

CBT and Feeling Good CogSci Therapy and Seminars and Workshops

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Promoting psychological health & well being through
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy & Brainskills Training
info@CBTandFeelingGood.com

HR iNfo Newsletter: Bringing Cognitive Science into the Boardroom



"Emotional resilience and new skills in self management can be learned, and *bad thinking habits* can be dismantled - new science tells us that the brain is more malleable than we ever knew, and can literally be rewired through 'learning and doing'. That's what Cognitive Behavioural Training is proven to do - improving well being in all measures."

Is it true that companies and organisations can develop cultural attitudes and beliefs and behaviours that are not helpful, and that foster unnecessary drama and poor choices of action? That are not compatible with good communications? And that give poor outcomes? **Oh yes. Yes it is.**

Read on for more information on the psychology view of workplace cultures, and/or how to address problematic cultures creeping into your own organisation...

We all know of workplaces that are accused of having 'a toxic culture'. Workplaces that inspire comments like:

***'it comes from the top down'
'you could join as a starry eyed idealist, but they'd knock that out of you',
'they're impossible to deal with'***

This post aims to explain the problem and a management solution...

Such 'toxicity' can be low, moderate or high. It occurs when negative attitudes and behaviours becomes the norm. From a *psychological training* point of view, this is neither right or wrong or good or bad, it just is what it is - and if it is a problem, it can be addressed in a non judgemental way.

- sometimes the problem for your workplace is that you have to deal with and manage communications with other workplaces (suppliers or customers for example) that have such cultures and behaviour.
- sometimes it's your own workplace that is veering towards that culture.
- and sometimes it's your own workplace that has that culture embedded.

... whichever the case, there is practical learning that will teach proactive, preventative or curative tools and skills to understand and manage challenging people and situations in a smart way, and also to recognise and examine and change our own unhelpful attitudes and behaviours when they are self sabotaging.

Psychological training:

There is a strong case to be made for **taking evidence based therapy practices out of the counselling rooms and into the boardrooms** (be it government, public service institutions, organisations, companies or institutions).

I don't mean 'psychoanalysis'! Though I'm sure many social scientists would love to be commissioned to do a study of origins, and how a particular vicious circle developed and consumed, and that those studies would be fascinating – but, no, I'm suggesting the very practical and pragmatic **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**, as it is a '**rational thinking skills**' psycho-educational model that can be learned and applied through simple structures, with practical skills and tools that can be applied immediately, and that **can become an intrinsic part of management into the future.**



Cognitive behavioural training is concerned with NOW, TODAY, rather than addressing the past or navel gazing endlessly. It's core theory is that it is not an event or situation, (no matter how challenging), that is the direct cause of a person's upsettiness and behaviours, but rather that it is:

- the person's JUDGEMENT of the event
- the person's thoughts and beliefs about the event
- the meaning and significance the person assigns to the event.

The same thing could happen to ten people, but they would all feel and behave in a unique way in response to it, depending on their perception ... (The event influences, the cognitive and emotional cause.)

Here is a table example to illustrate the 'negative thoughts cause negative feelings which cause self sabotaging behaviours' point:

Event / Situation	Team thoughts/belief	Emotional/physical	Behavioural
Your team is meeting with a supplier /distributor team to persuade them to grant your company an exclusive contract.	<p>These guys love the power they have over us.</p> <p>They love lording it over us and watching us grovel.</p> <p>I don't like them.</p> <p>They're horrible people.</p> <p>They don't respect us, if they did they wouldn't put us through this crap.</p> <p>They prefer our rivals.</p> <p>There's no way we're getting this contract, we're wasting our time.</p> <p>We'll have to go in at a super low margin as a first proposal, even if just to screw the rival.</p> <p>This is a disaster.</p> <p>What's the point?</p>	<p>Anxious</p> <p>Angry</p> <p>Nervous</p> <p>Irritated</p> <p>Butterflies or sick feeling in stomach</p> <p>Overload of oxygen and adrenaline</p> <p>Unfocused</p>	<p>Not at all calm or relaxed.</p> <p>Conducting the meeting in a stiff formal way.</p> <p>Displaying physical discomfort.</p> <p>Not engaging in 'social niceties' / not enjoying the encounter at all / not getting to know the distributor team.</p> <p>Talk too fast, don't listen.</p> <p>Panic into immediately proposing a tiny margin take in return for a contract.</p>

So...

Can you see how our thoughts and beliefs (*the lens that we view the world through*) decide our emotional and physical and behavioural response? Can you see that they are not plucked out of the clouds, but rather they are based on bits and pieces of evidences and half truths and assumptions and feelings? So that they appear rational and plausible, but are in fact distorted?

What would be the outcome with these kinds of attitudes and behaviours?

Are your team prone to negative predictions and absolute belief in their 'mind reading' analysis?

If your team have decided that these negative thoughts and beliefs are 100% true and evidence based, then what's the point in them being in the room at all? (Often this kind of thinking causes 'avoidant behaviour', so we're NOT in the room at all, we don't even pitch to get into the room).

Will they be able to focus and prepare with enthusiasm if they've decided 'there's no point' even before the meeting? Do they understand the physicality of their bodies 'threat response' to the situation, and how to manage that? Or are they using emotional reasoning ('I feel bad, so it is bad').

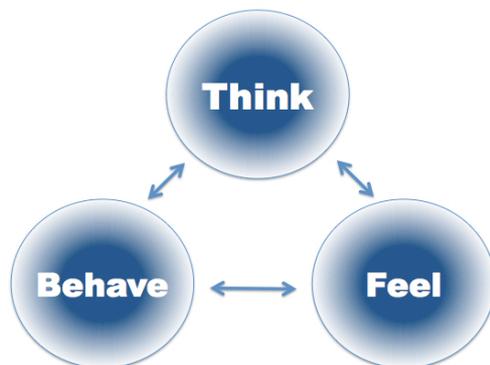
Are there alternative more true and rational ways to view this situation? (Even IF the supplier team do have challenging behavior - and there's a big IF there for a reason, often our absolute thinking is extreme and overdramatic, and simply off the mark).

Are there different behaviours that would bring a better outcome? (A smarter way to manage the supplier team even IF they are difficult to deal with).

Was there any critical thinking - examination and reframing - applied to these views before the meeting?

Were these views even known and understood before the meeting? Or does everything just happen as you go along... with emotional reasoning ruling the day?

This scenario can be pretty typical - again, remember that it's neither good nor bad (from a scientific point of view), it simply is what it is - it happens for a reason, we are *primal*, we are wired to sense danger and hazards and to problem solve, but unfortunately we're often perceiving dangers and hazards where there are none, thereby upsetting ourselves and behaving in unhelpful ways.



When stress becomes a disorder it causes a shift in thinking to a negative view, which can become a vicious circle of automatic thinking if it goes unchecked. CBT skills and tools for self management help to prevent or cure this through *understanding and managing* thinking and behaviours through structured and guided rational thinking skills tasks and exercises ... so why not transfer this model for use in the workplace and for company management? Moving therapy out of the counselling rooms for everyday use. This learning is proven to benefit personal and work life - in fact the new science of CBT is often called 'how to be happy' training, - so at the very least, happier work societies equal better outcomes, and at best, you can utilise and transfer the learning to management, planning and overviews.

"Always be learning."

A new foundation for management skills:

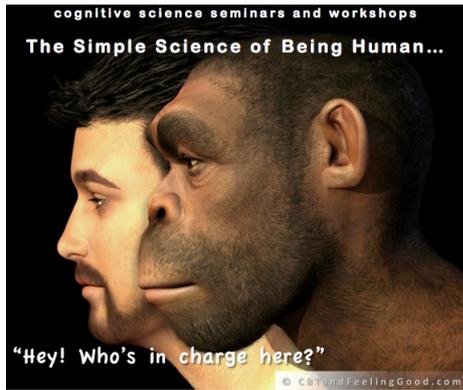
Most of the top executive 'how-to' management books and training give great behavioral instructions on what we should and ought to do for great outcomes, but they mostly assume that the executive is emotionally stable and starting from a position of rationality and good psychological health, and indeed that the staff they manage are emotionally stable too - **this is an ERROR** (to directly quote the founding father of CBT, Dr Albert Ellis, also known as the Prince of Reason).

Those books and training can have high value, but the value can only be accessed when there is a base of good psychological health and wellbeing in the first place, and when rational thinking skills are being applied to examine and challenge default general thinking and communications and behaviour.

CBT can provide a great foundation to make the most out of other personal and practical professional and personal development training - in fact, [Cognitive Behavioural Training studies](#)



[show an improvement in employee well being in all measurements.](#)



Training options

Non Therapy **Cognitive Behavioural Training** ('third wave' including evolutionary psychology and neuroscience) is available in either one to one sessions for individuals, or seminars, or flexible module workshops - bespoke tailored for employee group training.

Note: **this training is not group therapy**, it is not depression training, and it is not sickness training: it is executive development training to teach new skills in self management – and it is fast fun and fascinating.

[Click to open the workshop newsletter](#)

Contact Veronica at veronica@CBTandFeelingGood.com or 086 8113031 for more information.

Links to relevant reports and articles:

- Why Happiness Matters in the Workplace - an academic view of ROI: [LINK](#)
- 'Notes and stats on mental health in the workplace', my blog post. [LINK](#)
- 'Companies on the Couch', my article for the Dublin City Enterprise Board: [LINK](#)
- Irish Times feature article on one of my workshops: [LINK](#)
- Herald feature article / interview with me on 'Recession Anxiety': [LINK](#)
- 11 million days lost to absenteeism in Ireland: [LINK](#)
- Absenteeism costs 490€m a year say Small Firms Assoc Ireland [LINK](#)
- Irish Medical Times: The Economic & Social cost of mental illness in Ireland [LINK](#)
- Irish Times: Mental Illness Exacerbated by Recession: [LINK](#)
- London School of Economics Layard lecture: Mental Health: The New Frontier....: [LINK](#)
- Using CBT to tackle work related stress [LINK](#):
- An extract from Dr Albert Ellis' book 'Executive Leadership: a rational approach: [LINK](#)
- CBTandFeelingGood testimonials: [LINK](#)
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www.CBTandFeelingGood.com

info@cbtandfeelinggood.com

Email: info@cbtandfeelinggood.com
Telephone: 086 8113031
Blog: www.iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com

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