

This lab exercise appeared in Section VIX: Therapy, developed by David Topor, Claire Burgess & Julia Huston, in Promoting psychological science: A Compendium of laboratory exercises for teachers of high school psychology (Miller, 2018). This exercise is provided here with permission from the editor.

Lab Title: The Relationship Between Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors

Section 1: Performance Expectations

What will the student be asked to do?

- Formulate a scientific question about how thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are related.
- Plan and carry out a scientific investigation on how we can change thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- Communicate in a written report how thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are related and how we can change them.

Students will communicate the information they have learned through a final lab report.

After conducting this lab, students will understand:

- The relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- How thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are impacted by each other and how we can work to change how we think, feel, and act.

After concluding the lab report, students are able to (performance standards):

- Understand the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and how each impacts the other.
- Formulate examples of specific situations that would illustrate how thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are related. Begin to understand how awareness of patterns in our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in reaction to different environmental stimuli.

Main Idea/Concept Demonstrated or Taught by Lab:

This lab will aid students in understanding the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Students may be able to apply this knowledge to their own life and conceptualize patterns of thinking/behaviors for themselves.

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Key Terms and Psychologists Associated with Main Idea/Concept:

Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, automatic thoughts, depression, emotion, behavior, cognitive model, cognitive therapy, point of intervention, cognitive distortions

Materials:

Pen and paper (or whiteboard and markers).

Instructions:

Experiential Component

Lead students in a series of exercises that may result in changed behaviors or thoughts, and therefore changed feelings.

1. Have students **think** of a positive experience, such as playing with a favorite pet, eating a favorite food, or cheering for a favorite sports team.
2. Have students record the impact of these thoughts on their feelings and behaviors.
3. Have students engage in a positive **behavior**, such as smiling or laughing.
4. Have students record the impact of this behavior on their feelings and thoughts.
5. Have students **think** of a negative experience.
6. Have students record the impact of these thoughts on their feelings and behaviors.
7. Have students engage in a negative **behavior**, such as frowning.
8. Have students record the impact of this behavior on their feelings and thoughts.

Reflective Component

1. Have students think about how their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors changed in each of the scenarios. Why did these changes occur?
2. Have students write down personal ways they could change negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Follow-Up and Discussion:

Additional Considerations: Questions to Ask

1. Ask students to describe the relationship among thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that they noticed. How readily changeable are our emotions?
2. Ask students to comment on why these changes occur.

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3. Ask students to consider how therapy can be used to impact negative thoughts, behaviors, and feelings. How easy is it to change thoughts, feelings, or behaviors? Which is the easiest component to change? Which is the most difficult?

Section 2: Cross-cutting concepts: Choose One

Students will identify the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Students will attempt to discover the cause and effect relationship between factors.

Section 3: Lab Report (written):

Students will demonstrate 1) how thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are related and 2) ways we can change thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Consider the activity you engaged in and any resulting change in thoughts, feelings, or behaviors.

Please adhere to the following sections in your write up:

- Background information
 - Explain key terms (e.g., thoughts, feelings, behaviors)
 - Explain the theories that account for the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- Objectives of research
 - What would we expect to find by **thinking** about a pleasant event or by **engaging** in a pleasant activity? What would we expect to find by **thinking** about a negative event or by **engaging** in a negative activity? What impacts our emotions? State this in the form of a hypothesis.
- Method
 - Describe the process of implementing the experimental component described above, including materials used.
- Results
 - What did the intervention do? What did it target or change?
 - How did thoughts, emotions, and behaviors change depending on the activity?
- Discussion
 - Summarize your findings.
 - What worked well and why do you think that happened?
 - What did not go according to plan?

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- How can these findings be used in psychotherapy?

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What representations or media help students make sense of the material?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWPMKXbFzsk>

Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviors Explained

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcFmrVZ0e-I>

Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviors Explained as they Relate to Mental Health and Brain Function