that although CBT is not a cure for my condition, it is most definitely a very positive and valuable tool in coping with it. It lets me move forward without fear. I shudder to think where I'd be now without it.

- T.A.
- Group taught me to be aware of and better cope with the stresses in my life. This includes family, work, relationships, life's surprises and even the things we say to ourselves. With better coping skills I have less stress. Less stress less pain!
 - K.D.