



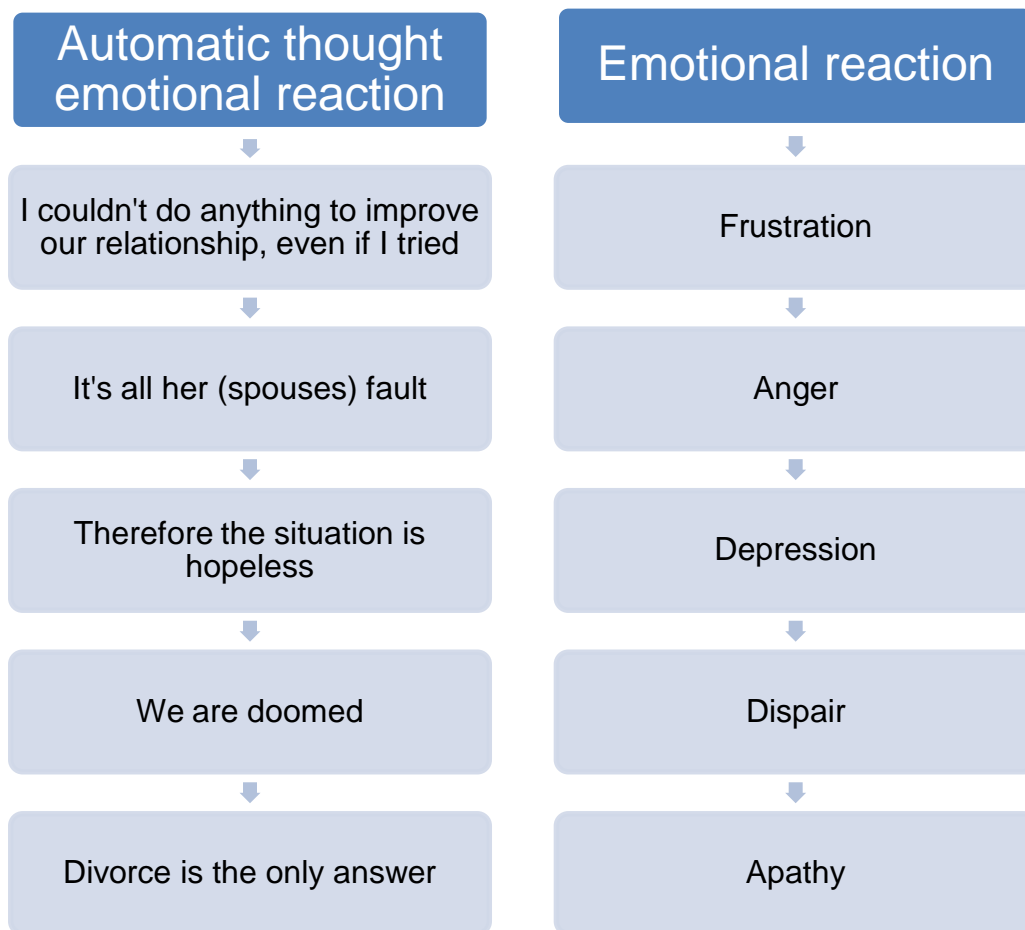
AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

UNIT 2

Learning Outcomes: Understand the key aspects of negative automatic thoughts

Automatic Thoughts

'Thoughts that occur automatically in response to a given situation. Cognitive and cognitive behavioural therapies work to change negative automatic thoughts into more rational responses'.



In his work, Beck noted that the link between a client's thoughts and behaviour was very important.

He coined the term 'automatic thoughts' to describe emotion-filled thoughts that would often pop up in the client's mind.

He found that while the client may not always be aware of such thoughts, they could learn to identify and report them.

It was negative automatic thoughts, which he found held the key to many client's difficulties.

He believed that by teaching client's the skills they needed to identify such thoughts, they could begin to overcome and understand these difficulties.

Automatic thoughts are generally defined as the repetitive automatic self-statements that people say to themselves in certain situations and can be both positive and negative.

Psychological problems develop however, when these automatic thoughts are continuously negative.

Such thoughts are defined as 'automatic' because they are not the result of analysing a problem or specific situation

Some examples of negative “automatic thoughts” are:

Perfectionism

“I still sometimes feel anxious so I’ve failed in treatment”

Mind Reading

“Everyone thinks I’m stupid”

Emotional Reasoning (I feel it so it must be true)

“I feel stupid so I must really be stupid”

All or nothing

“I’ve reacted in the way I used to so I’m just heading back where I came from”

“Should” Statements

“I should always be in control”

“I shouldn’t show others how nervous I am”

Jumping to conclusions

“My boss asked me to see him later today - so I must be in trouble”

Labelling

“I’m just a loser”

Dwelling on the negatives

“I always screw things up, why should this time be any different?”

Assignment Two

2.1 Explain how continuous negative automatic thoughts can lead to psychological problems

2.2 Explain why it is important that CBT allows clients to identify which of the problems they are facing are critical and which are minor

2.3 Review an example of negative automatic thoughts and suggest a positive alternative, explaining the differences in cognitions, physical feelings/psychological effects, emotions and behaviour.