

AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS, INTERMEDIATE AND CORE BELIEFS

Automatic Thoughts

Those immediate, first, quick thoughts that go through our mind in response to a situation. They are our initial thinking reactions that go on to affect emotions and behaviors. Problematic automatic thoughts are negative. Sometimes they can go unnoticed and usually they go unquestioned. Learning to monitor thoughts is a essential first step in Cognitive and behavioral therapy. As obvious as these surface thoughts can be. It does take practice to capture them. Regular thought monitoring helps us notice these more easily.

Examples:

“ She thinks I’m weird”
“ I won’t pass that test”
“ My heart might stop beating”
“ I will get AIDS from that doorknob

Intermediate Beliefs

These are more under the surface but influence the direction our automatic thoughts go in. They are very important in maintaining anxiety and depression. Discovering these beliefs help us move toward change. Key aspects of Intermediate Beliefs are:

- expectations and assumptions about ourselves, relationships and situations around us
- Rules and guidelines we follow
- Attentional priorities and biases which influence what we notice or don’t notice and the ways we think and respond to a given situation.

Examples:

“ Meeting new people is something to avoid”
“ Not exerting myself, will keep my heart from failing”
“ Always look for danger and expect it to be there”

Core Beliefs

These beliefs, in the Cognitive Model, are considered to be at the deepest level of our thinking. They represent our

- underlying self-values and perceptions and
- Underlying views of ourselves, others and the world around us.
- Core belief statement have an absolute quality to them such as:

Examples:

“ I am worthless” - “ I am inadequate” - “ if I fail, I am worthless” -“ I am unsafe in the world”

Patterns of thoughts and behaviors

Researcher believe that our biology, genetic predispositions and our life experiences come together to form our beliefs, perceptions, rules assumptions and expectations. Over time, it is thought that we develop certain repetitive cycles or patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that can be self-reinforcing