

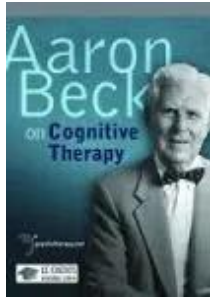
What “LIES” Beneath...



The most fundamental principle in Psychiatry for self development is discovering the content of our “self talk”. It is what we tell ourselves about who we are that determines how we behave in situations and with others in our sphere of life.



Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), introduced by Dr. Aaron Beck, has been established as a very useful therapy strategy for those suffering from a wide range of emotional problems. The effective application of this therapy has been a powerful tool not only for troubled individuals but also for anyone who desires some sort of compass to navigate through the rocky terrain of everyday life.



The principles behind Cognitive Therapy (CBT) is based on uncovering the lies behind our maladaptive coping strategies that we have learned early in our life and how this “map” is used to navigate our lives in the way we deal with situations and relationships. We all face obstacles in our life journeys. This is necessary part of our growth. When we were young we learned that certain behaviors would bring about changes in order to have our needs met. However, as we matured throughout our adolescent and toward our adult years, the “old way”, (aka, our maps) required changes in order for needs to be addressed. This learning model has much to offer especially since there are no perfect parents, no perfect relationships and there is no such thing as stress-free situations in life. Yet, without obstacles, life would not offer us opportunities to develop the required skills for our personal growth and mastery.

Here some examples of Lies we tell ourselves.

I am not as smart as other people.

People at work think I am lazy

I am a failure as a parent

I will never be happy

We are creatures of habit and tend to repeat particular patterns that appeared to best meet our needs. This is true for our practiced patterns of behavior and the way we learn to interpret our situations. Over time, our unique interpretations find a quiet place in a mental seat that precedes life scenarios. This is what Cognitive therapists call. “Automatic thoughts”.

Example of how our thoughts affect our behavior

[Automatic Thought] ⇒ [Behavior] ⇒ [Consequence]

Scene: Coffee Shop

I spilled some coffee on the table

(A family started laughing in the corner)

[People are always laughing at me]

I became angry and yelled at the family

[They are so rude-how dare they?]

I left the coffee Shop and I refuse to back

[I hate stores that serve such people]

What if you learned that the family was having coffee and one the kids told a funny story that made them laugh?

Personalizing the reason for the family laughing without knowing the facts is based on what I brought into the situation. The false interpretation that I automatically believed resulted in me lashing out angrily and left me with a conclusion that only robbed my freedom.

Our automatic thoughts are a set of many conclusions tagged to other similar experiences we have had in our life. Yet, these are more than just distinct memories. Our automatic thoughts are about “me” in the situation. They precede every situation we face and define who we are in those situations. We carry these interpretations about ourselves with us, unaware of their influence. As we experience repeating themes in our life that seem to be consistent, we begin to embrace our interpretations as “truth”. These “truths” continue to define us and provide scripts that we believe in our experiences throughout our life. All too often, we solidify our personal interpretations from our past about ourselves as “truths”, when they are in fact, “lies”.

The real Struggle is about Fear

We are living creatures, designed to assure our survival. Every part of our body, from our cells to whole body systems always promote our quality of life and well-being. To stay alive, our body must be postured on the offensive and defensive. When we plan to take on an adventure, we will need assurance of our safety and we will avoid any dangers that may threaten our survival. That is where the emotion of fear plays a vital role. Courage for example, is a virtue that can only occur in the presence of fear. Without fear, no courage is possible. The role of our fears is to keep our behavior in check. But when the fear is unrealistic or false, our fears can actually enslave us. Unfortunately, fears do not always have a healthy role, especially when the fears are not based on accurate interpretations. Inappropriate fears can hinder instead of promoting growth. Fears help us gauge our risks more carefully because the priority of survival is vital for us to thrive. The sense of danger is not just physical. Often it can be relationship based and will direct us to avoid the likelihood of social threats as well.

*In order to know if our fears are based on realistic or unrealistic interpretations, **we need to evaluate the statements our automatic thoughts are telling us.** If our acts of avoidance are not “truth-based”, they will not lead to our growth, but to our enslavement.*

The most valuable aspect of CBT is that it can instruct us on healthy coping strategies without the requirement of having lifelong counseling. Unlike Psychoanalysis, where the therapy structure depends on unraveling unconscious motivations or defenses over many appointment sessions, in Cognitive therapy, the pace of therapy depends on learning the skills that will keep the mental dialogue in check. When we learn how the lies we tell ourselves are compromising our growth, we can be equipped to replace our interpretations with truth. By applying a litmus test to our self-talk, we will be able to break free from the anxiety and fear that threaten the freedom we have to live life fully as intended.

Below, you will notice six basic rules that we help reveal the lies we often tell ourselves. Learning how to identify the lies we tell ourselves and learning how to correct our self-talk is central to the making life changes. With practice, you will be well on your way to your journey of freedom.



THE SIX LIES
We Tell Ourselves



Maximize others/ Minimize self
Example:
"He speaks so well in public"
"I will never be as good as him"

Overgeneralize
Example:
"My last girlfriend betrayed me after 2 months"
"She will betray me too"

Personalize
Example:
"They seemed to be laughing and staring at me"
"They are talking about me"



How to apply Cognitive Therapy to your life

Let us use the coffee shop scene above as an example

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What I have instructed clients to do is to make separate columns on a sheet of paper as follows:

<u>SITUATION</u>	<u>AUTOMATIC THOUGHT</u>	<u>FEELING</u>
A family started laughing in the corner	They are laughing at me	Anger

Now what Lie is at work in my interpretation?

**-Over generalizing
-Personalizing
-Jumping to conclusions**

Let us correct the interpretation with another possible explanation

<u>SITUATION</u>	<u>AUTOMATIC THOUGHT</u>	<u>FEELING</u>
A family started laughing in the corner	They may be laughing at a family joke	unchanged

This is just a rough guide to begin your journey in Cognitive Therapy techniques. I have used these principles frequently in my life and they have been the most useful guide for dealing with many challenges I encounter.

I hope you will find this post useful for you as well. Now, go reclaim your freedom!

Greg