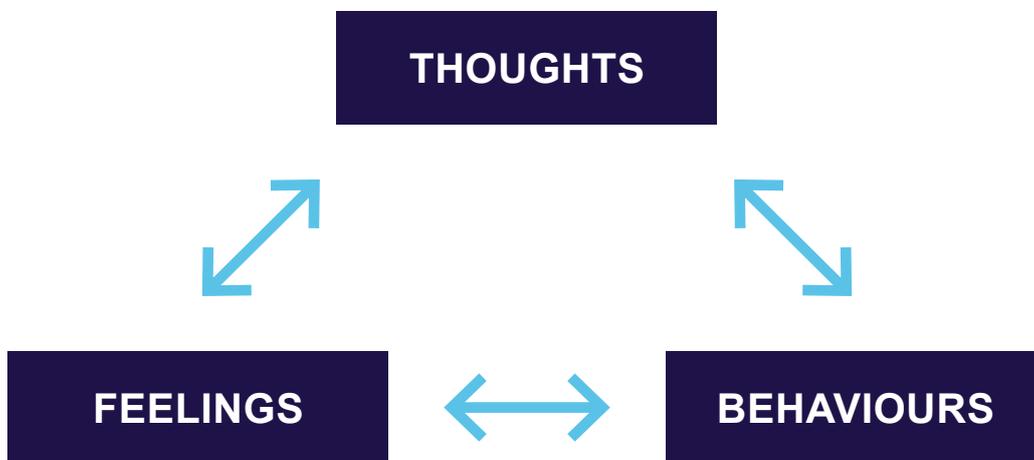


THOUGHT–FEELING–BEHAVIOUR CONNECTION

The Cognitive Triangle



The way we **THINK** influences how we **FEEL**, which influences what we **DO**.

- ◆ **Thoughts:** The things that you say to yourself. This includes your ideas, opinions, and beliefs about yourself and the world around you
- ◆ **Emotions:** This is what you feel inside (e.g. sad, happy). Emotions can have a physiological component too, such as feeling sick to the stomach.
- ◆ **Behaviours:** This is what you do and don't do.

Importantly, all three (thoughts, feelings, and behaviours) connect and influence each other. Our thoughts can change our feelings and behaviour, and vice versa.

Why is this important?

Well, it is the reason why two different people may experience the same situation but experience different thoughts, feelings, and behaviours about the event. This may lead to both people coming to completely different conclusions, despite experiencing the same thing.

For example

Person A and Person B both fail an exam.

PERSON A

PERSON B

Thoughts

I failed the exam! I'm an idiot! Why should I bother?

I failed the exam! I need to try harder in future. This doesn't mean I'm an idiot, I was really struggling but hopefully I can do better next time.

Feelings

- ◆ Sad: 10/10
- ◆ Angry: 9/10
- ◆ Upset: 10/10

- ◆ Sad: 6/10
- ◆ Hopeful: 6/10
- ◆ Optimistic: 8/10

Behaviours

Goes home, doesn't talk to anyone, skips classes.

Hires a tutor to help them, reaches out to classmates and friends for support, attends classes.

Here is another example of what changing your self-talk can look like.

AUTOMATIC THOUGHT

ALTERNATIVE THOUGHT

I'm a failure.

I didn't do as well as I wanted to in that assignment.

No one likes me.

I don't have as many friends as I would like.

I'm screwed.

I'm struggling and I need some help.

Everything is terrible.

There are good and bad things happening in my life.

What can I ask myself to try and think differently?

Here are some good prompting questions.

- ◆ What would I say to a friend?
- ◆ How do I know that this thought is true? Could I be making assumptions?
- ◆ Am I thinking of the worst case scenario? How likely is it that the worst case scenario is going to happen?
- ◆ Have I ever felt really worried about a situation before, and then things turned out to be fine? Could that possibly happen again in this current situation?

Who can I contact for more support?

VU's Counselling Service provides free professional services to enrolled students that are designed to support you in your personal, psychological, academic, and social development. To book an appointment, call 9919 5400 and have a look at our webpage: vu.edu.au/counselling