

Cognitive-Behavioral Theories

Chapter 16

Methodological Behaviorism

Albert Ellis

- Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)
- The A-B-C Theory of Personality
- Inherited Nature of Dysfunction

Aaron Beck

- Cognitive therapy
- Thoughts largely influence our behaviors
- Collaborative, "Turned the client into a colleague who researches verifiable reality"
- Rooted in empirical evidence

Schema

Beck's Cognitive Theory

- Automatic Thoughts
- Cognitive Distortions

Beck's Specific Vulnerability Hypothesis

- Sociotropy
- Autonomy

Beck's Cognitive Therapy

Reformulated Learned Helplessness

Measuring Explanatory Style

- Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ)

Optimism and Health

Optimism and Longevity

Optimism and U.S. Presidential Candidates

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Methodological Behaviorists

- Assume that all learning arises through classical and instrumental conditioning
- Unlike strict behaviorists, thoughts are phenomena that come about through learning and can be shaped by learning
- Thoughts are mental behaviors we can identify through self-report

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Albert Ellis

- Developed a therapy technique known as rational psychotherapy
 - Emphasis placed on rational, rather than irrational thinking
- When criticized for ignoring emotions in his theory, changes the name of the theory to rational emotive therapy (RET)
- With the rise of behaviorism, Ellis renamed his psychotherapy rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT)
 - NOTE: rational psychotherapy/RET contained behavioral interventions prior to the rise of behaviorism

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REBT

- Theoretically, REBT is related to Adler's concept of inferiority feelings
- Ellis emphasizes that absolutistic philosophical assumptions lead to dysfunctional behaviors and emotions → postmodern, constructivist, approach
 - I must... should... ought...
 - It is right... wrong...
 - Spirituality & religion (goals to be chosen with caution)
- Believes in innate human tendency for self-actualization (à la Maslow & Rogers)
 - BUT, also believes in an innate tendency to be self-defeating
 - Must use constructive, positive, human potential to oppose these inherent self-defeating tendencies

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The Process of Self-Defeat

- Humans are thinking, emoting, moving, and perceiving animals
 - These functions are interactional and transactional
 - Fundamental overlap of thoughts and feelings
 - Thought BECOMES emotion
 - Often, dysfunction springs from caring too much about how others perceive us or think about us
 - People frequently feel they can only accept themselves if others accept them

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The A-B-C Theory of Personality

1. When a highly charged emotional consequence (C-fear) follows a significant activating event (A-dog), A seems to cause C



In reality, however, A does NOT cause C

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The A-B-C Theory of Personality

2. In reality, emotional consequences (C) are largely formed through an individual's belief system (B-dogs are dangerous)



The integration of the belief system explains how two people with the same experience can respond in vastly different ways

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The A-B-C Theory of Personality

3. Once beliefs are effectively challenged, or disputed (D-not all dogs are dangerous), unpleasant emotional consequences (C) are eliminated or at least significantly lessened



Thus, we see how dysfunction springs from the interaction of behavior, cognition, and emotion

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More on Dysfunctions

- Ellis held that individuals are more likely to experience dysfunctions when their beliefs are grounded in dogmatic, musturbatory beliefs systems, that take the form of absolute musts
 - I absolutely **MUST** receive an A in this class...
 - My living conditions absolutely **MUST** be comfortable...
 - I **MUST** have the approval of others...
- Dysfunction improves with modification of these beliefs

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Inherited Nature of Dysfunction

- Ellis believed that out musturbatory beliefs are mostly inherited and biologically determined
 - 80% biological, 20% environmental
 - “We inherit a tendency to raise cultural preferences into musts and social norms into absolute shoulds.”

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Psychotherapy with REBT

- Directive...
- Learn to judge behavior in terms of what is right for the individual, not what others believe → identify **TRUE** value system
- Free individuals from irrational, dysfunctional, beliefs so that they might construct confident image of their self-worth
 - Cognitive therapy (identify shoulds, musts)
 - Emotion evocative therapy (prepare clients for experience of emotions)
 - Behavior therapy (change maladaptive behaviors/thoughts—implosion)

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Aaron Beck



Cognitive therapy

- Thoughts largely influence our behaviors
- “Turned the client into a colleague who researches verifiable reality”
 - Collaborative
 - Rooted in empirical evidence

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Schema

- Piaget was probably the most influential theorist in the field of human development
- Piaget proposed that there were several early stages of cognitive development that built upon each other and that defined what abilities each of us had; mastering of some skill was the sign that we had passed into the successive stage

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Schema

- Piaget also offered us the notion of schema which represented a cognitive representation and filter of information
- In Piaget's schema theory information is filtered from the world and assimilated into the schema; however if the information is so disparate then the schema is altered or made to accommodate the new information

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Beck's Cognitive Theory

- Individuals form many self-concepts defined as "clusters of attitudes about the self... consisting of generalizations made on the basis of interactions with the environment"
- Concepts can be positive or negative in valence and they can be affected by additional environmental cues
- Beck observed that his patients had endorsed many negative self-concepts which he termed the "cognitive triad"

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Beck's Cognitive Theory

- These unrealistically negative and distorted attitudes influence the depressed patient's view of the self, world, and future
 - But what does this look like?
- Vulnerability to depression occurs when these negative views become incorporated into cognitive schemata
 - Organized, enduring (trait-like) representations of knowledge and experience, generally formed during childhood, that guide the processing of current situational information
 - Includes an individual's fundamental core beliefs and assumptions about how the world operates

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Beck's Specific Vulnerability Hypothesis

- Difficulties in early life can lead to particular maladaptive schema that leave us vulnerable to depression when confronted with particular situations
- Sociotropy
 - Extreme interpersonal orientation and a vulnerability to depression in the face of interpersonal stressors
- Autonomy
 - Extreme achievement orientation and a vulnerability to depression in the face of interpersonal stressors

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Automatic Thoughts

- Involuntary, unintentional thoughts
 - Difficult to stop/regulate
 - Self-monologues, inner voices criticizing or berating us
 - Woman engaging in self-deprecation (unattractive/worthless) might engage in promiscuous sexual activity → automatic thoughts lead her to believe she has nothing better/else to offer
- Similarly, systematic errors in reasoning are referred to as cognitive distortions
 - Stressful events trigger an unrealistic schema

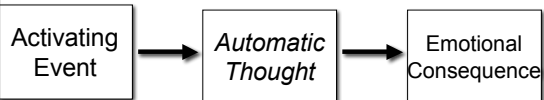
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Usual Model of Emotional Disturbance (and emotions generally)



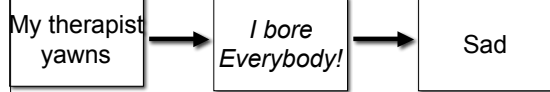
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Aaron Beck's Model of Emotional Disturbance



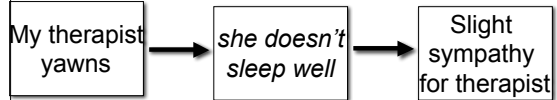
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Beck's Model



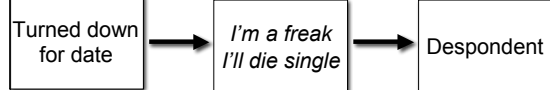
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Beck's Model: Different Interpretation, Different Feeling!



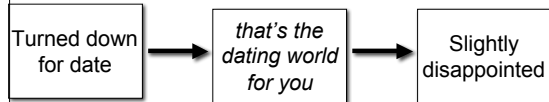
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Beck's Model



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Beck's Model



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Cognitive Distortions

| Distortion | Definition | Example |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Arbitrary Inference | Drawing a conclusion without evidence or in spite of contradictory evidence | After getting a C instead of an A on the first exam, a student concludes he/she will not pass the course |
| Selective Abstraction | Conceptualizing a situation based on a detail taken out of context | A person fearful of getting in a car accident is sensitive to news about accidents on the radio |
| Over-generalization | Abstracting a rule from 1 or 2 isolated incidents/applying rule too broadly | Hearing about 1 robbery leads a person to believe everyone is being robbed |

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Cognitive Distortions

| Distortion | Definition | Example |
|---|---|--|
| Magnification and Minimization | Seeing an event as more/less significant than it really is | A high school girl believing that if she isn't asked to the prom, her life is over |
| Personalization | Attributing external events to oneself without evidence of connection | Parents assume they are to blame when their children misbehave |
| Dichotomous Thinking or "Black and White" | Categorizing situations in extremes | A person views performance on a task as success or failure |

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Identify the distortions

- Michelle is upset that Richard is late. Her thoughts are:
- “What a jerk! He’s never on time. If he cared about me, he wouldn’t be so late. He should be home by now.”

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Identify the distortions

- Aaron, a successful lawyer, is racked with anxiety going to his office. He thinks:
- “I’ll never catch up on my work. With so much to do I’m sure to make a mistake. If I lose this case, my client will be really angry, and I won’t get any more business.”

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Identify the distortions

- Joanne, an options trader, made only \$4,000 this month, when she averages and expects to make \$12,000 per month:
- “ I’ve lost my touch and accomplished nothing this month. If my partner finds out I’ll get fired. I’m a failure.”

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Identify the distortions

- Jennifer, a depressed student trying to study for finals, thinks:
- “What’s the use in trying to study? My mind will just wander like yesterday. I can’t remember anything I read. I can’t possibly read 200 pages this week, so what’s the point?”

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Beck's Cognitive Therapy

- Therapist helps the client identify thoughts that are producing the depression or anxiety
- Identifying these negative thoughts allows client to challenge (dispute) them, and replace them with more realistic thoughts
- Beck’s collaborative empiricism
 - The role of the therapist is to be the coach, cheerleader, and collaborator
 - Not as a guru, healer, or master
 - As is typically the role of the therapist in psychodynamic psychotherapy

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Reformulated Learned Helplessness

- Began as a diathesis-stress model of depression based on findings from animal research
 - Remember the shuttle-box dog
- Incorporated attribution theory
- Considered to be an individual's habitual way of assigning causes to events that occur in their lives

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Reformulated Learned Helplessness

- People who make internal, stable, and global attributions for bad events and external, unstable, and specific attributions for good events are said to possess a depressogenic explanatory style
 - So, what does a depressogenic explanatory style look like?
- Conversely, individuals who possess a non-depressogenic explanatory style (e.g., internal, stable & global for good events; external, unstable & specific for bad events) are considered to be buffered against depression
 - This, of course, looks very different

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Measuring Explanatory Style

- Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ)

YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A JOB UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR SOME TIME.

Write down the *one* major cause

Is the cause of your unsuccessful job search due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances? (7-point Likert-type)

In the future when looking for a job, will this cause again be present? (7-point Likert-type)

Is the cause something that just influences looking for a job or does it also influence other areas of your life? (7-point Likert-type)

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Optimism and Health

Peterson (1988)

- 146 pessimistic college students experienced more days of illness in the following month and visited physicians more frequently in the following year than students who were optimistic
- As compared with optimists, pessimists reported
 - More unhealthy habits
 - Less sense of control over these habits
 - More stressful occurrences in their lives

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Optimism and Health

Peterson & Barrett

- 175 college students—demonstrated a relationship to pessimism and increased illness
- The relationship may be mediated by variables such as:
 - Passivity
 - Social withdrawal
 - Depression
 - Health-related behaviors,
 - Problem solving skills
 - Physiological response to stress

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Optimism and Longevity

Peterson, Seligman and Vaillant (1988)

- Explanatory style stable over a 35 year span
- Explanatory style strongly related to health over the life span
- Optimists in the Harvard University Grant Study showed lower levels of illnesses than the pessimists
- More optimists were still living 35 years later

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Optimism and U.S. Presidential Candidates

- Zullo and Seligman (1990)
 - More optimistic candidate wins elections
 - Difference in optimism scores correlated .80 with difference in popular vote
- Fresco & Seligman (1996)
 - Clinton more optimistic than Dole
 - Young Clinton more optimistic than Young Dole
- Fresco, Hambrick, & Seligman (2000)
 - Gore *slightly* more optimistic than Bush

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