

Top Ten 2020 Skills Project

SKILL 7 – JUDGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING
Information Processing



7. Judgment and Decision Making

SKILL 7 – Judgement and Decision Making

Information Processing

**“The less I understood of
this farrago, the less I was in
a position to judge of its
importance.”**

Robert Louis Stevenson in *Dr.
Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*



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Overall objective:

- Understand the relevance of Information Processing to Judgment and Decision Making**

Specific objectives:

- Understand the Information Processing Theory**
- Understand the relevance of automatic thoughts**
- Understand the relevance of beliefs**



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Learning method

- You have to read all the slides carefully to understand the concepts addressed in the training pill.
- In the end, you have to complete an exercise in order to test your knowledge.



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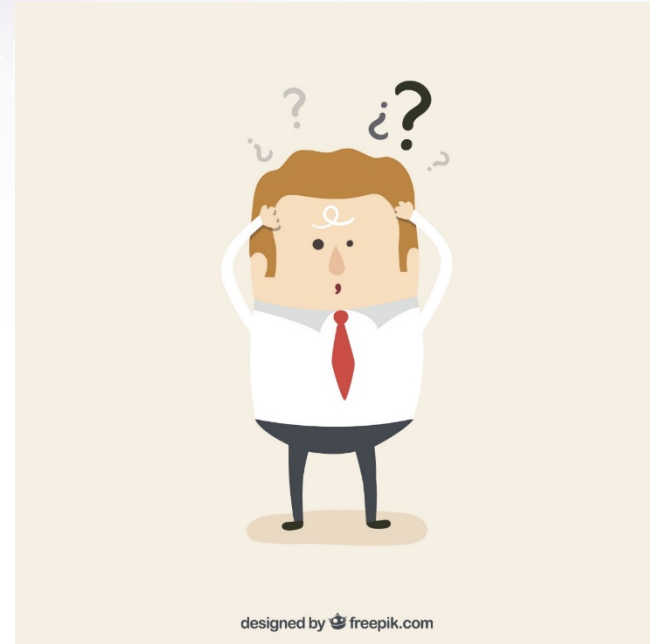


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Contents

- Information Process Theory
- Automatic Thoughts
- Core Beliefs
- Intermediate Beliefs
- 3 R's Technique



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People's emotions, behaviours, and physiology are affected by their perception of the situations⁽¹⁾.

People have pretty different emotional and behavioural responses to the same situation, due to what is on their minds at that moment⁽¹⁾.



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It is not the situation itself that determines how people will react, but rather the construction they will make of the situation → the automatic thoughts⁽¹⁾.

↓
Shapes: verbal, visual (images) or both⁽²⁾.



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The automatic thoughts do not result from deliberation or reasoning. They seem to emerge in a spontaneous way, as they are very fast, fleeting and brief. Usually, the individuals have no sense of these thoughts^(1,2).

It is more likely to be aware of the emotions or behaviours that follows those thoughts^(1,2).



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You can ask yourself:

What was just going through my mind when...

(1)

I noticed distressing changes in my body and/or mind.



I began to feel dysphoric.



I felt inclined to behave in a dysfunctional way (or to avoid behaving in an adaptive way).



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When the automatic thoughts are identified, it is possible, to a certain level, **examine the validity and utility of thought**^(1,2).

When unrealistic thoughts are subjected to a straightforward analysis, usually, the emotions, behaviour and physiological responses of the individual change⁽¹⁾.



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When you consider that your interpretation of an event does not make any sense and you change it to a more adaptive one, your mood will probably improve, you will behave in a more functional way and/or your physiological arousal will decrease⁽¹⁾.



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Beliefs

The individuals build **notions about themselves, others and their world** since their childhood^(1,4).

*“Their **core beliefs** are enduring understandings so fundamental and deep that they often do not articulate them, even to themselves. The person regards these ideas as **absolute truths**—just the way things “are”⁽¹⁾.”*



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When a core belief is expressed, **the individual interprets the event through the lens of his belief**, even though his interpretation may be, rationally, misleading⁽¹⁾.

The individual will tend to focus specifically on information that confirms his belief, disregarding the presence of data to the contrary⁽¹⁾.



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Consequently, his belief will be preserved, even though it may be misleading and inadequate⁽¹⁾.

It is important to highlight that **this form of processing the information occurs automatically**⁽¹⁾.



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Unrealistic thoughts, that deform reality, are emotionally distressing and **influence the individual's ability to reach their goals**⁽²⁾.

The most common type of automatic thought is somehow deformed and appears although objective evidences to the contrary⁽¹⁾.

Even though **automatic thoughts** seem to appear spontaneously, they **become frankly foreseeable once the individual's underlying core beliefs are distinguished**⁽²⁾.

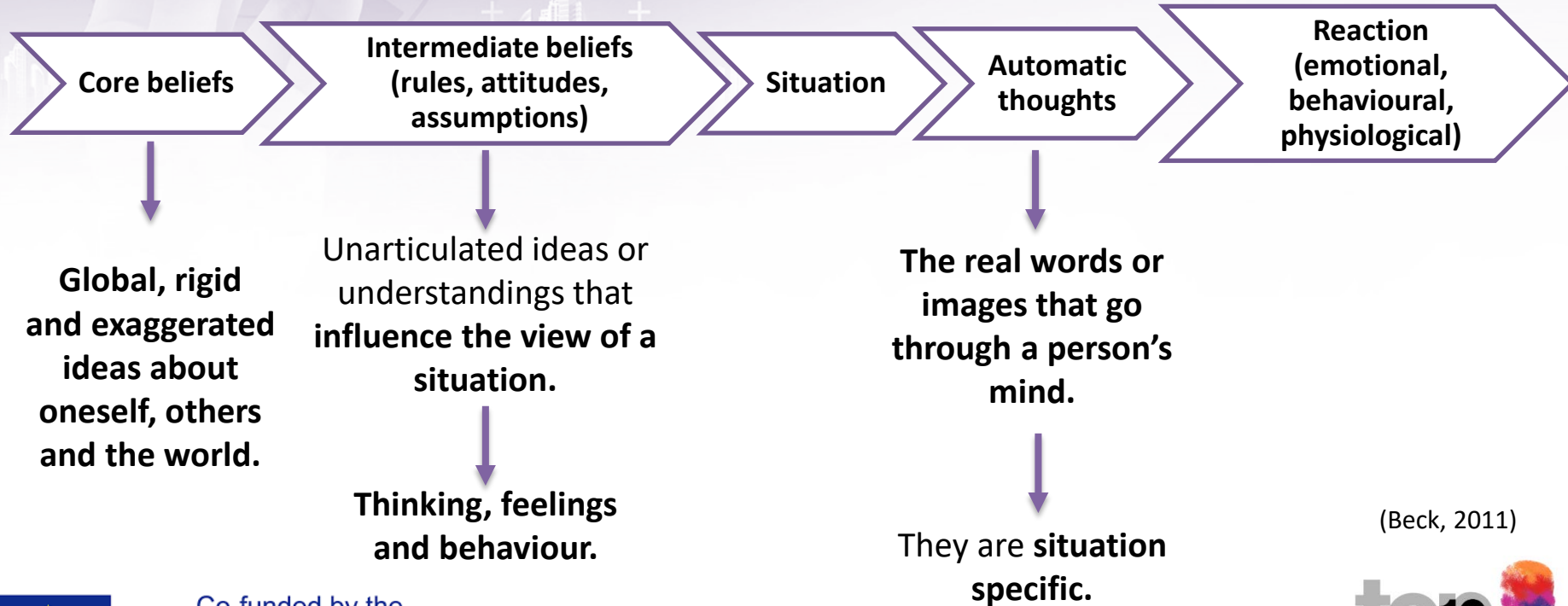


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(Beck, 2011)



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Intermediate beliefs



Acquired in early developmental stages⁽¹⁾.

Due to the interactions with the world and others, influenced by the genetic predisposition⁽¹⁾.

They **vary in accuracy and functionality** among individuals⁽¹⁾.



Unrealistic intermediate beliefs can be modifiable, as they are more malleable than core beliefs, **and more reality-based, functional and useful new beliefs can be developed and strengthened**^(1,3).

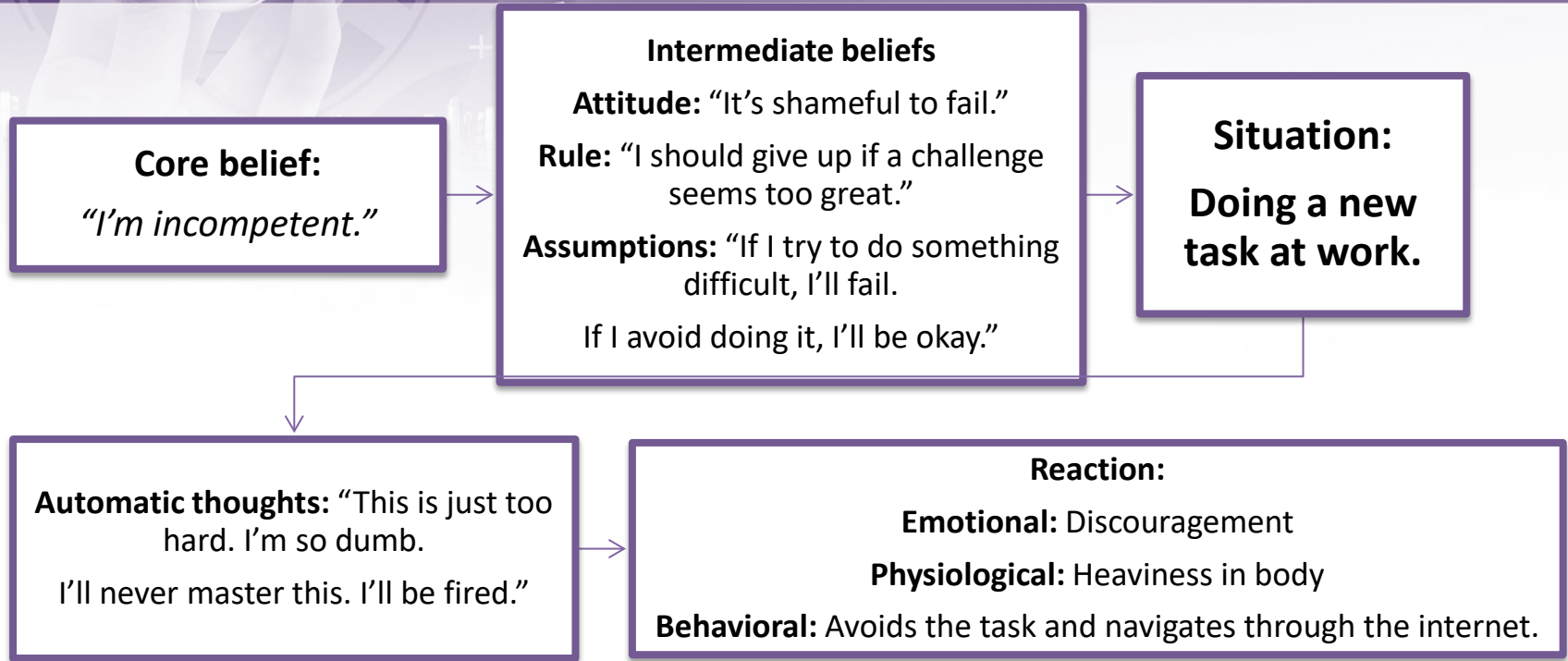


These changes help the individuals feel better and progress towards their goals, as they tend to perceive problems or future situations in a more constructive manner⁽¹⁾.



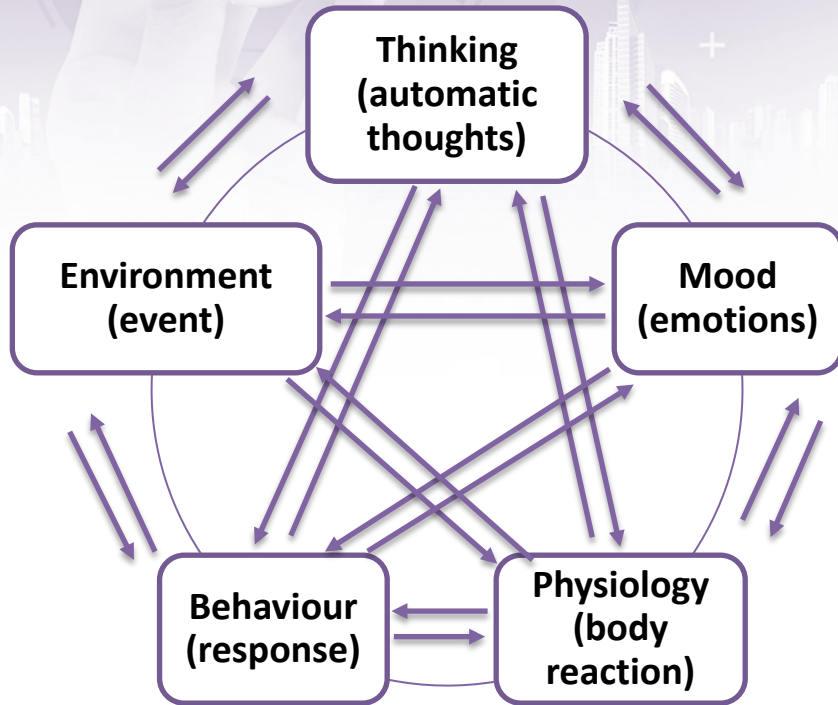
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Triggering situations can be⁽¹⁾:

- ✓ Discrete events
- ✓ A stream of thoughts
- ✓ A memory
- ✓ An image
- ✓ An emotion
- ✓ A behaviour
- ✓ A physiological or mental experience



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This process and the **automatic thoughts** are not specific of individuals with psychological distress. **We all have them**, although, most of the time, we are barely aware. However, **with practice, we can bring these thoughts into consciousness**(2).

It should be noted that individuals who are in distress may not reach this kind of critical examination(2).

For most individuals, **it is possible to identify and evaluate the validity and/or utility of their thoughts, and then develop adaptive responses, in order to promote a positive change in humour, physiology and behaviour**(2).



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People who got caught in cycles of negative and distorted Automatic Thinking can become clinically⁽⁵⁾:

- Depressed⁽⁵⁾;
- Self-critical⁽⁵⁾;
- Less successful in their work and personal lives⁽⁵⁾.



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3 R's exercise to keep the Automatic Thoughts in check⁽⁵⁾:

1. Record the upsetting event: describe the event in a journal and record it in detail⁽⁵⁾.

2. Rationalise it by addressing the Automatic Thought: think about the Automatic Thought associated with the event⁽⁵⁾.

3. Replace the irrational Automatic Thought with a rational one⁽⁵⁾.



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Examples of categories of distorted Automatic Thoughts⁽⁶⁾:

Mind Reading

“He thinks I’m a loser.”

Assuming what other people are thinking without having sufficient evidence of their thoughts⁽⁶⁾.

Shoulds

“I should do well on this job. If I don’t, then I’m a failure.”

Interpreting events based on how things should be rather than on what they are⁽⁶⁾.



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Examples of categories of distorted Automatic Thoughts⁽⁶⁾:

Catastrophizing

“It would be terrible if I failed.”

Believing that what has happened or will happen will be so tragic and unbearable that you would not be able to cope with it⁽⁶⁾.

Overgeneralizing

“This generally happens to me. I seem to fail at a lot of things.”

Perceiving a common pattern of negatives according to a single negative episode⁽⁶⁾.



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Example₍₅₎:

Record	Rationalise	Replace*
“I always do poorly on every assignment.”	Overgeneralizing	“I did well on other assignments!”

* You can try to imagine what you would say to a friend if he was struggling with an Automatic Thought, and say it to yourself₍₅₎.



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Exercises

Choose the most suitable answer:

1. The individuals have different emotional and behavioural responses due to:

- the construction/perception they make/have of the situation;
- the situation itself that determines how they will react;
- only their feelings.

2. The automatic thoughts:

- result from deliberation and reasoning;
- are very fast, fleeting and brief;
- are not associated with switches in humour, behaviour and/or physiology.



Exercises

Choose the most suitable answer:

3. The information is usually processed in the following sequence:

- a. situation; core beliefs; intermediate beliefs; reaction; automatic thoughts;
- b. core beliefs, intermediate beliefs; situation; automatic thoughts; reaction;
- c. situation; reaction; automatic thoughts; intermediate beliefs; core beliefs.

4. The automatic thoughts:

- a. can be unrealistic and can influence the individual's ability to reach their goals;
- b. cannot be foreseeable and/or identified, as they occur automatically;
- c. are not specific to the events.



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Exercises

Choose the most suitable answer:

5. Regarding the beliefs, the individuals:

- a. face them as absolute truths;
- b. tend to avoid information that confirms their beliefs;
- c. build them in the adulthood.

6. The intermediate beliefs:

- a. are usually the same among individuals, as they do not vary in content, accuracy and functionality;
- b. cannot be replaced by new beliefs, as they are acquired in early developmental stages;
- c. can influence the feelings of the individual and his progress towards his goals.



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Exercises

Choose the most suitable answer:

7. When the information received is processed:

- a. usually the individuals do not interpret the situation through the lens of their beliefs, because they know that their interpretations may be misleading;
- b. usually the individuals are more aware of the emotions and/or behaviours they have than the prior automatic thoughts;
- c. that process does not occur in an automatic way.



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Exercises

Choose the most suitable answer:

8. Regarding the automatic thoughts:

- a. they are specific of individuals with psychological distress;
- b. it is possible to identify and evaluate their validity and then develop adaptative responses;
- c. it is not possible to bring them into consciousness.



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Exercises

Choose the most suitable answer:

- 9. When unrealistic thoughts are subjected to a direct analysis, generally:**
- a. the individual's emotions, behaviour and physiological responses change;
 - b. the individuals realise that it is impossible to change them to others more adaptative and functional, because they are deep-rooted;
 - c. the emotions do not change, because they are not connected to the content of the automatic thoughts.



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Exercises

Choose the most suitable answer:

10. To keep your automatic thoughts regulated, you should:

- a. rationalise the upsetting events by addressing each irrational thought; replace your irrational automatic thought by a rational one; record the upsetting events;
- b. rationalise the upsetting events by addressing each irrational thought; record the upsetting events; replace your irrational automatic thought by a rational one;
- c. record the upsetting events; rationalise them by addressing each irrational thought; replace your irrational automatic thought by a rational one.



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