



## Cognitive behavioral therapy: A valuable intervention in the autistic universe

### Terapia cognitivo comportamental: Uma intervenção de grande valia no universo autista

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#### ABSTRACT

The scope of this article is to understand intervention models in the cognitive and behavioral approach with learners with ASD, in order to expand their skills and capacities for a life with greater autonomy. Thus, it is a bibliographic research, based on analyzing the evolution of patients with the disorder within the process of cognitive-behavioral therapy, in the sense of linking therapeutic actions with the use of specific techniques, pointing out alterations and meanings outlined by multiple theorists. Where we see that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), as an intervention in cases of patients with impairments of the most varied levels of support, indicated significant evolution, collaborating to validate this approach as being of great

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value in the evolution of clinical conditions of people within the spectrum.

**Keywords:** Inclusion, Autism, Therapy.

## INTRODUCTION

Talking about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) requires a keen understanding of it. According to Araújo (2019), Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder, where it causes disorders in the social, communication and behavioral spheres. Such characteristics listed specialties, if there is no early and assertive intervention, can favor the withdrawal of the individual with ASD, further impoverishing their skills for a life with greater autonomy.

It is salutary to understand that the early diagnosis of ASD, coupled with therapeutic interferences and early actions, favor an evolution of the patient's prognosis, which are the core for global rehabilitation in the condition that each patient with ASD is in. (ZWAIGENBAUM, 2010). The driving force behind the core of this article is to highlight the way in which early intervention using cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) has led to real gains in the situation of patients with ASD. CBT is an approach that has been gaining favoritism due to its relevance. It is understood that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy exhibits cognitive and behavioral intervention tactics and artifices, so that, when applied to the autistic, it modulates behaviors and activates cognition, generating an improvement that can lead to the achievement of communication, social interaction, self-monitoring, allowing a reduction of symptoms such as aggressiveness, anxiety, among others. Thus, this study aims to corroborate information about autism and how Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) presents the modification of restrictive and repetitive patterns in ASD, in addition to favoring an improvement in the clinical condition of autistic people. According to studies on this subject, it is necessary to understand that autism is a disorder that mainly affects sensory and behavioral issues. Based on this analysis, the cognitive-behavioral approach has a better therapeutic response to the coeval behavioral and cognitive points in the disorder.

## DEVELOPMENT

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is indeed a very valuable intervention in the context of autism. While CBT is often associated with treating mental health issues, its structured, evidence-based approaches have also shown significant benefits for people on the autism spectrum. Before delving into the subject of CBT, it is necessary to make a historical



rescue about autism.

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It is known that the meaning of childhood autism was raised by Leo Kanner in 1934 for the first time, who was a psychiatrist. (MAS, 2018). Autism, before the perception of the physician described above, was envisioned as intense mental weakness or hearing impairment. After Leo Kanner's accurate analysis, it was possible to realize that the disorder in question lowered the cognitive capacity and was not a matter of hearing weakness or impairment. According to Calazans and Martins (2007), a priori autism was a comorbidity in schizophrenia, only then was it understood as the notion of disorder and with such understanding, psychopathological, as a separate disorder and took its place in the DSM. According to Barlow and Durand (2016), people with Autism Spectrum Disorder have difficulties in terms of communication, behavior, and social interaction. However, the level of support need for the disorder in question is pendulum, changing according to the need for support that each individual needs. Therefore, there are several methods that are used in therapies, however, studies show the greatest effectiveness for behavioral approaches. (BARLOW; DURAND, 2016). In view of the above understanding of the impairment that autism brings in certain fields, CBT is shown to have better results by a range of interventional techniques that act exactly in the context in which the disability is shown, trying to mitigate the impairment of the affected area; We know that in the psychological field, cognitive errors are, in short, the ones that cause inappropriate behaviors and disorders, and for there to be a cognitive modulation, CBT is the one that gives the best response to the condition in question. (ASUNÇÃO et al., 2020) According to Tavares (2005), CBT provides the individual with the opportunity to change the situations that torment him and, in this way, designates learning suits that emanate from the adoption of additions through the techniques molded in each intervention. because CBT works by containing symptoms present in autism, through a gradual display of aversive stings, where the individual is prevented from spreading attitudes of tactics, in order to attenuate what needs to be molded. (UNG et al., 2015) Bahls and Navolar, (2010) explain that the interventional therapies in CBT derive from two basic approaches: the cognitive and the behavioral, which after the integrative movement in psychology there was the integration that he called cognitive-behavioral therapies Such therapy is based on the behaviorist current, which is effective in not descending symptoms of a multiplicity of psychiatric disorders (KNAPP; BECK, 2011).

We can highlight some key points about how CBT can be helpful for people with autism:

- **Focus on social and communication skills:** CBT can help autistic individuals develop



- more effective social and communication skills. This can include learning to interpret and respond to social cues, understanding emotions, and improving conversational skills;
- **Managing challenging behaviors:** CBT can teach strategies for coping with challenging behaviors common in autism, such as repetitive behaviors or emotional outbursts. This includes the use of techniques such as social skills training, stimulus control, and stress management;
  - **Sensory adaptation and emotional regulation:** Many autistic people have unique sensory sensitivities and difficulties with emotional regulation. CBT can help identify sensory triggers and develop strategies to cope with them, as well as promote the development of emotion regulation skills;
  - **Reduced anxiety and stress:** CBT is effective in treating anxiety and stress, which are common in autistic individuals due to challenges in social interaction and changes in routine. Techniques such as systematic desensitization and exposure therapy can be adapted to help reduce these symptoms;
  - **Focus on developing adaptive skills:** CBT focuses on developing practical and adaptive skills that can improve the independence and quality of life of autistic people. This can include organizational, problem-solving, and self-advocacy skills;
  - **Collaboration with caregivers and family members:** CBT often engages parents and caregivers in the therapeutic process, offering guidance on how to effectively support the development and maintenance of skills learned during therapy sessions;

By tailoring CBT techniques to meet the specific needs of people on the autism spectrum, therapists can provide a highly personalized and effective intervention. It is important to consider the individuality of each autistic person when implementing CBT, adjusting approaches and strategies as needed to ensure maximum therapeutic benefit.

One of the main goals of CBT in autism is to promote autonomy and emotional well-being. This may involve developing strategies to cope with daily challenges, such as transitions, social interactions, and communication. At the same time, CBT helps strengthen cognitive skills, such as mental flexibility and problem-solving, which are essential for an independent and fulfilling life. Close collaboration with parents, family members, and caregivers is critical in the therapeutic process of CBT for autism. They play a crucial role in the ongoing support and application of the strategies learned during therapy sessions. By better understanding the specific needs and challenges of the autistic person, caregivers can provide a more supportive



environment for the development and application of acquired skills.

Additionally, CBT can be tailored to cater to different age groups and levels of functionality within the autism spectrum. From more structured interventions for children to more social and professional skills-focused approaches for adults, CBT can be shaped to meet evolving needs across the lifespan.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

In conclusions, it is noticeable that Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy is a valuable and comprehensive intervention for people on the autism spectrum. By providing practical tools and specific strategies, it empowers autistic individuals to develop skills and new skills essential to face the challenges of everyday life, promoting autonomy, emotional well-being and quality of life.

Therefore, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) represents a highly beneficial and valuable intervention in the universe of autism. By adapting its techniques to focus on the specific needs of people on the autism spectrum, it helps to promote the development of essential social, communication and emotional regulation skills. In addition, CBT provides effective strategies for coping with challenging behaviors, reducing anxiety, and strengthening adaptive skills.

The collaborative role of parents, family members, and caregivers is critical to maximizing benefits, as they play a crucial role in implementing the therapeutic strategies in the autistic individual's daily environment. CBT's flexibility in adapting to different age groups and levels of functionality also makes it a versatile and long-lasting lifelong intervention.

Therefore, CBT not only addresses the specific challenges faced by people on the autism spectrum, but also empowers them to achieve greater autonomy, emotional well-being, and overall quality of life. As a result, it is clear that therapy continues to be an essential tool in the support and development of autistic individuals, promoting their full potential and inclusion in society.



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