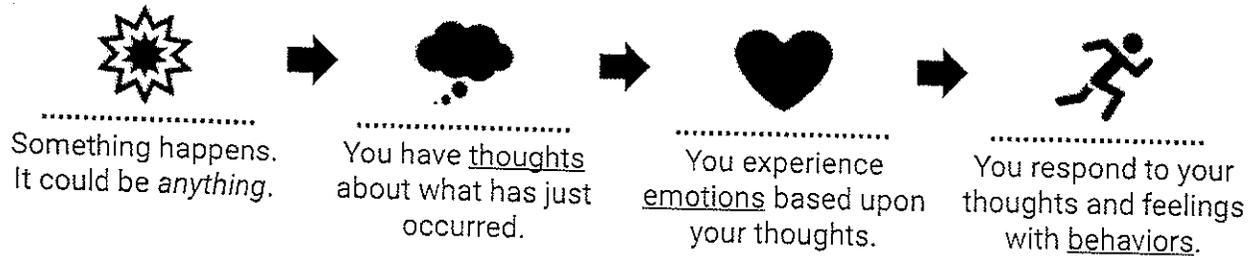# The Cognitive Model
Thoughts → Emotions → Behaviors

Cognitive behavioral therapy (usually referred to as "CBT") is based upon the idea that **how you think determines how you feel and how you behave.** The diagram and example below show us this process:

| Something happens. It could be *anything*. | You have <u>thoughts</u> about what has just occurred. | You experience <u>emotions</u> based upon your thoughts. | You respond to your thoughts and feelings with <u>behaviors</u>. |

Example: Pharrell

Situation: A stranger scowls at Pharrell while passing him on the street.

Pharrell's Thoughts: "I must've done something wrong... I'm so awkward."

Pharrell's Emotions: Embarrassed and upset with himself.

Pharrell's Behaviors: Pharrell apologizes to the stranger and replays the situation over and over in his head, trying to understand what he did wrong.

In this example, you might've noticed that Pharrell's thought wasn't very rational. The stranger could've been scowling for any number of reasons. Maybe the stranger just got dumped, or maybe he scowls at everyone. Who knows?

As humans, we all have **irrational thoughts** like these. Unfortunately, irrational or not, these thoughts still affect how we feel, and how we behave. Consider how Pharrell might've responded to the same situation if he had a different thought:

Thought	➡	Emotion	➡	Behavior
"What a jerk!"		Angry		Pharrell shouts: "What's your problem?!"
"He must be having a bad day..."		Neutral		Pharrell walks away and forgets the incident.

Using the cognitive model, you will learn to identify your own patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. You'll come to understand how your thoughts shape how you feel, and how they impact your life in significant ways.
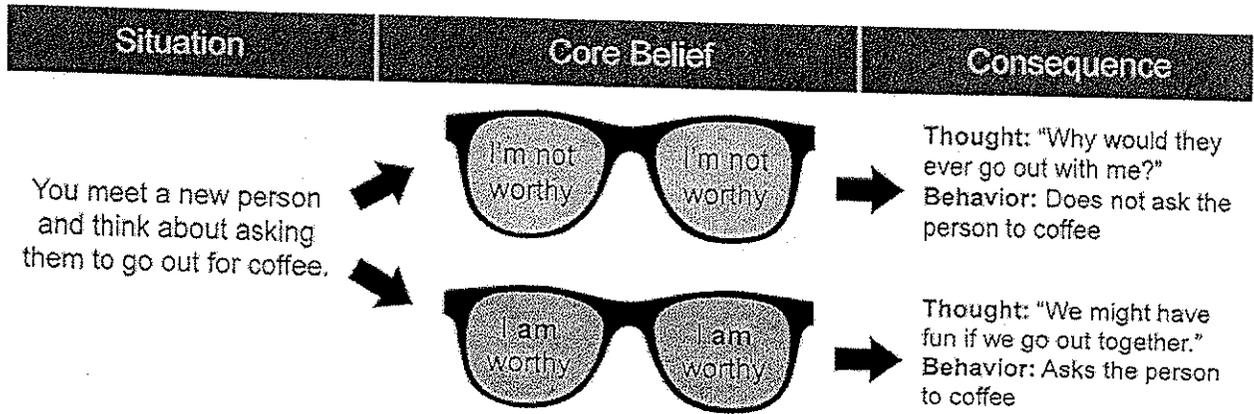
Once you become aware of your own irrational thoughts, you will learn to change them. The thoughts that once led to depression, anxiety, and anger will be replaced with new, healthy alternatives. Finally, *you* will be in control of how you feel.

Core Beliefs

Everyone looks at the world differently. Two people can have the same experience, yet have very different interpretations of what happened. **Core beliefs** are the deeply held beliefs that influence how we interpret our experiences.

Think of core beliefs like a pair of sunglasses. Everyone has a different "shade" that causes them to see things differently.

Situation	Core Belief	Consequence

You meet a new person and think about asking them to go out for coffee.

Thought: "Why would they ever go out with me?"
Behavior: Does not ask the person to coffee

Thought: "We might have fun if we go out together."
Behavior: Asks the person to coffee

Many people have negative core beliefs that cause harmful consequences. To begin challenging your negative core beliefs, you first need to identify what they are. Here are some common examples:

I'm unlovable	I'm stupid	I'm boring
I'm not good enough	I'm ugly	I'm worthless
I'm a bad person	I'm abnormal	I'm undeserving

What is one of your negative core beliefs? _____

List three pieces of evidence contrary to your negative core belief.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that can influence your emotions. Everyone experiences cognitive distortions to some degree, but in their more extreme forms they can be harmful.

Magnification and Minimization: Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. One might believe their own achievements are unimportant, or that their mistakes are excessively important.

Catastrophizing: Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.

Overgeneralization: Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. "I felt awkward during my job interview. I am *always* so awkward."

Magical Thinking: The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations. "I am a good person—bad things shouldn't happen to me."

Personalization: The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control. "My mom is always upset. She would be fine if I did more to help her."

Jumping to Conclusions: Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.

Mind Reading: Interpreting the thought sand beliefs of others without adequate evidence. "She would not go on a date with me. She probably thinks I'm ugly."

Fortune Telling: The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.

Emotional Reasoning: The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. "I feel like a bad friend, therefor I must be a bad friend."

Disqualifying the Positive: Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. One might receive many compliments on an evaluation, but focus on the single piece of negative feedback.

"Should" Statements: The belief that things should be a certain way. "I should always be friendly."

All-or-Nothing Thinking: Thinking in absolutes such as "always", "never", or "every". "I *never* do a good enough job on anything."

Thought Log

Event	Thought	Consequence (emotion & behavior)	Alternate Response

Automatic Thoughts

Our thoughts control how we feel about ourselves and the world around us. Positive thoughts lead to us feeling good and negative thoughts can put us down. Sometimes our thoughts happen so quickly that we fail to notice them, but they can still affect our mood. These are called *automatic thoughts*.

Oftentimes, our automatic thoughts are negative and irrational. Identifying these negative automatic thoughts and replacing them with new rational thoughts can improve our mood.

Trigger	Automatic Thought	New Thought
EXAMPLE: I made a mistake at work.	"I'm probably going to be fired. I always mess up. This is it. I'm no good at this job."	"I messed up, but mistakes happen. I'm going to work through this, like I always do."

Countering Negative Thoughts

Come up with a rational counterstatement for each of the negative thoughts below.

Negative Thought	Rational Counterstatement
I got into trouble at work—They'll probably want to fire me soon because I can't do my job right.	**Example:** I made a mistake at work, but everyone does that from time to time. I usually get a lot of positive feedback about my work. I'll be careful not to make that same mistake again.
My husband was angry yesterday and he yelled at me for not feeding the dog. I'm so irresponsible.	
How will I ever get a date? Everyone else seems like more fun than me.	

Next, come up with three examples of negative thoughts and rational counterstatements from your own life:

Negative Thought	Rational Counterstatement