

The Cognitive Model

Thoughts → Emotions → Behaviors

Cognitive behavioral therapy (“**CBT**”) is based on the idea that **how you think determines how you feel and how you behave**. The diagram and example below show us this process:



Example: Mark

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

Mark's Thoughts: “I must’ve done something wrong... I’m so awkward.”

Mark's Emotions: Embarrassed and upset with himself.

Mark's Behaviors: Mark 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 Mark’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 Mark might’ve responded to the same situation if he had a different thought:

Thought	➡	Emotion	➡	Behavior
“What a jerk!”		Angry		Mark shouts: “What’s your problem?!”
“He must be having a bad day...”		Neutral		Mark 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.