

# Our Relationship with Cognitive Dissonance

How the rapport between self and cognitive  
dissonance can increase optimal personal  
development

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# Travel

- Contradictions between thought and action
- Travel as window into “self” and cognitive dissonance



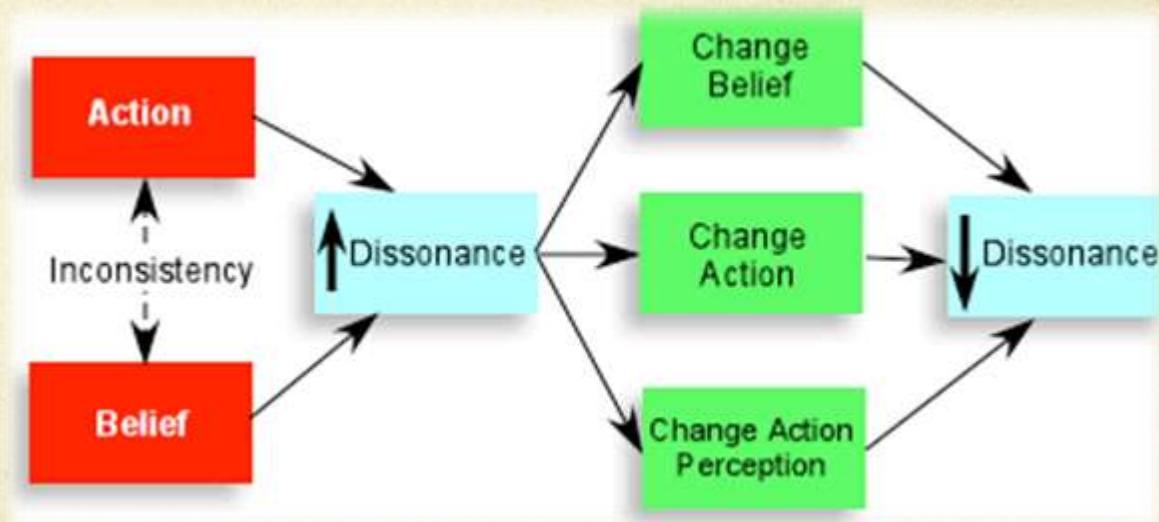


**What is Cognitive Dissonance?**

# Cognitive Dissonance (CD)

- “The state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioral decisions and attitude changes.”

- Behavior
- Smoking
- Inter-cognition
- Leon Festinger
- Defense mechanisms:





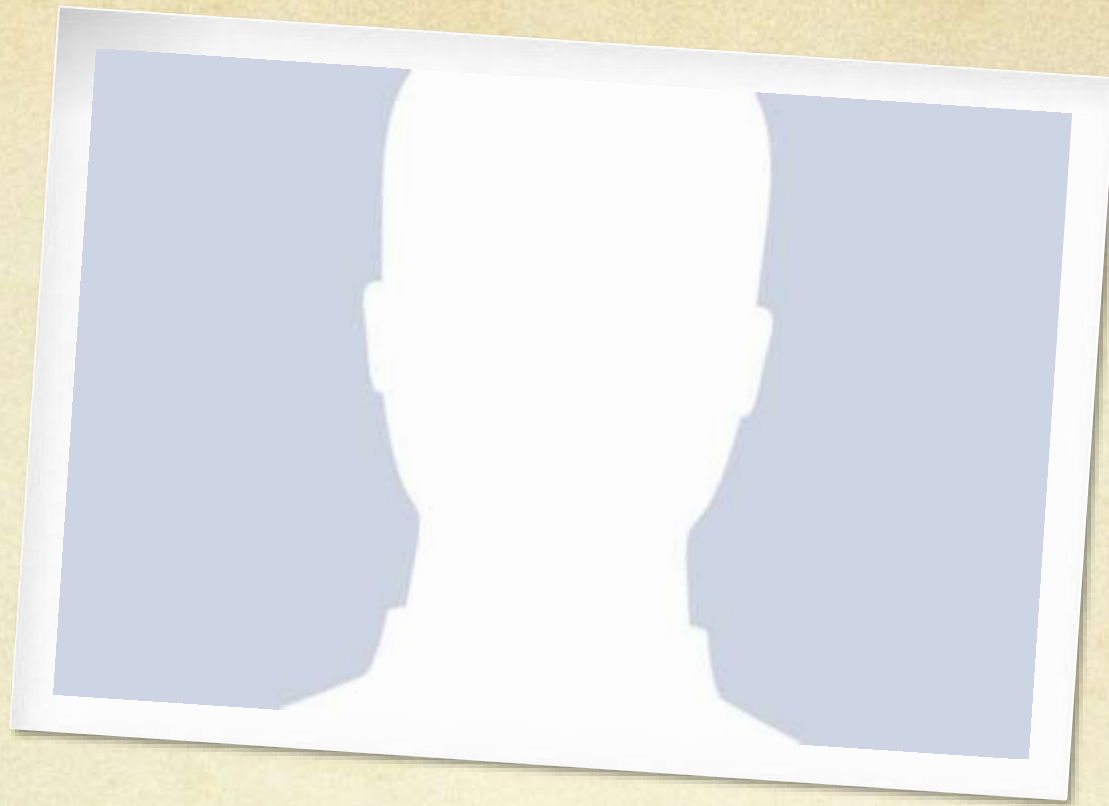


# Relation to Self

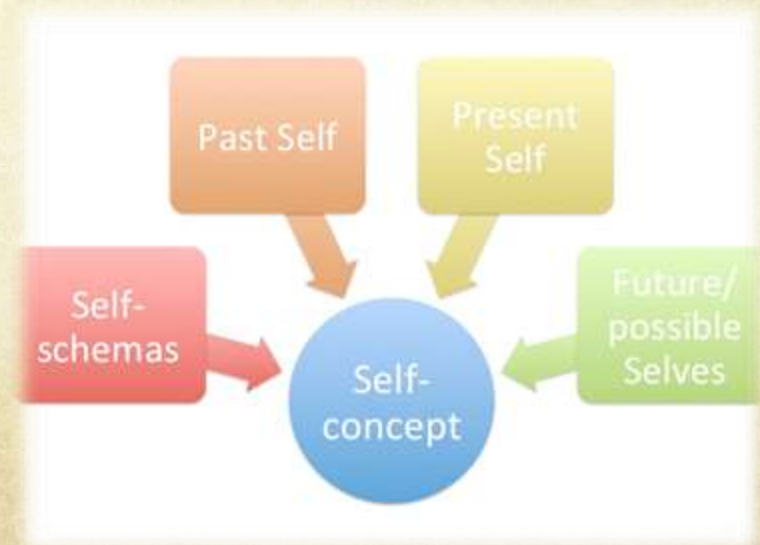
# CD and Self

- Implicit
- Cognitive elements
  - Beliefs, opinions, knowledge, behaviors rational, etc.
- Through the perspective of and relating it to the self





# Conception of Self



# Possible Selves

- Dynamic (changing) not static (constant)
- Markus & Nurius
- Derive from past, representations of future self
  - Constrained by background and skill set
  - Still can fabricate ideal “true” self
- Self-schemas: Interpret info and bring coherence
- Possible selves deal with:
  - Self-schemas
  - Fears, goals, motivations for self in life (future and now)
  - Criteria for event perception
  - Vulnerable/Sensitive to info
  - CD possible with inherent instability of possible selves





# Development and CD

# Chow & Thompson study

- Administered PDT and DISS tests to 320 University students
- Results:
  - Negative correlation between cognitive dissonance and development
- Less CD with more development in life



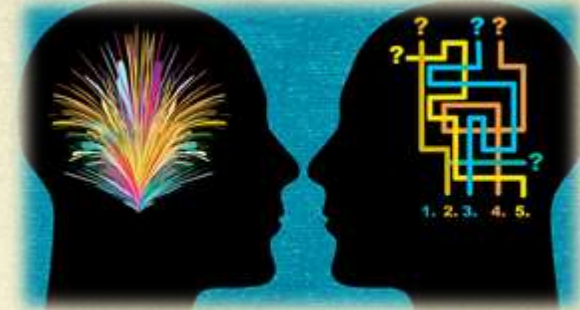




# Economic Applications

# Rationality & Utility Maximization

- Neoclassical economics assumes rationality
  - Behavioral ECON incorporates irrationality
- Maximize benefits from engaging in an activity
- Choice variables & exogenous parameters
- Surprise (Experienced utility – expected utility)
- Threshold
  - Determined by discrepancy in surprise utilities
- Information filter
  - Blocks confounding info from changing exogenous parameters
- Not true utility maximization, rather utility after filtration







# Deep rooted & Inevitable

CD not just a problem that goes away with  
time



# Religion & Life-death Situations



- Major cognitive situations show cognitive dissonance existence
- Ying Li (2010)
  - Chinese students studying in large USA Christian University
  - Results
- High Altitude Mountaineering







# Application

How can we deal with cognitive dissonance?

# Awareness

- Heightened sense of awareness with CD
- “Awareness or smirti is the heart of Buddhist practice and the teachings of Buddha. Yet it doesn’t belong to Buddhism. Awareness is intrinsic to each of us. It is a state of being conscious and rising above our mental habits that keep us bound to internal limitations. Through awareness we can see the true nature of all things and find unfathomable joy beyond conditions.” – Anam Thubten
- Pole to which the flag of ordinary consciousness is attached to



# Mindfulness (Awareness) Study

- *Altered processing of self-related emotional stimuli in mindfulness meditators – Lutz et al.*
- Long term mindfulness meditators (LTM) vs. naïve
- Reported affective states
- fMRI on brain activity differences
- Results
  - LTM use awareness on neural & Psych levels to control cognitions of self-praise and self-criticism better than naïve
  - Have less self-focus







**Nonattachment**



# Nonattachment to thought

- Misinterpreted
  - Don't have to leave all and become a monk
  - Interdependency of people and thought is important
- Aversion to attachment or possessiveness
- Loch Kelly
  - Thinking is 6<sup>th</sup> sense
  - “Thought looping on itself that creates the separate sense of self”
- Mind is made to think like heart is made to pump blood
- “Thought is a wonderful part of a group but not meant to be the leader or the center of our identity.”



# Altered sense of self





# Alternative view of self

- Awareness and nonattachment principles
  - “True” Self
  - Self-as-illusion
- Argue there is a transcendence of self
  - Recognize interdependency
    - Self is not independent of others yet not forgotten in masses
- Is there a self?
  - Silence
  - “To respond either yes or no to this question would be to side with opposite extremes of the wrong view” (Samyutta Nikaya 44.10)





# Conclusion

- Cognitive Dissonance found within many aspects of life
  - Small everyday to major cognitive elements (religion/culture) and life and death situations
  - Can cause negative effects
- The use of awareness and nonattachment practices
- Alternative sense of self
- Looking at the relationship between conception of self and cognitive dissonance can lead to optimal personal development
- **Not answers** but views to promote critical thinking



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# Thank you

