Welcome to

Training Module 1:
Attribution
Blaming and Taking Credit

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Attribution: Blaming and taking credit

Attribution = inferring causes for events (e.g. blaming and taking credit)
Attribution = inferring causes for events (e.g. blaming and taking credit)

We often overlook the idea that the same event can have very different causes.
What causes could have contributed to the following situation?

A good friend did not call you on your birthday.
Why did your friend not call you?

Possible causes for this behaviour...

???
Why did your friend not call you?

Possible causes for this behaviour...

- I’m not important to her. If it were someone else she wouldn’t have forgotten.
- She’s a very disorganized woman and might even forget about her own birthday.
- She has an important exam to pass and no time for anything else.
Why did your friend not call you?

Possible causes for this behaviour...

...myself
I’m not important enough.

...others
She’s disorganized.

...a situation or chance
She has an exam to pass and no time.
As the example shows, events can have many different causes.
In most cases, several factors contribute to a situation.
Nevertheless, many people have a preference for only one aspect (e.g. blaming others instead of oneself or opposite).
“You’re discharged from hospital almost symptom-free.”

Reasons...

...myself

...others

...a situation or chance
“You’re discharged from hospital almost symptom-free.”

Explanations...

... myself:

(can be changed to some extent)
- The recovery process was successful because I was highly motivated.
- I insisted on certain treatment options, which played a major part in me getting well again.

(more difficult to change)
- I think I would have recovered anyway without therapy or drugs.
- Recovery was due to my excellent genes.

... others:

- The medical staff in this hospital is highly competent.
- Without the support of my family, it wouldn’t have been such a success.

... A situation or chance:

- I was fortunate that the hospital staff wasn’t as busy as usual.
- The recovery was due to the medication I took.
“You’re discharged from hospital almost symptom-free.”

Explanations...

... myself:

(can be changed to some extent)

- The recovery process was successful because I was highly motivated.
- I insisted on certain treatment options, which played a major part in me getting well again.

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- I think I would have recovered anyway without therapy or drugs.
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- I was fortunate that the hospital staff wasn’t as busy as usual.
- The recovery was due to the medication I took.
You’re discharged from hospital almost symptom-free.

Now, please come up with some answers that involve a variety of causes (i.e. others, the situation & myself)

???

???

???
Now, please come up with some answers that involve a variety of causes (i.e. others, the situation & myself)

- “The support of my family, the doctors, and the medication have all contributed to the recovery process. Last but not least, some of the success can be attributed to myself because I was highly motivated, and I actively participated in the treatment process.”

- “I was motivated to change, and I asked to participate in a specific group therapy that was well-conducted by the therapists.”
Effects of certain attributional styles on negative events!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Self Attribution</strong></th>
<th><strong>Disadvantage:</strong> ???</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. “I should have studied harder!”)</td>
<td><strong>Advantage:</strong> ???</td>
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| **Others/Situational Attribution** | **Disadvantage:** pushing the responsibility onto others is considered impolite (taking the easy way out)  
**Advantage:** self-confidence is not threatened |
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<td>(e.g. “The teacher is a moron and hates me.”)</td>
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That was poorly done. You failed the English exam.
Effects of certain attributional styles on negative events!

More balanced responses (i.e. combine influences from self, others/situation; offer different explanations):

???

???

???
Effects of certain attributional styles on negative events!

More balanced responses (i.e. combine influences from self, others/situation; offer different explanations):

“I’m not used to that kind of exam; I’ll be better prepared next time.”

“I should improve my relationship with the teacher. He wouldn't fail me out of pure resentment anyway.”
### Self Attribution
(e.g. “This was an excellent individual piece of work.”)

| Disadvantage: ??? |
| Advantage: ??? |

### Others/Situational Attribution
(e.g. “Anybody could have scored from there.”)

| Disadvantage: ??? |
| Advantage: ??? |

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**Effects of certain attributional styles on positive events!**

Superb! Your goal won the game!
Effects of certain attributional styles on positive events!

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### Effects of certain attributional styles on positive events!

| **Self Attribution** | **Disadvantage:** self-praise is arrogant  
|**Advantage:** increases self-confidence |
| (e.g. “This was an excellent individual piece of work.”) | |

| **Others/Situational Attribution** | **Disadvantage:** self-confidence is decreased by playing down one’s achievements  
|**Advantage:** You are deemed to be modest, and a team player |
| (e.g. “Anybody could have scored from there.”) | |
Effects of certain attributional styles on positive events!

More balanced responses (i.e. combine influences from self, others/situation; offer different explanations):

Superb! Your goal won the game!
Effects of certain attributional styles on positive events!

More balanced responses (i.e. combine influences from self, others/situation; offer different explanations):

“Superb! Your goal won the game!”

“I’m very proud, but Steve’s contribution was awesome, too.”

“That’s my job, but indeed, it was hard to score from that angle.”

“Thanks a lot. It’s going very well at the moment.”
Why are we doing this?

Studies show that many people with depression [but not all!]:

- tend to blame themselves for failures
- tend to give others or circumstances credit for success

This may lead to low self-esteem!
Why are we doing this?

Studies show that many people with delusions [but not all!]:

- tend to blame other people for negative events and failures
- tend to think that all events are beyond their own control

The first attributional style in particular may lead to interpersonal problems!
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Explanation during psychosis</th>
<th>Other explanations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important documents were lost in your flat.</td>
<td>Someone has broken into your house and stolen the documents to harm you.</td>
<td>The documents were accidentally misplaced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You failed your exam.</td>
<td>The examiner wants to ruin your career.</td>
<td>Perhaps the examiner was strict, but insufficient preparation and lack of sleep are also possible causes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A friend doesn’t say hello.</td>
<td>Your friend does not want to know you anymore and is ashamed of you.</td>
<td>Your friend is worried; simply did not notice you.</td>
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**Can anyone contribute a short personal experience?**
Attributional Style
Goal of today’s session:

- Consider possible causes of events
- Do not rush into accepting only one explanation
- Discuss the consequences of certain attributions

We should try to be as realistic as possible in our everyday life:

We should not always blame others for our failures, nor should we always blame ourselves when things go wrong.
A friend is talking about you behind your back.

What caused your friend to talk about you behind your back?

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
You are invited to a job interview.

Why have you been invited to this interview?

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
A friend is unpleasantly surprised by your unexpected visit.

What caused your friend to be unpleasantly surprised?

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
Other people laugh while you are talking.

What caused other people to laugh while you were talking?

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
Come up with your own examples!

What might have led to the situation?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?

„Question mark“ (Marco Bellucci)
“An inner voice tells you that you are no good.”

Reasons...

...yourself

...others

...situation/circumstances
“An inner voice tells you that you are no good.”

Reasons...

... yourself:
- “Unfortunately, I constantly blame myself. This seems to be some kind of hidden self-hate.”
- “I am going insane.”
- “It seems as if someone else is thinking. But I do know that these are my own thoughts.”

... others:
- “Something got implanted into my brain..”
- “I do not know how this could happen, but someone took control of my thoughts.”

... Situation/circumstances:
- “I am feeling stressed these days. That is why I experience everything more intensely, including my thoughts.”
- “My ears are ringing from listening to loud music.”
Psychosis: the inner voice is attributed to other persons/powers:

- “Something got implanted into my brain.”
- “I do not know how this could happen, but someone took control of my thoughts.”
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<th>Why do you think the voices are inserted from outside?</th>
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### Hearing voices

**Own thoughts or remote-controlled?**

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• Intense thoughts are sometimes almost audible (e.g. catchy tunes, ruminating, hearing a friend’s voice while reading his or her e-mail). |
<p>| “These thoughts are not under my control. When I try to counteract it, it gets worse. That shows me that someone really wants to put me down.” | ??? |
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| “These thoughts are not under my control. When I try to counteract it, it gets worse. That shows me that someone really wants to put me down.” | • Our thoughts are not fully controllable – otherwise there would be no such events as sudden inspirations, brainstorms, or rumination  
• If we try to counteract those thoughts, they automatically become stronger  
→ Experiment: Try not to think of the number 8.... You will not succeed. It will pop into your mind more strongly than ever. |
| “I would never have such evil thoughts. I could never do any harm to anyone. But still, I constantly have these aggressive thoughts.” | ??? |
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<td>• We often have thoughts that are opposite to our usual way of thinking. Thoughts do not equal action! 20% of the general population have passing thoughts about committing suicide, but they don’t act on them. Even when it comes to people we love, we sometimes feel aggression (e.g. a mother and her crying child).</td>
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Hearing voices
Own thoughts or remote-controlled?
Pros and cons

The explanation that strange thoughts are somehow being controlled remotely raises a lot more questions than it answers, e.g.:

- Is it technically feasible?
- When and where did the implantation take place?
- Who would be interested in harming you? Who would have the time and money to do so?
- There are easier ways of harming someone. Why should such a complex (perhaps impossible) method be chosen?
A friend gave you a lift home.

What caused your friend to drive you home?

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
A friend did not show up to a meeting with you.

What caused your friend not to turn up?

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
A friend did not send you a postcard.

What caused your friend not to send you a postcard.

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
A car has been driving behind you for half an hour.

What caused the car to drive behind you?

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
The bus you wanted to catch is leaving right in front of you.

Why didn’t you get the bus?

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
A neighbour invited you for a drink.

What caused your neighbour to invite you for a drink?

What is the main reason for this event?

- Yourself?
- Another person or other people?
- Circumstances or chance?
For quite some time, a man has been reading the newspaper in front of your door.

What caused the man to read the newspaper in front of your door?

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
A friend thinks you are unfair.

What caused your friend to think you are unfair?

What is the main reason for this event?

Yourself?

Another person or other people?

Circumstances or chance?
A friend thinks you are smart.

What caused your friend to make this judgment?

What is the main reason for this event?

**Yourself?**

**Another person or other people?**

**Circumstances or chance?**
Learning objectives:

- Always consider different factors that could have contributed to the outcome of an event (i.e. yourself/others/circumstances).
Learning objectives:

- Always consider different factors that could have contributed to the outcome of an event (i.e. yourself/others/circumstances).
- We should try to be as realistic as possible in everyday life: It’s not justified to always put the blame on others, just as it is not always our fault when things go wrong.
Always consider different factors that could have contributed to the outcome of an event (i.e. yourself/others/circumstances).

We should try to be as realistic as possible in everyday life: It’s not justified to always put the blame on others, just as it is not always our fault when things go wrong.

Usually, many factors contribute to an event.
Many people with psychosis tend to explain complex events with one single reason only. Sometimes, other people alone are blamed for one’s failure.

**Example I:** Edward gets a phone call. An automated phone voice asks him about his consumer habits.

**Own belief:** His landlord is spying on him to get him out of his apartment.

**Alternative explanation:** The call came from a market research company, which picked him randomly. Edward has never had any conflict with his landlord. There is no reason for his belief that his landlord is trying to remove him from his apartment, because Edward is an ordinary man who always pays his rent on time.
Sometimes, other people carry *partial* responsibility, but other important factors have to be acknowledged as well.

**Example II:** Anna relapses into psychosis!

**Own belief:** Relapse was caused by memories re-awakened when she bumped into her ex-husband on the street. They quarrelled a lot during their marriage.

**Additional factors:** This could be one possible reason, but there are additional factors: Anna stopped taking medication. She has had problems at her workplace and worries that she may lose her job.
Thank you for your attention!

For trainers: please hand out worksheets (www.uke.de/mct)
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>Doctor gretting patient [sic]</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>A doctor is shaking a patient’s hand/Ein Arzt schüttelt einem Patienten die Hand</td>
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<td>Benny-Kristin Fischer</td>
<td>- - -</td>
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<td>Produced for the MCT/Anfertigung für das MKT; © Arbeitsgruppe Neuropsychologie</td>
<td>Various motives: pupil, ice hockey player/ Verschiedene Motive: Schüler, Eishockeyspieler</td>
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<td>Bdunnette</td>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>DSCF0486</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>A friend is talking behind your back (wispering)/Freundin hat hinter Ihrem Rücken geredet (flüstern)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>rileyroxx</td>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>Job Interview #2</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>You are invited for a job interview (man dressed in grey shirt + tie)/Vorstellungsgespräch (Mann in schwarzem Hemd u. Krawatte)</td>
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<td>bre pettis</td>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>This is what the webcam sees through a peephole</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>A friend is unpleasantly surprised by your spontaneous visit (man in a spyhole)/Eine Freundin ist von ihrem Besuch unangenehm überrascht (Mann im Spion)</td>
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<td>yanec</td>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>laughter workshop</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Other people laugh while you are talking (celebration)/Andere fangen an zu lachen, während Sie reden (Feier)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heidi Wittwer</td>
<td>fotocommunity</td>
<td>schreiende Hand</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Screaming hand/Schreiende Hand</td>
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<tr>
<td>zen</td>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>zen driving home - day 14</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>A friend gives you a lift home (man in the car)/ Ein Freund hat sie nach Hause gefahren (Mann im Auto)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Jswieringa</td>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>Quarter Past three</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>A friend did not show up for a meeting with you (clock)/Ein Freund versetzte sie (Wanduhr)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rocketjim54</td>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>mail box</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Postcard (mailbox)/Postkarte (Briefkasten)</td>
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<td>flickr</td>
<td>rear view side mirror</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>A car has been driving behind you for some time (rearview mirror of the car)/Ein Wagen fährt längere Zeit hinter ihnen her (Rückspiegel e. Autos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jamoker</td>
<td>flickr</td>
<td>Missed The Bus</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Bus passing by/Der Bus fährt weg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*MarS</td>
<td>flickr</td>
<td>wine II</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>A neighbour invited you for a drink (Glass of white wine)/Nachbar hat sie auf ein Gläschen eingeladen (Glas m. Weiswein)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heater</td>
<td>flickr</td>
<td>Commute (reading gang signs)</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Reading the newspaper/Zeitungsleser</td>
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<td>Katrin Ze.</td>
<td>fotocommunity</td>
<td>enttäuscht</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>A friend thinks you are unfair/Ein Freund findet sie unfair (in der Ecke kauernde Frau)</td>
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<tr>
<td>judge mental</td>
<td>flickr</td>
<td>The Fluoride uncertainty Theory</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>A friend thinks you are smart (Albert Einstein)/Ein Freund findet sie klug (Einstein)</td>
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