

# Evolution Could Explain Why Psychotherapy May Work for Depression

March 03, 2021

A consensus has emerged in recent years that psychotherapies—in particular, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)—rate comparably to medications such as Prozac and Lexapro as treatments for depression. Either option, or the two together, may at times alleviate the mood disorder. In looking more closely at both treatments, CBT—which delves into dysfunctional thinking patterns—may have a benefit that could make it the better choice for a patient.

The reason may be rooted in our deep evolutionary past. Scholars suggest humans may become depressed to help us focus attention on a problem that might cause someone to fall out of step with family, friends, clan or the larger society—an outcast status that, especially in Paleolithic times, would have meant an all-but-certain tragic fate. Depression, by this account, came about as a mood state to make us think long and hard about behaviors that may have caused us to become despondent because some issue in our lives is socially problematic.

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