



**A CBT Handout – An intro to Classical conditioning / Pavlovian Conditioning**

– this is when we have conditioned a learned response to something – pairing and associating two stimulus' together - e.g. the first time a child hears an ice cream van enter the housing estate playing it's music, it means nothing in particular to them - but when the child associates the sound of the colourful ice cream van with the delicious ice cream treat it delivers, it's tinkling musical arrival will produce an immediate excited happy response from then on. Initially the van is a 'neutral stimulus' that doesn't mean anything to the child, but after the 'pairing' of the delicious treat, it is now a 'conditioned (positive) stimulus'.

A conditioned stimulus creates an automatic cognitive (thinking), physical (nervous system), emotional (feelings), and behavioural response to it. Positive or negative, rational or irrational, helpful or unhelpful.

CBT helps us to learn how to build awareness and regulation of our *conditioned response* to situations and events - and how to dismantle problematic associations by reframing and creating different responses through rational reasoning and behavioural changes and tests (exposure therapy - break associations - face the fear, collect evidence, think and feel and behave differently, build new habits).

Examples of classical conditioning:

Positive Conditioning	Negative Conditioning
If we associate the smell of bread cooking in the oven with a lovely childhood memory, the smell even today may prompt a positive response.	If we associate the smell of whiskey with an aggressive alcoholic parent, the smell even today may prompt a negative response.
If we associate our old school with a happy childhood experience, driving past it it may prompt a positive response.	If we associate our old school with an unhappy childhood experience, driving past it may prompt a negative response.
If we associate dogs with lovely memories of beloved pets, being around them may prompt a positive response and expectation.	If we associate dogs with a scary memory of being scared by a snarling dog when we were a child, being around them may prompt a negative response and expectation.
If we associate a particular song with a lovely event and experience, hearing it may prompt a positive response.	If we associate a particular song with somebody we lost (e.g. through bereavement or a breakup) it may prompt a negative painful response.
If we associate public speaking with an exciting event that we enjoyed and that gave us a good outcome, we may have a positive approach to it.	If we associate public speaking with a previous event where we had anxiety/panic and embarrassment, we may have a negative approach to it.

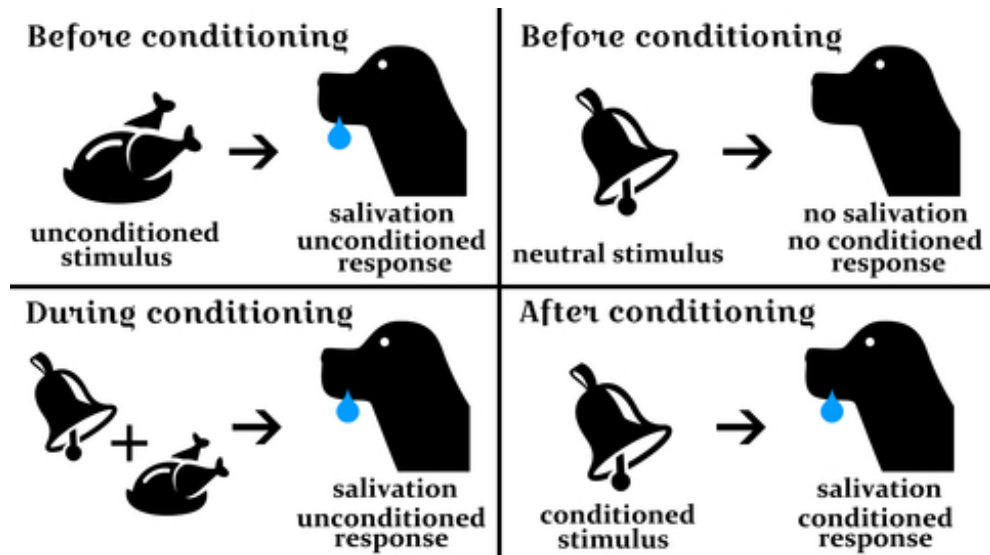
Positive Conditioning	Negative Conditioning
If we associate a particular person with good social experience, contact from them may prompt a positive response.	If we associate a particular person with a bad social experience that caused us upset, contact from them may prompt a negative response.
If we associate family parties with previously having a good time, an invitation may prompt a positive response.	If we associate family parties with previous social discomfort, an invitation may prompt a negative response.
You say WALKIES loudly waving the leash at your dog - it may prompt a happy excited positive response. (Positive association)	You say NO! loudly to your dog when it's wandering out onto the road- it may prompt a fearful obedient response. (Operant conditioning - training through behaviour and consequence, you're in trouble buddy).

You can see from these examples that some conditioning is helpful and positive, but others can be unhelpful and not particularly rational – CBT helps us to build awareness and self-management to break the associations with evidence and ‘exposure therapy’ to approach the situations rationally, collecting new experiences, and new ways to think about and respond to them.

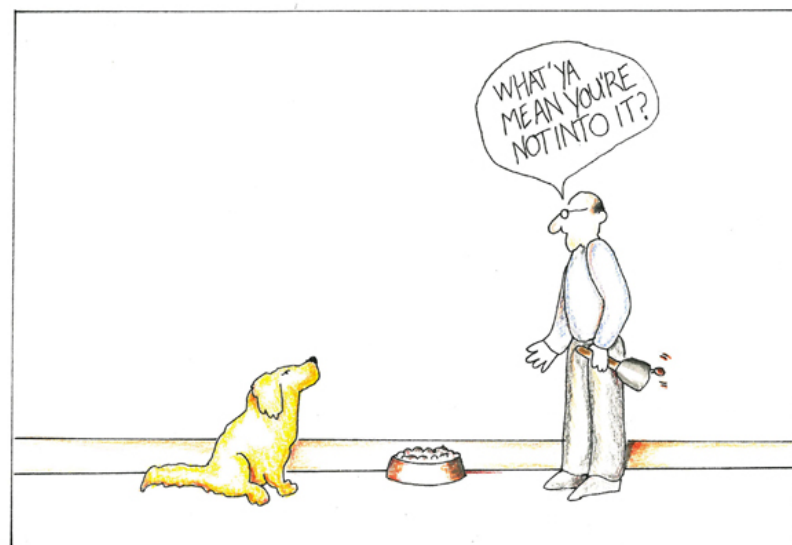
Practice noticing and journaling - become your own cognitive and behavioural therapist through 'learning and doing'. Think about examples of conditioning you may have, positive or negative, helpful or unhelpful:

Positive Conditioning	Negative Conditioning

You may have heard of '[Pavlov's Dogs](#)' - this refers to a famous experiment by the physiologist Ivan Pavlov in the 1800's, where he discovered that the dogs he was studying paired the ringing of a bell with the arrival of their food, so that in future the bell alone, without the food, would produce the physiological change of salivating for food. He also discovered, under further experimentation, that he could 'unpair' the conditioning through training - and then pair it again...



Key ideas: / 'what have I learned?'



**PAVLOV'S OTHER DOG**

Access more CBT resources to begin your journey at [iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com](http://iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com)