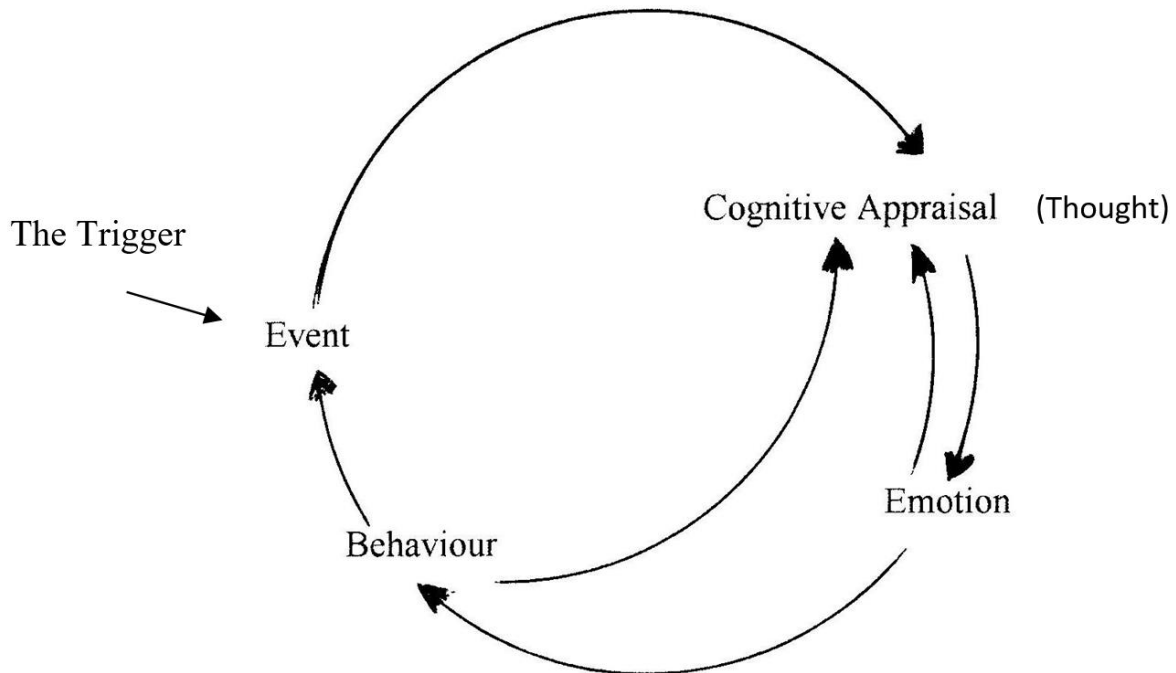




The Cognitive Model



Principles of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

CBT is based on two central principles: 1) our cognitions (thoughts) have a controlling influence on our emotions; and 2) how we act or behave can strongly affect our thought patterns and emotions. CBT teaches people to 'think about their thinking' and to detect and modify maladaptive ways of thinking and behaving.

The CBT Model

An example:

John, a man with a social anxiety disorder, was preparing to attend a party at a neighbour's home and had the following thoughts: "I won't know what to say everyone will know I'm nervous...I look like a wit...I'll want to leave straight away." The emotions and physiological responses that were stimulated by these maladaptive cognitions (negative thoughts) were predictable: severe anxiety, physical tension, and autonomic arousal – he began sweating, felt "butterflies" in his stomach, and had a dry mouth. His behavioural response was also problematic. Instead of facing the situation and attempting to gain skills to master social situations, John avoided the social encounter. He called to tell his neighbour that he had the flu.

Avoidance of the feared situation reinforced John's negative thinking and became part of a vicious cycle of thoughts, emotions and behaviour that deepened his problem with social anxiety. Each time John manoeuvred to escape from social situations, his beliefs about being incapable and vulnerable were strengthened. These fearful cognitions then amplified his emotional discomfort and made it less likely that he would engage in social activities.

Levels of cognitive processing

There are three primary levels of cognitive processing:

Consciousness – in which decisions are made on a rational basis. Conscious attention allows us to: 1) monitor and assess our environment, 2) link past memories with present experiences, and 3) control and plan future actions.

Automatic thoughts – stream rapidly through our mind and are not typically subjected to rational analysis (such as John's negative self-talk above).

Schemas – or core beliefs (used interchangeably). These act as templates or underlying rules for information processing. They function to allow humans to screen, filter, code, and assign meaning to information from the environment.



An example of automatic thoughts:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Automatic thoughts</u>	<u>Emotion</u>
Thinking about a big project that is due at work	"It's too much for me" "I'll never get it done in time" "I'll lose my job"	Anxiety

One of the key indicators that automatic thoughts may be occurring is the presence of strong emotions. Sometimes automatic thoughts can be logically sound and can be an accurate reflection of the reality of the situation. For example, it could be true that the individual is in danger of losing their job. However, this may actually reflect a cognitive error (an error in logic in the automatic thought).

One type of cognitive error is all-or-nothing thinking. This refers to judgements about oneself, personal experiences, or others as being placed into two categories – all good or all bad, total success or total failure, completely perfect or completely flawed.

All people have a mixture adaptive (healthy) schemas and maladaptive core beliefs.

<u>Adaptive Schemas</u>	<u>Maladaptive Schemas</u>
No matter what happens, I can manage somehow. If I work at something, I can master it. I'm a survivor. I'm lovable. If I prepare in advance, I usually do better.	If I choose to do something, I must succeed. I am stupid. I'm a fake. Without a partner, I'm nothing. No matter what I do, I won't succeed.