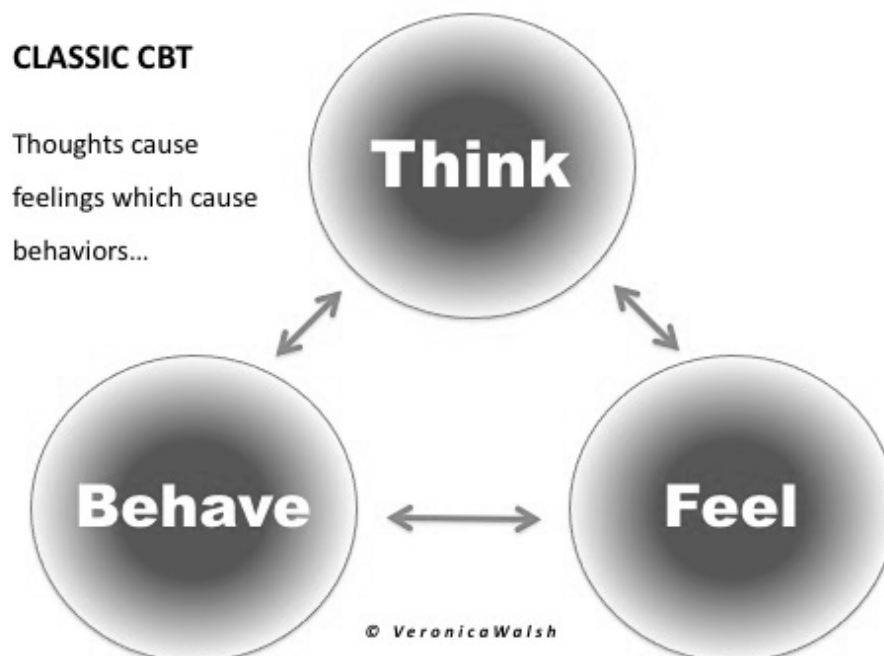

Introduction to Classic CBT

WHAT IS CLASSIC CBT? An introduction:

Classic CBT has been around since the 60's in various forms. Many agree it has two main 'founding fathers': **Albert Ellis** and **Aaron Beck**. Both had trained as psychoanalysts in the 1950s, and both were essentially research scientists as well as practitioners, meaning they measured data and outcomes – and both were ultimately unhappy with *delving into the deep subconscious mind* as a treatment, because it didn't give good outcomes, (meaning the clients 'didn't get better') – and both focussed on the same findings, that how the person explains the world to themselves largely causes how they feel and behave – and that *stress distorts thinking* which can cause negative feelings and behaviours - but **we can literally learn to undistort our thinking**, which will help to regulate how we feel and behave,



We can build awareness and self-regulation, to think and feel and behave differently.

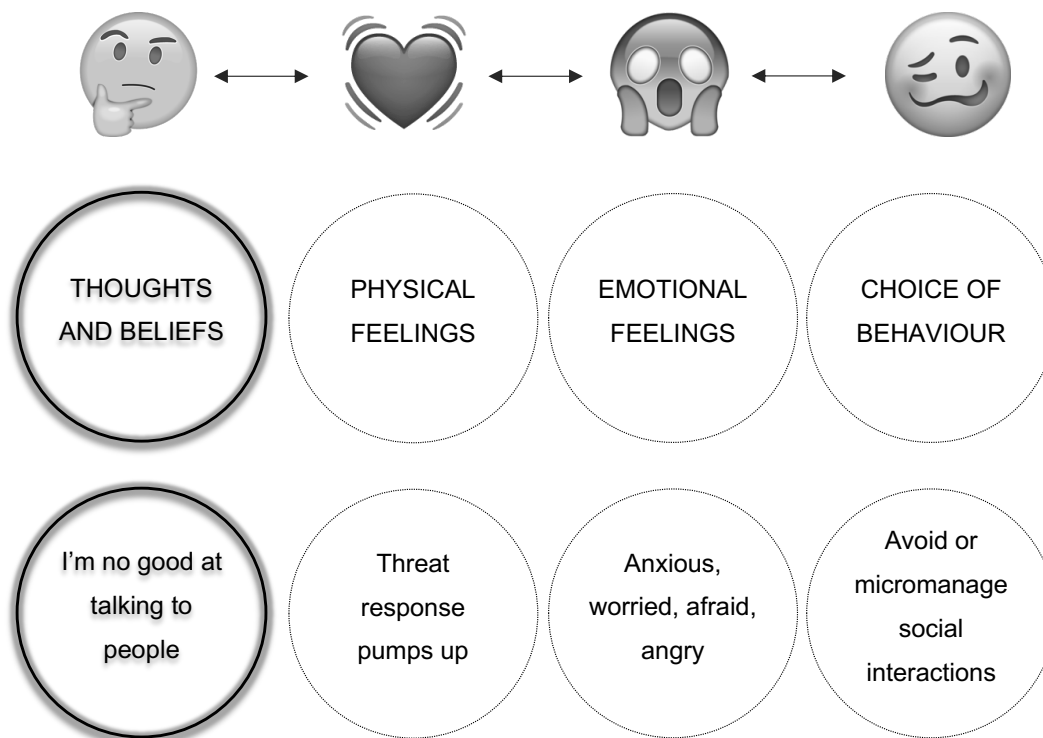
“What am I thinking? How am I explaining the world to myself? Is it healthy or unhealthy? Is it proportional or exaggerated? Is it rational or irrational? When I accept these thoughts and beliefs 100%, how does it make me feel and behave?”

Reframe and regulate...

Key idea: stress / anxiety / depression changes how a person thinks and feels and behaves – creating a **'negative filter'** and **'irrational cognitions'**.

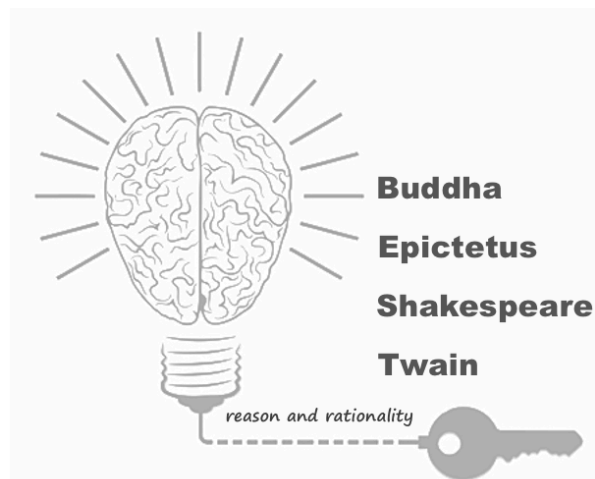
We are not seeing pink elephants and are not making everything up out of thin air, but we are an **unreliable narrator** because **stress has become a disorder** and *the way we explain the world to ourselves* is sometimes inaccurate and exaggerated or distorted - causing us to feel bad - and to develop self-sabotaging behaviour - which gives us bad outcomes - which appears to confirm the original negative distorted thinking - and so on in a vicious circle.

CBT teaches you skills to examine and edit 'bad thinking habits' (we've all got them!), helping you to think differently, and to feel and behave differently to get better outcomes in life. That is the central principal, and of course CBT evolves as the science evolves, and many great practitioners have added to the work through the years. This book gives you simple chunky key idea models and tools to build the skill of self awareness and self management. (We should be taught these skills at 13 in school – it would save many of us from unnecessary emotional roller coasters and bad choices and bad outcomes.)



The great intellectuals were 'CBT advocates' of a kind:

The theory that how we explain the world to ourselves can be the main cause of our problems, (rather than events which merely influence us), is not new - this has been the view of many deep intellectual thinkers with insight through the ages.



Buddha:

- We are what we think.
- All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make our world.
- What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind.

Epictetus (Stoic - Greek Philosopher):

- What disturbs men's minds is not events but their judgments on events.
- There is only one way to happiness and that is to cease worrying about things which are beyond the power of our will.
- It is not he who gives abuse that affronts, but the view that we take of it as insulting; so that when one provokes you it is your own opinion which is provoking.

Albert Einstein (Stoic - Greek Philosopher):

- The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking, it cannot be changed without changing our thinking.
- The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.
- If we knew what we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?

Shakespeare:

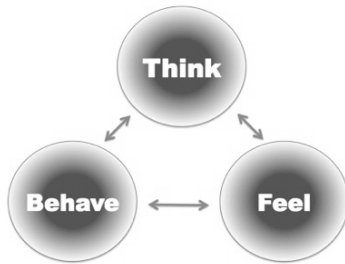
- Make not your thoughts your prisons.
- There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

And my favorite: **Mark Twain:**

- I've been through terrible things in this life. And some of them actually happened!
- Life does not consist mainly -- or even largely -- of facts and happenings. It consists mainly of the storm of thoughts that is forever blowing through one's head.
- Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please.

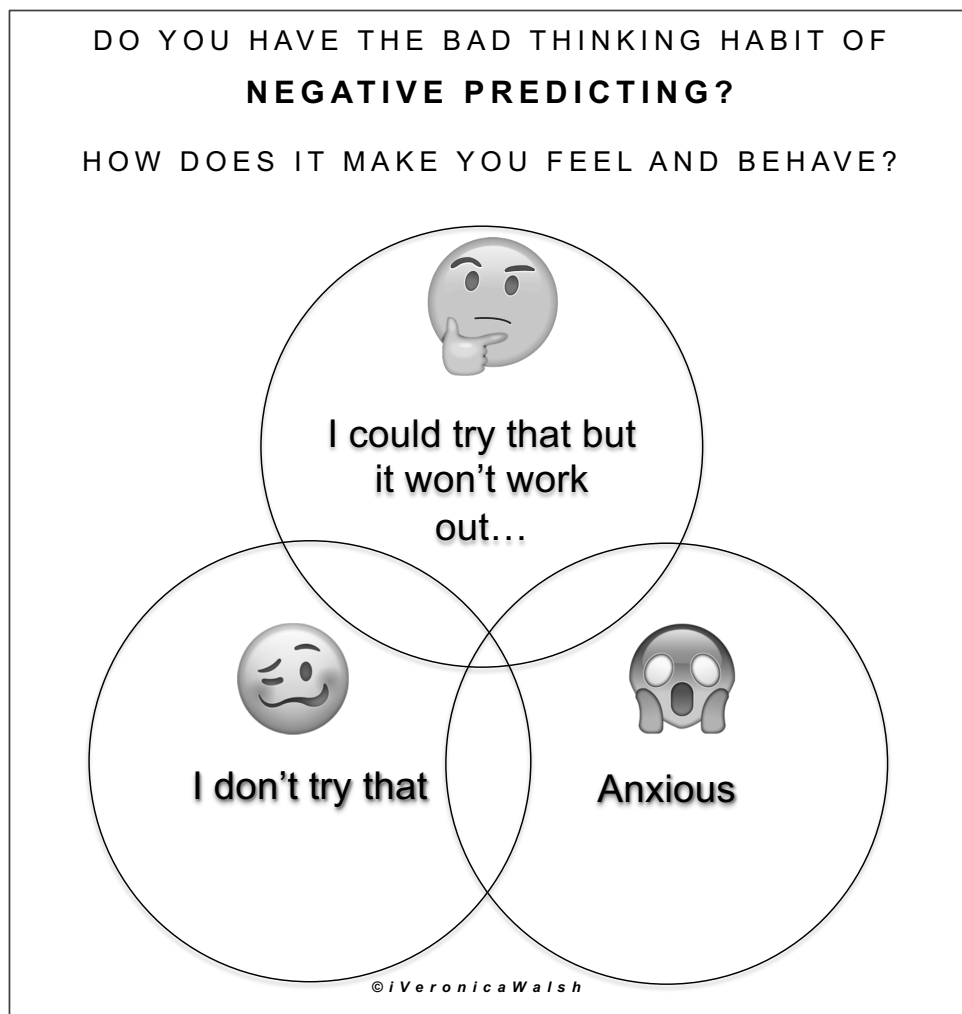
Modern cognitive science theory proves the great thinkers of the past correct, you *can* change your life by thinking differently, rationally, proportionally using CBT – it is art, it is poetry, it is a philosophy for living, for all day every day, to be present, to be happier, especially when life is tough.

Thoughts cause Feelings and Behaviours – model / template examples



The CBT model showed that engaged learners can build awareness and management of their **attributional style** (how they are explaining the world to themselves, their self-talk) – to examine how **bad thinking habits** may cause them to feel and behave. Classic CBT proposes that events and situations, even very negative ones, *influence* how a person feels and behaves, but that ultimately their *thoughts and beliefs about the event or situation* will decide their emotions and behaviour. After all, the same thing can happen to 10 different people, but they will all think and feel and behave uniquely.

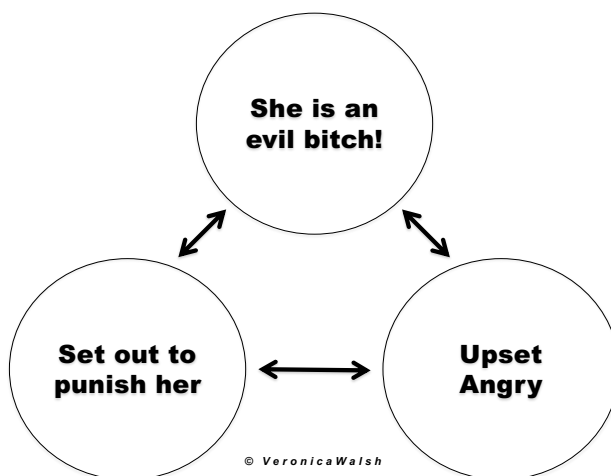
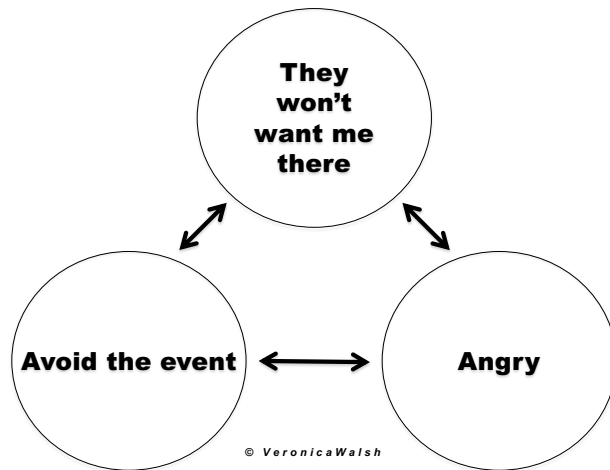
‘Change your mind, change your mood...’ ~ Greenberger & Padesky



Use simple CBT models to build the skill of identifying and unpacking unhelpful self-talk that causes emotional upset and self-sabotaging behaviours.

*“You have considerable power to **construct self-helping thoughts, feelings and actions as well as to construct self-defeating behaviours.** You have the ability, if you use it, to **choose healthy instead of unhealthy thinking, feeling and acting.**” Albert Ellis*

We can largely be the cause of our own upset with the way we explain the world to ourselves - therefore, we can un-cause it. Every choice we make is based on what we are thinking and feeling at the time, we do our best – but **when we know better, we do better.**



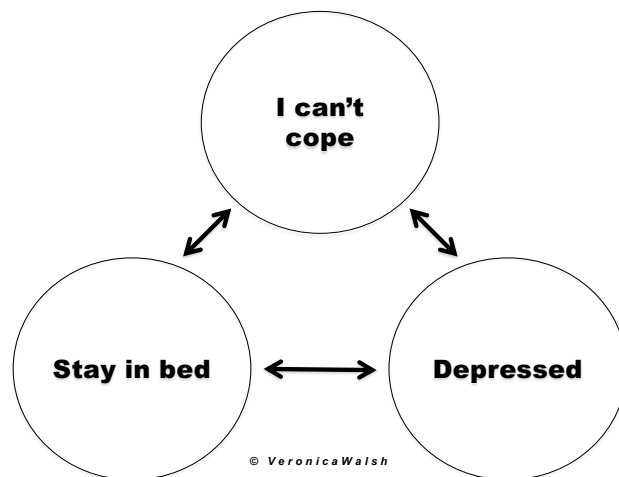
Those with good psychological health and good coping skills will process situations in a different way to those with stress disorders like stress or anxiety or depression, it is accepted that when stress becomes a disorder, it changes the way a person

thinks and feels and behaves – so it stands to reason that an effective care-plan should include examining and managing our *thinking*, which may help change how we feel, and what we do, to a healthier model. To cope well, to be present, to be happier.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy has become the first-choice treatment for most stress disorders, rather than medicating or spending years undergoing psychoanalysis or counselling.

CBT is different to the traditional talking-therapies - it is not about long term sessions of open questions, and sympathetic listening, with a focus on your emotional feelings - instead, it is a *psycho-educational* approach that teaches engaged learners (that's you) to apply methods and techniques to **build awareness and self-regulation** of how they evaluate and respond to their world – effectively becoming their own therapists by understanding and managing their **thinking** (cognitive), **feelings** ([physical and emotional), and **behaviour** (choice of responses to events and situations).

You can go to a cognitive behavioral therapist and work with them to develop the skills (guided self-help) – and/or you can do it as self-help using support materials and resources (worksheets, handouts and workbooks).



Studies show that CBT regularly outperforms medication, and that the effects stay with participants after treatment - engaged learners can develop life changing skills that stay with them forever.

If CBT is applied consistently by somebody who is capable of building self-awareness and self-regulation, it literally physically changes the brain and body (neural circuitry). It is the only measured and proven psychotherapy in the world. And it is fast if you do the work (yes, homework!) - very real improvements with good outcomes can show after even a handful of sessions.

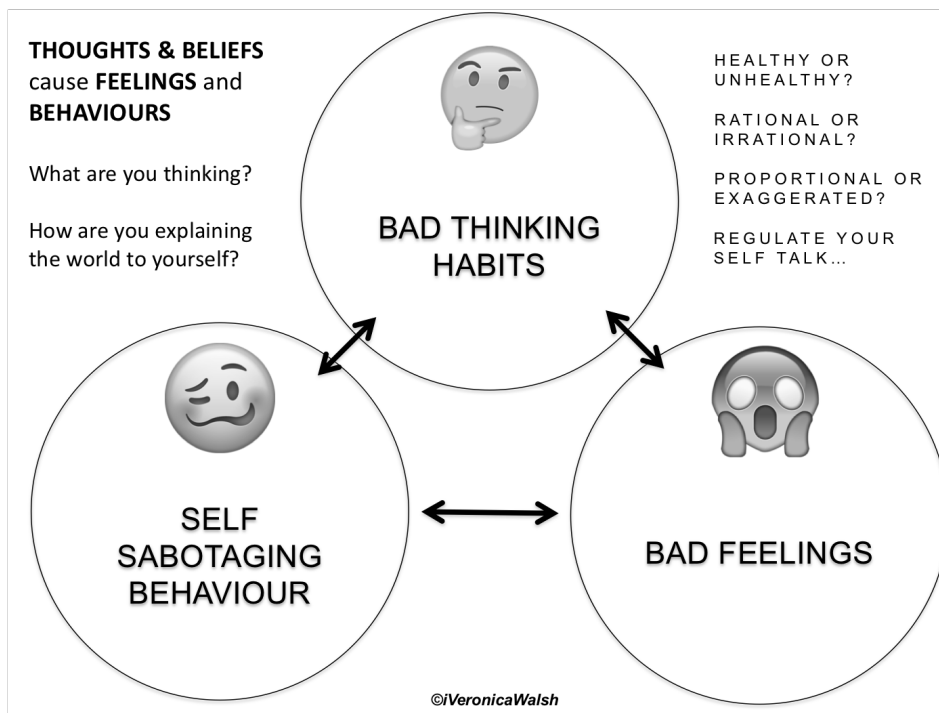
CBT is science, and science is magic that works. It is a philosophy for living, for all day every day. Bake it in. Regulate.

Next are the 'bad thinking habits' – we've all got them. Name and tame the

The top 10 Bad Thinking Habits

The Top Ten Bad Thinking Habits – intro to this mini-workbook

Humans: we're a bit messy. We are not glossy machines with all-knowing rational processors for brains. We are not like the wise elders in Superman. Or Confucius at the top of the mountain. We are essentially 'predicting machines', doing our best to navigate our world, with a brain that is tethered to a trippy nervous system, and a memory that is, well, not completely reliable.




Use this workbook to become familiar with the top ten bad thinking habits of messy humans (that's you and I). We all have these distorted thinking habits sometimes, but when stress becomes a disorder; we have most of them most of the time. They can be our default setting. Think of them as 'coding' with some blips and skips.

Learn to understand and recognise which habits are automatic for you. Build awareness of when and how you do them, and learn to interrupt and thought-stop them, and to edit them with rational evidence based new self-talk. Be present, be happier.


Become familiar with the bad thinking habits guide: watch out for them, and reframe.

NEGATIVE PREDICTING



'I'm not dating that person, it would be a disaster'.
'I'll never really be happy.'
'I'm going to fail that exam so there's no point in putting effort in'.
'That won't work out'.
'I'll go, but I won't enjoy myself'.
My partner is going to break up with me.
'This is going to be a bad situation for me'.
'I'm not ready yet – I'm not ready yet – I'm not ready yet.....'.
'I'll never be successful.'

NEGATIVE MIND READING



'He thinks I'm an idiot.'
'They don't really want me here'.
'They think I'm ugly'.
'They think they're better than everybody else'.
'She's a bitch. She did that out of spite and jealousy'.
'She doesn't like me, she thinks I'm boring'.
'My partner thinks I'm not good enough'.
'My boss doesn't respect me.'

MUSTY RULES FOR LIVING

*'I want, therefore I
MUST have.'*

*'Things must be
comfortable and
not frustrating, or
else I can't cope'*



*'I must be thoroughly
competent at all times,
or else I'm incompetent'*

*'You must behave
as I think you ought
to, or else I can't be
happy.'*

*'You must treat me with
respect and kindness, or
you're a very bad person
who should be punished.'*

AWFULISING / DRAMATISING

*Have a skin blemish? 'Life is
AWFUL. I'm gross'.*

*Late for work? 'This
is AWFUL, I'll be
anxious all day long
now'.*

*Asked to give a
presentation/speech:
Oh God, I'll die, this
is AWFUL..*



*Put weight on?
'OMG, this is so
AWFUL, I'm
disgusting'.*

*Friend snaps at
you? 'She's so
horrible and
AWFUL'.*

*Raining and bad
traffic? 'Oh God, this
is so AWFUL..*

I can't cope!

EMOTIONAL REASONING

'I feel bad, therefore it must be bad.'

'I feel scared so this is a bad situation.'

'You have made me so angry, therefore you must be punished.'



'I feel insecure, therefore I'm not safe in this situation.'

'I feel sick and shaky, and I trust my gut so something bad is going on.'

COMPARING AND RATING

'She's so attractive and I'm so ugly'.

'They like him, they hate me.'

'They have more friends than me.'

'I'm not good enough.'

'Everybody clicks on her posts, everybody ignores mine.'

'He's cooler than me'.



'They're really happy, but we're so unhappy.'

'She has it so easy, I have it hard.'

'He's so popular, I'm ignored.'

LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE

I can not, and will not, and should not have to tolerate this thing I find frustrating!

A man is playing music on the train without headphones – No! How dare he! I won't tolerate it!

My friends have chosen a venue I hate – I'm not going...



A group is walking slowly on the kerb in front of me – aargh, get out of my way!

A friend calling over without an invitation – so rude!

A group are chatting and blocking my way on the escalator – OMG, you idiots, move!

PERSONALISING

My therapist is saying humans are irrational. How dare she? I'm perfectly rational!

Ghosted on tinder – I must have really messed up here!

No response to a tweet – I'm boring!

A friend posts a famous quote on FB about toxic people – that's a dig at me!



A friend says he's not free this weekend – I'm never inviting him out again!

My partner is withdrawn today – it's about me!

My boss is cranky today – I'm in trouble here!

INNER CRITIC

I can't cope. I never step up. I'm a bitch.
I'm very unattractive. I am negative and miserable.
I'm not really fun. There's something wrong with me. I'm so lazy.
I'm boring. I'm rubbish on social media. I'm not a nice person.
I'm an oddball. I'll never be successful. I have no style.
I'm a mess.



LABELLING

He's very cool, but his friend is a total nerd. He didn't know much about climate change – he's an idiot.
She's always late – she's rude. He's gorgeous, and his wife is ugly.
He didn't pay for dinner – he's mean. Vegans are idiots.
He's overweight – so he's a slob. A colleague was rude – she's a bitch.



Name and tame your thinking habits - catch and reframe your unhelpful self-talk.



NEGATIVE PREDICTING



NEGATIVE MIND READING



MUSTY RULES FOR LIVING



AWFULISING / DRAMATISING



EMOTIONAL REASONING



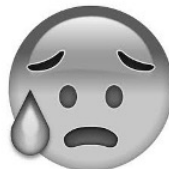
COMPARING & RATING



LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE



PERSONALISING



INNER CRITIC



LABELLING

Name it and tame it.

As you become familiar with your self-talk, journal it, or brain dump key ideas into your notes app on your phone, building awareness of when and how you are using the bad thinking habits - and then review and design new self-talk to replace them, literally - using cool moderate language that you can activate when needed.

You can create a routine by wearing a coloured rubber band on your wrist – just having it there reminds you to thought-stop and reframe – and you can play with it and snap it lightly when you're reframing dramatic simplistic unhelpful thinking to rational evidence based thinking. Be your own little Buddha. **That's CBT.**

Classic tips to convert *distorted thinking* to evidence based rational thinking:



What exactly is the situation and how am I explaining it to myself?

My self-talk:

- Am I using my *Bad Thinking Habits*?
- Am I getting things out of proportion? Where is the evidence?
- Am I only looking at negatives and ignoring positives?
- Am I focussing on things I cannot control rather than things I can?
- Is that a bit overly dramatic and causing my threat response to spike?
- Is that rational or irrational, healthy or unhealthy?
- How does accepting these thoughts and beliefs make me feel and behave?
- Has thinking this way been helpful in life so far, or unhelpful?
- Does this kind of thinking cause me to miss out on great experiences?
- Does this kind of thinking stop me truly being present?
- What would I advise my best friend if they were thinking this way?
- What is the rational calm alternative view of this situation?

What is it more accurate to say?

Design new self-talk – REFRAME

The bad thinking habits table – when do you use them? Journal key ideas :

Negative Predicting	Negative Mindreading
Musty Rules for Living	Awfulising / Dramatising
Emotional Reasoning	Comparing and Rating
Low Frustration Tolerance	Personalising
Inner Critic	Labelling

An
introduction
to CBT
Journaling

An introduction to efficient CBT Journaling



This handout guides you with simple models that introduce how to identify and journal *thoughts that cause feelings*.

WRITE THINGS DOWN – your brain likes learning-by-discovery with key ideas, it sticks.

What is your ‘attributional style’? How are you explaining the world to yourself? Is it distorted by stress? Do you have bad thinking habits? Catch them and edit them – literally!

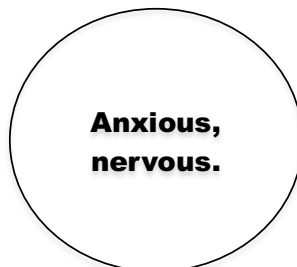
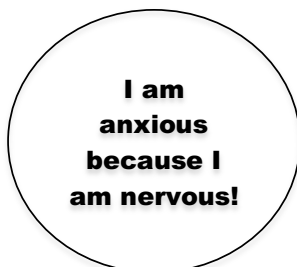
Thoughts and beliefs don’t come to us in helpful paragraphs and chapters that are rational and clear – they are mixed up with feelings and physicality and biases and misinformation, and if you have ‘crooked thinking’ it will cause crooked feeling and crooked behavior – CBT journaling helps you to have clarity and to examine your version of what is going on, and to clean it up with cool evidence based assessments, which will literally change how you feel and behave, and your whole life experience. Be cool. Be rational. Deliberately. Especially in challenging times.

Firstly: watch out for emotional reasoning / explaining *feelings with feelings*.

Emotions are not thoughts – learn the habit of separating thoughts from feelings and behaviours – learn how to *identify what you are thinking* when you are feeling emotional upset like anxiety, anger, or depression..

I think...

... therefore I feel...



ERROR!

Trying to make sense of things through how you ‘feel’ gives you the wrong information. The following styles of emotional reasoning are *not helpful* in building awareness of our thoughts and beliefs about a given event or situation, they are very general and only identify feelings, which tells you nothing concrete. And if you have the very human habit of trying to figure out the meaning of things through how you are feeling emotionally, well, you have the wrong data! Feelings are not facts.

I am stressed because I am anxious.	I am afraid because I am nervous.	I am angry because I am insecure.	I am upset because I am embarrassed.
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The above emotion and emotion statements pair two feelings and don't give you enough information to evaluate what's going on.

FEELINGS ARE NOT FACTS, an emotion doesn't come out of the blue and cause another emotion.

What is causing the feelings? Be concrete – what is the event or situation – and how are you explaining it to yourself? Is physical anxiety, rather than just emotions, a main issue? Events are often quite benign and neutral, or at least manageable - it is how we view them, plus what our nervous system is doing, that largely causes our dramatic negative emotional responses. Explore *context* in your journaling. If you do not map context that objectively describes the *activating event or situation*, and then *how you think* about it, you will be left at the mercy of 'emotional reasoning' (trying to make sense of things through *how you feel*, rather than rational evaluation of evidence and facts), and you will not cope well..



If feelings are largely caused by the view we take of events or situations, more concrete and helpful ‘thought catching notes’ might be like this:

<p><i>I am nervous because I think I will fail this exam because I always fail at things these days and it's all too much.</i></p>	<p><i>I am afraid because I think this meeting is going to go badly, I'm not good enough for this job, and am not able to cope.</i></p>	<p><i>I am furious because I think that your behaviour is absolutely disgraceful and I will not tolerate it.</i></p>	<p><i>I am upset because I think that everybody is looking at my horrible big butt in these ugly jeans. I look awful!</i></p>
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Re-cap: feelings are not facts, and thoughts are not the same as feelings

– identify and examine thoughts and beliefs that cause the feelings.

So – **if feelings are ‘internal emotions’ caused by perception**, it would not be useful to conclude “I feel anxious because I am nervous!”, as anxiety and nervousness are both feelings. It would be more useful and accurate to identify the event or situation, and the thoughts and beliefs you have about the situation, that are causing the feelings (eg ‘I predict I am going to embarrass myself at the interview, so I feel very upset and anxious). Be precise. Catch how you are explaining the world to yourself. Are you ‘negative predicting’ in a dramatic way?

Task: unpack your self-talk and bad feelings about a situation or event:

Thoughts and beliefs about a situation/event	Feelings

Thoughts cause feelings which cause behaviours – template examples.



Try it this way: make simple maps of your thoughts and feelings and behaviours.

What are you thinking? Consider the following random examples of **unhealthy self-talk patterns**. Different people have different patterns, can you spot yours? Can you see how language matters, and how accepting automatic dramatic thoughts and beliefs 100% will cause yourself and others unnecessary upset? You don't have to accept them! Catch how you are talking to yourself, and thought-stop and consider whether it is rational and healthy, or a bit extreme and over the top. Edit edit edit.

Change how you think, change how you feel, change how you behave.

THINKING THAT...	MAY MAKE YOU FEEL...	AND YOU MAY...
I'm no good at talking to people	Anxious, worried, afraid.	Go quiet – can't focus, can't listen properly, don't interact.
My boss hates me	Anxious, worried, angry.	Not communicative or productive in work. Take a lot of sick days.
She is an evil bitch.	Rage.	Text her a rant about how awful she is.

I can't cope!

Anxious, depressed

Isolate yourself, poor hygiene, stay in bed.

He is out to get me!

Angry

Lash out, vent and plot and sulk.

I'll never be in a real loving relationship

Sad, hopeless

Overthink and bring drama to potential relationships.

People are horrible.

Angry and frustrated.

Aggressive, suspicious, lashing out and sulking.

This is all there is for me.

Anxious, sad, frustrated.

Procrastinate and stay in unsatisfactory conditions.

Is your inner narrative sometimes negative and exaggerated? Thought-stop and edit.

Task: a blank form to track *thoughts that cause distorted feeling and behaviours:*

Thoughts and beliefs	Feelings	Behaviour
Thinking that...	May make you feel...	You may...

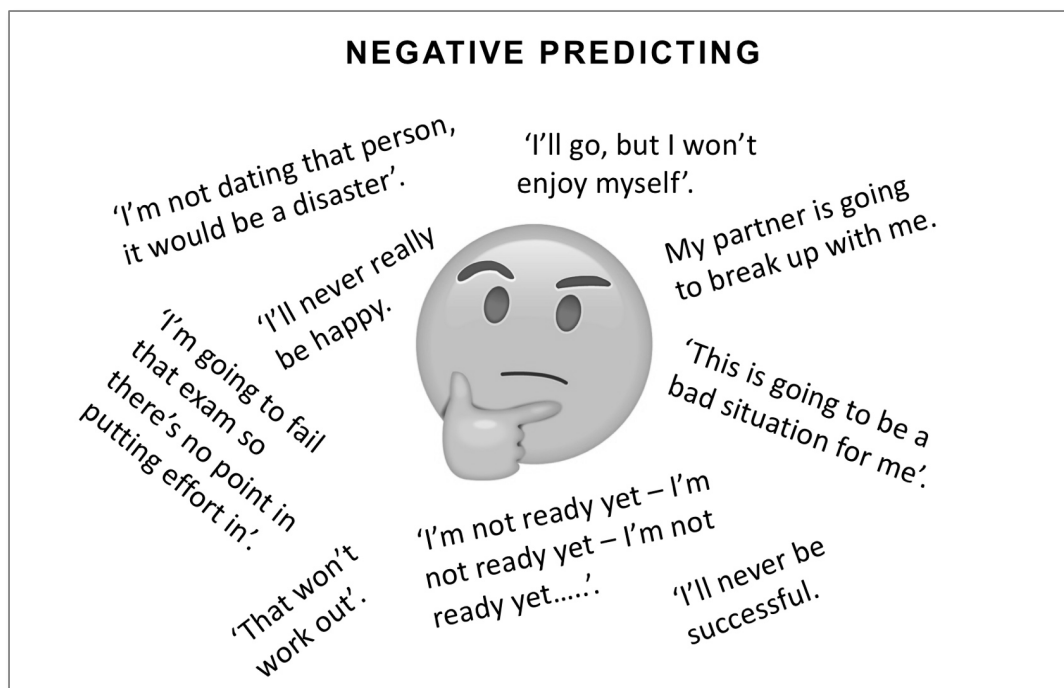
Important note: feelings are not just emotional – they’re also physical. Do you see how this style of negative dramatic thinking would affect your nervous system? You are perceiving *threats* to your status and wellbeing – and your body treats all threats as physical challenges (‘paper tigers’), with a surge of adrenaline and oxygen and cortisol to *pump you up* to handle them – this is ‘discomfor’t, this is ‘anxiety’. Remember – your mind is your brain which is attached to your nervous system. Dial down the drama with new accurate rational self-talk – to regulate yourself,

Task: controlled breathing can help to regulate your nervous system: the threat response overloads us with oxygen, so controlling the intake and output yourself puts you in control and regulates you – it’s simple: take a long slow breath in through the nose, hold for a few beats, then breathe out long and slow through the mouth – and repeat in a rhythm...

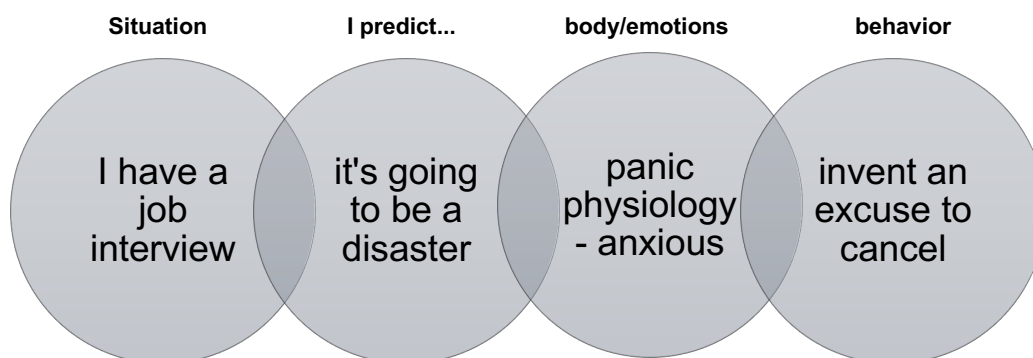


Clear CBT journaling requires context: without mapping *context* that includes the *activating event or situation* and *how you think* about it, you'll be left at the mercy of '*emotional reasoning*' – trying to make sense of things through *how you feel emotionally*, rather than cool rational evaluating. So assessing the event or situation in a concrete objective way through your journaling is essential.

Humans are PREDICTING MACHINES: catch and edit your predictions:



Map your situational anxieties and predictions and consequences: **Example:**



Consider whether you should accept your negative prediction and dramatic language, or dial it down and edit it to be cooler and more rational and evidence based. If negative visualisation is so powerful, couldn't rational positive visualisation and predictions be powerful too? Try that instead, deliberately.

Task: use this blank thought form to track your patterns:

Situation	Think	Feel	Behave

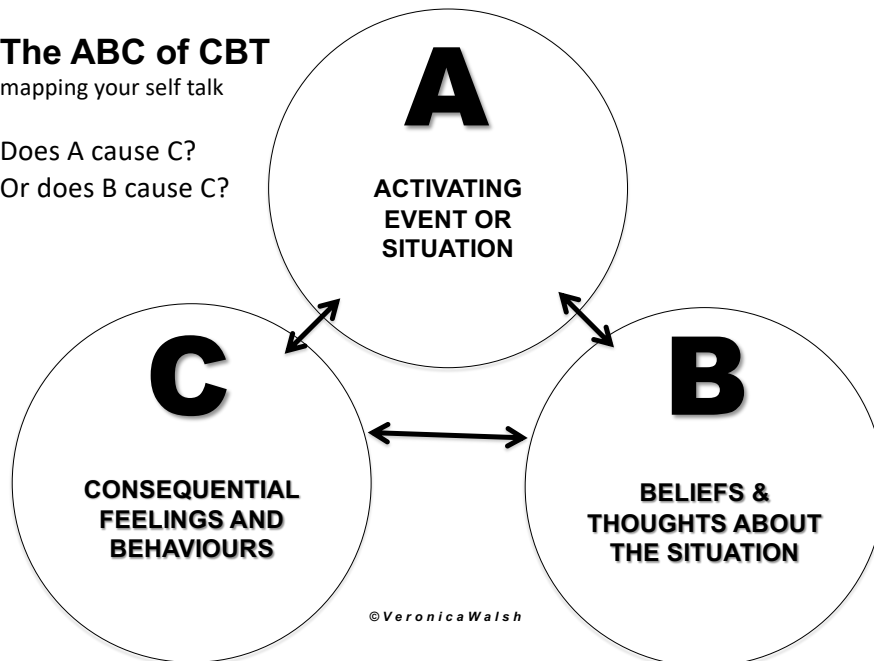
Or use this **simple ABC template** to journal, or to unpack with a mental thought task:

The ABC of CBT

mapping your self talk

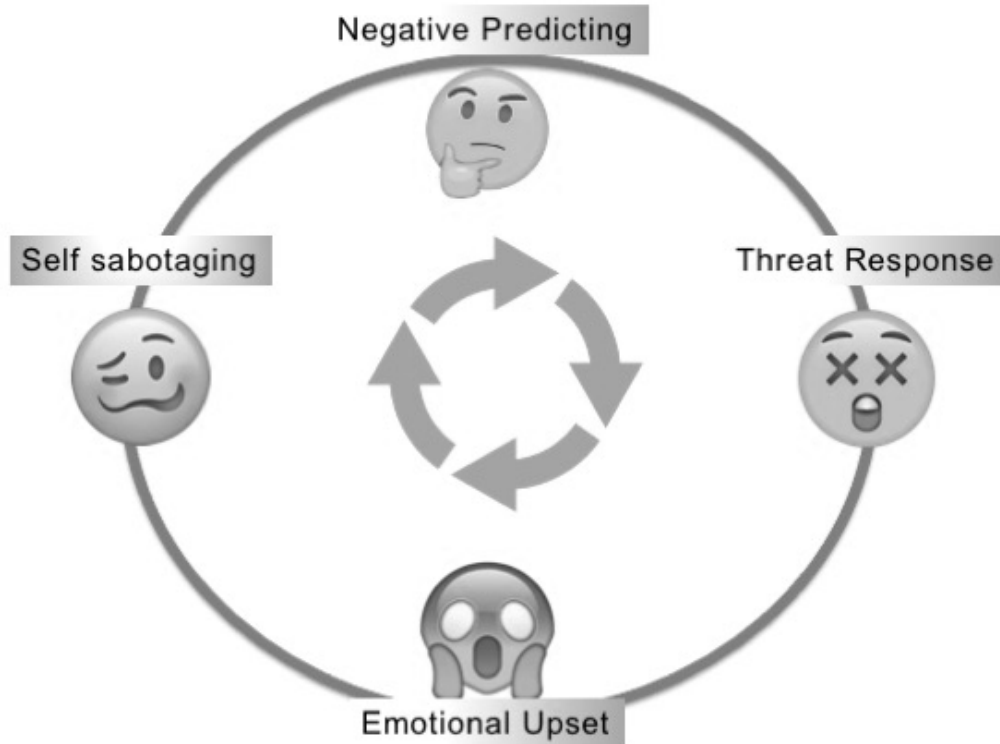
Does A cause C?

Or does B cause C?



Beware the vicious circle of negative predicting:

There are lots of helpful models in CBT, consider this template: **negative predicting** turns on the **threat response**, which causes **emotional upset**, which causes **self-sabotaging behavior**, which gives **bad outcomes**, which appears to confirm the negative predicting bias... trapping you in a 'vicious circle' of unnecessary upset.



Be careful what you say to yourself – your body is listening...

What did you learn? Write down your key takeaway ideas:

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT TAKING BETA BLOCKERS (ADRENALINE BLOCKERS) IF YOU HAVE HIGH PHYSICAL ANXIETY. THEY WILL REGULATE YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM AS PART OF A CBT CARE PLAN.