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Cognitive dissonance psychology definition

Cognitive dissonance is a theory in social psychology. It refers to the mental conflict that occurs when a person’s behaviors and beliefs do not align.It may also happen when a person holds two beliefs that contradict one another.Cognitive dissonance causes feelings of unease and tension, and people attempt to relieve this discomfort in different ways. Examples include “explaining things away” or rejecting new information that conflicts with their existing beliefs.Read on to learn more about cognitive dissonance and its effects.Share on PinterestMany people experience feelings of unease and tension with cognitive dissonance.The psychologist Leon Festinger published his theory of cognitive dissonance in his 1957 book, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance.Festinger proposed that people experience discomfort when they hold conflicting beliefs or when their actions contradict their beliefs.Since then, cognitive dissonance has become one of the most influential and researched theories in social psychology.People will try to reduce this dissonance to relieve the discomfort. The drive to resolve dissonance is called the “principle of cognitive consistency.”It is important to note that cognitive dissonance is not automatic when a person holds opposing beliefs. They must have an awareness of the inconsistency to feel discomfort.Not everyone experiences cognitive dissonance to the same degree. Some people have a higher tolerance for uncertainty and inconsistency and may experience less cognitive dissonance than those who require consistency.Other factors that affect the degree of cognitive dissonance that a person experiences include:The type of beliefs: Beliefs that are more personal lead to more significant dissonance.The value of the beliefs: Beliefs that people hold in high regard tend to cause greater dissonance.The size of the disparity: A substantial disparity between conflicting and harmonious beliefs will result in more dissonance.Cognitive dissonance has the immediate effect of causing feelings of discomfort and unease.As people generally have an innate desire to avoid this discomfort, cognitive dissonance has a significant effect on a person’s:behaviorthoughtsdecisionsbeliefs and attitudesmental healthPeople experiencing cognitive dissonance may notice that they feel:As a result, they may:try to hide their actions or beliefs from othersrationalize their actions or choices continuouslyshy away from conversations or debates about specific topicsavoid learning new information that goes against their existing beliefsignore research, newspaper articles, or doctor’s advice that causes dissonanceAvoiding factual information can allow people to continue maintaining behaviors with which they do not fully agree.Of course, cognitive dissonance may prompt some people to change their behavior so that their actions align with their beliefs. In this way, it provides people with an opportunity to examine their values and actions and achieve cognitive consistency.As a result of cognitive dissonance, many people confront problematic attitudes and actions.They may make positive changes in their lives, such as addressing unhealthful eating habits, addiction, or anger issues.Share on Pinterestff a person smokes despite knowing the risk, they may experience cognitive dissonance.Situations where cognitive dissonance can occur include:Smoking despite being aware of the adverse health effects of tobacco use.Choosing to promote a behavior, such as regular exercise, that a person does not themselves practice. This type of cognitive dissonance is called hypocrisy.Telling a lie despite the person thinking of themselves as honest.Purchasing a new car that is not fuel efficient, despite being environmentally conscious.Eating meat while also thinking of themselves as an animal lover who dislikes the thought of killing animals. Some researchers call this the meat paradox.People who experience cognitive dissonance can take steps to reduce it. They may do this by:Rejecting or avoiding conflicting informationOften, people resolve cognitive dissonance by devaluing and discarding conflicting knowledge.They may limit their exposure to new information that does not align with their existing beliefs — a phenomenon called “confirmation bias.”One example of this is devaluing particular news sources by describing them as biased or false.Persuading and justifyingIndividuals may persuade themselves that no conflict exists.They may seek out support from others who share similar beliefs or try to convince others that the new information is inaccurate.Alternatively, a person may find a way to justify behaviors that conflict with their beliefs. For example, someone who smokes despite knowing that it is bad for their health may rationalize the behavior on the basis that it helps them socialize with others.Reconciling the differencesShare on PinterestA person may reconcile differences by giving up eating meat because they love animals.This method of reducing dissonance may be the most effective, but it is also the most challenging to implement.It involves a person changing their behaviors so that they are consistent with their other beliefs.Reconciling the differences between conflicting beliefs, or between actions and beliefs, is a form of personal growth.One example of reconciling differences is when a person stops eating meat because they love animals or dislike the thought of killing them.Cognitive dissonance affects everyone, and it plays a role in many of a person’s daily judgments and decisions.Although cognitive dissonance may seem like a negative effect, it can also help people change and grow in positive ways.Through awareness of conflicting beliefs and actions, people can address their habits and bring their behaviors in line with their values.Read this article in Spanish.
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Cognitive complexity refers to the number of processes required to complete specific tasks. Although its origins lie in psychology and personal construct theory, it’s also used as a measurement of task difficulty in other fields. Understanding cognitive complexity aids individuals and organizations in decision-making.Personal Construct Theory According to personal construct theory, each individual interprets the world through constructs. These are essentially shortcuts that help them analyze what’s going on around them. For example, if you see a dark sky, you may suspect that it’s going to rain. You can make this prediction if you learned from experience that the sky darkens before it rains. This construct is useful because it helps you decide whether to go outside, stay home, or put on rain gear before heading out the door. Task Complexity Task complexity refers to the number of mental and physical interactions required to complete a task. Think about what you have to know and be able to do, in order to make a peanut butter sandwich. It seems like a simple task and it is—after you have the knowledge and skill necessary to complete each step. This includes knowing how to open the jars, as well as having the ability to hold a spoon or knife, scoop out the ingredients, and spread them on the bread. The first time someone tries to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich can be time consuming and messy. This is because it requires a greater number of mental and physical interactions. Personal construct theory suggests that constructs developed through trial and error reduce the amount of time it takes to perform a task such as making a PB&J. This doesn’t end as soon as the individual masters the sandwich-making steps. Challenges like opening a jar with a sticky lid and cleaning up spilled jelly require additional constructs. Cognitive Complexity in Psychology In addition to personal construct theory, cognitive complexity plays a role in the study of industrial and organizational psychology. Like individuals, organizations have to interpret the environment around them and make decisions based on this information. Researchers in the field have noted that organizations with diverse decision-makers, who have a variety of perspectives, have greater cognitive complexity which brings more creativity and timeliness to their work. Cognitive Complexity in Education Educators use cognitive complexity to determine which materials and activities are appropriate for children. It’s commonly used to identify which texts students can read. Teachers look quantitative features like the number of words on the page, and the number of syllables in each word. They also consider qualitative features like the complexity of sentences and ideas in the text. Texts with fewer and shorter words take less time to decode and have a lower cognitive complexity than texts with more advanced vocabulary and sentence structure. Cognitive Complexity in Coding In computer coding, cognitive complexity refers to the relationship between humans creating code and the computers or artificial intelligence that must interpret it. Factors like shorthand, nesting, and breaks in linear flow contribute to the code’s cognitive complexity. The term is also a name for a program that analyzes code. MORE FROM REFERENCE.COM

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