

Key Strategies Training for Psychotherapy Students:

Lesson 8

Using a Multidimensional Survey to Choose a Focal Dimension

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KST Lesson Plan

1. Parallel Strategies for Exploration and Change
2. Exploring Thoughts: COG-1 – COG-4
3. Changing Thoughts: COG-5 – COG-8
4. Exploring Actions: BHV-1 – BHV-4
5. Changing Actions: BHV-5 – BHV-8
6. Exploring Feelings: EFT-1 – EFT-4
7. Changing Feelings: EFT-5 – EFT-8
- 8. Multidimensional Survey**

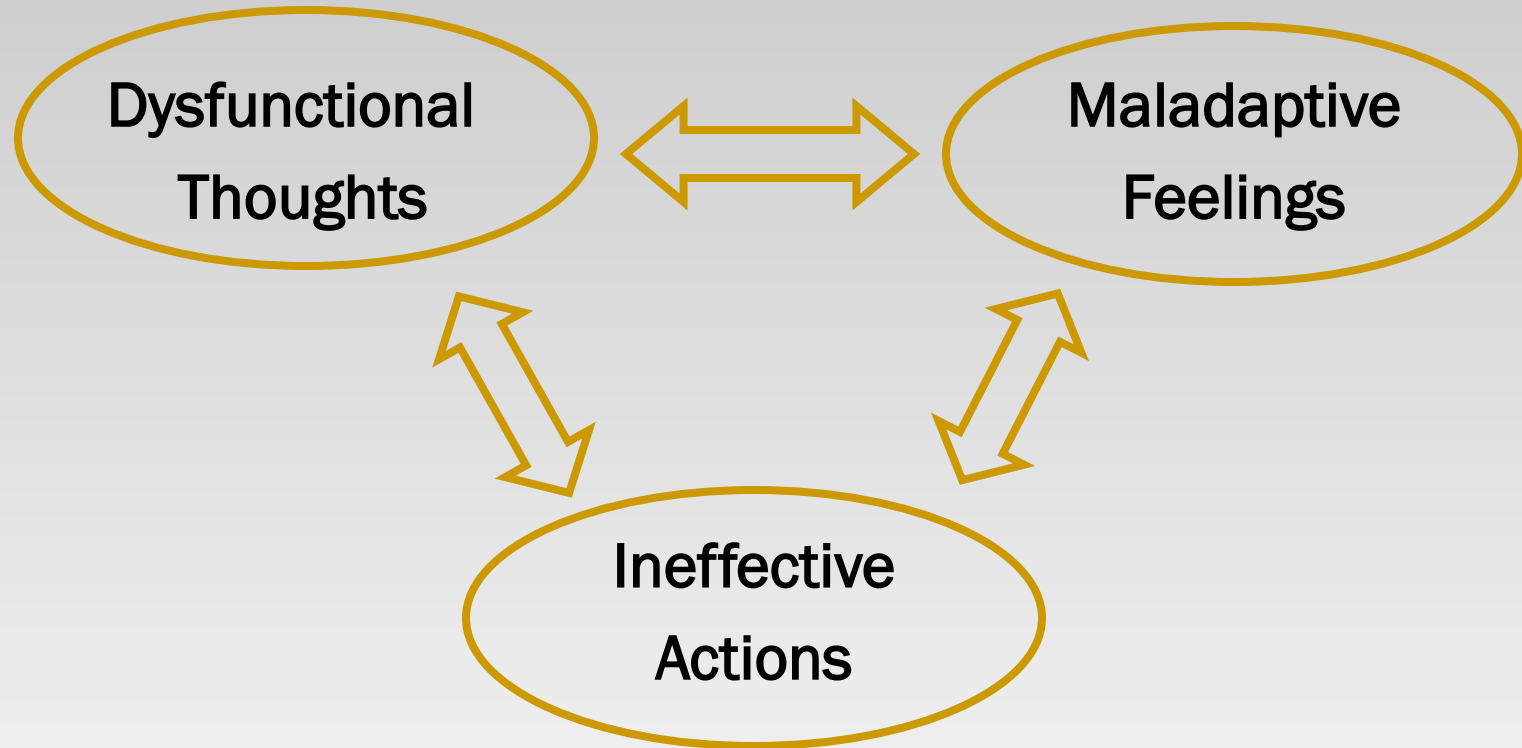
What are Thoughts, Actions, and Feelings?

Thoughts or beliefs are cognitive processes that help people perceive, interpret, and assign meaning

Actions are observable behaviors that involve the brain's control of motor activity

Feelings or emotions are affective responses that may be associated with physical sensations

Maladaptive thoughts, actions, and feelings are highly interactive



Maladaptive Interactions

Maladaptive Feelings like hopelessness are often associated with...

Dysfunctional Thoughts like “I’m a loser; no one would want to date me,” and...

Ineffective Actions like social isolation and withdrawal.

Adaptive Interactions

Adaptive Feelings—like hope and a desire to overcome loneliness—are more likely to be associated with...

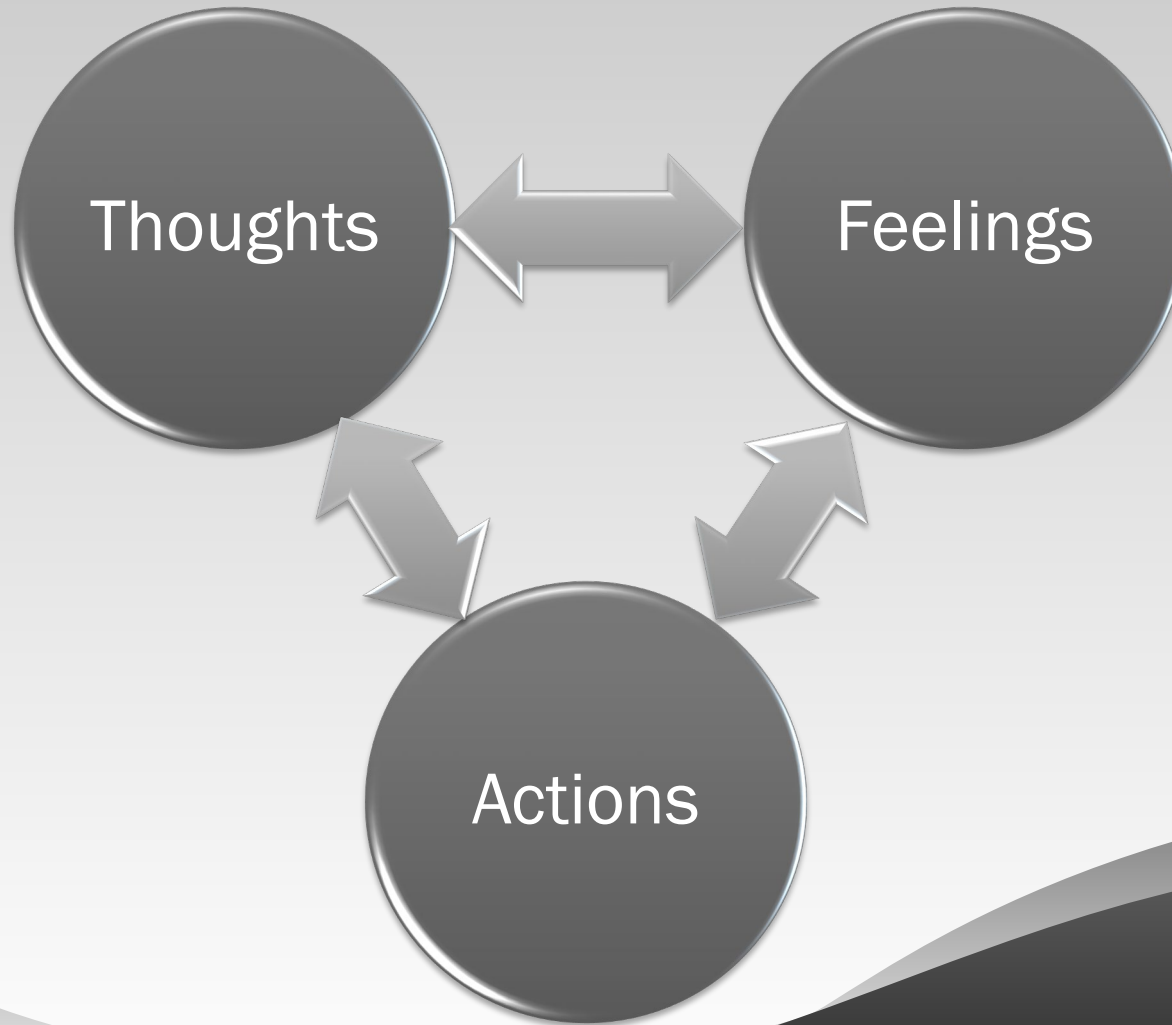
Functional Thoughts like “Maybe I’ll meet someone nice at the party,” and...

Effective Actions associated with overcoming fears and talking to new people in a social setting.

Multidimensional Survey / Focal Dimension

- Counselors can survey clients' thoughts, feelings, and actions to get a holistic picture of the presenting concern
- ***Firing order*** describes the interaction between different dimensions (Lazarus)
- It may be helpful to also look at ***readiness for change*** (Prochaska)
- The counselor and client can use ***collaborative dialogue*** to establish a ***focal dimension*** by deciding together which dimension they want to explore and change first

To conduct a multidimensional survey, it is often helpful to use a worksheet with three circles labeled thoughts, feelings, and actions.



Example Dialogue: Feelings

Counselor: When we describe a problem—like depression or anxiety—it is often helpful to describe a pattern that includes thoughts, feelings, and actions. I have a worksheet here with three circles. Which dimension would you like to describe first?

Client: Let's start with feelings. I feel *discouraged* a lot.

Counselor: Let me write *discouraged* in the feelings circle. Are there other feelings you would like to include?

Client: I also feel *weary*. Like I can't go on.

Counselor: Okay, I've written down *discouraged* and *weary* as feelings related to your depression.

Multidimensional Survey

Thoughts

Feelings

Discouraged

Weary

Actions

Example Dialogue: Thoughts

Counselor: Which dimension would you like to describe next?
Actions or thoughts?

Client: Let's do thoughts next.

Counselor: Okay. When you feel depressed; when you feel weary and discouraged, what are you typically thinking?

Client: I often tell myself that *I'm not smart enough to do this job.*

Counselor: Any other thoughts?

Client: Just a more general, I'm dumb,

Counselor: Okay, I've written those down. I'm not smart enough to do this job and I'm dumb.

Client: That's what I tell myself all day long.

Multidimensional Survey

Thoughts

I'm not smart enough
to do this job.

I'm dumb.

Feelings

Discouraged

Weary

Actions

Example Dialogue: Actions

Counselor: When you feel discouraged and weary and tell yourself you're dumb, how does that impact you actions?

Client: I think I *shut down*. When I tell myself that I'm not smart enough, I don't think I try very hard.

Counselor: Okay, I've written *shut down* in the actions circle. What else?

Client: I think I *goof off* at work, *avoiding* the difficult tasks.

Counselor: I've written down *goof off* and *avoid*. Are there other actions you would like to highlight?

Cleint: No, those are the actions I usually do that are related to my depression.

Multidimensional Survey

Thoughts

I'm not smart enough
to do this job.

I'm dumb.

Feelings

Discouraged

Weary

Actions

Shut down

Goof off

Avoid difficult tasks

Example Dialogue: Firing Order

Counselor: Now that we've described your thoughts, feelings, and actions, let's see how they are related. It may be helpful to draw arrows on our worksheet. Where do you think the pattern starts?

Client: I think it starts with feeling discouraged about work.

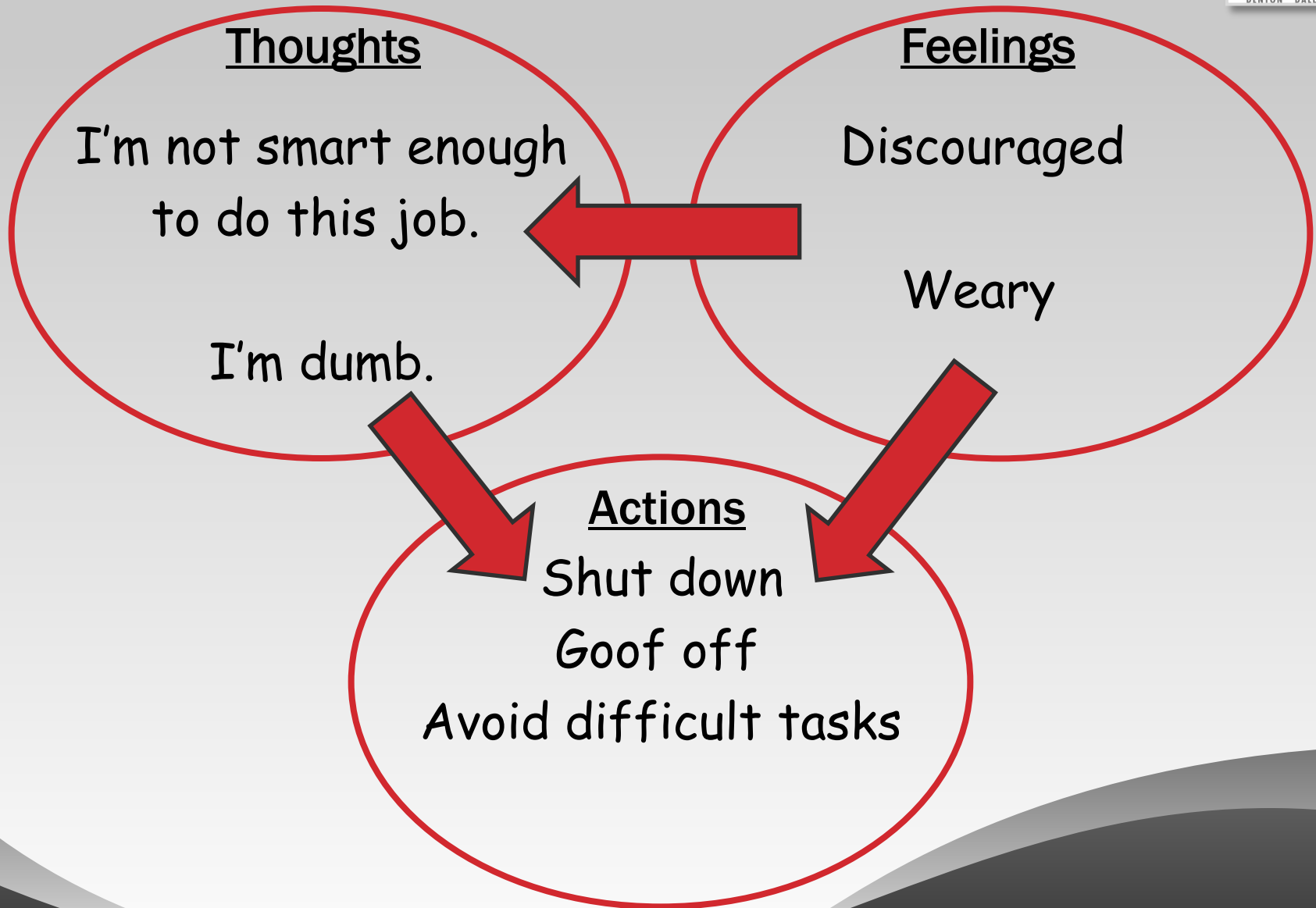
Counselor: And then what happens?

Client: Then I start telling myself I'm dumb and I can't do the job.

Counselor: Let's draw an arrow from feelings to thoughts. Where do the actions come from?

Client: I think they come equally from my feelings and thoughts.

Multidimensional Survey



Example Dialogue: Focal Dimension

Counselor: Now that we have described thoughts, feelings, and actions related to your depression, do you have an idea where we should start? Is there one area where we should focus first?

Client: I think we should look at my thoughts first.

Counselor: Do you have a sense of why that would be most helpful?

Client: I think I start by feeling a little discouraged but then when I start telling myself how stupid I am, then I get really depressed.

Counselor: So the self-critical thoughts really amplify the depression.

Client: Yes, it seems like I am always criticizing myself.

Example Dialogue: Collecting Data

Counselor: Now that we've described the general pattern of your thoughts, feelings, and actions, I would like you to observe how this pattern occurs throughout the week.

Client: Okay, how do I do that?

Counselor: I'm going to give you a few blank copies of this worksheet and I want you to write down your thoughts, feelings, and actions when you are feeling depressed or discouraged. I want you to *pay particular attention to the thoughts*. Try to write down the self-talk that you tell yourself in your mind. This will give us some specific examples to look at next week. We can explore your thoughts and see how they may be contributing to your depression.

Working Sequentially

- Choosing a *focal dimension* can guide the beginning of treatment.
- The choice of a focal dimension allows the counselor to use cognitive, emotion-focused, or behavioral skills that focus on *exploration* and *change* (KST Lessons 2-7).
- Over time, the focal dimensions may shift and treatment may be able to explore and promote change related to different dimensions.

Working Interactively

- A counselor can work interactively with thoughts, actions, and feelings to promote multidimensional adaptation and change.
- Different points of clinical leverage can be used with different clients or in response to different situations with the same client.

