

Cognitive Therapy Techniques: A Practitioner's Guide

Robert L. Leahy. New York: Guilford Press (www.guilford.com). 2003, 347 pp., \$38.00 (hardcover).

An abundance of resources are available for both the novice and the experienced practitioner to learn about the practice and techniques of cognitive therapy. Clinical researchers and practitioners have developed and disseminated a cornucopia of cognitive therapy techniques since Aaron T. Beck's initial formulation of cognitive therapy. While some of these techniques are well known to practitioners of cognitive therapy, less-well known techniques are dispersed throughout the many publications related to the practice of cognitive therapy. Among all these resources, few provide such a comprehensive and useful compilation of techniques as Robert L. Leahy's volume, *Cognitive Therapy Techniques: A Practitioner's Guide*.

Dr. Leahy is a well-known authority in the field of cognitive therapy. He has written numerous books, chapters, and peer-reviewed articles on the topic of cognitive therapy. He is clearly a leader in the field. In addition to several appointments and positions, both past and present, Dr. Leahy is the Director for the American Institute of Cognitive Therapy, President of the International Association for Cognitive Therapy, and President Elect for the Academy of Cognitive Therapy. It is hard to question Dr. Leahy's qualifications for developing a volume on cognitive therapy techniques.

The volume includes a compilation of over 70 cognitive techniques organized into several topic areas. The focus is specifically on *cognitive* techniques; readers are referred to other resources for behavioral techniques. Although the techniques presented in this volume are clearly derived from a Beckian model of cognitive therapy, influences from rational-emotive therapy, emotion-focused therapy, and emotional processing research are evident.

The volume is composed of an introduction, 8 chapters of techniques, 3 chapters of strategies, and a concluding comment. The introduction includes a concise overview of the cognitive therapy model. This overview provides a needed context for the techniques that follow, and serves as a useful introduction to the cognitive model for less experienced practitioners. Dr. Leahy also discusses the reasons for why a book on techniques is needed in the field and addresses common criticisms levied at the important status that techniques hold in cognitive therapy. Although Dr. Leahy acknowledges that techniques are only a part of the cognitive therapy process, it is clear that he considers techniques to be a vital part of the process. Indeed, Dr. Leahy encourages cognitive therapists of all levels to expand their repertoire of techniques and overpractice and overlearn these techniques.

The chapters on techniques are organized according to levels of analysis and intervention within the cognitive model. The first three chapters focus on the fundamental techniques of cognitive therapy, such as eliciting thoughts and assumptions, and evaluating and challenging thoughts, assumptions and rules. The remaining chapters that are devoted to techniques address specific areas within the cognitive model, including the evaluation and reduction of worrying, identification of information processing and logical errors, improvement of rational thinking, identifying and modifying individual schemas, and accessing and modifying emotions and emotion-related beliefs and thoughts.

Each technique is presented in a uniform fashion. First, a brief description of the technique is provided. This description provides a useful context for the technique, highlighting the technique's function and purpose within the cognitive model. Next, Dr. Leahy presents an explanation of the intervention and provides examples of how to pose questions. This is

followed by a case example, often accompanied by sample dialogue between the therapist and patient. A description of homework assignments accompanies each technique. Dr. Leahy also discusses the likely problems that a therapist will experience in using each of the techniques. Finally, the reader is informed of other interventions relevant to this technique through a cross-reference section, and is directed to the form(s) that accompanies the technique.

The chapters on strategies provide examples of how to implement the techniques within a therapy session. Dr. Leahy uses sample dialogue, sometimes session-by-session, to describe a step-wise approach to implementing the techniques. These chapters focus on strategies that examine and challenge cognitive distortions, modify a need for approval, and challenge self-criticism.

It is difficult to criticize this volume. It is well written and user-friendly. Dr. Leahy uses jargon-free and accessible language without sacrificing complexity or sophistication. The uniform layout of the techniques is a major strength of this volume. The layout of the techniques provides an inexperienced cognitive therapist with all of the tools necessary for understanding how, when, and for what reason to employ a specific cognitive technique. The layout is also useful for the experienced cognitive therapist as a quick and easy reference for learning or re-learning specific components of a technique. The forms are another major strength of this volume. Dr. Leahy has constructed at least one form for each technique. The design of the forms makes them easy for clients to understand and complete. In addition to providing worksheet forms (e.g., identifying negative predictions), Dr. Leahy has included informational handouts (e.g., emotional schemas) and questionnaires (e.g., Metacognitive Questionnaire).

This volume is an exceptionally useful resource for cognitive therapists. It is likely to benefit anyone from the student to the expert in cognitive therapy. This volume is also likely to be read by a variety of practitioners from non-cognitive orientations, as many non-cognitive therapist incorporate cognitive techniques into their practice. As such, this volume provides an opportunity to not only educate non-cognitive practitioners on cognitive techniques, but to inform these practitioners of the role of techniques within the broader cognitive model. I hope that in future editions of this volume, Dr. Leahy further capitalizes on this opportunity by expanding his discussion of the common misconceptions regarding the function of techniques within the cognitive model. Overall, this is an excellent volume that will find a home not on the bookshelf, but in the hands and laps of many practitioners.

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