

# CHANGES MODULE 5:

## Thoughts, feelings & behaviour

---



The way we think about certain situations can affect how we feel and how we behave. If we interpret a situation negatively, then we might have negative feelings or emotions as a result and then behave in a particular way. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is mainly focused on examining how these are interconnected and trying to break negative cycles. It isn't for everyone, but it can be really useful for some.

### How does negative thinking start?

Negative thinking can begin at any point in our lives. For example, if we didn't receive enough praise as children, we might start to think "I'm not good enough".

If these negative thoughts are left unchallenged, they can become **core beliefs** such as "I'm completely useless". These will impact on how we feel and behave in multiple situations. These feelings and behaviours feed on each other, creating a loop.

For example:

You have a core belief of "I'm not likeable" so when your friend cancels plans you start thinking "they don't want to be around me" (even though there could be a simple explanation). This leads to you feeling low and avoiding other friends (a behaviour).

### Challenge your patterns

This can be incredibly hard and takes a lot of practice! First you will need to

identify your negative thought patterns: what are the negative things you believe about yourself? Are they really true?

The first place to start is to notice when the feelings are strongest and what kinds of things cause them to start.

For example: you break a cup and feel instantly angry with yourself. Out of this you might find yourself thinking "I never do anything right, I'm a failure". Try to challenge this thought by asking yourself whether it is appropriate: *How could breaking one cup mean someone is a failure?*

Some people find keeping a diary of their feelings and thoughts helps them to see their patterns more clearly.

### Finally

Even if you don't relate to this approach, identifying how thoughts, feelings and behaviours are separate can be useful. It can help us understand ourselves better and begin to make change.

## Discussion Options

Can you identify what your core beliefs are?  
Do you have any negative thought patterns?

## Further resources

- *Retrain Your Brain: CBT in 7 weeks: a workbook for managing depression and anxiety* by SJ Gillihan (a breakdown with exercises to help you self-learn)
- “Let’s Talk About CBT” a podcast that mixes interviews, myth-busting and breaks down the jargon
- “What is CBT?” - a short video from Mind: <https://bit.ly/35SJY15>