

Workshops:

1. Behaviour

2. Emotions

3. Anxiety

4. Assertiveness

5. Worrying

6. Thinking 1

7. Thinking 2

Emotions





“The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing.”

[Blaise Pascal]



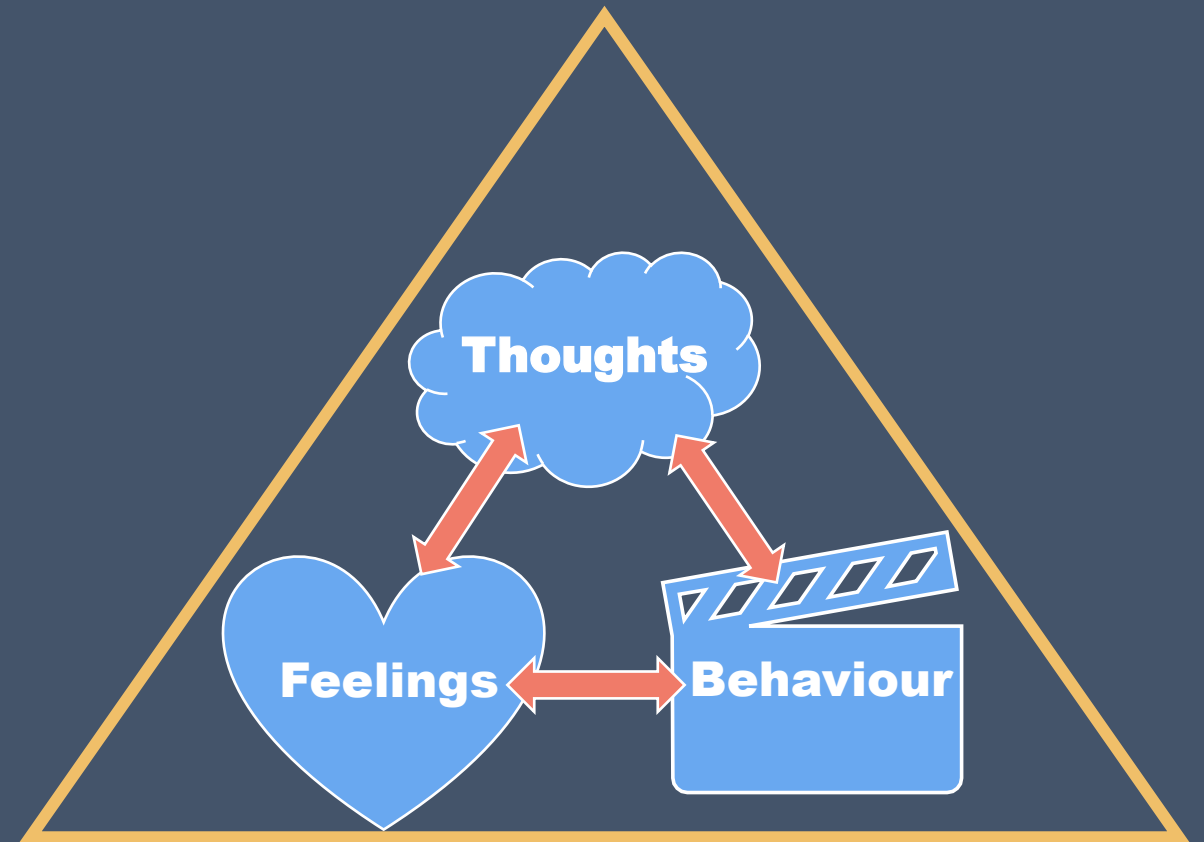
All About Emotions - I

- Emotions are how we feel.
- They arise from complicated brain, nervous system and hormonal activity in response to internal and external stimuli.
- Emotions are a mixture of ideas, thoughts and physical sensations.



All About Emotions - I

- It can be difficult to identify how we are feeling sometimes.
- It can be difficult to tease out what are emotions and what are thoughts.
- This is important when we look at the Thoughts-Feelings-Behaviour triangle in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT).



All About Emotions - II

Studies by Paul Ekman have shown that facial expressions of the six basic emotions are recognised across all human societies and cultures...



1.

Happiness / Joy

2.

Fear

3.

Disgust

4.

Sadness

5.

Anger

6.

Surprise

All About Emotions - III

Happiness / Joy

Fear

Disgust

Sadness

Anger

Surprise

This list was expanded to include emotions that are not necessarily encoded in facial muscles...

Amusement

Contempt

Contentment

Embarrassment

Excitement

Guilt

Pride in achievement

Relief

Satisfaction

Sensory pleasure

Shame

Anatomy of Emotions - I



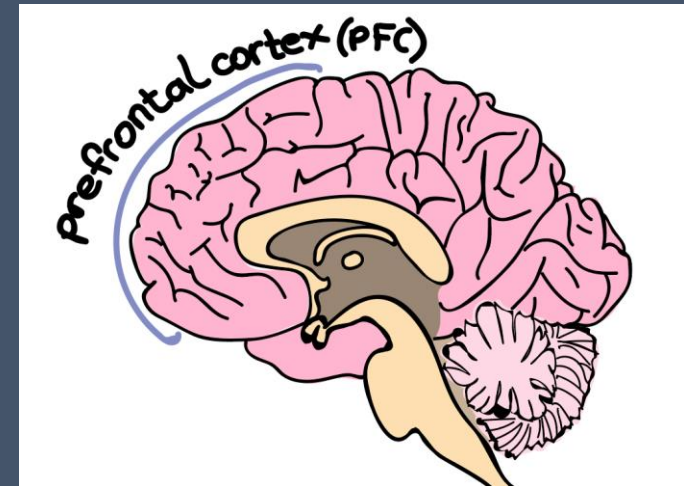
The main message is that emotions arise in the older parts of our brains (in evolutionary terms) but become evermore intricately connected to the newer structures (the neocortex) as one ascends the phylogenetic scale (through lower mammals to the apes to homo sapiens).

So while our primary emotions are readily activated, we have the ability to modify and control them at the level of conscious thought. There are exceptions to this which are addressed later.

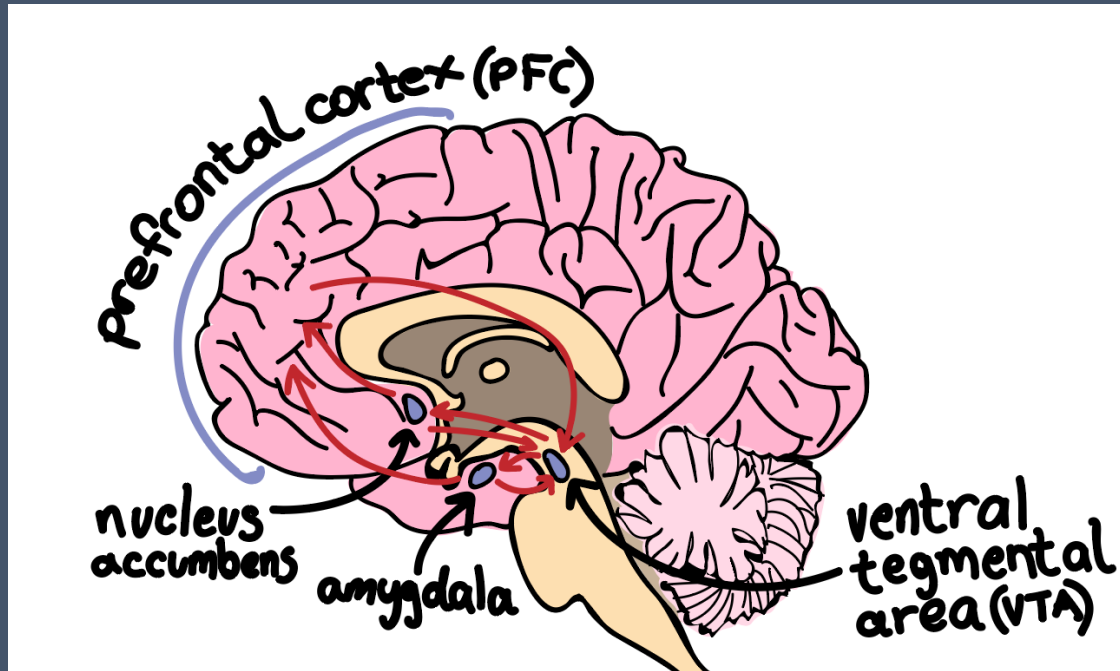
Anatomy of Emotions - II

“PFC” – known as the Prefrontal Cortex, this area of the brain plays an important role in how we respond to our emotions. It helps us to inhibit our more instinctual responses so we do not physically or verbally lash out when someone upsets us or engage in inappropriate sexual language or behaviour. This part of the brain can be impaired in conditions such as dementia and severe alcoholism.

The PFC also plays an important role in our ability to solve problems and plan a course of action.



Anatomy of Emotions - III

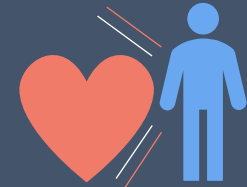


The red arrows map out the pleasure circuitry of the brain, the areas which are stimulated by alcohol, heroin, cocaine, sex, gambling, chocolate cake and getting “likes” on social media! Dopamine is the key neurotransmitter (chemical messenger) in this circuit, but it is acted upon and acts upon in turn other neurotransmitters.

The pleasure circuit (or “reward centre”) is often impaired in clinical depression, such that no activity brings any joy or sense of reward. This has important implications for motivation.

Emotions: Motivation & Evolution - I

- Emotions have evolved through our older brain structures for the purpose of survival.
- Emotions represent a *motivational state* – they propel us towards appropriate action. This action tends to be adaptive and increase our chances of survival.
- This is akin to motivational states such as thirst and hunger propelling us towards drinking and eating respectively.
- On the next slide we consider how this might work for some of the key emotions.



Emotions: Motivation & Evolution - II

The emotion

Fear

How is it useful?

Fear is our natural response to threats and danger, motivating us to fight or flee. The survival value is obvious. But it is less obvious when it is activated in seemingly non-life-threatening situations such as a supermarket queue or job interview. More about fear and anxiety in the next session.

Anger

Anger is typically activated in situations where we feel frustrated about not being able to achieve our goals and when our rights are violated. We are motivated to protect ourselves and others, and to redress the balance in some way. Problems arise in the expression of anger, not in anger itself. Anger lies at the heart of great social changes over the years – e.g., emancipation and universal suffrage.

Emotions: Motivation & Evolution - III

The emotion

Disgust

How is it useful?

Disgust motivates us to keep away from unpleasant and noxious substances such as vomit and faeces. This is the literal meaning and the survival value is apparent, but we tend to use the term less literally in a moralistic way – a judgement about the beliefs and behaviours of others (and maybe of ourselves at times).

Happiness / Joy

We are motivated to seek out happiness by engaging in activities that stimulate our pleasure centres and give meaning to our lives. Many of these activities involve interaction with others, contributing to the well-being of our families and the wider social fabric.

Emotions: Motivation & Evolution - IV

The emotion

Sadness

How is it useful?

Sadness motivates us to seek self-preservation. When depressed, like a wounded bear, we retreat to our cave to lick our wounds, avoid further harm, and to regain our strength.

It also speaks to the social and communicative aspects of emotions...

Emotions: Social Aspects

Shame and guilt can often be very problematic for people struggling with mental health difficulties. It may not seem obvious at first how these emotions have evolved to help our survival.

The emotion

Guilt

Shame

How is it useful?

These emotions motivate us to adhere to the norms of our social groups, with their origins in the age when animals began living together in herds and troops. Being a member of such a community (e.g., of chimpanzees) clearly has strong survival value and you would not want to risk being cast out of the group to survive on your own.

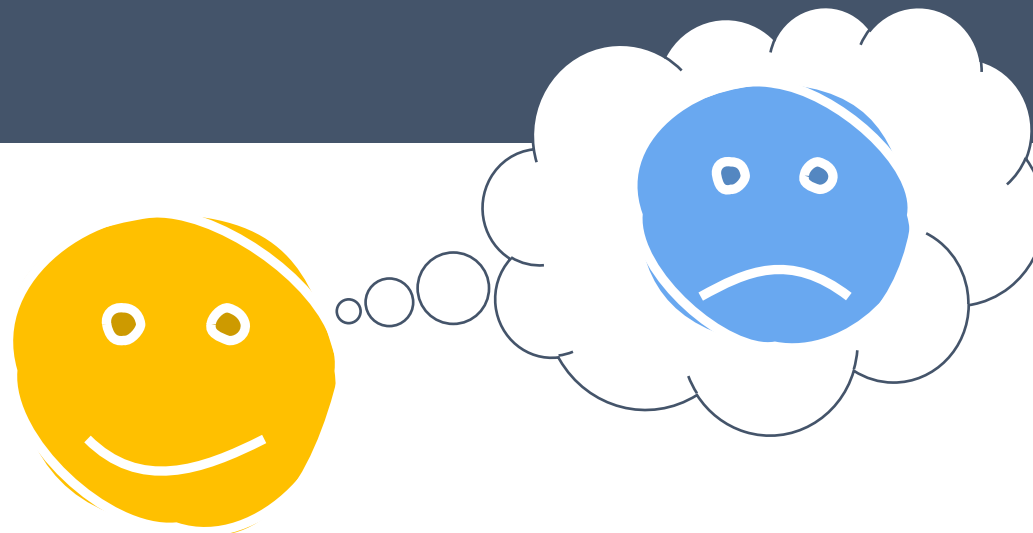
The feelings of shame and guilt are often unwarranted but the resultant fears of being ridiculed, abandoned or rejected are very real.

Emotions as Communication - I

As well as being motivational states, emotions also have an important role to play in communication. As noted earlier, the facial expressions associated with the primary emotions are universally recognised.

Communication occurs through body language (e.g., posture, movements, tone of voice, blushing) and verbally. We often ask people how they are feeling. We may be able to infer this from the non-verbal cues, but sometimes the verbal reply does not match what we see.

Often we do not want people to know how we are feeling – maybe we think it makes us vulnerable or look weak, or maybe we don't want to burden others with our troubles.



Emotions as Communication - II

It is clearly important to recognise when someone is getting angry so we can take appropriate action to protect ourselves.

Conversely, when someone is feeling sad we are motivated to offer them comfort. If people try to hide these feelings, they risk missing out on such support.

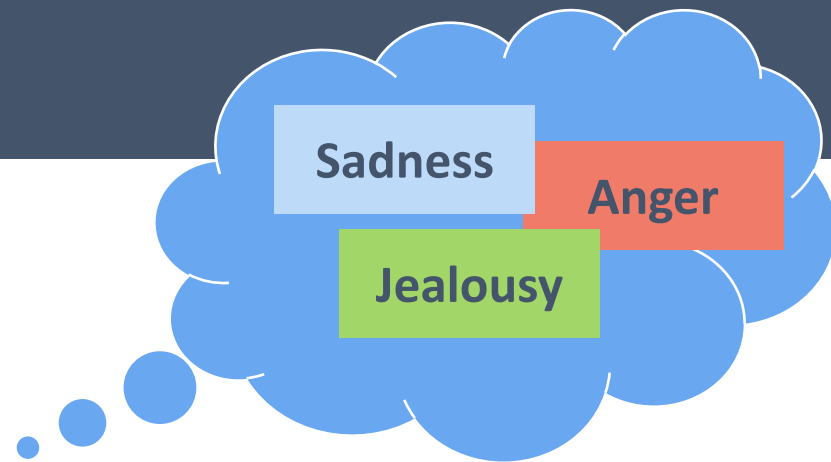
Our emotions also communicate to us – they contain important information we need to act on. This is often the case when we have a “gut instinct” about someone or a situation – the primitive areas of our brain are clearly picking up signals of which we may not be consciously aware.



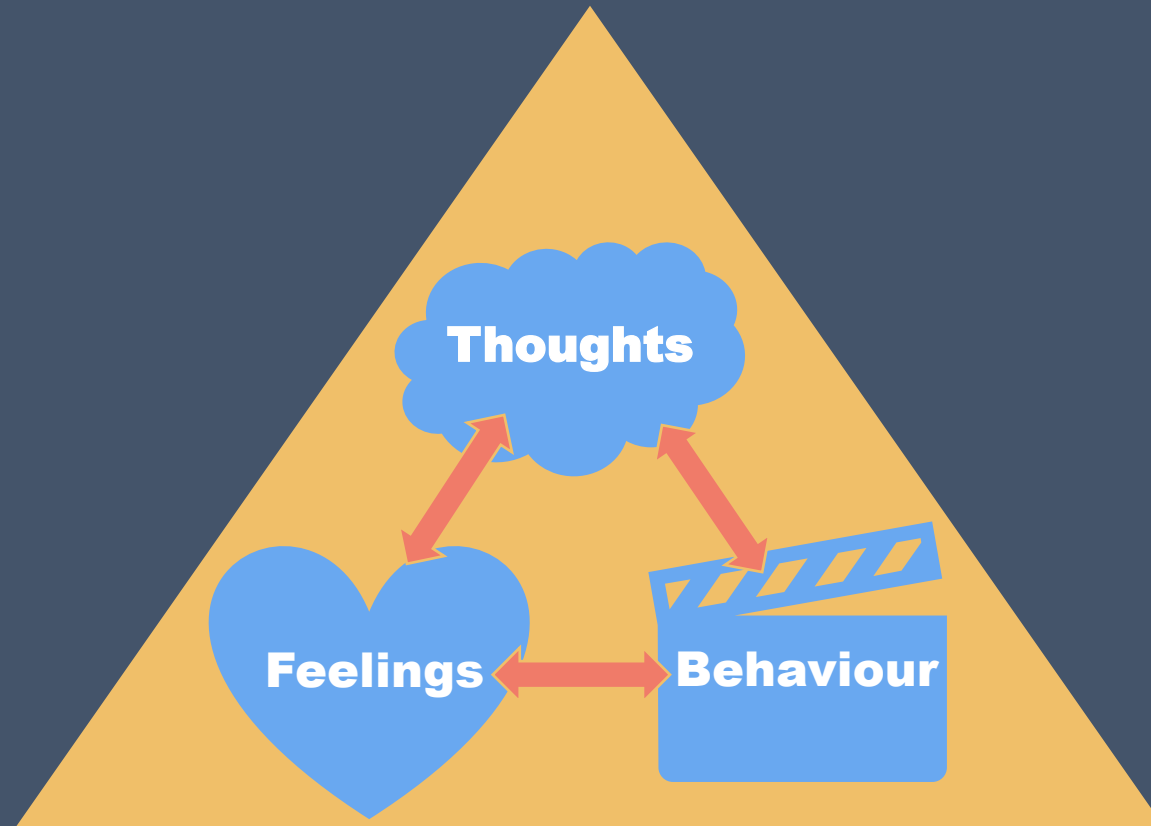
Emotions as Communication - III

In terms of survival, we need to respond quickly – there is not time for rational thought. In the days when we lived in separate communities and met a stranger on the path we needed to judge very quickly if they were friend or foe.

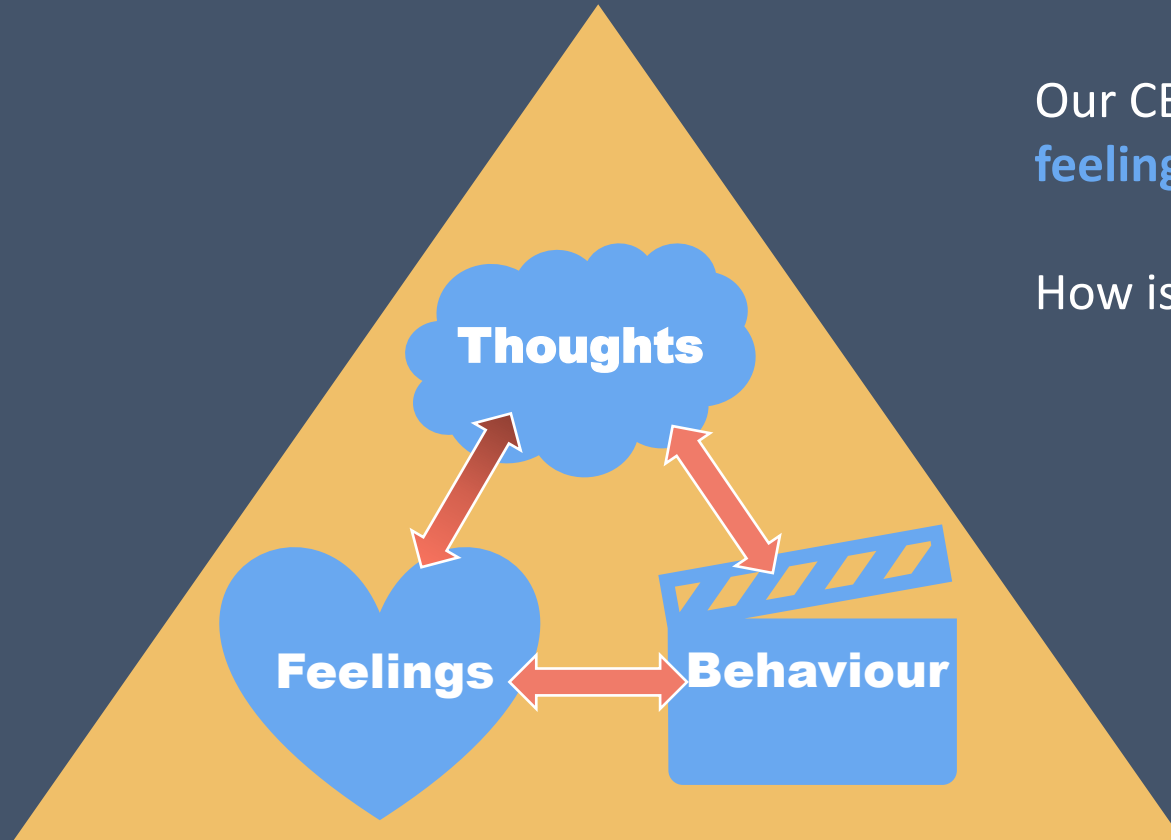
The communication to self is an important part of mindfulness - an opportunity to observe how we are reacting to things around us. If we find ourselves feeling envious of someone, maybe it is a signal to make changes in our own lives.



Thoughts-Feelings-Behaviour triangle



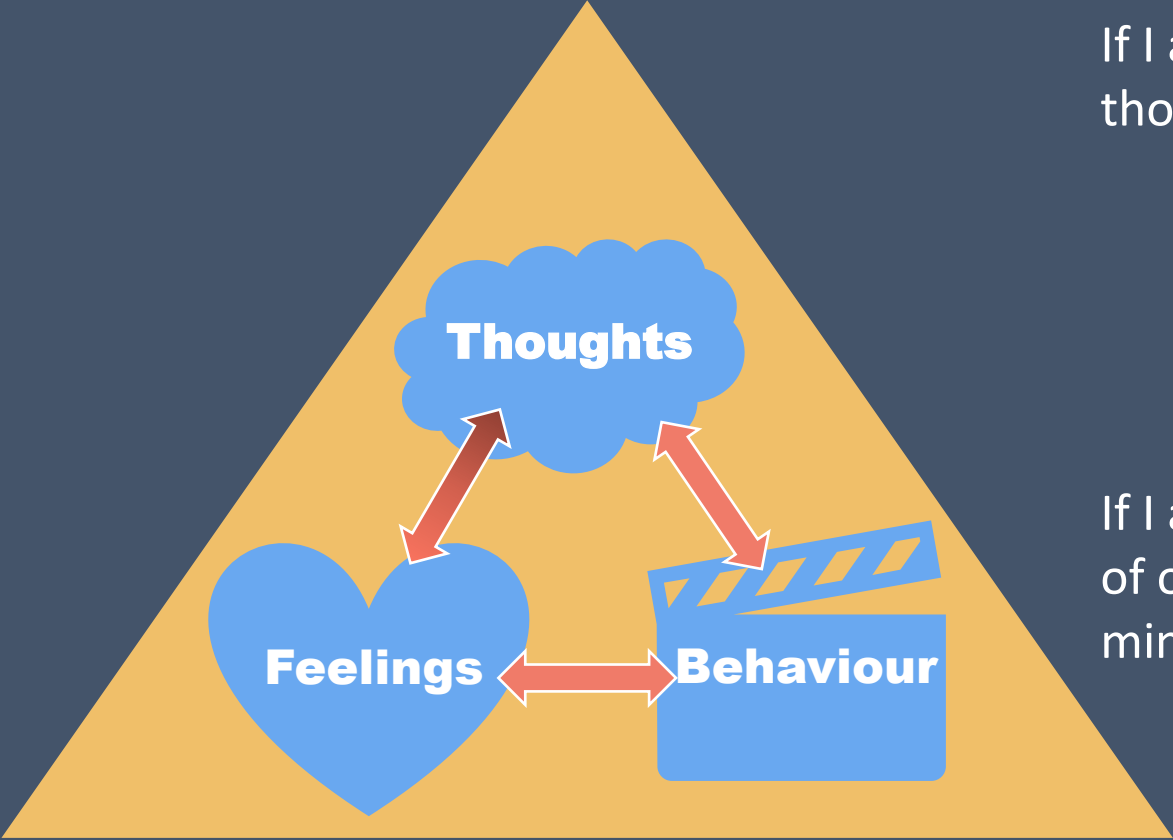
How Feelings Affect Our Thoughts - I



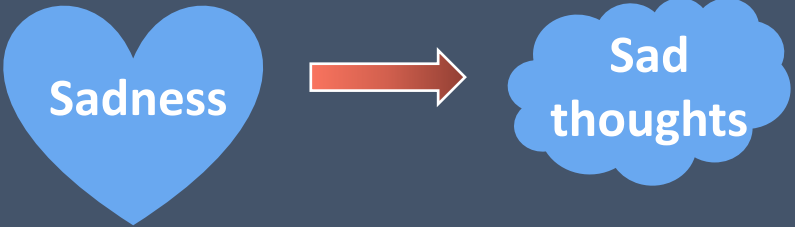
Our CBT model tells us that our **feelings** can affect **the way we think**.

How is this possible?

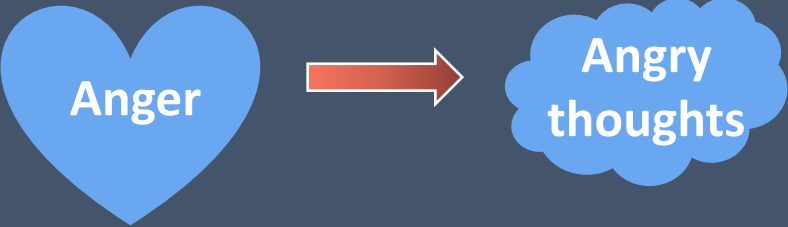
How Feelings Affect Our Thoughts - II



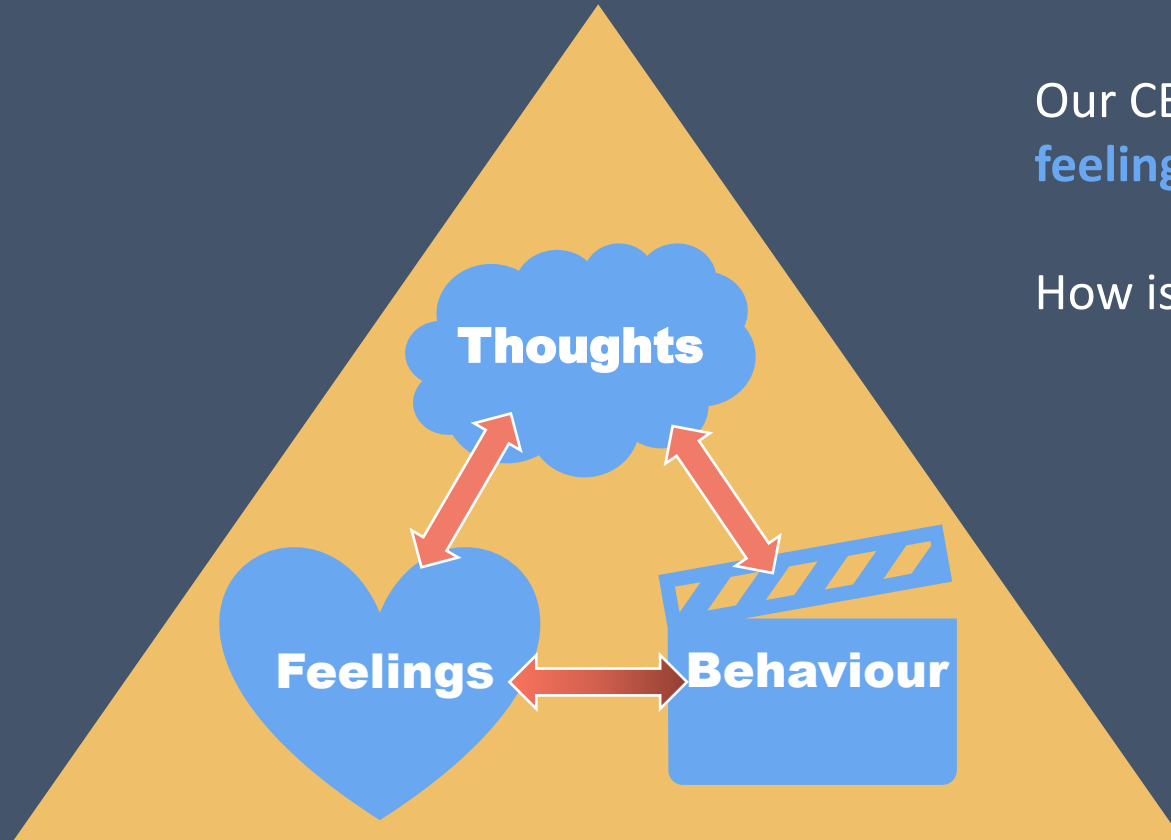
If I am feeling sad, I find that lots of other sad thoughts and memories come into my mind.



If I am feeling angry, then I find that memories of other times I have been angry come into my mind.



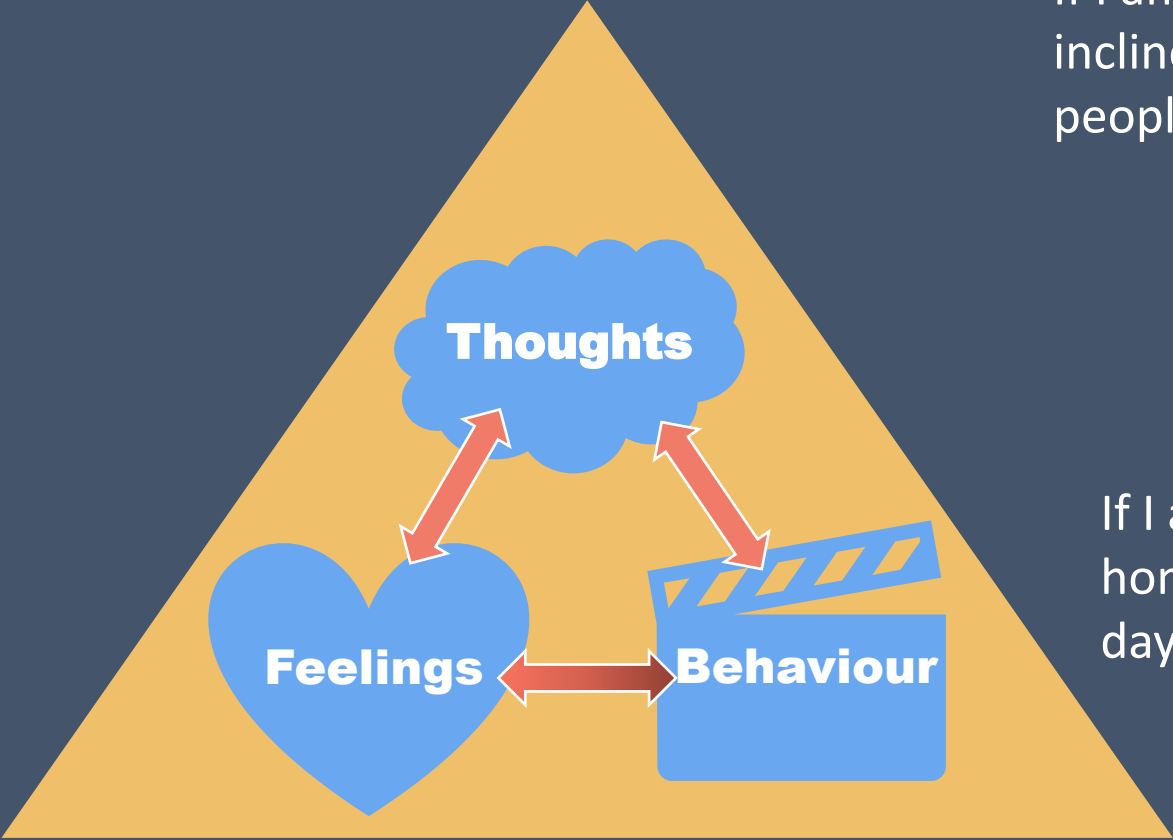
How Feelings Affect Our Behaviour - I



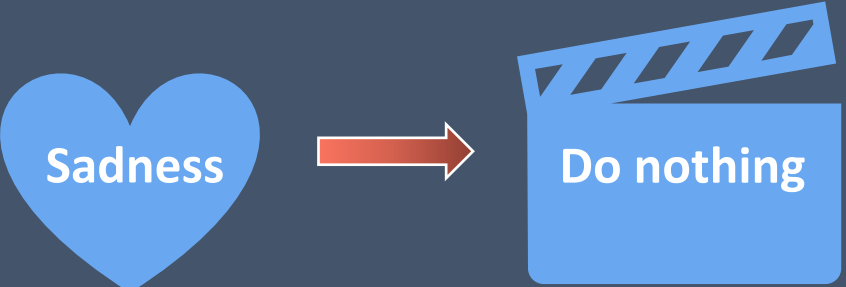
Our CBT model tells us that our **feelings** can affect **the way we behave**.

How is this possible?

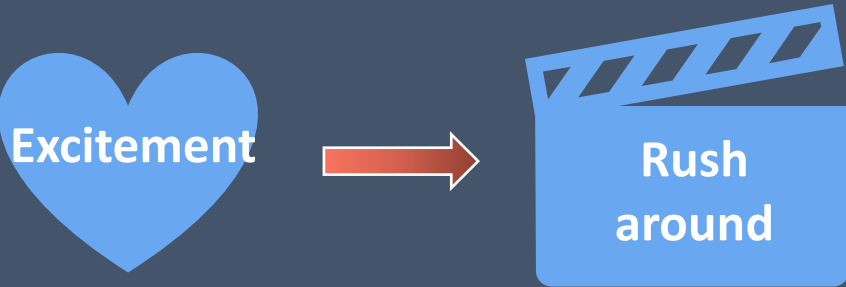
How Feelings Affect Our Behaviour - II



If I am feeling low in mood, then I do not feel inclined to do much. I might hide away from other people, or hide under my duvet all day.



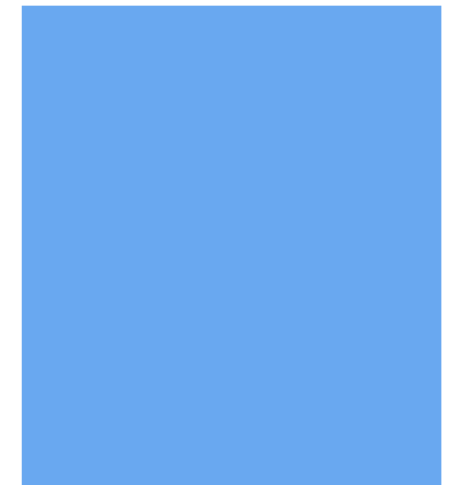
If I am feeling excited, I might rush around my home tidying things up, making plans for the day, and arrange to meet someone for coffee.



Are My Feelings Normal? - I

- This can be a difficult question to answer. However you are feeling in a particular situation will be understandable given your personal history and temperament.
- Our feelings (according to the CBT model) are driven by our appraisal/understanding of a situation.
- Often our appraisals/understanding are based on first impressions – there may be other ways of understanding some situations.

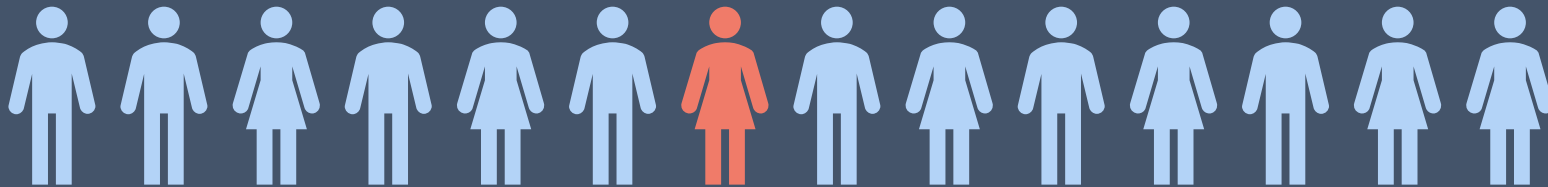
half full
or
half empty?



Are My Feelings Normal? - II

There are a number of steps we can go through to answer this question

1. Is my understanding of the situation accurate, or has some thinking bias interfered with my appraisal? [This is covered further in Sessions 6 and 7]
2. If I have understood correctly, is my emotional response consistent with how a friend might react in this situation?
3. If my friend would react with a similar emotion, is the intensity of my emotion proportionate to the situation? [Either too strong or not strong enough]



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