Welcome to

Metacognitive Training for Borderline Personality Disorder (B-MCT)

If there is no new participant in the group, you can skip slides 1-13 (start at slide 14)!

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Metacognitive Training (MCT)
Metacognitive Training (MCT)

*meta* →

derived from Greek, means “about”
Metacognitive Training (MCT)

**meta** →
derived from Greek, means “about”

**cognition** →
derived from Latin, means “thinking”
Metacognitive Training (MCT)

**meta**

derived from Greek, means “about”

**cognition**

derived from Latin, means “thinking”

**metacognition**

“thinking about thinking”
Metacognitive training for BPD (B-MCT) is a therapeutic approach that deals with thoughts and thought processes. The training is designed to …

- impart knowledge about your own thought processes and
- make you aware of typical thought distortions and how to change these

**Thought distortion:** unfavorable way of taking in and processing information from the environment that can lead to developing or maintaining mental problems (e.g., always blaming only oneself).
The neighbors in the apartment above are having a noisy party again.

What possible thoughts can arise in reaction?
The neighbors in the apartment above are having a noisy party again.

One event – many possible emotions...
What leads to the different reactions?

Possible thoughts

response / thoughts?
response / thoughts?
response / thoughts?
The neighbors in the apartment above are having a noisy party again.

Possible thoughts

“I've had it with them! I'm trying to get a good night's sleep! I bet they're doing this on purpose!”

“Well, it’s the weekend and it's not like I’ve never partied. All right, I'll just stay up a bit longer.”

“They don't give a damn about me. They didn't even invite me. Am I really that big a bore?”
One event – many possible emotions…
What leads to the different reactions?

The neighbors in the apartment above are having a noisy party again.

Possible thoughts

“I’ve had it with them! I’m trying to get a good night’s sleep! I bet they’re doing this on purpose!”

“Well, it’s the weekend and it’s not like I’ve never partied. All right, I’ll just stay up a bit longer.”

“They don’t give a damn about me. They didn’t even invite me. Am I really that big a bore?”

What possible emotions may arise along with these thoughts?
The neighbors in the apartment above are having a noisy party again.

Possible thoughts

“I’ve had it with them! I’m trying to get a good night’s sleep! I bet they’re doing this on purpose!”

“Well, it’s the weekend and it’s not like I’ve never partied. All right, I’ll just stay up a bit longer.”

“They don’t give a damn about me. They didn’t even invite me. Am I really that big a bore?”

Possible emotions

angry

relaxed

sad
The neighbors in the apartment above are having a noisy party again.

**Possible thoughts**

- “I’ve had it with them! I’m trying to get a good night’s sleep! I bet they’re doing this on purpose!”
- “Well, it’s the weekend and it’s not like I’ve never partied. All right, I’ll just stay up a bit longer.”
- “They don’t give a damn about me. They didn’t even invite me. Am I really that big a bore?”

**Possible emotions**

- angry
- relaxed
- sad

What possible behavioral reactions could result in each case?
The neighbors in the apartment above are having a noisy party again.

**Possible thoughts**

- “I’ve had it with them! I’m trying to get a good night’s sleep! I bet they’re doing this on purpose!”
- “Well, it’s the weekend and it’s not like I’ve never partied. All right, I’ll just stay up a bit longer.”
- “They don’t give a damn about me. They didn’t even invite me. Am I really that big a bore?”

**Possible emotions**

- **angry**
  - knock at the door & threaten to call the police
- **relaxed**
  - stay calm, sleep with earplugs
- **sad**
  - brood & therefore not find peace
Welcome to

Training module:
Attributional Style

The use of the pictures in this module has been kindly permitted by artists and copyright holders, respectively. For details (artist, title), please refer to the end of this presentation.
What is an attribution?
Attribution

= our own explanation of why a situation happens.

(e.g., “My friend invited me to the movies because she likes me!”)
= our own explanation of why a situation happens.
(e.g., “My friend invited me to the movies because she likes me!”)

→ We often fail to see that the same event can have very different causes.
= our own explanation of why a situation happens.
(e.g., “My friend invited me to the movies because she likes me!”)

➔ We often fail to see that the same event can have very different causes.

What causes could have contributed to the following situation?

➔ A friend is late for a meeting with you.
Why does your friend keep you waiting?

Possible types of attribution…
Why does your friend keep you waiting?

Possible types of attribution…

- “He doesn't care enough about me. He wouldn’t have dared to do this with someone else.”
- “He is forgetful – he got the time wrong.”
- “His car broke down.”
Why does your friend keep you waiting?

Possible types of attribution...

...to oneself
“He doesn't care enough about me.”

...to others
“He is forgetful.”

...to chance or the situation
“His car broke down.”
Events can have quite different causes.

In addition, several contributing factors are often involved at the same time.

However many people consider only one-sided explanations (e.g. only blaming others rather than oneself or vice versa).
“You’re discharged from the hospital but don’t feel any better.”

Reasons...

... oneself

... others

... chance or the situation
Reasons...

... oneself:

(can be changed)

• I wasn’t motivated enough to cooperate.
• I didn’t believe in recovery.

(difficult to change)

• I am incurable.
• I just have bad genes.

... others:

• The doctors here have a bad reputation.
• The hospital staff should have made more effort and spent more time with me.

... chance or the situation:

• I would have recovered better if I hadn’t shared a room with 6 other patients.
• If the hospital was better equipped, I would be recovered.
• Sometimes the recovery process takes time before you can see results.

“You’re discharged from the hospital but don’t feel any better.”
"You’re discharged from the hospital but don’t feel any better."

**Reasons...**

**... oneself:**

*(can be changed)*

- I wasn’t motivated enough to cooperate.
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*(difficult to change)*

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**... others:**

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**... chance or the situation:**

- I would have recovered better if I hadn’t shared a room with 6 other patients.
- If the hospital was better equipped, I would be recovered.
- Sometimes the recovery process takes time before you can see results.

*Caution: one-sided explanations!*
“You’re discharged from the hospital but don’t feel any better.”

Now think of balanced responses that involve several causes (combination of “others”, “situation”, and “self”)

???

???

???
You’re discharged from the hospital but don’t feel any better.

Now think of balanced responses that involve several causes (combination of “others”, “situation”, and “self”)

- “The staff didn’t have much time, but I could have requested more support, and should have attended group sessions more frequently. That might be why my stay wasn’t as successful as it could have been.”

- “Maybe I should be more patient regarding my recovery. I’m confident that in the future I can be helped by competent staff.”
Effects of certain attributional styles on positive events!

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<th>Disadvantage: ???</th>
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“That’s a great dress you’re wearing!”

“You seem modest (But always devaluing compliments may make you seem depressed!)”

“That’s a great dress you’re wearing!” by dunikowski
| **Self Attribution:**  
| (e.g., “I can wear anything.”) | **Disadvantage:**  
| You seem arrogant to others | **Advantage:**  
| ??? |  

| **Others/Situational Attribution**  
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"That’s a great dress you’re wearing!"

“That’s a great dress you’re wearing!”

“plaid dress” by dunikowski
**Effects of certain attributional styles on positive events!**

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“That’s a great dress you’re wearing!”

“If you have a plaid dress...” by dunikowski

---

“plaid dress” by dunikowski
### Effects of certain attributional styles on positive events!

**Self Attribution:**
(e.g., “I can wear anything.”)

- **Disadvantage:** You seem arrogant to others
- **Advantage:** Self-confidence increases

**Others/Situational Attribution**
(e.g., “He says that to everyone!”)

- **Disadvantage:** Self-confidence is not sustained
- **Advantage:** You seem modest
  (But *always* rejecting compliments may make you seem depressed!)

“plaid dress” by dunikowski

“That’s a great dress you’re wearing!”
Effects of certain attributional styles on positive events!

“That’s a great dress you’re wearing!”

More balanced responses (i.e., combination of others, situation & self):

???

???

???
More balanced responses (i.e., combination of others, situation & self):

“Actually, the dress does bring out my body pretty well and suits me. Besides, I was on vacation recently and certainly look relaxed. I know he’s a nice person who honestly means it when he says such a thing.”

“That’s a great dress you’re wearing!”
### Effects of certain attributional styles on negative events!

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You spill a glass of wine while trying to avoid the waiter.

**Self Attribution:**
(e.g., “What a klutz! How come these things always happen to me?”)

| Disadvantage: reduces self-confidence |
| Advantage: You don’t get into an argument. Maybe you will be more cautious in the future. |

**Others/Situational Attribution:**
(e.g., “It wouldn’t have happened if this idiot hadn’t pushed past me!”)

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Effects of certain attributional styles on negative events!

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You spill a glass of wine while trying to avoid the waiter.

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**Disadvantage:** reduces self-confidence
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**Others/Situational Attribution:**
(e.g., “It wouldn’t have happened if this idiot hadn’t pushed past me!”)

**Disadvantage:** You get angry and possibly start an argument. You remain less cautious of your surroundings.
**Advantage:** Self-confidence not at risk
Effects of certain attributional styles on negative events!

You spill a glass of wine while trying to avoid the waiter.

Balanced responses (i.e., combination of others, situation & self):

???

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Effects of certain attributional styles on negative events!

You spill a glass of wine while trying to avoid the waiter.

Balanced responses (i.e., combination of others, situation & self):

- “Bummer! But it’s not actually that bad. Luckily nothing got onto my clothes.”
- “How annoying that the waiter pushed past me like that, but I could have paid a bit more attention myself. Obviously he didn’t bump into me on purpose.”
Why do we do this?

Studies show that many [but not all!] people with depression tend to...

... blame themselves for failures...

... attribute success to circumstances/chance.

→ This attributional style reduces self-esteem!
Many [but not all!] people with BPD tend to...

... reduce situations to single causes and...

... hardly give any regard to circumstances/chance.

→ They primarily blame only themselves for the occurrence of events.
Taking things (too) personally

???

"long face" by paramitta
= Events or the behavior of others are often thought to have something to do with oneself, even if they don’t.
Events or the behavior of others are often thought to have something to do with oneself, even if they don’t.

Typical thoughts: ????
Events or the behavior of others are often thought to have something to do with oneself, even if they don’t.

**Typical thoughts:**

“Of course this happens to me of all people!”

“He doesn’t like me. It must be me.”

You have a distorted perception of events, feel responsible for everything and everyone, and take things too much to heart.
Events or the behavior of others are often thought to have something to do with oneself, even if they don’t.

Typical thoughts:

“Of course this happens to me of all people!”

“He doesn’t like me. It must be me.”

You have a distorted perception of events, feel responsible for everything and everyone, and take things too much to heart.

It is a human tendency to feel involved somehow (e.g., children feel guilty when their parents fight).
## Event on behavior

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“no, I'm not sad, just tired” by erix
## Effect on behavior

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### Alternate Attribution

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Don’t take everything too personally!

• Try to consciously register when you make a very personal attribution!

→ Could there be other explanations?
Don’t take everything too personally!

• Try to consciously register when you make a very personal attribution!

→ *Could there be other explanations?*

And: If a snub really is meant personally, that reveals something about the other person as well.
Don’t take everything too personally!

- Try to consciously register when you make a very personal attribution!

  → Could there be other explanations?

And: If a snub really is meant personally, that reveals something about the other person as well.

- Put yourself in someone else’s shoes (e.g., a good friend)!

  → What would you think, if something similar happened to someone else?
Don’t take everything too personally!

• Try to consciously register when you make a very personal attribution!

→ Could there be other explanations?
And: If a snub really is meant personally, that reveals something about the other person as well.

• Put yourself in someone else’s shoes (e.g., a good friend)!

→ What would you think, if something similar happened to someone else?

• Think of different possible causes of a situation.

→ With negative events, start with “circumstances”!
Exercise: drawing pie charts

• What happened?
Here’s an example of a negative event that happened last week:
“A friend cancelled a lunch with you that you were looking forward to a lot.”

• What is the main aspect you explained the event by?
“She thinks I’m boring.”

• What effects does your explanation have?
“I am sad and feel unwanted.”
Exercise: drawing pie charts

What are other and more balanced ways of responding to the event? What percentage of the event could you estimate as being attributable to other causes?

Try to split the pie fairly and not always take the biggest piece yourself.
The fundamental attribution error

= People in Western countries are generally more apt to blame someone’s personal characteristics rather than situational influences for their behavior.

Example: When someone bumps into you on the bus, you may be more apt to think the person is rude than to see that the bus is packed tightly.
Study: staging of a quiz show.
The participants were randomly allocated one of three roles: quiz show host, candidate, or spectator.

The quiz show host’s task was to think of difficult questions that “display his broad knowledge.” He then had to ask the candidate these questions.
All of the participants knew that the quiz show host had been allowed to make up the questions himself.
Study: staging of a quiz show.
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All of the participants knew that the quiz show host had been allowed to make up the questions himself.

After the show, all participants were asked to judge who was smarter, the quiz show host or the candidate???
Even though the quiz show host clearly had the advantage because he was allowed to make up the questions himself (situation!), both the spectators and the candidates themselves thought the host had more knowledge than the candidates.
A “fundamental attribution error” is made unconsciously and automatically!
A “fundamental attribution error” is made unconsciously and automatically!

Our attention is limited, and we pay the most attention to fellow humans (because they stand out the most) rather than circumstances.
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Our attention is limited, and we pay the most attention to fellow humans (because they stand out the most) rather than circumstances.

It takes time and motivation to consciously control our thinking and question the attributions we make about a person or event.
Exercise

In the following, you will be presented with several events.

Please think of several possible causes of the occurrence of the particular situation.
With negative events, start with circumstances/chance!

→ Make yourself aware of the possible effects of different attributions – short-term as well as long-term ones!
Someone tells you that you look bad.

Why might the person have said this?

To what do you primarily attribute this event?

Yourself?

Another person/other people?

Circumstances/chance?
A friend invites you for dinner.

What made your friend invite you for dinner?

To what do you primarily attribute this event?

Yourself?

Another person/other people?

Circumstances/chance?
When your neighbor lets you hold her baby it starts crying.

Why did the baby start crying?

To what do you primarily attribute this event?

Yourself?

Another person/other people?

Circumstances/chance?
A colleague is not willing to help you with a task.

Why does your colleague refuse to help you?

To what do you primarily attribute this event?

Yourself?

Another person/other people?

Circumstances/chance?
Learning objectives:
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- Always consider different possibilities. Because: Usually several factors contribute to the occurrence of an event (myself/others/circumstances)!
- Attribution Module -

Transfer to everyday life

**Learning objectives:**

- Always consider different possibilities. Because: Usually several factors contribute to the occurrence of an event (myself/others/circumstances)!

- Draw a pie chart and name the different pieces.
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- Always consider different possibilities. Because: Usually several factors contribute to the occurrence of an event (myself/others/circumstances)!

- Draw a pie chart and name the different pieces.

- Tip: Practice “perspective-taking” (What would you think if something similar happened to someone else?)!
The bridge experiment (Dutton & Aron, 1974):

Scientists had a young and pretty female student stand at the end of a shaky rope bridge and a regular bridge.
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The student asked male passers-by who had already crossed the bridge to help her with her research work.
The bridge experiment (Dutton & Aron, 1974):

Scientists had a young and pretty female student stand at the end of a shaky rope bridge and a regular bridge.

The student asked male passers-by who had already crossed the bridge to help her with her research work.

After having them answer a questionnaire, the student gave the participants her private phone number and asked them to call her if they had any questions about the study.
Emotions can be falsely attributed too...

Number of calls: ???
Emotions can be falsely attributed too...

Number of calls:

**Rope bridge**: 9 of 18 men called

**Stable bridge**: 2 of 16 men called
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**Rope bridge**: 9 of 18 men called

**Stable bridge**: 2 of 16 men called

Canadian scientists concluded that this is because the men’s physical excitement (after crossing the rope bridge) due to the gaping abyss was falsely attributed to the woman’s attractiveness, and the fear/excitement was interpreted as an affection.
For control purposes they also had a male student stand at the end of the two bridges.

Result: ???
For control purposes they also had a male student stand at the end of the two bridges.

**Result:** Only one third each of all men were willing to accept his number at all!

Only 2 men (shaky bridge) and 1 man (stable bridge) actually called.
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**Result:** Only one third each of all men were willing to accept his number at all!

Only 2 men (shaky bridge) and 1 man (stable bridge) actually called.

The men who called the pretty female student were probably more interested in her than the study.
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**Result:** Only one third each of all men were willing to accept his number at all!

Only 2 men (shaky bridge) and 1 man (stable bridge) actually called.

The men who called the pretty female student were probably more interested in her than the study.

*Detect external influences that artificially “heat up” your feelings (e.g., coffee and nervousness); the feeling has lost some of its power because you recognize it was exaggerated.*
Further questions?
Thank you for your attention!
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