

RETRAIN YOUR BRAIN

COGNITIVE APPRAISAL
AND REAPPRAISAL





WHAT ARE COGNITIVE APPRAISALS?

APPRAISALS =
INTERPRETATIONS,
"AUTOMATIC
THOUGHTS"

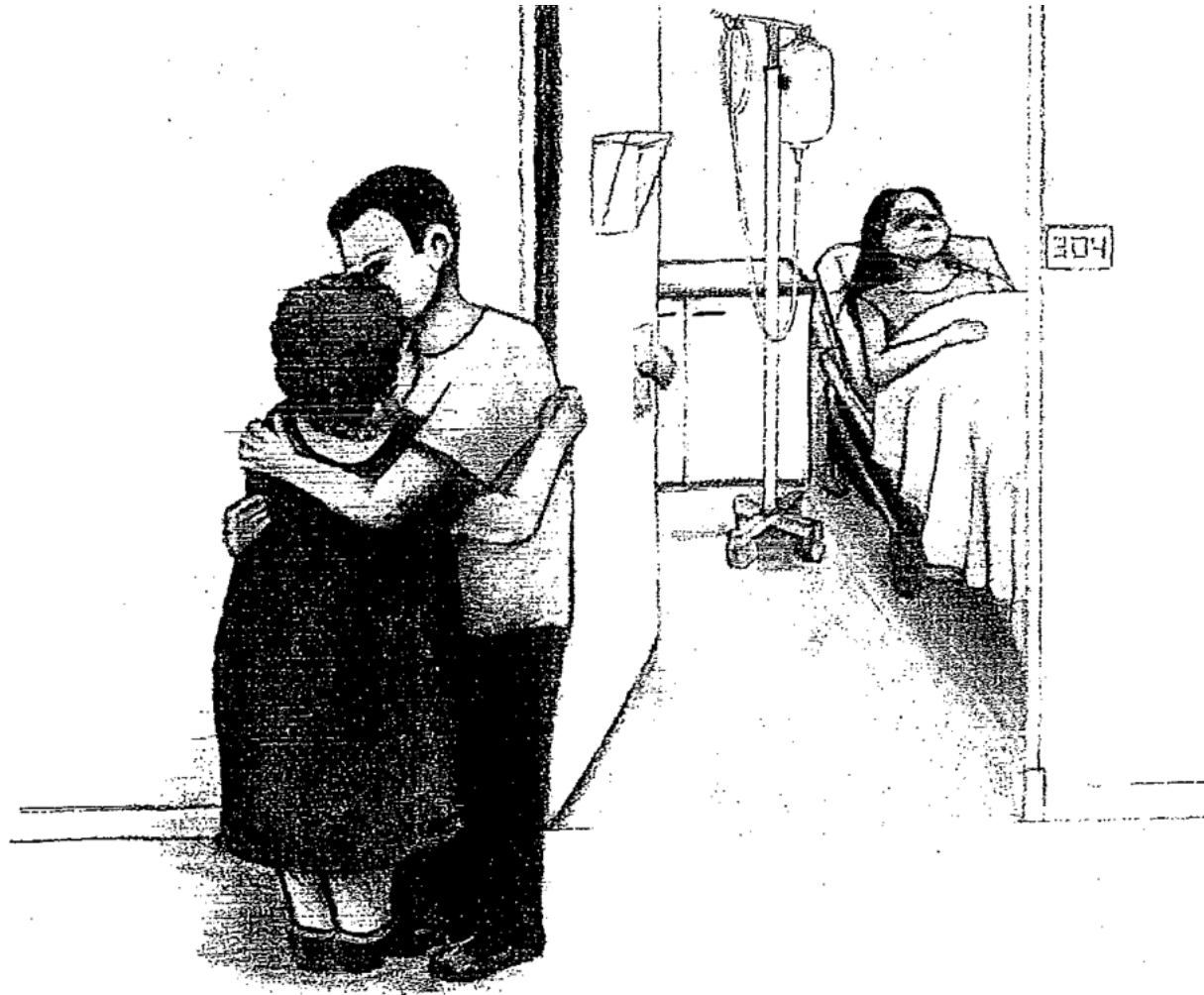
**WHAT MIGHT
INFLUENCE
APPRAISALS?**

Importance and meaning
assigned to an event or situation

What you focus on in the
situation

What you did/experienced
during past, similar situations

The body's response



EXAMPLE

- What is happening here?

USEFUL FUNCTIONS OF APPRAISALS

- Mental filter
- Efficient
- Predicting outcomes



THE PROBLEM

- Not always accurate!
- Development of thinking “style”
- Thinking traps

WHAT ARE THINKING TRAPS?

- Form with repeated use of appraisals and exclusion of other ways of thinking
- Feeds negative emotional patterns
- Generally being inflexible in thinking, making inaccurate assumptions

UNHELPFUL THINKING PATTERNS

All or nothing thinking



Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

Over-generalising

"everything is always rubbish"

"nothing good ever happens"

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

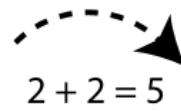
Disqualifying the positive



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

That doesn't count

Jumping to conclusions



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot

should
must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

*I'm a loser
I'm completely useless
They're such an idiot*

Personalisation

"this is my fault"

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL

- Thinking flexibly, allowing for other interpretations
- Four methods of doing this
 1. Pull out the thinking trap from the thought
 2. What is the worst that could happen?
 3. Find a “gray” alternative
 4. Evaluate the evidence

1. PULLING OUT THE THINKING TRAP

"I KNOW THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT ME
RIGHT NOW. THEY'RE THINKING ABOUT
HOW WEIRD I LOOK."

1. PULLING OUT THE THINKING TRAP

"I KNOW THEY ARE TALKING ~~ABOUT ME~~
~~RIGHT NOW.~~ THEY'RE THINKING ~~ABOUT~~
~~HOW WEIRD I LOOK.~~"

1. PULLING OUT THE THINKING TRAP

"I'm feeling nervous about this presentation...I'm going to do horribly and then I'll end up failing the class."

1. PULLING OUT THE THINKING TRAP

"I'm feeling nervous about this presentation...I'm
~~going to do horribly and then I'll end up~~
~~failing the class."~~

2. WHAT'S THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN?

De-catastrophizing: If the worst happened, how would you cope with it?

Finish the story: then what?

SITUATION/ TRIGGER	AUTOMATIC APPRAISAL(s)	EMOTION(s)	IDENTIFY “THINKING TRAP”	GENERATE ALTERNATIVE APPRAISAL(s)

3. FINDING AN ALTERNATIVE, AND 4. EVALUATING EVIDENCE

SITUATION/ TRIGGER	AUTOMATIC APPRAISAL(s)	EMOTION(s)	IDENTIFY “THINKING TRAP”	GENERATE ALTERNATIVE APPRAISAL(s)
Made an error on an assignment	I can't do anything right. I'm a screw up.	Shame, sadness, anger	Black and white thinking	I've done a lot right during my time here. I'm qualified to be here. (list)

3. FINDING AN ALTERNATIVE, AND 4. EVALUATING EVIDENCE

SITUATION/ TRIGGER	AUTOMATIC APPRAISAL(s)	EMOTION(s)	IDENTIFY “THINKING TRAP”	GENERATE ALTERNATIVE APPRAISAL(s)
Recent breakup	I’m never going to find someone for me.	Sadness, defeat	Over-generalization	I don’t know what the future holds, but this is my situation now.

3. FINDING AN ALTERNATIVE, AND 4. EVALUATING EVIDENCE

HOW DOES REAPPRAISAL HELP?

1

Breaking appraisal patterns that are no longer working for us

2

Breaking the cycle of challenging, unmanageable emotions

3

Rewiring neural pathways to create new patterns in thinking



HIT THE STOP BUTTON

- Your appraisal is an option, do you want to use it?
- Consider your common thinking traps



DON'T BLAME YOURSELF!

- They are normal!
- There is a reason for appraisals

GENERAL STRATEGIES

GENERAL STRATEGIES



CONSIDER OTHER POSSIBLE
INTERPRETATIONS



DON'T TRY TO "STOP YOUR
THOUGHTS"

FINAL THOUGHTS

- What if the modified thought is still distressing?
 - Acceptance of painful thoughts
 - Come to full series for other tips for tolerating
- Homework: Practice finding alternative thoughts!
 - Start retroactively

