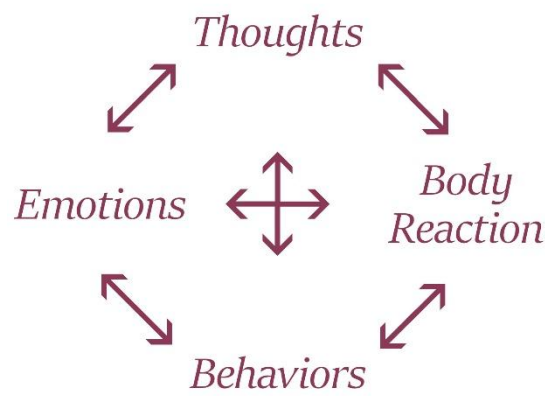


## Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

(Please note this is for educational purposes only. I, the writer, am not a medical professional of any kind. The information provided is my interpretation and understanding from attending classes, lessons and research that I have experienced.)

Cognitive Behavioral therapy works on changing behavioural patterns. Recognizing the behaviors and what leads to them can start you on the right track of changing them.

Developed by Mr. Aaron Beck in 1960, has since been further researched and found to show good results by participants struggling with mental health disorders. Diagnosed conditions including depression, anxiety and eating disorders, substance use, and personality disorders can find CBT a beneficial improvement in their mindset and life.



The diagram above represents how parts of us can affect the other. If your ‘lense’ of the world has been altered from traumatic events, it can distort the pathway between these parts of us. At any point between these steps above (thoughts, emotions, body reactions, and behaviors) you can intercept and change the narrative.

When you feel yourself starting to follow the ‘wrong path’, that is thoughts, behaviors, emotions, etc. leading to undesirable end results. Examples of body reactions like anxiety or panic attacks, behaviors like outburst of emotions crying, anger or screaming, thoughts of suicide, unlovable, not good enough, low self-worth or self-esteem . That is the opportunity to recognize its presence. When any one of these moments start showing up, pause, take a breath and acknowledge it’s there.

It's good to have a list of steps you can refer to that brings you back to the present moment. Activities you can do to distract from these unwanted outcomes, activities that bring up your self-esteem making you happy, or bring a sense of calm to you during the situation.

If you are unsure of what makes you happy or brings calm to your life, maybe that's a good goal you can set for yourself. This gives you an opportunity to learn more about yourself, and it

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doesn't have to cost a lot of money or a large commitment. You can start small! I've included a list at the end for your reference.

Have patience and give yourself forgiveness and grace. No one gets this right the first time, changing behavioral patterns can take months or practice.

If you would like to know a little more about how we got to this point in our actions and behaviors. If you are asking yourself, 'But how did I get here? How did it come to this?'. Great questions! There are some common-sense approaches to growing into a new pattern.

Three main areas creating this negative narrative include Automatic Thoughts, Cognitive Distortions, and Underlying Beliefs or Schemas. I will give a brief description of each, but if you feel these resonate with you, I encourage you to do a little research.

### Automatic Thoughts

Your immediate unfiltered thoughts that come to your mind freely without effort. As the diagram shows above, thoughts can lead to behavioral and emotional changes. If your first unfiltered thoughts are unrealistic, incorrect, judgmental, opinionated or negative and you don't recognize this. It can have effects on your daily life, resulting in anger, frustration, impatience, argumentative.

### Cognitive Distortions

Errors in how you process things around you, your environment. Some symptoms to suggest you may be suffering from this include:

All or Nothing Thinking (Black and white thinking), no room for grey, interpretations or variations, an example could be people love me or they hate me, there's no in between.

Overgeneralizing based on little facts or exposure, an example could be 'this child likes gum, so every child likes gum'.

Disqualifying the positive and focusing on the negative, an example could be 'My debit card got charged twice for my coffee this morning', (but you also got the best parking spot right outside your office which rarely happens, and you don't acknowledge that).

Fortune Telling (Mind reading) is kind of future thinking and assuming what the other person is thinking or feeling. An example could be 'She said yes, but her face looked upset, I don't think she likes me much'. You have no idea what that person is thinking, it could be a million things and may not even be about you.

Additional distortions include Minimization, Catastrophizing, Blaming, Mislabeled/Labeling, Personalization, Emotional Reasoning, Internal Mental Filters, and Should Statements.

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## Underlying Beliefs

As humans, when we are born, we need others to care for us. Our survival solely relies on other people. As we grow up and learn to be more independent in thought and action. We learn to receive input from the world around us and adapt to take care of our needs. The people raising us, can instill in us core beliefs of who we think we are or need to be.

If we are in an environment presenting us with dysfunctional beliefs, it can change the core beliefs of anyone to accept those beliefs. Dysfunctional core beliefs can be 'I am unlovable/inadequate', 'I don't deserve to have needs or dreams/wants', and 'People are dangerous or untrustworthy'.

Once you internalize these beliefs, you start to truly believe them yourself, even if they are not true, THEY ARE NOT TRUE. A good time to practice now is 'Check the Facts'. Are these negative thoughts about me true? Name a good thing for every bad thing you think about yourself. Remember to be kind and forgiving of yourself. We all make mistakes; the past decisions cannot be undone. But we can choose to step forward with different views.

Learning to 'see' these negatives happening within yourself can be hard. Emotionally accepting that it is a part of you and choosing to take action and change how you want to be in this world is worth it.

### Practice Steps of Growth:

1. Identify the negative thoughts
2. Challenge, be curious about that negative thought
3. Replace negative thoughts
4. Change behaviors
5. Maintain progress and growth
6. Acknowledge and encourage yourself with positive self-affirmations on accomplishments

(Do not go to negative thoughts when you make a mistake or fall back a step. Hold grace and forgiveness for yourself. Look how far you have come. Being here right now means you're doing great!)

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Activities to Try

‘Who am I? What do I like?’

Activity	I love this	I could try this
Walk around my neighborhood		
Make a craft		
Cook/Bake a new recipe		
Adult coloring book		
Rearrange furniture in my place		
Visit a local attraction		
Be curious about something new		
Repair something		
Find new music you like		
Stretch, do yoga, pilates		
Visit a coffee shop		
Interact or pet some animals		
Go for a bike ride		
Spend time with someone you love		
Make a gift for someone		
Hangout in the local library		

## Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

### Practice Steps of Growth:

1. Identify the negative thoughts, feelings, behaviors
2. Be curious and challenge the above
3. Replace negative thoughts with positive ones
4. Change behaviors, choose what you can do (what's in your control to improve)
5. Maintain progress and growth, it's okay to have backsteps (be kind to yourself)
6. Acknowledge and encourage yourself with positive self-affirmations on accomplishments

Be Curious	My Expression
Identify the undesirable moment? Is it a body response, thought, emotion, behavior?	
How can I understand what is happening? What caused this to arise?	
Where do I feel it in my body? Focus inward	
Take a deep breath into that space of your body. Slowly inhale through your nose all the way to your belly. Exhale through your mouth quickly.	
How can I calm myself to a calmer place? Do I need to take a break, journal my thoughts and feelings, cry.	
Is there anything I can do to make the situation better? *	
If this didn't work out how you wanted. What can be better next time?	

\* If you are not sure what to do to improve the situation, you can refer to the DBT skills. This can help encourage thoughtful speech to help communicate your needs effectively.

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