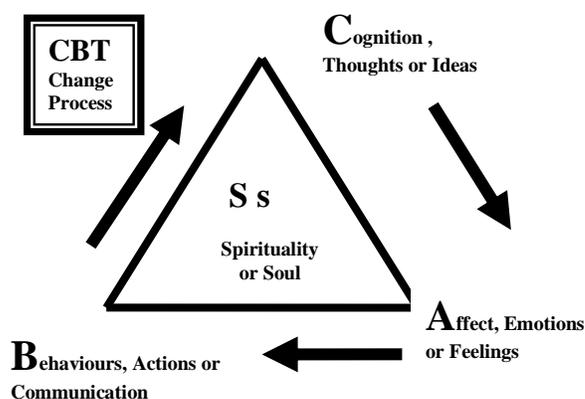


“Hybrid” Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) or “Getting Rid of Stink’n Think’n”

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (a form of psychotherapy or talk therapy) can be quite effective for improving our mental health and our physical health as well. It has proven helpful for health promotion in areas such as lowering stress, decreasing anxiety (heightened fear), quitting smoking, losing weight, lifting depression, managing diabetes and many other challenges we face in life. Traditional cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) has two main components. The **cognitive** component aims to have us examine and change our negative thinking patterns or what I like to call “**Stink’n Think’n**”. Through a process of positive reframing or “cognitive shifting” we can **gradually** replace negative thought patterns with increasingly more positive ones. The underlying premise of the theory is that our cognitions or **thoughts** strongly influence our affective or **emotional** state which, in turn, directly drives our **behaviours** or actions (see diagram).

Many of us have grown to believe if we want to change we simply need to change our behaviour. CBT, however, suggests we can be more successful and achieve more permanent change by understanding and altering the thoughts underneath our negative behaviour. This can, for example, put an end to the repetitive cycles of arguing & making-up in relationships or quitting/starting and under eating /over eating that are so common with smoking and eating behaviours. This approach may sound easy to do, yet it actually takes a bit of practice. However, it does not have to



take a long time to see results with CBT. Discussing your thought patterns with a trained and experienced CBT therapist/coach can speed up your change process. Identifying the positive reframes to alter the negative patterns and, then, consistently inserting the new thoughts requires courage, hard work and patience. This could be referred to as a **mental health workout** because, as the thoughts are shifted, emotions also become more positive or “pumped up”. This emotional strength helps us gradually increase positive behaviour and our negative behaviours, in turn, fade.

The **behavioural** component of CBT seeks to change our actions or reactions. Once shifted, more positive behaviours will have a positive influence on our thought patterns. Examples of effective behavioural techniques include deep breathing, relaxation, increasing our knowledge base (e.g. communication), emotional management strategies and increasing self-awareness. Parenting and relationship skills training, family changes and reorganizing rules and roles are all examples of behavioural strategies that can improve our overall mental or psychological health. This, in turn, improves our attention and improvements to our physical health. Think of it as “**mind management!**”

While CBT is helpful, there is much more to us than just thoughts, feelings and behaviours. What about our connection to others, the meaning we give to our existence or what some refer to as our **spiritual** dimension? We are also strongly influenced by our connection to others and to our world. The meaning we give to life and our experiences shape how we view both ourselves and our world. This sense of soul or spirit shapes our core values and beliefs, which also has an important impact on our thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

We can, quite often, choose our thoughts or interpretations about ourselves, others and situations. With some reflection, we can select a positive view about an event or situation. Other times we seem unable to see and take the positive perspective. We may be “too busy” to track our thoughts or our thoughts may be out of conscious awareness in our subconscious. Of course significant life events and situations occur and often interrupt our ability to cope and think clearly. To gain perspective and improve our behaviours, we can often benefit from supportive others, getting their guidance to help speed up the change process.

How Do I Change?

When you have a behaviour you want to change, take some time to discover some of the negative thoughts that are connected to your negative emotions (e.g. mad, sad, upset, frustrated, guilty, embarrassed confused or hopeless). Ask yourself how many times you think that negative thought...hourly, daily, weekly?... do the math.

With the technological age now upon us, I find it useful to think about our mind as a computer hard drive. Interestingly, we often think all the thoughts in our mind are our own, yet others, the media and almost everything actually writes to our mind or hard drive. With effective questions and conversations, we can uncover the negative thoughts that are driving emotional and behavioural troubles. In keeping with the computer analogy, we can increase the positives icons on our desktop and quarantine out or reduce the negatives. Using “Hybrid” CBT, we can become much more effective managers of the amazing wealth of information thought we possess in our mind.

Do you really believe you can “change your mind”? If we believe we can choose our thoughts, why not choose ones that make us feel more positive feelings (joy, happiness, excited, calm, confident, energetic)? Through the process of exploration and thought shifting, this hybrid CBT model gives us the ability to also positively and effectively shift our emotions and behaviours. Reorganizing and managing our minds and **uncovering our true self** in the process is definitely hard work and work that is well worth the effort.

Positively changing our thoughts actually alters how we the express ourselves to others. We can have increasingly more **amazing, satisfying and fulfilling relationships** by continuing to work at improving how we treat ourselves and one another. I encourage each of us to consistently work at identifying and quarantining out **Stink’n Think’n**.

Think About It !