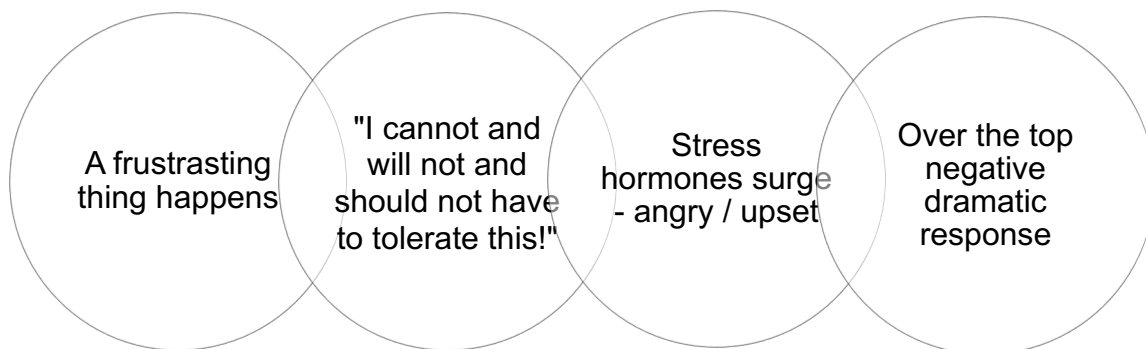


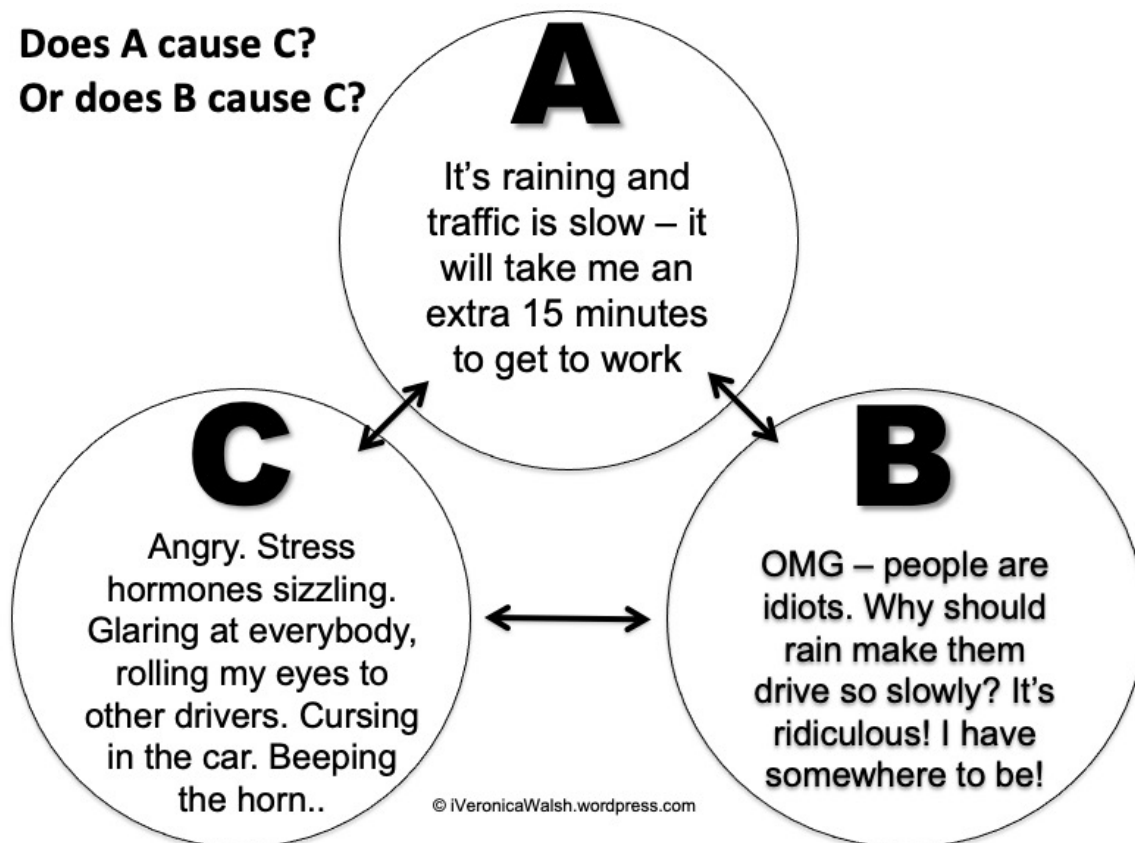
The CBT of LFT – iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com

Many people who suffer from stress disorders develop **Low Frustration Tolerance (LFT)** – this is a term coined by one of the founding fathers of CBT, Dr Albert Ellis - referring to when we imagine we *cannot* and *will not* and *should not have to* tolerate conditions that frustrate us (e.g. situations or events that cause us stress hormones, and/or *anger us*). “I REFUSE TO TOLERATE THIS!!!” *sulks* *angry* *pumped up* *drama* *self-sabotages all over the place....



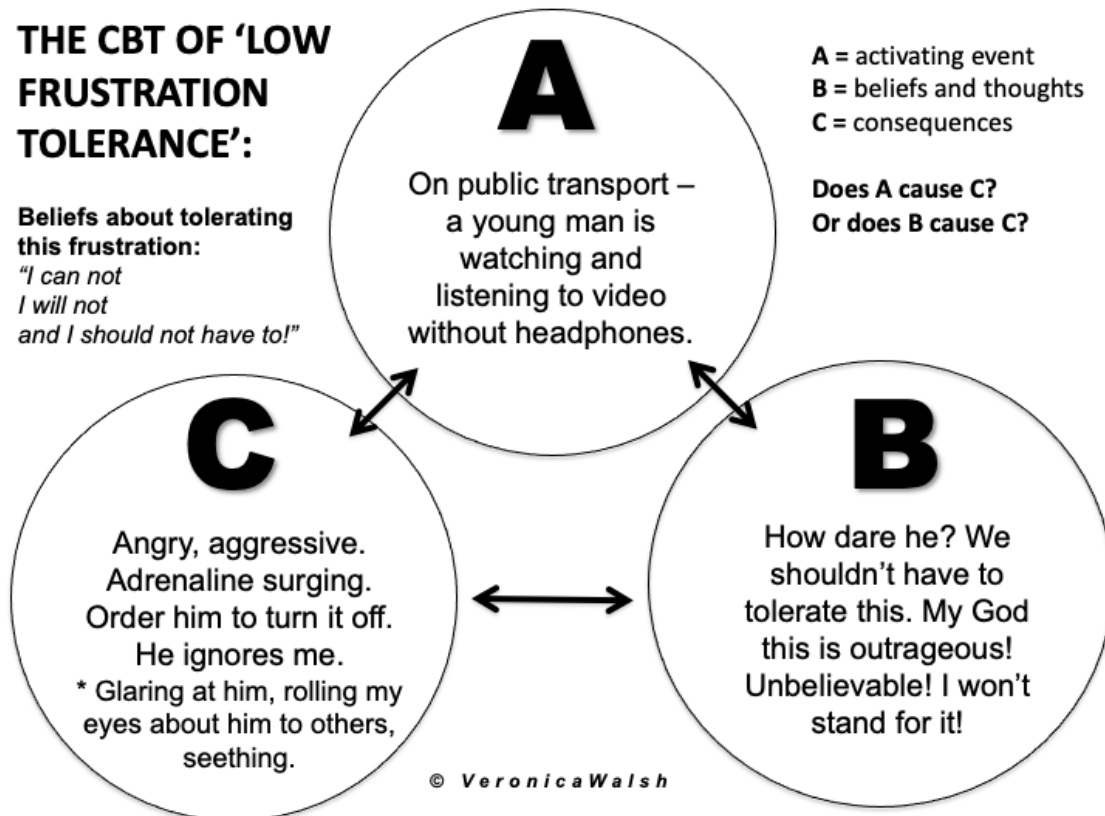
Examples – check out these ABC imagery examples of low frustration tolerance:

**Does A cause C?
Or does B cause C?**



THE CBT OF 'LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE':

Beliefs about tolerating this frustration:
"I can not
I will not
and I should not have to!"



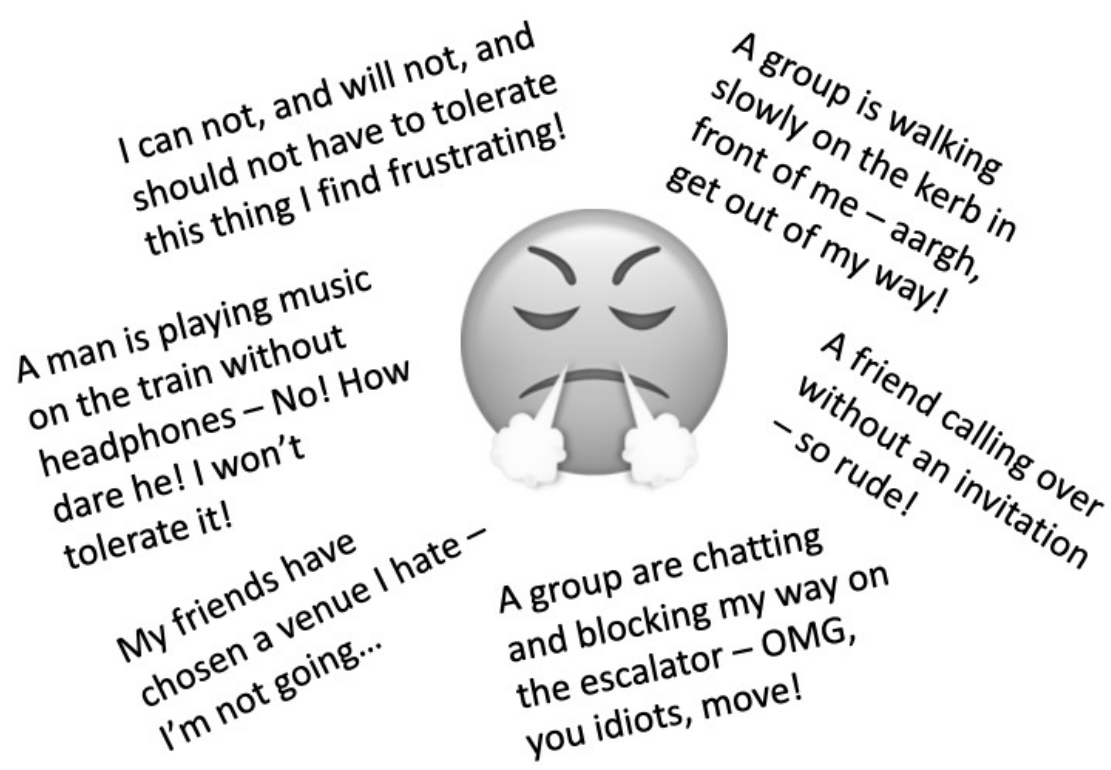
For the thoughtless misbehaving passenger example above, consider this: is it the noise itself that is causing the upset? Or the rule that it SHOULD NOT AND MUST NOT HAPPEN and that it CANNOT AND WILL NOT AND SHOULD NOT HAVE TO be tolerated? If it was a child giggling at a Sesame Street video would it be the same? If it was a Downs Syndrome man happily scrolling YouTube and smiling? If the audio was coming from the bus drivers radio, that he listens to while doing a stressful job? No? Well then it is not literally the event itself – so your response can be dialled down and regulated...

We can of course disapprove of the behaviour of a stranger, but we might be going over the top and causing unnecessary upset to ourselves and others with our drama of enforcing our 'rules'. We can certainly flash him a disapproving look, and/or say, 'excuse me, would you mind turning that down?' We can even get off that bus if it's causing a high surge in stress hormones, if we must – because sizzling with rage is not healthy. Give your actions thought – and maybe change them!

Note: there are many different self-management choices rather than aggression at yourself, or others, or the universe.

More examples:

LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE



So - can you see that this style of thinking is of course not quite rational, since it is not possible to live a life with no frustration, especially if we have a stress disorder that causes us to over respond to often benign or neutral situations that are actually no big deal, or at least nothing that we cannot cope with. We can learn to be cooler and more rational, and to dismantle this bad thinking habit, and develop higher frustration tolerance with a healthy acceptance of reality.

Know what you can control and what you cannot control, that is the secret to good psychological health, (thank you Greek stoics). The idea that we have a supreme 'entitlement' not to be caused any discomfort is irrational. Sometimes it simply is what it is, (weather, traffic, a skin breakout, a stranger behaving poorly...), plus note that if stress is distorting your thinking, and causing a trippy nervous system and extreme emotional states, well you can't even be trusted as a reliable narrator of exactly *what* the situation is. If you were in an amazing mood and everything was rainbows in your life, your response to stressors would probably be quite different.

So - the CBT solution is to develop Higher Frustration Tolerance: through developing new skills in self-awareness and self-management through 'thought stopping' to disrupt the automatic LFT habit, (and to ideally dismantle irrational over the top frustration entirely in many instances). Would you be happy if somebody videoed you doing your thing, and then posted it online? No? Then maybe don't do it.

Thought Stopping: begin to build a new habit of noticing situations where you are using the low frustration tolerance distorted thinking habit – and consciously and deliberately interrupt and disrupt it, and change your self-talk, and your behavioural response to the event. Cool yourself down with rational reframing – go from 70% anger to 35% irritation in seconds, then let it go...

- BELIEVING THAT I CANNOT, WILL NOT, AND SHOULD NOT HAVE TO TOLERATE THIS...
- LEADS TO: STRESS HORMONE SURGES - ADRENALINE SPIKE
- LEADS TO: ANGER AND/OR UPSET
- LEADS TO: SELF LIMITING, SELF DEFEATING, SELF SABOTAGING BEHAVIOUR...

The simple one line reframing table guide:

| LFT thinking: | Reframe with realistic rational thinking: |
|----------------------------------|--|
| I cannot tolerate... | Well I can actually, I'd just <i>prefer</i> if I didn't have to. |
| I will not tolerate... | I will, because <i>it is what it is</i> , and I have no choice. |
| I should not have to tolerate... | <i>Says who?</i> Am I a special creature who should have no stressors? That's silly. |

Or go deeper with this LFT thought form example template: notice the LFT habit – it's often instant and accompanied by anger. Stop it in its tracks – examine your self-talk – and replace it with alternative healthy self-talk that is thoughtful and has context. *When you know better, you do better. Feel better. Behave better. Regulate yourself.* This strategy works best if you WRITE IT DOWN in the first few weeks – journal how you explain things to yourself, and reframe with cool rational self-talk – see examples in the table below. This is called 'learning by discovery, and is more

likely to stick in your beautiful brain as a skill that can be used quickly as a mental task.

LFT thought and belief: I CAN NOT TOLERATE [insert whatever it is that you refuse to accept] – so I am justified in exploding with anger at this INJUSTICE!

Dispute / reframe: The idea that I *cannot* tolerate situations that upset me, or that I disapprove of: e.g. people's poor behaviour, random events, unsatisfactory conditions, and so on, is actually untrue when I have no choice in the matter.

Accepting the belief that I cannot tolerate (or bear) something is irrational, and might become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This inflexible belief maximises my discomfort and causes stress hormones to surge, and strong negative emotions, usually resulting in self sabotaging, or self-defeating, or self-limiting choices of behaviours.

I CAN tolerate them, I just don't want to, so I imagine I should REFUSE TO. Which is quite ridiculous (irrational) since I cannot control others or the world or basic facts and realities, so I'm really just causing myself and others unnecessary upset with this kind of 'rule' and attitude and behaviour.

It is more true and rational to say that I would PREFER NOT TO HAVE TO TOLERATE things I find frustrating, but I can tolerate them, and I'm okay, it's okay.

* Be rational: know what you can control and what you cannot control, be present.

I WILL NOT TOLERATE [insert whatever it is making you frustrated]

Dispute / reframe: Am I being reasonable and rational here? That statement is a bit silly (irrational) when I don't have a choice – or when it is self-limiting and self-defeating to opt out of situations, or to be angry and upset at situations, because I imagine they're intolerable for me. It's more true and rational to say that I can tolerate this, *I'd just prefer if I didn't have to*, and I'd prefer conditions and situations were always as I wish them to be, but I don't DEMAND them to be as I wish, because that would be irrational.

I would PREFER it if I bore stress more easily, but my stress is a disorder, and I can only do my best, and my best is good enough - and I am evolving and changing and getting better... I'm ok, it's ok.

* breathe it down... and reframe – what are the facts? What are my choices?

I SHOULD NOT HAVE TO TOLERATE [insert whatever is frustrating you]

Dispute/reframe: It's very silly (irrational) to imagine I *should not have to* tolerate things that are frustrating, especially since my stress is a disorder so I find lots of things frustrating! Even benign neutral events, or situations that are not really a big drama. So that rule is not going to work out well for me.

It's more helpful to thought-stop and remind myself that I am over responding to events and situations, but that of course I can accept reality in a cooler and more proportional way if I activate my 'thinking brain', and that I do have the resources to cope with and tolerate and accept frustrating situations and events.

*Breathe it down.... Think different, feel different, behave different...

The LFT exercise: *What regularly drives you bananas in an OTT unhelpful way? Start journaling to build awareness and self-regulation.*

Be cool and reframe – know what you can control and what you cannot control – accept reality, and structure realistic preferences instead of irrational demands and rules. Name and tame your bad habit, thought-stop and regulate....

| Low Frustration Tolerance statement: | Reframe with realistic rational thinking: |
|---|--|
| I cannot tolerate: | |
| I will not tolerate: | |
| I should not have to tolerate: | |

For more CBT resources check out iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com