

# LEARNING NOT TO SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

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WELLNESS LECTURE

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# ARE THE EVERYDAY HASSLES OF LIFE GETTING TO YOU?

- Traffic/commuting
- Work deadlines
- E-mail
- Tensions in relationships
- Childcare responsibilities
- Household chores
- Crowds/other people
- Lack of time
- Money

What are triggers for *you*?



# HOW CAN WE COPE?

## Problem-Focused Coping

- Aimed at resolving the stressful situation or event or altering the source of the stress
  - Taking control of the stress
  - Seeking information or assistance in handling the situation
  - Removing oneself from the stressful situation

## Emotion-Focused Coping

- Aimed at managing the emotions associated with the situation, rather than changing the situation itself
- Useful approach when situation is outside of a person's control

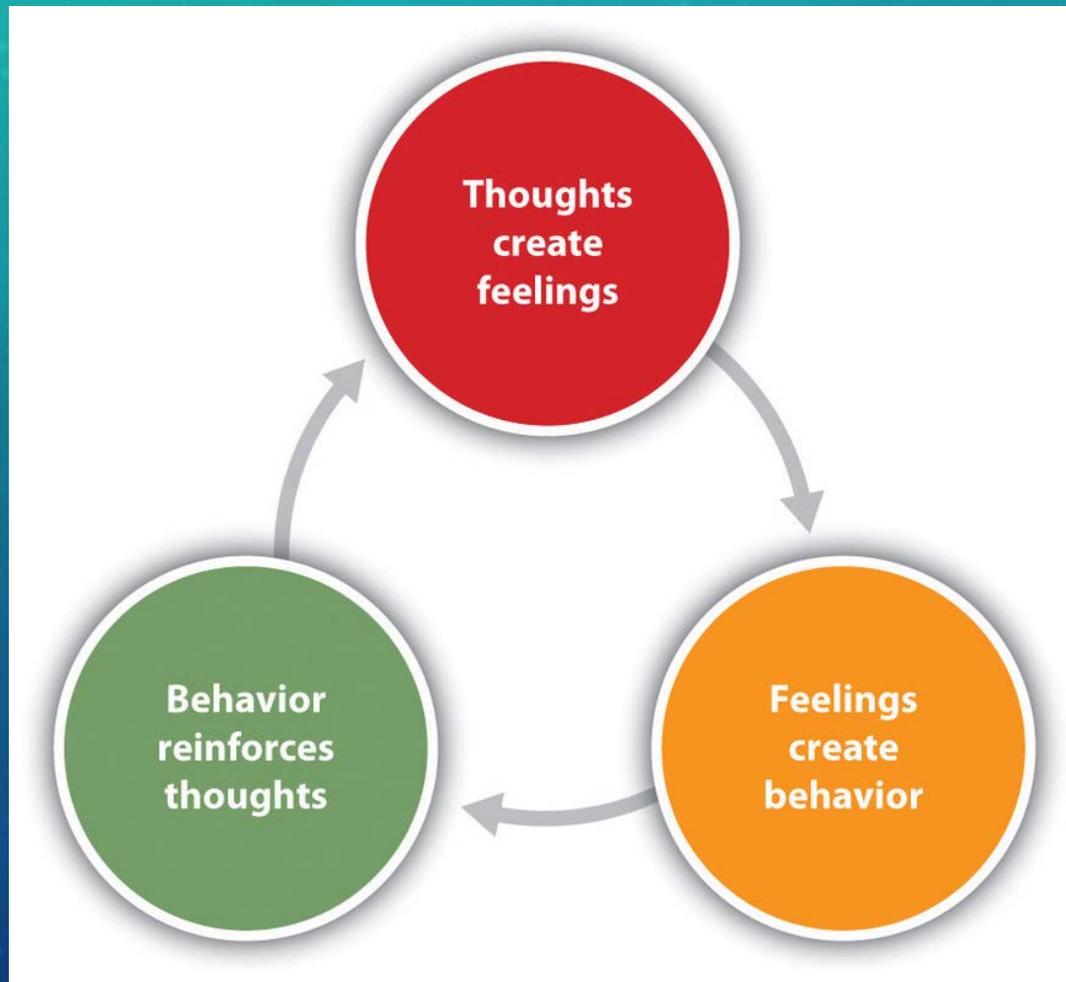
# TRY THESE OUT...

- You hold the door for someone and they end up in front of you on line at the coffee shop. They have a long order and you are waiting, worried you're going to be late to work.
- Your boss keeps emailing you with additional work at all hours and even while you're on vacation.
- Your parents are going away and ask you to feed their cats and generally take care of the house while they're gone. You live a half hour away from them, while your sister lives 2 minutes from their house. You ask to share the responsibilities with your sister, but your parents are concerned she's unreliable and say they'd be more comfortable if you could take care of everything.
- You see your mother-in-law for the first time in 3 months. She asks you, "Have you gained some weight?"
- You and your partner are planning on renovating your bathroom. He wants to get rid of the bathtub and make it a stand-up shower, but you are concerned that this is not a good idea because it's the only bathtub in the house. You are at a stand-still.



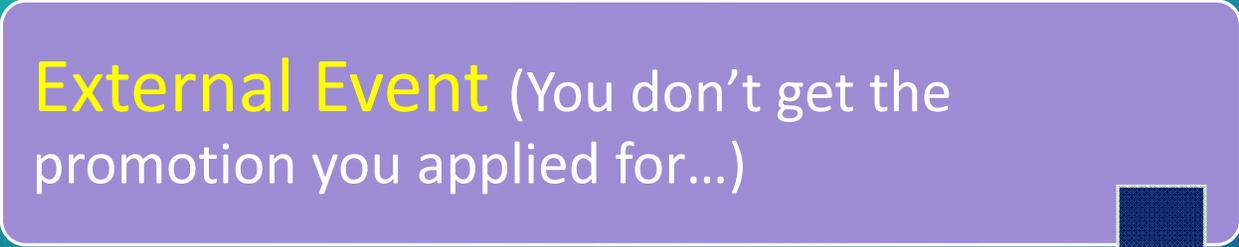
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TO CHANGE YOUR FEELINGS, CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS...

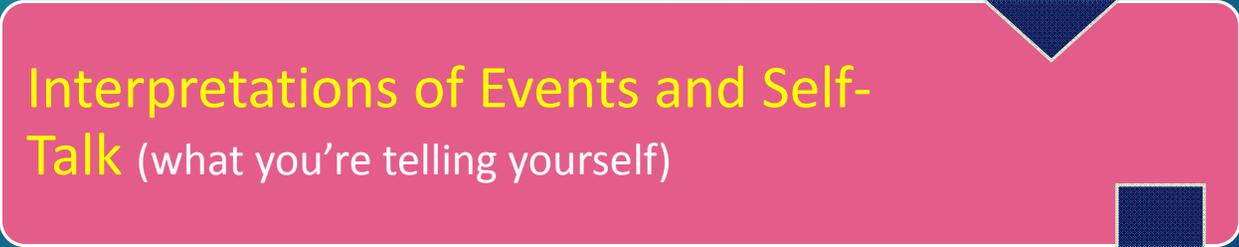


## HOW IT WORKS...

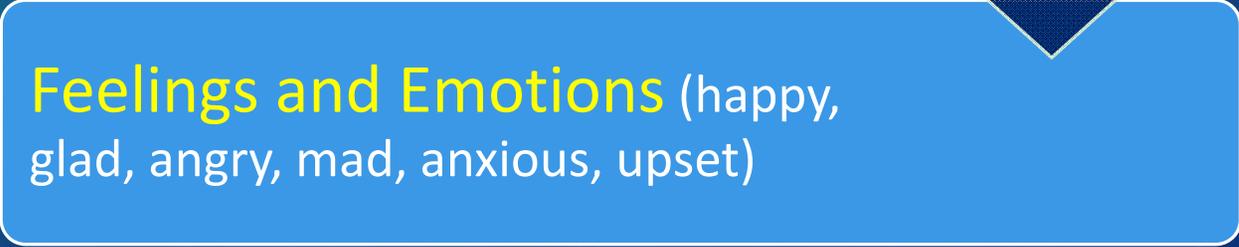
**External Event** (You don't get the promotion you applied for...)



**Interpretations of Events and Self-Talk** (what you're telling yourself)



**Feelings and Emotions** (happy, glad, angry, mad, anxious, upset)



# NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

- I **must** succeed at everything I do. I **must not** make mistakes.
- I **have to** have the love and approval of others. Disapproval would be **terrible** and must be avoided at all costs.
- My **world would end** if I don't do well on a particular assignment, get a promotion, etc.
- It would be **absolutely horrible** if I tripped over my words during an oral presentation.
- I am **a complete failure** if my date doesn't go well.
- I **have to** be liked by everyone to be a worthwhile person.
- People **should** treat me fairly and if they don't, they're **jerks** and should be punished.
- Things **must** be the way that I want them to be – otherwise, life will be **intolerable**.



# THE 4 CATEGORIES OF IRRATIONAL BELIEFS

- **Demands**
- **Awfulizing**
- **Low Frustration Tolerance (LFT)**
- **Global Evaluation of Human Worth**

# DEMANDS

- They reflect unrealistic and absolute expectations of events or individuals, and are often recognizable by cue words such as **“must”**, **“ought”**, **“should”**, **“have to”**, and **“need”**.
- **“Three Major Musts”**
  - Demands about the self
  - Demands about others
  - Demands about the world/life conditions



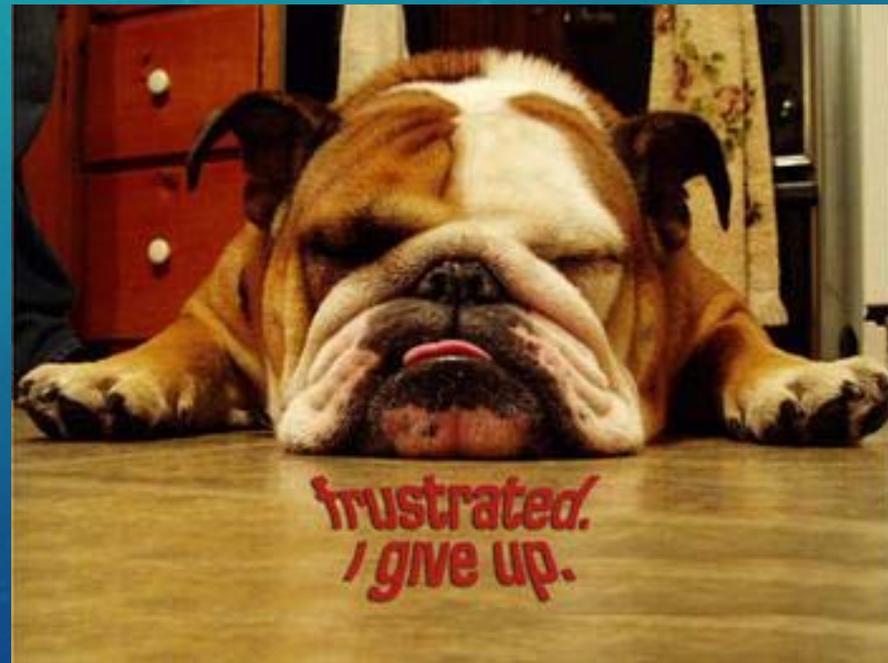
# AWFULIZING

- This is a way of exaggerating the negative consequences of a situation to an extreme degree, so that an unfortunate occurrence becomes “terrible”.



## LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE

- This stems from demands for ease and comfort, and reflects an intolerance of discomfort.
- In REBT, avoidance is considered the result of Low Frustration Tolerance (LFT).
- Clients demonstrate LFT when they refuse to do what they agree would be beneficial for them, citing reasons such as, **“It’s too hard,” “I’d be too scared,” or “I can’t stand it.”**



# GLOBAL EVALUATION OF HUMAN WORTH

- Either of the self or others.
- It implies that humans can be rated, and that some people are worthless, or at least less valuable than others.
- All self-worth statements are **overgeneralizations**.
- Behavior may be judged, people cannot.
  - Clients are not their behavior. People are far too complex to be judged within a single category.
- Help clients monitor their language so that they change their labels (i.e., change nouns into verbs).
- Clients are taught to avoid self-rating and substitute self-acceptance or self-tolerance.



# YOU CAN STOP THE STINKING THINKING BY CHANGING YOUR PERCEPTIONS!

- Change musts to preferences
  - Why **must** I?
- Awfulizing is nonsense, although things may be unpleasant
- You can stand it and experience some happiness even if bad events continue
  - Use coping thoughts
    - “This situation won’t last forever.”
    - “I’ve been through other difficult situations before and I’ve survived.”
- Accept yourself, other people, and the world as fallible and complex – too complex to be given a single global rating

**“IF YOU DON’T LIKE  
SOMETHING,  
CHANGE IT. IF YOU  
CAN’T CHANGE IT,  
CHANGE YOUR  
ATTITUDE.”**  
– MAYA ANGELOU



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# OPPOSITE ACTION:

## DOING THE OPPOSITE OF YOUR EMOTIONAL URGES

Emotion	Emotion-Driven Behavior	Opposite Action
Anger	Attack, criticize, hurt, shout	Validate, avoid or distract, use soft voice
Fear	Avoid, hunch shoulders	Approach what you fear, do what you've been avoiding, stand tall
Sadness	Shut down, avoid, be passive, slump, hang your head	Be active, get involved, set goals, stand straight
Guilt/Shame	Punish yourself, confess, avoid, shut down	If unfounded guilt, continue doing whatever is triggering guilt; if guilt is justified, atone and make amends.

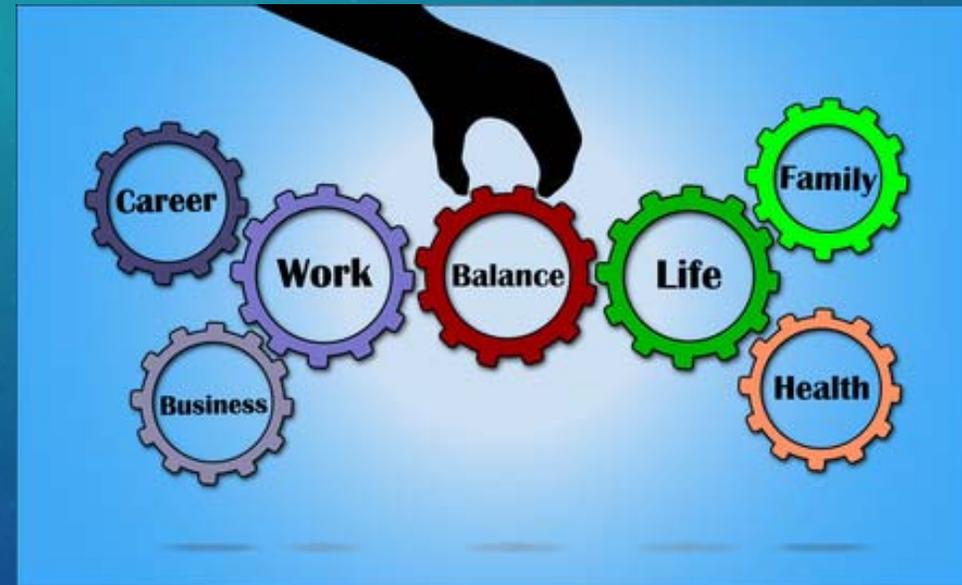
# MAKE TIME FOR PLEASANT EXPERIENCES – NO MATTER HOW SMALL!

- **Go for a walk**
- **Meet a friend for coffee**
- **Take a dancing class**
- **Volunteer**
- **Paint something**
- **Cook a meal**
- **Watch a movie**
- **Go to a sports event**
- **Listen to music**
- **Take a hot bath**



# LIVING A VALUES-DRIVEN LIFE

- What do you personally value in life? What gives your life meaning?
- What do you consider most important to you? What are your priorities?
- Are you living in a way that reflects what matters to you?
- What obstacles are getting in the way of your stated values?
- Have your values gotten lost in the shuffle of living?



# MOUNTAIN MEDITATION EXERCISE



# THE IMPORTANCE OF GRATITUDE

- Three blessings
  - Write down 3 good things that happened to you today for which you can give other people some credit.
- Gratitude journal
  - Take 5 – 10 minutes to write at least every other day.
  - Be specific and go into depth
  - Don't forget to journal about people who've helped those you love.
  - Also consider how a positive event or experience in your life might never have happened or might never have been part of your life.
- Gratitude letter and visit
- Pay it forward



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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