

Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Treating Adults with AD/HD

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Best References

- ***The Adult ADHD Toolkit.*** J.R. Ramsay & A. L. Rostain. New York: Routledge Press, 2015
- ***Cognitive- Behavioral Therapy for Adult ADHD 2nd ed).*** J. R. Ramsey & A. L. Rostain. New York: Routledge Press, 2015.
- ***Mastering Your Adult ADHD: A Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment Program.*** Steven Safren, Susan Sprich, Carol Perlman & Michael Otto. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

What Is CBT?

- **An approach to therapy that helps people achieve their goals by changing faulty thinking and problem behaviors**
- **Faulty thinking --- Anger, Depression**
- **Anger/ Depression --- problem behavior**

What is CBT?

- **If we change our faulty thinking, we will change anger & depression, making it possible for us to experiment with new behaviors for coping with AD/HD.**
- **We then can learn to embrace tools for follow-through, time management, organization, interpersonal relations, & intimate relationship improvement**

But wait a minute.....

- **AD/HD is not caused by faulty thinking**
- **It is caused by neurobiology & genetics**
- **But, the experience of going through life with AD/HD, often undiagnosed, leads to faulty thinking that keeps us from dealing with AD/HD properly**

Optorectomytis- most
common comorbid
condition to AD/HD

Optorectomytis

- **When the nerve endings in your eyes get crossed with the nerve endings in your rectum**
- **Gives you a bad outlook on life**

ADHD Faulty Thinking

- **I have plenty of time left.**
- **I will just do one more thing before leaving**
- **Since I can't get organized, why bother**
- **My spouse/ boss/ etc. is responsible for this. It is not my fault.**
- **I don't need any calendars, planners, etc. I will just remember what to do**
- **Life owes me everything without work**

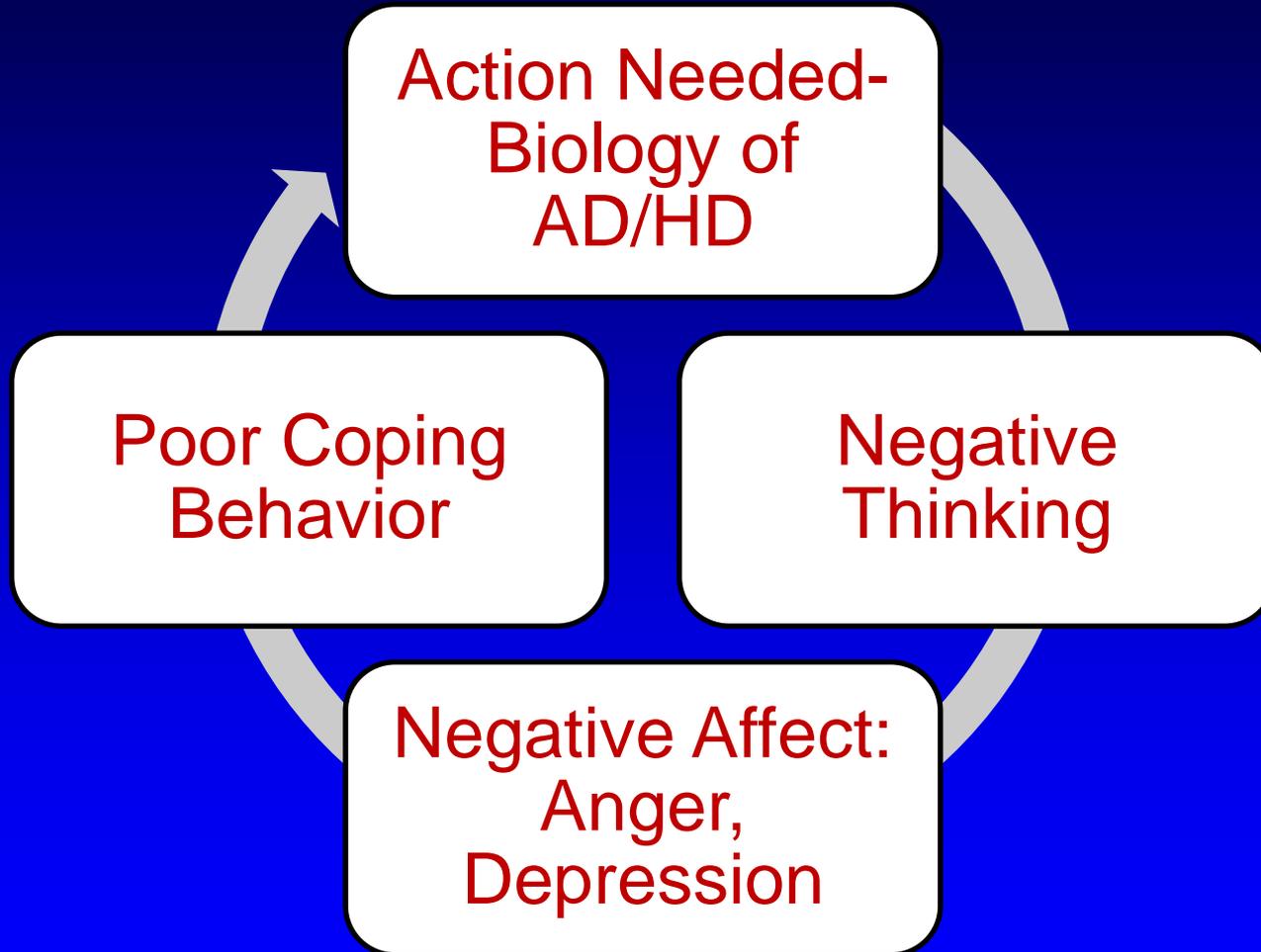
CBT Neurobiological Model

- **Core neurobiological impairments contribute to extreme negative thinking**
- **Negative thinking leads to negative feelings (anger, frustration, depression, hopelessness)**

CBT Neurobiological Model

- **Negative feeling fuels ineffective coping**
- **This becomes a vicious cycle**

CBT Neurobiological Model



Who Needs CBT?

Peter is overwhelmed in his new position as a plant manager for a Ford assembly plant. Union reps, workers, suppliers, managers- they are asking him to do stuff all day. He is never getting it done & his boss is on his case. At home are many unfinished projects, a screaming 8 year old son with ADHD, & an angry wife threatening divorce. His follow through stinks! This is all so, so depressing.

Peter 2

Life has always been like this. First, he struggled to make it through school, with his parents always on his case. Then, he struggled in college, dropping out & working his way up the job ladder at Ford. He always knew he was different, but he never understand how. Life never gives him a break. After his son was diagnosed with AD/HD, he knew he had it too. ***His wife said- see the Doc or hit the road!***

Peter 3

He saw the Doc. Now that he has a diagnosis & some meds, *what does he do next to change a lifetime of negativity?*

ADHD as a Neurobiological Executive Function Problem

- **Executive Functions:**
 1. **initiating tasks**
 2. **sustaining attention and effort**
 3. **thinking before acting**
 4. **planning**
 5. **working memory**
 6. **managing feelings**
- **EF impairment = failure to listen, follow through, remember priorities, pay attention to partner, etc.**

Peter



Principles of Behavior Change

- **Select a target behavior for change**
- **Break it down into small steps**
- **Put the steps on your calendar- phone or paper**
- **Set alarms to remind you to do steps**
- **Set positive incentives**
- **Incorporate fun, humor**

Cognitive Restructuring

- **Identify the extreme thought**
- **Provide a logical challenge**
- **Identify a more reasonable thought**
- **Experiment to see which belief fits the situation**
- **Disconfirm the extreme thought**

Peter Selects Target Behaviors

- **Combat optorectomytis**
- **Prioritize tasks at work, given multiple inputs**
- **Complete tasks by deadlines**
- **With his wife, prioritize household tasks & establish time line to finish**
- **Complete tasks by deadlines**
- **Romance his wife properly**

Peter Manages Time

- **Problem: too many inputs coming his way from all kinds of people at the plant.**
- **He has his regular job duties plus dealing with all these requests.**
- **How to balance it out, get his regular duties done, & put out everyone's fires.**

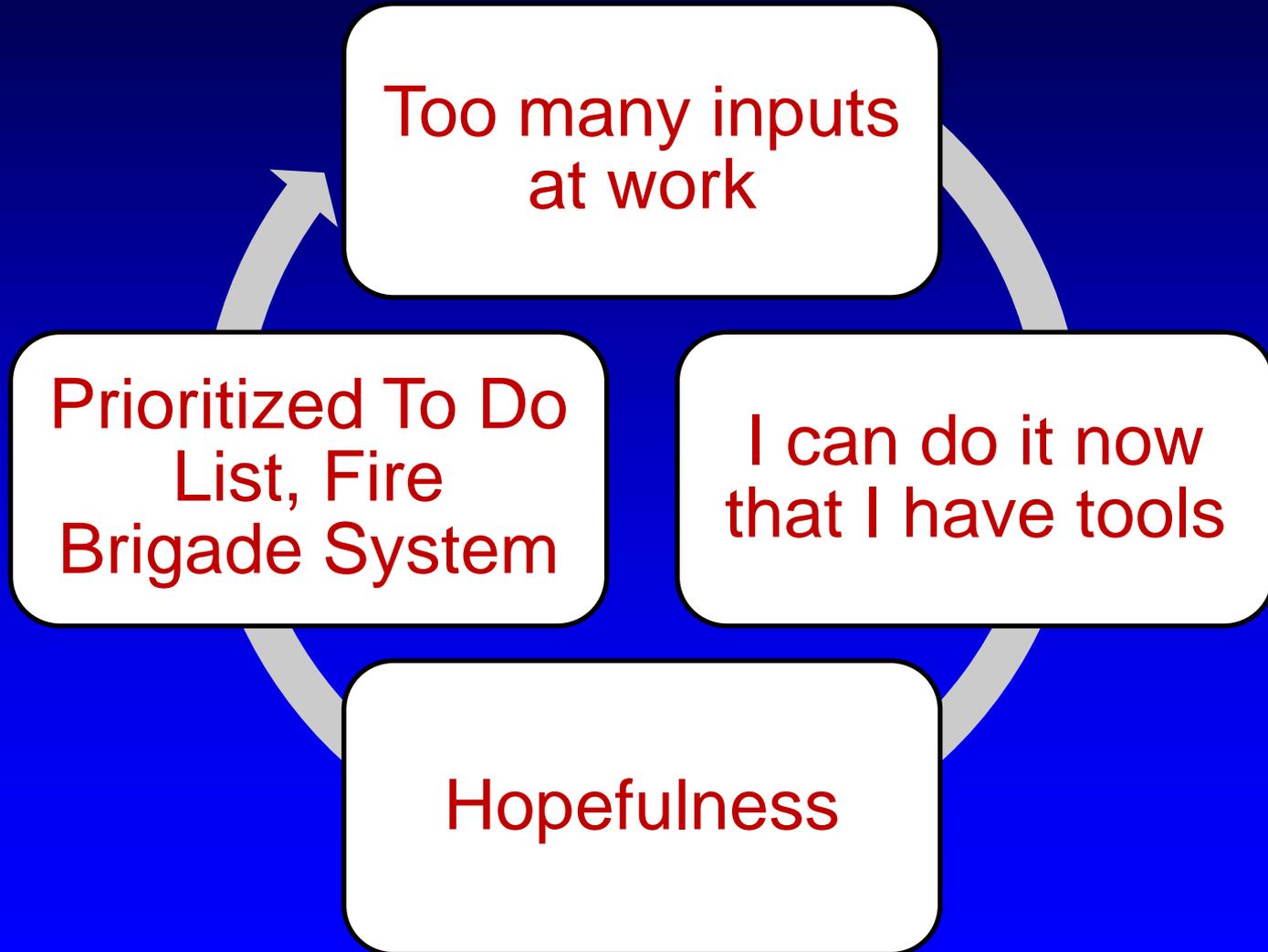
Peter's New Routines

- **Make next day's To Do list the night before**
- **Review & prioritize To Do list upon arriving at the plant with AM coffee**
- **Establish estimated times in work day to complete high priority tasks**
- **Go through day working through To Do list, checking off each item**

Interference Control

- **Establish routine for “fire brigade”**
- **Set up E mail address just for such requests**
- **Ask people to send you such requests by E mail**
- **If still done in person, digitally record the request & listen, putting on To Do List**

Peter



Cognitions

- **Thought** about a situation
- **Thought** is a reflection of a **Core Belief**
- **Logical errors** pervade **thoughts** and **core beliefs**
- **Thought & core belief** follow from our “worldview,” also called **Schema**.

Logical Errors

- **We make logical errors in reasoning with our thoughts & core beliefs**
- **These errors predispose us to negative feelings & inappropriate behavior**
- **We need to identify and correct these logical errors**

Logical Errors 2

- **All or none thinking-** my life will always be a disaster, so why bother fixing it
- **Overgeneralization-** just because I blew it in 1 relationship, I will never get married
- **Jump to conclusions-** my wife yelled at me today. I can't do anything right.cdd
- **Catastrophizing-** I have always failed at work, so I will definitely get fired
- **Should statements-** I should always do things on time, even though I have AD/HD

Logical Errors 3

- **Minimization-** “No problem. I can get it done in 5 minutes.”
- **Emotional Reasoning-** “I feel like a jerk; therefore, I must be a jerk.”

Core Beliefs

- Life situations activate **core beliefs**
- Peter's letting down his boss & wife activates this belief:
- **“I have not met expectations. I have always failed & will always fail at what I set out to do.”**
- AD/HD has always contributed to failing to meet others' expectations
- Continued failure reinforces his belief

Examples of Your Logical Errors

- **All or none thinking-**
-
- **Overgeneralization-**
- **Jump to conclusions-**
- **Catastrophizing-**
- **Should statements-**

World Views: Schemas

- Cognitive structures or mental categories for making sense of our life
- Core beliefs are specific expressions of schemas.
- Core belief: ***I have always failed & will always fail at what I set out to do.***”
- Schema: ***Failure***
- Schema is a broad category under which fall more specific beliefs

Who else needs CBT?

Alice is a 29 year old, single bubbly social butterfly with lots of friends. She loves to party & date “hot” guys. Her apartment is a wreck, her bills are overdue, she lost her last 3 cell phones & she has 15 parking tickets. As an airline stewardess, her social skills serve her well, as long as she does not have to remember much. She charms her way through life, but feels like a fraud inside.

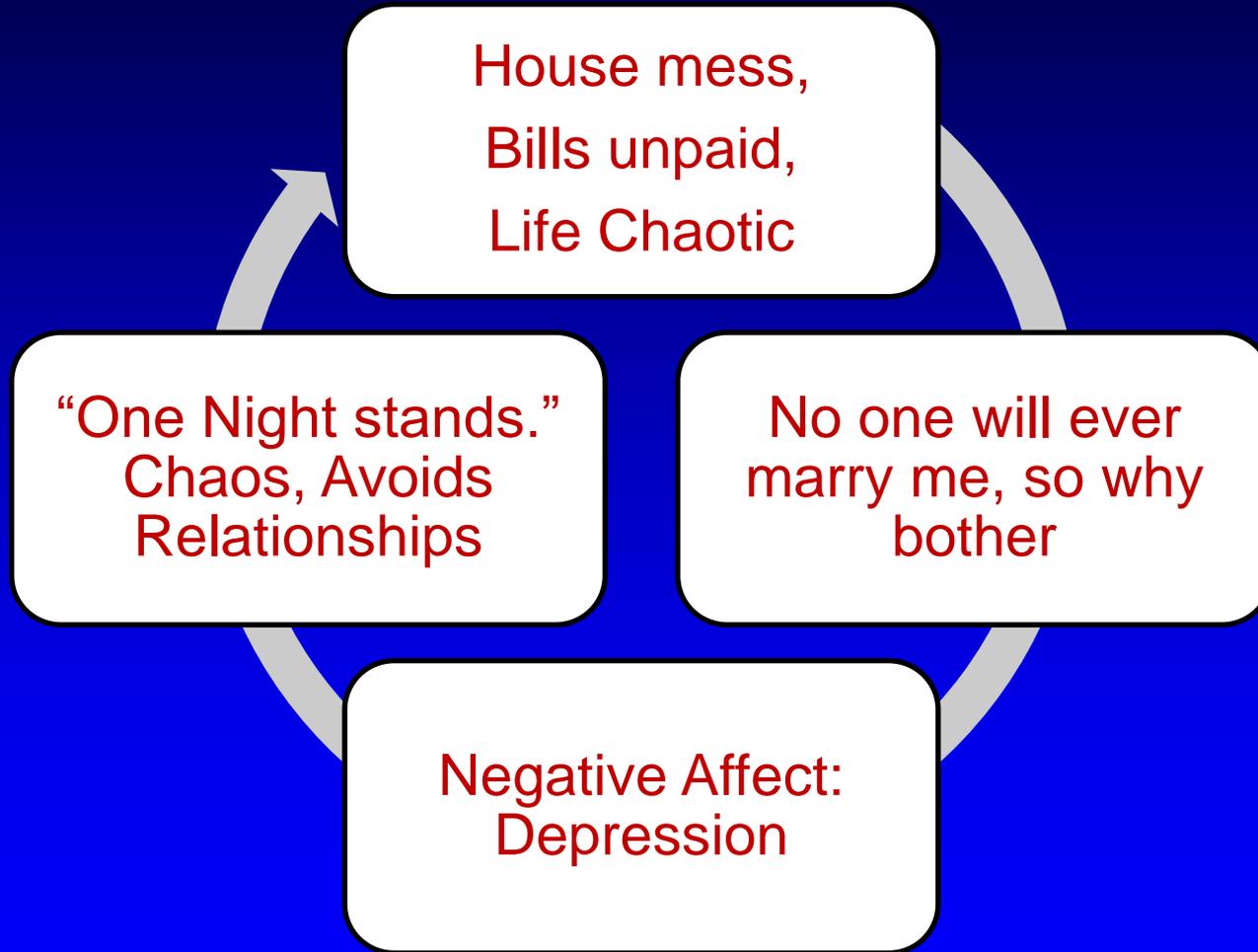
Alice 2

Alice is hoping to meet “Mr. Right,” get married, & “settle down.” But she can’t maintain relationships. When the lust wears off, she gets bored & dumps the guy. ***10 boyfriends in 60 days in 10 countries- her record!*** School was the only thing that bored her more than staying with 1 guy. How do her friends do it? Then, one day, she saw Sari Solden being interviewed on TV about her book, ***Women***

Alice 3

with Attention Deficit Disorder. Sari talked about how women with AD/HD appear outwardly successful, but inside they feel like failures. Alice knew that this was her. Between flights to London & Paris, she called 20 psychologists to find one who could see her the next day & got an AD/HD diagnosis & meds. ***Now, she has the diagnosis & meds, what next?***

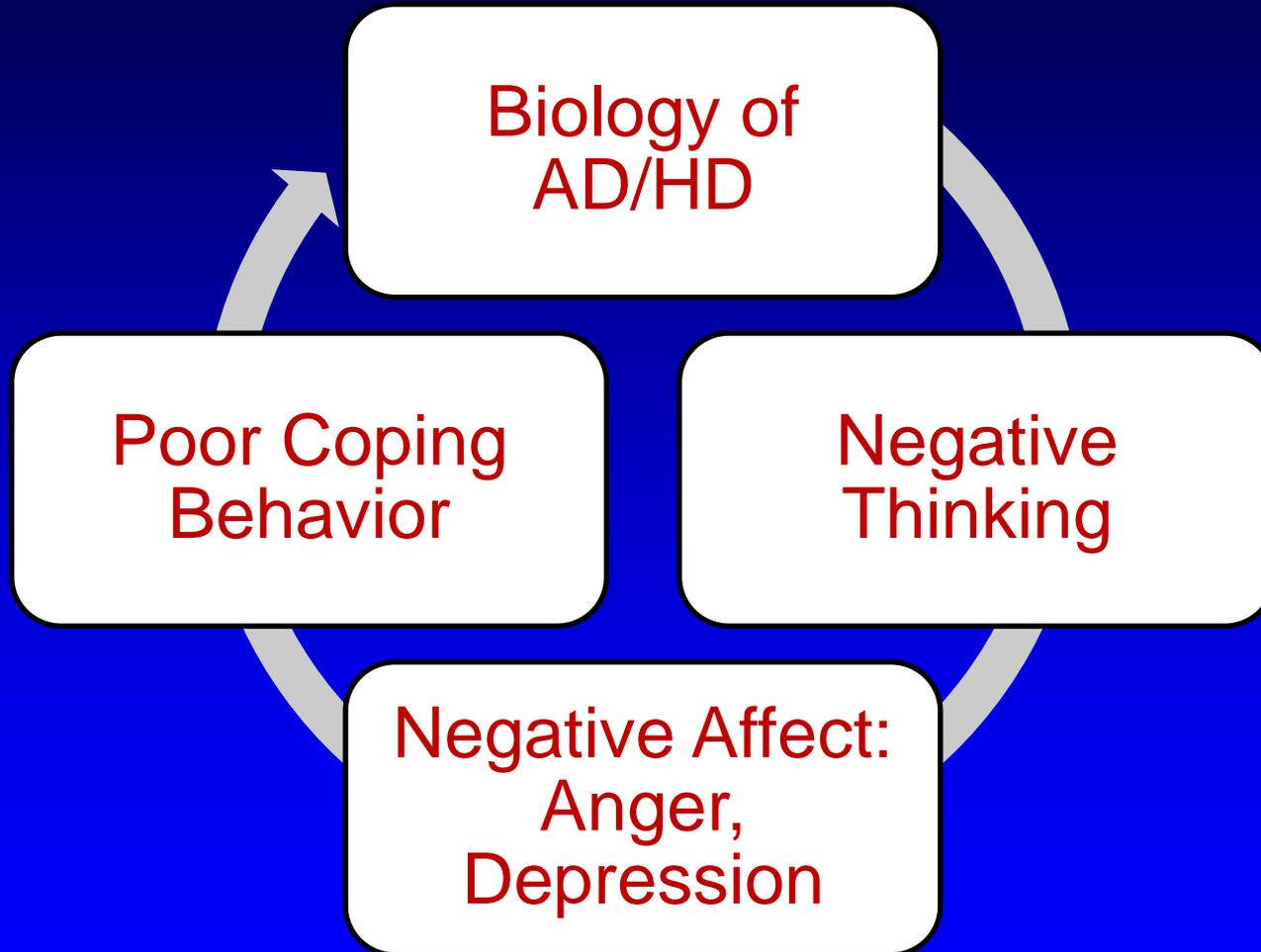
Alice



Alice's Schemas, Beliefs

Schema	Core Belief
Instability	My life is & will always be chaotic and in turmoil. I might as well party & have one-night stands with guys- at least it's fun
Incompetence	I am too inept to handle the basic demands of life. I can't risk having a guy see this. I won't get close to any guys- they will see my incompetence.
Failure	I always fail & always will. Why bother? I can't sustain a relationship anyway.

What Is Your Example?



Challenge Illogical Thinking

- **What is the evidence that this thought is true?**
- **Is there an alternative explanation?**
- **What is the worst thing that can happen?**
- **Am I worrying too much about this?**
- **Has this situation unreasonably grown in importance?**

Challenge 2

- **Have I done what I could to control it?**
- **What would a good friend say about this?**
- **Why is this statement a logical thinking error?**
- **Am I going to attain my goal thinking this way?**

Changing Core Beliefs

- **Gradually, we help adults with AD/HD to change their core beliefs in adaptive directions**
- **Conduct experiments to test out their maladaptive core beliefs**
- **See that they are wrong**
- ***Thought records are 1 way to do this***

Cognitive Distortion: “Should Statements”

- 1. Event:** Janet can't find her keys (again).
- 2. Thought:** “I *should* be able to find my *&%^! keys.”
- 3. Cognitive Schema:** Failure
- 4. Feeling:** Indignation; frustration; stupidity.
- 5. Poor Coping:** Spends 20 minutes hunting, getting very irritated. Is late to work.

Janet does not know she has ADHD. Thus, she has no frame of reference. The “should statement” stops her from pursuing a practical solution, e.g. hammering a nail into the wall. She doesn't know why other people can find their keys. Once she is diagnosed, she can revise her automatic thought and pursue better strategies.

Famous Last Words:

“I have plenty of time. I’ll do it later...”

Event: Bill needs to clear the deck for a party. He puts it off for 2 weeks until the night before the party.

Thoughts: “It will only take 1 hour. Why miss all the football games on TV when I can do it later?”

Cognitive Schema: Procrastination

Feeling: False confidence. At last minute- panic.

Poor Coping: He underestimates the time he needs. Alice reminds him several times, and he finally does it the night before the party, staying up all night. Alice is furious! He thinks she is just being a nag, totally missing his own procrastination and unrealistic mindset.

Couple's Cognitive Distortions

Partner of Adult with ADHD:

- 1. Event: Adult with ADHD maxed out credit card.**
- 2. Thought: "My partner does not care enough about me to stop doing this."**
- 3. Feeling: Hurt, anger; frustration; unloved**
- 4. Behavior: Criticize the partner and pull away.**

Adult with ADHD:

- 1. Event: Partner criticizes for maxing out credit card.**
- 2. Thought: "My partner is so rigid and controlling."**
- 3. Feeling: Anger and frustration**
- 4. Behavior: Defensive retort to criticism and pulls away.**

“My partner does not care enough about me to stop doing this.”

- **What is the evidence that this is true?** None, really. Just evidence that my partner spends too much impulsively. Spends without thinking.
- **Is this a cognitive distortion?** Yes, it may be an example of jumping to conclusions and /or overgeneralization. “ A spending spree does not mean he does not love me.”
- **Is there another way to think about this?** Yes, my partner’s having an AD/HD moment. S/he must take responsibility and develop an improvement plan, but it’s not about love or caring, more about “taming biology.”

“My partner is so rigid and controlling”

- **What is the evidence that this is true?** None, really. It’s not quibbling over pennies, it’s a whole lot of money I spent “out of control.”
- **Is this a cognitive distortion?** Yes, it may be an example of jumping to conclusions and /or overgeneralization. After all, someone has to “reel me in.” My partner usually goes along with reasonable things I do.
- **Is there another way to think about this?** Yes, I am having an AD/HD moment, to which my partner is naturally reacting. I need to take responsibility for my spending and enlist my partner in helping me.

Identify: The Thought Record

Time, Situation	Faulty Thought	Mood, 1-100 Intensity
At home, thinking about doing taxes	This is going to be so much work	Overwhelmed, 80
	I'm never going to finish them	Anxious, 70
	I'm never going to find everything I need	Frustrated, 80
	I am doing to get audited	
	I am going to end up having to pay so much money	

Challenge: Thought Record

Situation	Thought	Feeling	Thinking Error	Rational Response
Left taxes to last minute	I am a jerk & total loser	Depressed Hopeless	All or none thinking Jump to conclusion	This is a real problem, but I can work on it
Forgot to pick up dry cleaning	My wife will be very angry with me	Anxiety	Jump to conclusion Think the worst	She will be annoyed but not ballistic
Forget lunch meeting	I'm a dumb idiot	Depressed	Generalize too much	How can I avoid it in the future?

***Any Examples of
Successfully
Challenging Negative
Thinking?***

Cognitions & Behavior: Hand in Hand

- **Sometimes changes in behavior are necessary to disprove faulty core beliefs & change schema**
- **Take Alice, who “gets bored” with guys after 1 night stands & is afraid she never will have a lasting relationship**
- **Therapist brought up the possibility that she was afraid to let down her guard & get close to a guy because she thought the**

Beliefs & Behavior 2

the guy would see how inadequate she really was & reject her.

- Getting the AD/HD diagnosis & seeing that medication helped her focus, pay her bills on time, organize her apartment, etc., challenged this core belief.**
- She was more willing to risk dating a guy for a while rather than dumping him**
- Guys responded well. Beliefs changed.**

Behavior Change

- **Organization & Planning**
- **Reducing Distractibility**
- **Procrastination**
- **Relationship Skills**
- **Significant other invited to participate in some sessions**

Behavior Change

- ✓ **Use memory-management tools: alarms on devices, e-mail reminders, placing items in plain sight, sticky notes, etc.**
- ✓ **Use a calendar/ planner with To-Do lists. Update as a couple. Electronic or paper and pencil- whatever works**
- ✓ **Always carry your calendar/ planner**
- ✓ **Establish a daily routine for the mail. Divide into “money papers” versus everything else. Deal with “money papers” on the spot.”**
- ✓ **Establish daily check in times and weekly calendar checks with your partner**
- ✓ **Agree that your partner will call or page you as a reminder on certain occasions.**
- ✓ **Break big tasks into chunks; schedule each. If you need help doing this, ask your partner**
- ✓ **De-clutter the home. Streamline. Label.**

Tools: Organization & Planning

- **Calendar for managing appointments**
- **Notebook for recording To Do lists**
- **Use of “A” “B” “C” priority ratings**
- **Problem solving when overwhelmed**
- **Breaking large tasks into small steps**
- **Routines for sorting the mail, filing**

Organization & Planning 1

- **Calendar and notebook- electronic/ paper & pencil.**
- **It is absolutely essential**
- **Foundation of being organized**
- **Necessary but not sufficient**
- **Have you tried these in the past and they did not work? Ever used cell phone?**
- **Time to correct some faulty beliefs.**
- ***Tell me all your negative thoughts about calendars & notebooks***

Calendar & Notebook 2

- ***Let's challenge those negative thoughts***
- **Calendar & Notebook replace all pieces of paper.**
- **Phone messages get logged into notebook as a to-do item**
- **All appointments go in the calendar**

Involvement of Spouse

- Invite spouse to therapy sessions
- Review impact of ADHD on relationship
- Enlist support of spouse in carrying out therapy tasks, e.g. calendar/notebook for now, others later
- Enlist spouse to praise patient for coping responses

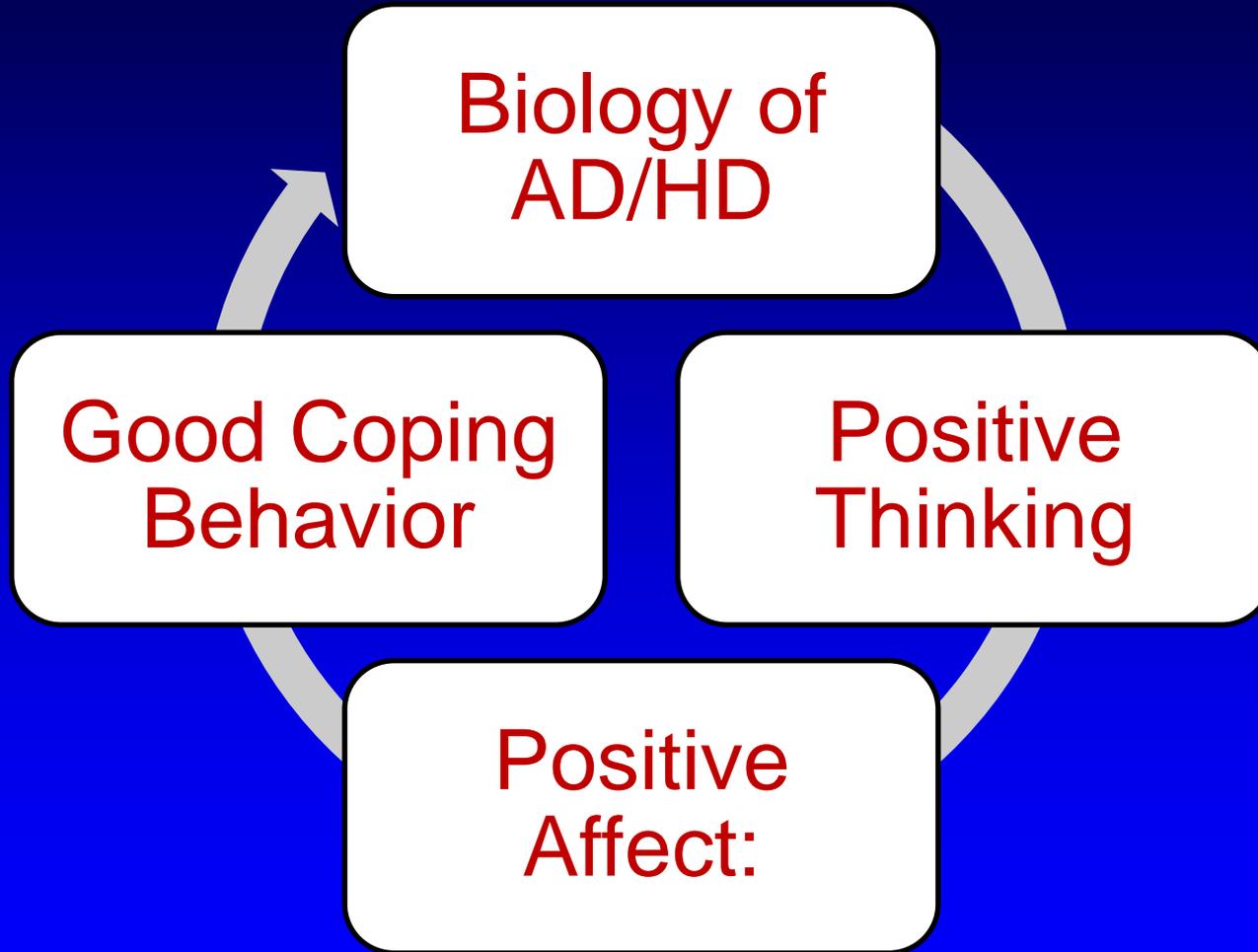
Organizing Multiple Tasks

- **We often have to manage multiple tasks**
- **We may complete the easier, more enjoyable tasks first**
- **Ex: Check the E mail instead of doing paperwork**
- **We feel like we accomplished something, but don't get done important things**

Multiple Tasks 2

- **Add priority ratings to your To Do list**
- **“A” tasks- highest importance. Do today.**
- **“B” tasks- moderate importance. Do within the next few days**
- **“C” tasks- least important, more attractive, easier. Do after As and Bs have been completed.**

What Is Your Example?



Break Down Tasks

- **Choose a complex task from your To Do List**
- **Write out a list of the steps to complete it**
- **Schedule yourself in your calendar to do each step**
- **Build in rewards for effort & completion**

Steps to Clear The Basement

- Divide basement into 4 areas**
- Buy plastic storage bins & garbage bags**
- Label bins for items to keep in each area**
- Label trash bags for “Give to Charity.” Keep others for garbage**
- Schedule 2 hours per area**

Basement 2

- **Work on area at designated time**
- **Arrange for wife to praise you for effort**
- **Treat yourself and your spouse to dinner out after completing each area**

Routine for the Mail/ Bills

- **OHIO** (not the state)- Only Handle It Once
- Pick a place for your Mail Center
- Get 2 baskets or trays
- Label one “Money Papers” & the other “All Other Mail”
- Keep all your bill paying supplies (checkbook, stamps, envelopes nearby)

Mail/ Bills 2

- **Daily, sort mail into Money vs. Other Papers**
- **Identify 5 times in the week to deal with the mail**
- **Assign 3 of them to Money Mail and 2 to Other Mail**
- **Put them in your calendar**

Mail/ Bills 2

- **On Bill Days, read the Money Mail, pay bills, make phone calls, etc.**
- **On Other Mail days, read the other mail, trash it, file it, make phone calls, etc.**
- ***Coordinate this with your spouse so you can work as a team on mail/ bills***

Cultivate Romance

Even as you establish new ways of working together, *remember to have some fun.*

Create atmosphere: flowers, candlelight dinners, loving notes, etc.

Remember anniversaries, birthdays: program into PDA, other reminder devices.

For more ideas on cultivating romance, Jonathan Halverstadt's book, *ADD and Romance.*