

“Thoughts vs Beliefs”

OBJECTIVE: To help children understand and distinguish between Thoughts and beliefs

SKILL: Understanding Thoughts and Beliefs



- Video
- Exercise Sheets
- Counsellor Interaction

CORE LEARNING

Individuals have the power to overcome both negative thoughts and beliefs

What are Thoughts?

Our thoughts are created by our mind, which is constantly helping us to interpret the world around us. Our thoughts help us describe what’s happening, and make sense of events, sights, sounds, smells, and feelings. It’s just what the human mind does.

Without even realizing it, we are interpreting and giving our own meanings to everything happening around us. We might decide that something is pleasant or nasty, good or bad, dangerous or safe. What we think then affects how we feel and ultimately what we do!



Because of our previous experiences, our upbringing, our culture, religious beliefs and family values, we make different interpretations and evaluations of situations than someone else. The interpretations and meanings we give to events and situations result in

physical and emotional feelings. Something happens or we notice something, which triggers a thought. Particular types of thoughts tend to lead to particular emotions.

| Thoughts | Emotion |
|---|---|
| I'm in danger and I won't be able to cope with it | Anxiety, Fear  |
| I'm being treated unfairly and I won't stand for it | Anger, Frustration  |
| Everything is hopeless – I'm totally worthless, no-one likes me, and nothing can change | Depression  |



Thoughts...

- ☐ **Can be words**, an image, a memory, a physical sensation, an imagined sound, or based on 'intuition' – a sense of just 'knowing'
- ☐ **Believable** – we tend to automatically believe our thoughts, usually not stopping to question their validity. When someone is running down the hall way and pushes us,

we might think “What an idiot”, thinking he did it on purpose to hurt us. However, he might just be late for class and not even notice he bumped you. Thoughts are not necessarily true, accurate or helpful.

- ② **Are automatic.** They just happen, popping into your head and you often won’t even notice them.

- ② **Our thoughts** are ours – they can be quite specific to us, perhaps because of our present or past experience, knowledge, values and culture, or just for no good reason at all. Some thoughts are so out of character, it causes us great stress, – because we add some meaning about why we had them in first place. E.g. Because I had this thought I must be a bad person! (VERY FALSE). Many times our thoughts are out of **our** control. It only becomes an issue if we fixate on them.

List some thoughts you had in the last two weeks that drove you to feel a strong emotion?

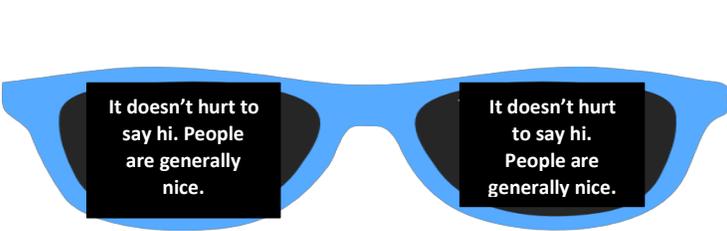
| | |
|---|-------|
| 1 | _____ |
| 2 | _____ |
| 3 | _____ |
| 4 | _____ |
| 5 | _____ |
| 6 | _____ |

Thoughts vs Beliefs

The difference between thoughts and beliefs is that you may have thousands of thoughts going through your mind but none of them give birth to any power except those that are beliefs. A belief is information that you understand as truth or knowledge and it can control your life and actually impact your actions.

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 |
|--|--|--|
| <p>A new person joins your class and you really would like to go and introduce yourself; perhaps make a new friend</p> |  | <p>Thought: People are mean. They'll just reject me Behavior- Doesn't go and loses out on making friends</p> |
| |  | <p>Thought: People are generally friendly. I'll go say Hi Behavior: Approaches student & makes a friend</p> |

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. _____

INSIDE STORY

Johnny played the piano and he was very good at it. His father was a piano player and his grandfather was a piano player. He'd been playing since he was 4 years old but now that he was 16, he was developing new interests and wasn't sure if he wanted to play piano anymore. His mom would often say "The Mc Arthurs are musicians" and that is who you are-- so he always believed that he never had a choice to do anything else or try anything else.

Johnny was chosen as the lead piano player for a huge musical in his school concert however he really didn't want to do it but didn't tell his teacher. During the performance, he got so shaken under the pressure that he froze and ran out of the auditorium. The band teacher gave him some water and later asked him what happened. That is when Johnny revealed the pressure he had to please everyone and his lack of interest in playing the piano for the last three years. Mrs. Truro, the band teacher explained to Johnny that his desires and wants mattered just as much as everyone else's and that she would have been okay had he told her from the very beginning that he was not interested in playing the piano. Since that day, Johnny started being honest about his feelings to everyone.

- 1) Which of these statements would have been a core belief Johnny probably had?
 - A) "I have to please everyone"
 - B) "Pianos are very heavy instruments."
- 2) Based on your answer above, how could this core belief have affected other areas of Johnny's life?
- 3) What are some thoughts Johnny would have on days he was forced to practice even though he didn't want to?
- 4) What could Johnny have done if he was afraid to tell his parents how he felt?

Additional Resources
Everydayspeech.com
Youtube.com