

Worksheet: Understanding How Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviours Influence Each Other

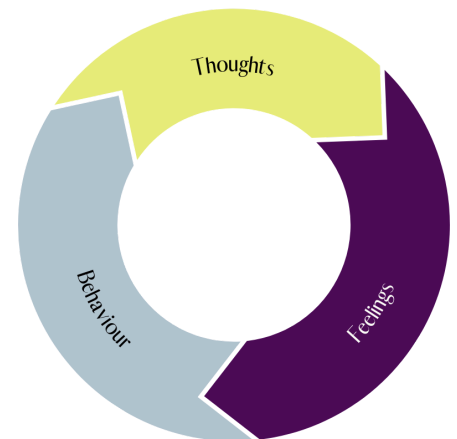
Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are all connected in powerful ways. Understanding these connections can help us make more conscious choices, especially when emotions run high. This worksheet is designed to help you reflect on how your feelings often influence your behaviour, and how changing one part of the cycle can affect the others.

The **Thoughts** - Feelings-Behaviour Cycle

1. **Thoughts:** What we think about a situation.
 - Example: "I'm not good enough for this task."
2. **Feelings:** How those thoughts make us feel.
 - Example: Sadness, frustration, or anxiety.
3. **Behaviours:** What we do (or don't) as a result of those feelings.
 - Example: Avoiding the task or giving up.

The **Feelings** - Thoughts-Behaviour Cycle

1. **Feelings:** What we feel in response to a situation.
 - *Example:* Feeling overwhelmed or anxious.
2. **Thoughts:** How those feelings influence what we think.
 - *Example:* "I'm never going to finish this task," or "I'm not good enough to handle this."
3. **Behaviours:** What we do (or don't do) as a result of those thoughts.
 - *Example:* Giving up on a project or avoiding the task entirely.





Feelings Influencing Behaviour

Feelings can have a powerful impact on how we act, and sometimes we aren't even aware of how much they're driving our behaviour. Below are a few examples that show how this plays out in real life:

1. **Feeling Overwhelmed** → **Procrastinating**

- When you feel overwhelmed by a big task or project, you may start procrastinating, avoiding the task altogether. The feeling of being overwhelmed leads to avoidance, rather than tackling the problem bit by bit.

2. **Feeling Angry** → **Yelling or Acting Out**

- When anger takes over, it can lead to behaviours like yelling or snapping at someone. In this case, the feeling of anger directly leads to a negative behaviour that can harm relationships.

3. **Feeling Sad** → **Withdrawing**

- When feeling down or sad, it's common to withdraw from others. This feeling can lead to isolation and not reaching out for help, even when support could make a big difference.

Reflection: How Your Feelings Influence Your Behaviour

Take a moment to reflect on your own feelings and how they affect your behaviour. Write down a recent situation where your feelings led to a certain behavior.

- **What happened? Describe the situation.**

- _____
- _____
- _____

- **What were you feeling in that moment?**

- _____
- _____

- **How did your feelings influence your behaviour?**

- _____
- _____
- _____

- **What was the outcome? How did this behaviour impact the situation?**

- _____
- _____
- _____

Breaking the Cycle in Parenting

When parenting gets stressful, emotions can drive our reactions. Learning to manage those feelings before they shape how you respond to your child can change the outcome of difficult moments. Here are some practical ways to break the cycle of emotional reactions in parenting.

1. Challenge Your Thoughts

If you're feeling overwhelmed by your child's behaviour, try to break down the situation. For example, when your child is having a meltdown, instead of thinking, "I can't handle this," pause and ask yourself, "What's really going on here?" Consider whether they're tired, hungry, or overstimulated. By breaking it down, you can address the root cause rather than feeling paralyzed by the chaos.

Don't assume that the way you feel is an accurate representation of what's happening - this is called 'emotional reasoning' eg. I'm annoyed, I can feel annoyance rising can easily become "They're trying to annoy me" when that's pretty unlikely to be the case. Kids know that an annoyed parent is not fun! It's much more likely that their intention is to have fun, or to get attention from you and either: They've no idea they're annoying you because they're so caught up in the fun, or they've learned somewhere along the line that it's a foolproof way to get you to stop what you're doing and focus on them.

2. **Pause Before Reacting**

When your child talks back or refuses to listen, it's easy to let frustration take over. In that moment, take a deep breath and pause. Ask yourself, "How do I want to respond right now?" Instead of yelling, try a calm tone or state your expectations clearly. For example, instead of reacting with, "Why are you always disrespectful?" try, "I need you to speak to me respectfully so we can solve this."

3. **Seek Support When Needed**

If you're feeling burnt out from parenting, it's okay to reach out for help. Whether it's asking your partner to take over for a while or calling a friend to vent, acknowledging your emotional limits helps you recharge. This might mean telling your child, "I need a few minutes to calm down before we talk," so you can respond with patience rather than frustration.

Practice Exercise

1. **Next time you notice a strong feeling, pause and identify it.** Write it down:

- *Feeling:*

2. **What are you thinking that might be fueling that feeling?**

- *Thought:*

3. **What behaviour are you inclined to do based on this feeling?**

- *Behaviour:*

4. **What's one small action you can take to change this behaviour?**

- _____
-

Further Reflection:

- How often do you find your feelings driving your behaviors in ways that don't serve you well?

- What strategies could help you change how you react when strong emotions arise?

Understanding the connection between your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours gives you more control over how you react to life's challenges. Use this worksheet as a guide to practice pausing, reflecting, and making thoughtful changes in your responses.

This worksheet can be revisited anytime you feel like your emotions are leading you to behaviours that aren't productive or helpful.