COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS AND PERCEPTION

HOW THINKING IMPACTS BEHAVIOR
Thinking is difficult, that's why most people judge.

Carl Jung
OBJECTIVES

• THREE PRINCIPLES OF CBT.

• CORE BELIEFS AND IMPACT ON BEHAVIOR.

• DEFINE COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS.

• HISTORY AND THEORY BEHIND COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS.

• COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS AND CRIMINAL THINKING.

• PERCEPTION AND THE IMPACT ON SOCIAL INTERACTIONS.

• RESPONDING TO PERCEPTION AND COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS.
WHAT IS THE BASIC CONCEPT OF COGNITIVE INTERVENTIONS?
THREE PRINCIPLES OF CBT

ACCESS HYPOTHESIS – THE PROCESS OF THINKING IS KNOWABLE. THOUGHTS ARE NOT “UNCONSCIOUS” OR “PRECONSCIOUS” OR SOME HOW UNAVAILABLE TO AWARENESS. WITH APPROPRIATE TRAINING AND ATTENTION, PEOPLE CAN BECOME AWARE OF THEIR OWN THINKING.
THREE PRINCIPLES OF CBT

MEDIATION HYPOTHESIS – OUR THOUGHTS MEDIATE OUR EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE TO THE VARIOUS SITUATIONS IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES IN. THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT THE EVENT IS PIVOTAL TO THE WAY WE FEEL.
THREE PRINCIPLES OF CBT

CHANGE HYPOTHESIS – BECAUSE THOUGHTS ARE KNOWABLE AND FACILITATE OUR RESPONSES, WE CAN INTENTIONALLY MODIFY THE WAY WE RESPOND TO EVENTS AROUND US.
The Power of Thoughts

• Cognitive therapy and interventions subscribes to the idea that there is a “real world” independent of our perception of it. “A tree in the woods does make a sound even if no one is there to hear it.”

• Our perception of a situations is based upon two sources.
  1. The facts of the situation we find ourselves in.
  2. Our beliefs, assumptions, and thoughts about that situation.

It is the interaction between these two that influences our behavior choices.
Our thoughts influence our emotions which impact behavior choices.

If we can think differently we will act differently.
WHAT ABOUT CORE BELIEFS?

WHAT ARE CORE BELIEFS?

INTERNAL RULES OR VALUES THAT SHAPE OUR THOUGHT RESPONSE TO SITUATIONS.
CORE BELIEFS

CORE BELIEFS ARE DEVELOPED OVER TIME FROM THE EXPERIENCES WE HAVE WITH OUR SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT.

TAKE A MINUTE TO THINK ABOUT YOUR CORE BELIEFS AND VALUES. WHERE DID THEY COME FROM? HOW HAVE THEY INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE? HOW HAVE THEY GUIDED YOUR DECISIONS?
Core beliefs impact how we see the world and choose to interact with it.

They very much influence our future development.

They can limit the situations we put ourselves in or the range of activities we can imagine ourselves in.
COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

• MANY TIMES PEOPLE HAVE THOUGHTS THAT ARE DISTORTED OR IN ERROR OF THE SITUATION THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN.

• IN THESE SITUATIONS PEOPLE HAVE SOMEHOW MISPERCEIVED OR DISTORTED THEIR PERCEPTION OF WHAT HAPPENED, USUALLY CONSISTENT WITH THEIR BELIEF SYSTEMS.
LETS TALK ABOUT COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

HOW MIGHT WE DEFINE COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS?
DEFINITION OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Exaggerated or irrational thought patterns that can reinforce negative thoughts and emotions.

Thoughts that can cause individuals to perceive reality inaccurately.

Errors in thinking that can continue even when there is obvious contradictory evidence.
THE HISTORY

• The theories of cognitive distortions have been published and discussed for nearly seventy years.

• The concept of cognitive distortions can be traced back to Albert Ellis’s irrational assumptions/beliefs.

• He suggested that several core self-defeating beliefs were the root of most unhealthy feelings and actions.
COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS AND CRIMINAL THINKING

• DR. STANTON SAMENOW (1984) SUGGESTED THAT THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR DO SO BECAUSE THEY HAVE DISTINCT AND ERRONEOUS THINKING PATTERNS THAT VALIDATE AND JUSTIFY THEIR BEHAVIORS.

• THIS INFLUENCED THE CONCEPT THAT THINKING ERRORS LEAD INDIVIDUALS TO DISTORTED SELF-IMAGES AND DENIAL OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THEIR ACTIONS.

• GIVING US........................
COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS AND CRIMINAL THINKING

GLENN D. WALTER (2001) - EIGHT COGNITIVE PATTERNS THAT LEAD TO ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR.

1) **MOLLIFICATION**: RATIONALIZING BEHAVIOR BY PLACING BLAME ON EXTERNAL FACTORS. “VICTIM” (IT’S NOT MY FAULT)

2) **CUTOFF**: QUICKLY DISREGARDING THOUGHTS THAT DETER FROM CRIME. “FUCK IT” (I KNOW IT’S WRONG, BUT I’M GOING TO DO IT ANYWAY)

3) **ENTITLEMENT**: PERMITTING CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR BY A SPECIAL PRIVILEGED SELF-ATTRIBUTION. “I DESERVE THIS” (I SHOULD GET WHAT I WANT)

4) **POWER ORIENTATION**: THE NEED FOR UTMOST CONTROL OVER THE ENVIRONMENT AND OTHERS. (I’M THE BOSS)
COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS AND CRIMINAL THINKING

5) **Sentimentality**: Doing something good to offset one’s negative feelings about one’s behavior. Do things to be perceived in a different light. (I’m a really great person)

6) **Super Optimism**: Confidence in one’s ability to evade the typical negative outcome of crime. “I won’t get caught”

7) **Cognitive Indolence**: Using mental “shortcuts” instead of using more developed and thoughtful mental strategies that lead to failure, low self-esteem, and poor critical thinking skills. (That is too much work for me)

8) **Discontinuity**: Lack of perseverance and reliability in both behavior and thinking. Trouble maintaining due to easily influenced by outside events. (I can talk the talk, but cannot walk the walk)
WHAT IF DISTORTIONS MIX WITH OTHER SELF-DEFEATING THOUGHTS?

- Magination, All or Nothing, Overgeneralizing
- Cut off and Power Orientation

Fuck it! No one can tell me what to do!

I always screw things up. I am a complete failure.
CAN YOU FIND THE COGNITIVE PATTERNS LEADING TO ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR CHOICES IN THESE THINKING CHECK-INS?
SITUATION: ASSAULT /OFFENSE THAT LEAD TO PROBATION SUPERVISION

**Thoughts**
- I can’t stay here I need to get out
- Will do what I need to get out or whatever it takes
- Nobody is listening to how I’m feeling
- Need to get out.

**Feelings**
- Scared, angry, frustrated, anxious, lonely

**Att/Belief**
- My life is my life/need to take control of my life
SITUATION: NOT SEEING GRANDFATHER BEFORE HE DIED. WENT TO BAR AND DRANK

Thoughts
- Life sucks
- I know he is in a better place
- If I drink the pain will go away
- I can't believe he's gone
- People are always dying around me

Feelings
- Sad, hurt, overwhelmed, relieved, happy

Att/Belief
- Every time I am doing well a bomb gets dropped on me.

Mollification / All or Nothing
SITUATION: SAW AN OLD FRIEND AND RELAPSED.

Thoughts
- Want to have fun
- Just once I can get away with it
- I already messed up, just keep going
- I don’t care

Feelings
- Shame and Guilt

Att/Belief
- Cover up my feelings
- Old habits are hard to break

Cutoff / Super Optimism
SITUATION: STOLE SUNGLASSES FROM WALGREENS.

Thoughts
• Those are cute
• My sister will be jealous
• I can get away with it
• I deserve to look nice

Feelings
• Excited, Anxious, and Nervous

Att/Belief
• I deserve to have nice things
• I can get away with stealing small things

Super Optimism/ Entitlement/Comparison
Game
NOW ADD IN A LITTLE PERCEPTION!

• WHAT IS PERCEPTION?

• HOW DOES OUR PERCEPTION OF A SITUATION IMPACT OUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS?
PERCEPTION IS REALITY

• HOW MIGHT CLIENTS PERCEIVE THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM?

• HOW MIGHT THEY PERCEIVE THEIR OWN ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIORS?

• HOW MIGHT THEY PERCEIVE YOU IN YOUR ROLE?
PERCEPTION IS REALITY

• HOW MIGHT WE PERCEIVE SOME OF THE CLIENTS WE WORK WITH?

• HOW MIGHT WE PERCEIVE SOME OF OUR CLIENTS ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIORS?

• HOW MIGHT THAT IMPACT OUR INTERACTIONS WITH THESE INDIVIDUALS?
THE WAY WE RESPOND TO CLIENT’S WILL IMPACT THEIR PERCEPTION AND MAY EVEN REINFORCE THEIR COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS.
SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

• UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THE THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS OF OTHER INDIVIDUALS.

• HOW SOMEONE CHOOSES TO RESPOND TO A SITUATION IS A RESULT OF THEIR OWN THOUGHTS, BELIEFS, AND PERCEPTIONS.

• RECOGNIZING SOMEONE’S BELIEF SYSTEM OR IDENTIFYING COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS, ALLOWS US TO GET AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHY A PERSON MAY MAKE CERTAIN CHOICES.

• WHEN WE RECOGNIZE THESE BELIEFS AND MINDSETS WE MUST.........
REMAIN OBJECTIVE

• REMAINING UNBIASED, NONJUDGMENTAL, AND NEUTRAL TO INFORMATION THAT IS PRESENTED.

• OUR GOAL IS TO HAVE THE PEOPLE WE WORK WITH DEFINE HIS/HER OWN BELIEFS WHILE WE REFRAIN FROM LABELING THEM.

• WE WANT THEM TO RECOGNIZE WHERE THEIR BELIEFS TAKE THEM, AND WHAT BEHAVIORS HAVE RESULTED FROM HOLDING SUCH BELIEFS.

• ACCEPTING THAT THE INDIVIDUAL HAS THOSE BELIEFS, NOT AGREEING WITH THEM, HELPS THEM FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE WITH EXPLORING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS
ACTIVE LISTENING

• Listen to what a person is saying not just hearing it.

• Using reflect listening to help the individual continue to explore their thoughts and beliefs.

• Work toward getting them to talk about what impact their beliefs and thinking has had on problem behaviors.

• Listeners do not seek to fix problems, they help to facilitate change.
AUTONOMY

• People have the right to accept a new reality or not.

• Recognizing this will ease the potential for confrontation.

• It can be tough at times to not fall into the authoritative and corrective mode. When we do this we only reinforce many of the cognitive distortions that have lead to problematic decision making.

• We want to do our best to help people realize that they have control over how they view things and ultimately their behavior choices.
INQUIRE

QUESTIONS TO HELP MODIFY THOUGHT PATTERNS

• WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR AND AGAINST THIS THOUGHT?

• WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF THINKING IN THIS SITUATION?

• WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THINKING THIS WAY?
FINALLY!!!

• It is important that we remain objective and use active listening to facilitate conversations around cognitive distortions.

• We are not trying to prove anyone wrong in their thinking, but instead help them look at how their current thinking “cognitive distortions” have lead them to problem behaviors.

• We must work toward getting individuals to talk about reasons they want to change and not why we think they should change.

• Understanding a person's mindset and why they have made behavior choices, can allow for less confrontation, lowered resistance, and more open communication.

• Perception is how that person sees their reality.