

Cognitive Explanation of Depression



Learning objective:

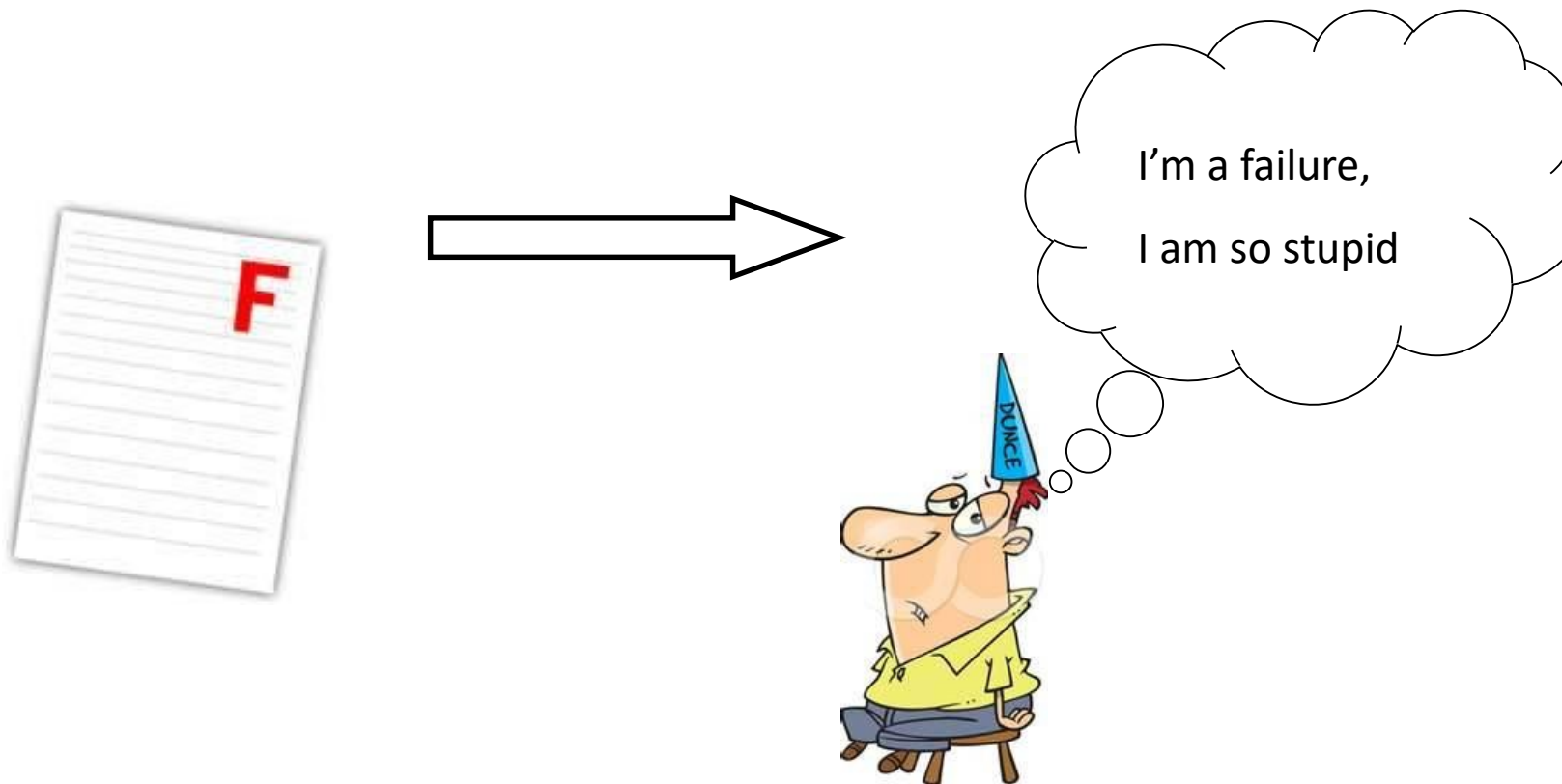
To outline and evaluate the strengths and limitations cognitive explanation of depression-
ABC model and Becks Negative Triads

Cognitive explanation

- Focuses on how our mental processes affect behaviour
- Cognitive process can affect a persons beliefs or expectations (schemas)
- Internal mental process can and should be investigated scientifically

Cognitive explanation of depression

It is the way you think about the problem rather than the problem itself which causes the abnormal behaviour.



Cognitive Explanation of Depression

Albert Ellis (1962)- ABC Model

Good mental health is a result of rational thinking
(happy and free from pain)

Poor mental health result from irrational thinking
(interfere with being happy and free from pain)

- ('A')- activation of the event/ whatever started things off:
a circumstance, event or experience - or just thinking about something which has happened.
- ('B')- belief about (A)
this triggers off thoughts
- ('C')- the consequence/ reaction/ behaviours triggered by these thoughts

Aaron Beck (1963)- Negative Schema, Faulty Thinking, The Negative triad



Evaluation: Ellis's ABC Model

Strength

It has a practical application. The ABC model has led to a successful therapy- CBT which challenges irrational beliefs. The effectiveness of CBT has been supported by Lipsky et al 1980. This supports and validates Ellis's theory that irrational beliefs cause depression. We can confidently offer CBT to patients who are suffering from depression as a standard treatment to deal with some of their symptoms.

Limitation

Some types of depression occur with no activating event- reactive depression. This means that Ellis's ABC model is only a partial explanation for depression. This limits our understanding what causes depression and suggests that further investigation and/ or alternative explanation for depression needs to be considered.

Additionally, Ellis's model does not explain all aspects/ behavioural characteristics of depression including anger, delusions and hallucinations. Again, this suggests the explanation is limited and further investigation and/ or an alternative explanation needs to be considered for use to fully understand the cause of depression.

Cognitive Explanation of Depression



Albert Ellis (1962)- ABC Model

Good mental health is a result of rational thinking (happy and free from pain)

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A persons cognition can create a vulnerability to depression

Faulty information processing

When depressed we tend to focus on negative aspects of a situation and ignore the positives

Negative self schemas

Schemas- knowledge packets of the world formed from our experiences

Self-schema- schemas about ourselves

Negative self-schema- interpreting information about ourselves in a negative way

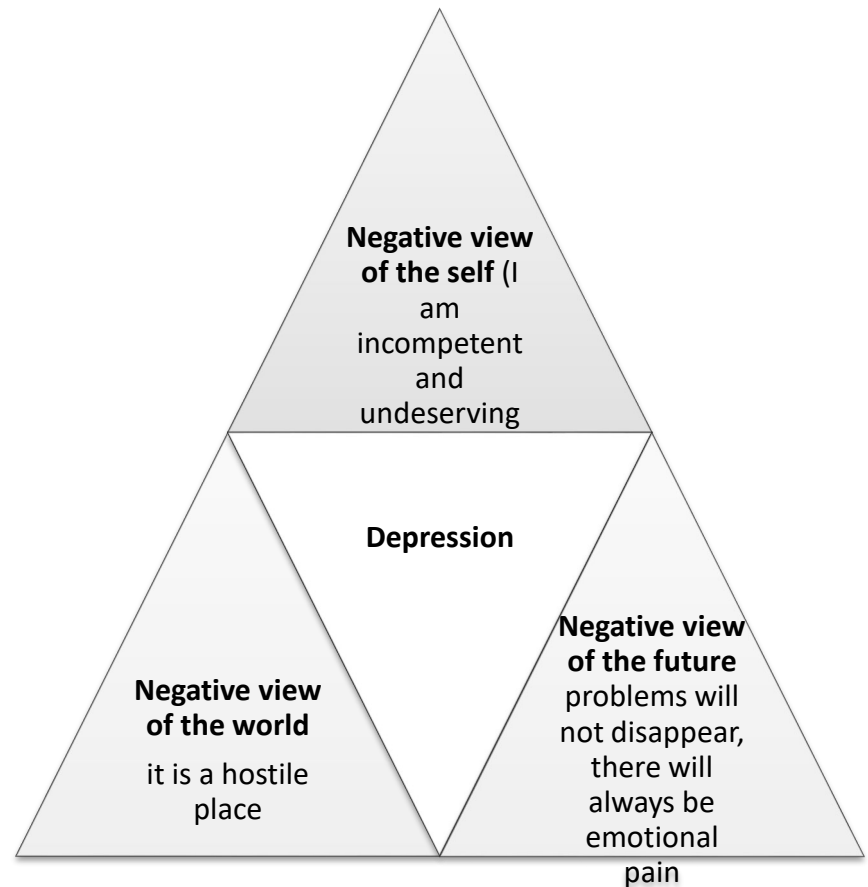
The negative triad

A person develops a dysfunctional view of themselves because of three types of negative thinking

Negative view of the world; negative view of the future; negative view of the self

Beck Cognitive theory of depression: Faulty information processing and The Negative Triad

Example of irrational thinking	Elaboration
Polarised thinking	Seeing everything black and white
Overgeneralisation	Sweeping generalisation from single events
Tyranny	'should', 'ought' and 'must'
Catastrophising	Making a mountain out of a molehill



Evaluation:

Beck Cognitive theory of depression:

Strength

Supporting evidence

Krantz (1976), depressed Ps made more errors in logic when asked to interpret written material compared to non- depressed Ps; **Bates et al (1999)** Depressed Ps who were given negative automatic thought statements became more and more depressed; **Reynolds & Salkovskis 1992** demonstrated the relationship between severity of depression and number of maladaptive cognitions (Beck); **Salkovskis 1992**

Found negative thinking higher in depression sufferers.

Validated Beck's theory and increases our confidence in his claims.

This furthers our understanding of what causes depression.

It has a practical application. Beck's theory has led to a successful therapy- REBT- CBT which challenges irrational beliefs.. This supports and validates Beck's theory that faulty information processing, negative self-schema and the negative triad cause depression. We can confidently offer CBT to patients who are suffering from depression as a standard treatment to deal with some of their symptoms.

Limitation

Additionally, Beck's model does not explain all aspects/ behavioural characteristics of depression including anger, delusions and hallucinations. Again, this suggests the explanation is limited and further investigation and/ or an alternative explanation needs to be considered for use to fully understand the cause of depression.

Alternative explanation- biological explanation suggests depression is caused by a chemical imbalances- too much dopamine/ too little serotonin is thought to lead to depression. This theory is supported by the effective use of drug therapy (antidepressants) to treat depression. This is a limitation of the cognitive explanation and suggests we can not solely rely on it has not considered other factors, including a patient's biology.

A03:

Cognitive explanation of depression

Limitation

1. Both Beck and Ellis's explanation for depression are limited as they fail to explain some symptoms of depression, including delusions

Cotard syndrome

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9DFXuTNfbM>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/what-is-cotards-syndrome-the-rare-mental-illness-which-makes-people-think-they-are-dead-a6722201.html>

2. Both theories are correlational not causal, they do not clarify whether faulty information thinking/irrational thoughts lead to depression or vice versa. This makes it difficult to confidently say these are the only factors which cause depression, it is possible that some individuals may have a biological vulnerability to depression, which both explanations have failed to take into account.

Homework

1. Consolidation cards: Beck and Ellis's explanation of depression

2. Research gender differences and depression:

www.WHO.int

3. Read and make notes on REBT:

<http://psychology.about.com/od/typesofpsychotherapy/a/rational-emotive-behavior-therapy.htm>