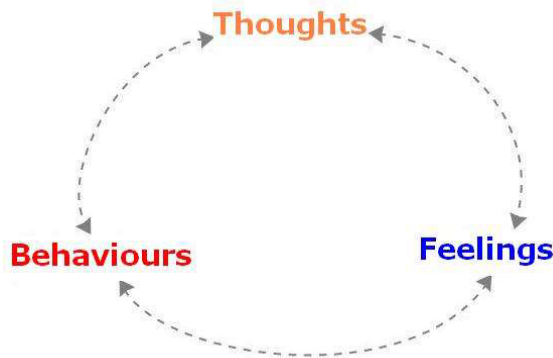


Cognitive Behavior Therapy - how it can help

Cognitive Behavior Therapy is a form of psychotherapy that talks about

- How you think about yourself, the world and other people
- How what you do affects your thoughts and feelings.



CBT focuses on the "here and now" problems and difficulties. Whilst it is often useful to discuss the past and understand how our pasts have influenced our lives and how problems have arisen, CBT mostly focuses on looking for ways to improve your mental wellbeing now.

CBT says that it's not the event which causes our emotions, but how we interpret that event - what we think or what meaning we give that event or situation.



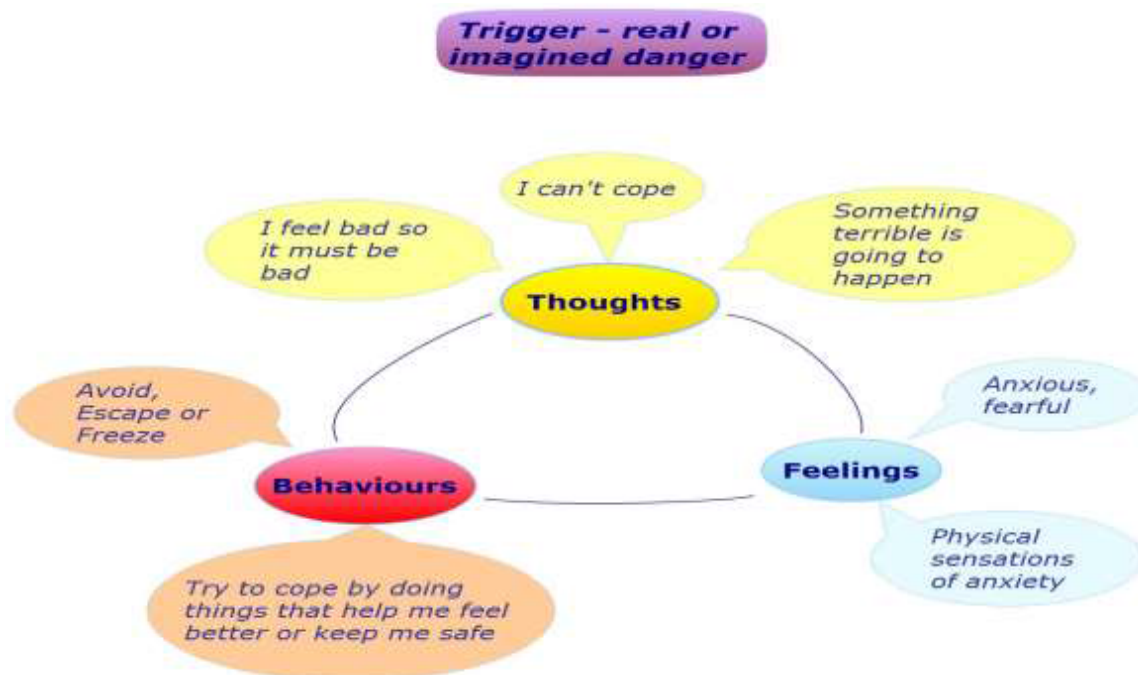
For instance, if someone you know passes you in the street without acknowledging you, you can interpret it several ways. You might think they don't want to know you because no-one likes you (which may lead you to feel depressed), your thought may be that you hope they don't stop to talk to you, because you won't know what to say and they'll think you're boring and stupid (anxiety), you may think they're being deliberately snotty (leading to anger). A healthier response might be that they just didn't see you.

Another example may be someone who's depressed might wake up in the morning and think: "This is going to be another awful day", "I'm going to mess up again", or "What's the point of anything?", which will make them feel even more depressed (feelings), and may prompt them to pull the covers over their head and stay in bed (behaviors). It's very likely that this will increase their negative thoughts, which in turn will increase the feelings of depression, and make them even less likely to get out of bed.

A vicious cycle is the result - continuing to think and act the same way will help maintain our depression (diagram below).



A vicious cycle of Anxiety might look something like this:



CBT can help you to break these vicious cycles of negative thinking, feelings and behavior. When you see the parts of the vicious cycle clearly, you can change them - and therefore change the way you feel. It can also be useful to look at the way our thoughts and feelings affect our bodies, and the physical sensations we can experience

Different emotions are often associated with particular types of thoughts:

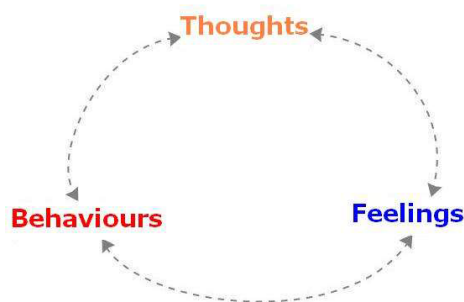


Step 1

Identifying Thoughts, Feelings & Behaviors

Now we can start to look at what's helping to keep your problems going.

*This is the Triangle- the arrows are just curved 😊



Let's use a recent example, when you've been distressed - perhaps something has happened in the past week or so when you've felt particularly anxious, angry, or depressed.

What was the situation? What happened? When did it happen? What else was going on? Was it a situation that you often find yourself in? Who were you with?

What thoughts or images went through your mind just before or during that time? What disturbed you?

If you had that thought, what did that mean to you, or what did that say about you or the situation? If your thought was a question, try to answer it.

What distressing emotion/s did you feel? What else?

E.g. Anger, anxiety, terror, rage, depression, frustration, guilt, shame, irritable.....

What did you notice in your body?

E.g. In anxiety and anger (and excitement) the body's adrenaline can result in us feeling physical sensations which can include: heart pounding or racing, palpitations, rapid breathing, difficulty breathing, light-headed, dizzy, shaky, sweaty, hot, red, pins & needles, tense or sore muscles, urge to go to the toilet, butterflies in the tummy, warm uncomfortable feeling in the abdomen or chest, difficulty concentrating, lump in throat. This is the fight & flight response - the body's survival mechanism which helps us escape or to stand up to the threat at times of real danger.

The body is unable to differentiate between a real or imagined danger, so the alarm signal is pressed and activated regardless. In depression, we can feel tired, lethargic, exhausted, experience appetite and sleep changes, aches and pains, headaches, digestive changes (e.g. constipation), agitation and feel unable to settle, experience lack of interest in sex, and have slow movement or speech.

What did you do? What didn't you do? How did you cope?

Examples include:

(Anxiety): Stayed home, left wherever you were or felt the urge to leave, didn't talk to anyone, avoided eye contact, fiddled with a pen, sat in a corner, didn't go out, chose to shop at less busy times, went to local corner shop instead of the big supermarket, distracted yourself (TV, radio, kept busy etc), urge to go (or went) to toilet, looked for reassurance, drank more, smoked more, ate more (or less), disturbed sleep.

(Depression): Stayed in bed, pulled covers over your head, didn't go out, sat and stared, watched television, didn't answer the phone, turned down an invite from a friend, didn't go to work, ate more (or less), slept more (or less), paced around, kept starting to do things but couldn't finish, no interest in others, no interest in sex, no interest in anything.

(Anger): shouted at someone, hit out, screamed, had a go at someone, sulked, criticized others (or had urge to do those things), used put-downs and threats, bottled it up, lost control.

Practice noticing these thoughts, feelings and behaviors - the more you practice, the more you will notice them. The more you notice them, the more you will be able to make helpful and effective changes.

You will learn to differentiate between healthy, unhealthy, familiar vs comfortable, etc.

See the template below to keep working!

