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Beyond Blue fact-checks anxiety and depression treatments

Beyond Blue has released two new booklets designed to help people separate fact from fiction about what really works for managing anxiety and depression.

Two free Beyond Blue online booklets – [A guide to what works for anxiety](#) and [A guide to what works for depression](#) – review and rate the scientific evidence available for 440 psychological, medical and complimentary approaches used to treat anxiety and depression.

University of Melbourne researchers, led by Dr Amy Morgan and Associate Professor Nicola Reavley, reviewed a significant number of studies and found almost two-thirds of therapies really worked.

They then used a simple thumbs-up/thumbs-down scale to rate the evidence base available for each treatment. Therapies requiring more studies are tagged with a question mark.

Beyond Blue Lead Clinical Adviser Dr Grant Blashki said the booklets provided a solid set of guidelines for people to consider before accessing mental health treatments.

“We live in a time of fake news when the online world spruiks many questionable mental health therapies and treatments, so it is important that people have access to simple, evidence-based advice about what actually works,” Dr Blashki said.

“These guides take the guess work out of knowing which treatments are available in Australia and what the international scientific studies say about how well they work.”

Dr Blashki said the booklets would be useful for the two million people who experience anxiety and one million who live with depression in Australia each year, as well as medical practitioners.

“The booklets are handy tools for the general public as well as medical professionals, particularly at a time when more people are seeking mental health support as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic – many of them for the first time,” he said.

“For example, the guides give Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) three thumbs up as a treatment for anxiety and depression.

“CBT involves working with a therapist to recognise thinking and behavioural patterns that are likely to make you feel anxious or depressed and learning to replace those patterns with ones that promote good mood and better coping skills.

“And because CBT can be just as effective being delivered online as it is when completing therapy face-to-face, it’s a great option for people who are self-isolating because of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Dr Blashki recommended people seek advice from qualified practitioners before using treatments listed in the guides.

“When an intervention is shown to have some effect in research, it does not necessarily mean it is available, used in clinical practice, or work equally well for every person,” he said.

“There is no substitute for the advice of a qualified mental health practitioner who can advise on the best available treatment options tailored to the specific needs of individuals.”

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The free Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service is available 24/7 coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au or by calling 1800 512 348.

Beyond Blue's existing support service will continue to operate alongside the new service. The Beyond Blue Support Service is available via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via beyondblue.org.au/get-support for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST or email responses within 24 hours).