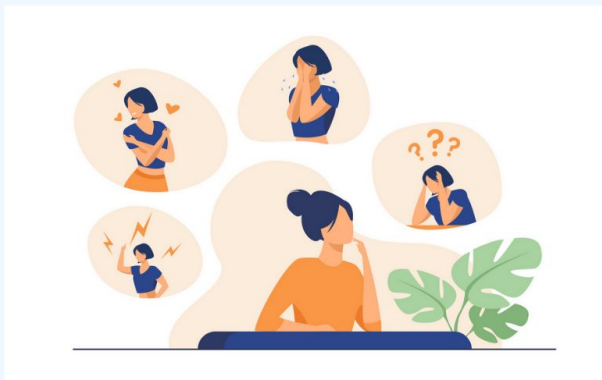


## Thoughts affect feelings: A core idea behind cognitive therapy

Some psychologists think that it is often the way people *interpret* events, rather than the events themselves, that leads to upsetting thoughts and feelings.

For example, if a person has the belief “I’m a failure”, they may interpret all negative things that happen to them as somehow resulting from their own actions, regardless of the actual reasons behind events.

This idea is helpful, because it explains why people experiencing the same event can react in different ways.



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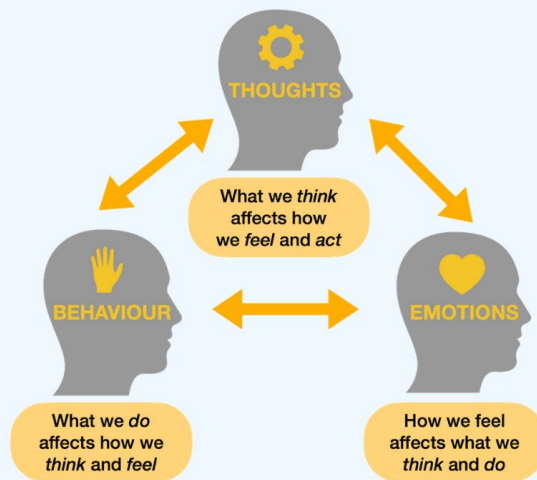
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## Thoughts affect feelings: A core idea behind cognitive therapy

Over time, people who tend to interpret events in an unhelpful way may become more vulnerable to feeling low. This is because the upsetting thoughts and feelings may trigger a negative cycle of thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.

For example, a person who believes they are a failure may give up trying to take part in activities that might lead to positive feelings (talking with friends or doing something they enjoy), as they already assume it will end up badly.

In cognitive therapy, this relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours is known as the **cognitive triangle**.



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## Thoughts affect feelings: A core idea behind cognitive therapy

One of the core ideas behind cognitive therapy is that it is possible to *identify* and then *challenge* unhelpful thoughts and beliefs.

Cognitive therapists believe that challenging unhelpful thoughts can change the way we interpret events, and therefore **change our emotional reactions to them.**



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## Thoughts affect feelings: A core idea behind cognitive therapy

Let's walk through some examples to see how this might work in practice.

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## Thoughts affect feelings: A core idea behind cognitive therapy

### Example one

Imagine a friend walks past you without acknowledging you

Below are two different ways you could think about this event.

#### Interpretation 1

"I must have done something to upset them"

#### Interpretation 2

"They probably just didn't see me"

What kind of feelings do you think you might experience if you thought interpretation 1 was true?

☐ worried ☐ tense ☐ relaxed ☐ unconcerned

What kind of feelings do you think you might experience if you thought interpretation 2 was true?

☐ worried ☐ tense ☐ relaxed ☐ unconcerned

Which interpretation do you think is the most helpful to think about?

Choose...



continue

## Thoughts affect feelings: A core idea behind cognitive therapy

### Example two

Imagine your boss tells you they have decided to offer you a promotion

Below are two different ways you could think about this event.

#### Interpretation 1

"I've worked hard and  
must have done well  
this year"

#### Interpretation 2

"They probably feel  
they have to offer this  
to everyone after a  
certain amount of  
time"

What kind of feelings do you think you might experience if you thought interpretation 1 was true?

☐ proud ☐ excited ☐ neutral ☐ nervous

What kind of feelings do you think you might experience if you thought interpretation 2 was true?

☐ proud ☐ excited ☐ neutral ☐ nervous

Which interpretation do you think is the most helpful to think about?

Choose...



continue

## Thoughts affect feelings: A core idea behind cognitive therapy

### Your turn!

Think of something *negative* that happened to you recently. For example, something that didn't go the way you would have liked it to at work, or in a social situation. What was going through your mind in that moment?

Briefly, summarise your first thoughts about why this event happened

Now, try and come up with an alternative interpretation. Is there another way of seeing things?

Consider how you would feel after thinking about each of the two different interpretations. Which explanation do you think is the most helpful to think about?

Choose...



Which explanation do you think would be more likely to be true if this event happened to a colleague or friend of yours?

Choose...



If you were looking back on this event from 20 years in the future, which interpretation do you think you would be likely to choose then?

Choose...



continue

## Thoughts affect feelings: A core idea behind cognitive therapy

### Your turn!

Now, think of something *positive* that happened to you recently. For example, something that went well at work, socially, or when taking part in another activity. What was going through your mind in that moment?

Briefly, summarise your first thoughts about why this event happened

Now, try and come up with an alternative interpretation. Is there another way of seeing things?

Consider how you would feel after thinking about each of the two different interpretations. Which explanation do you think is the most helpful to think about?

Which explanation do you think would be more likely to be true if this event happened to a colleague or friend of yours?

If you were looking back on this event from 20 years in the future, which interpretation do you think you would be likely to choose then?

continue



## Thoughts affect feelings: A core idea behind cognitive therapy

### Putting it all together

To finish up this part of the study, we'd like to ask you some questions about the information you've just read.

Please note, these questions are just to try and understand how clearly we have explained the material - your answers will not affect the chance of your submission being approved, and you will continue on to the final main part of the study at the end, whichever options you choose.

**For each group of sentences below, which best summarises the information you just read?**

1

- ☐ Thoughts are facts. The way we think about and interpret events is always correct.
- ☐ People can vary in their interpretations of the same events.
- ☐ People always interpret negative events in negative ways

2

- ☐ What we think doesn't make any difference to how we feel and act.
- ☐ Different people experiencing the same events always experience the same feelings.
- ☐ How we interpret events can affect our emotional responses to them.

3

- ☐ Whatever we think about events, we will always feel generally the same in the future as we do now.
- ☐ If we can learn to challenge unhelpful thoughts about events, over time we may come to experience less upsetting reactions to them.

continue