

Nothing Interests Me: Helping Students Overcome Negative Thoughts for Future Success

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Case Example

- Close your eyes
- Breathe
- Focus on the story and try to put yourself in their shoes



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Case Example 1

Kassie is a second-semester Sophomore from Syracuse, NY and is visiting your office for the first time. She is nervous because she knows that she needs to pick a major before the end of the semester, but feels that, at this point, she cannot decide on a major. She comes in thinking that what she chooses will determine what she does for the rest of her life, so she needs to pick the right one. If she does not choose correctly, she will be a failure. She does not want to be stuck doing something that she does not want to do.

Kassie Breakdown

- How do you think she feels right now?
- What is she looking for?



Some of Her Feelings...

- Scared
- Trapped
- Stuck
- Confused
- Stressed
- Helpless
- Insecure
- Anxious
- Discouraged
- Inadequate
- Embarrassed
- Overwhelmed
- Depressed
- Ashamed
- Frustrated
- Angry

Professional Breakdown

- How do you feel right now?
- What are you looking for?



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Some of Our Feelings (Perhaps, if we are honest...)

- Scared
- Trapped
- Stuck
- Confused
- Stressed
- Helpless
- Insecure
- Anxious
- Discouraged
- Inadequate
- Embarrassed
- Overwhelmed
- Depressed
- Ashamed
- Frustrated
- Angry

Why Share This?

- Thoughts and emotions can be complex
- As a career/academic professional, this information can inform us of the decision making process under which the student operates
- Decision-making processes influence action (or a lack thereof)

Outcomes

- Identify and understand negative career thoughts and their influencing effects on the career and academic decision-making of college students and young adults
- Recognize the verbal cues of negative thinking in students
- Understand how to help students identify, challenge, and reframe negative thoughts during and after advising or counseling sessions for improved academic and career-related decision-making
- Gain a foundation in the Cognitive Information Processing Approach to Career Development as a theoretical framework for working with students

Before We Dive In...



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Negative Thinking

- Not all negative thinking is bad, just as not all positive thinking is good!
 - In this case, Negative=Dysfunctional
- The term “dysfunctional” should not be used with students due to the negative stigma affiliated with the term

Steps for Helping Students with Pervasive Negative Thoughts

- Identify
- Challenge
- Alter
- Act



How Do I Identify Negative Thoughts?

- Verbal Cues
 - “I can’t...”
 - “I won’t...”
 - “I’ll never...”
 - “I always...”
 - “It has to be perfect...”
 - “It has to be the right one...”
- Intuition
 - A different way of knowing



Case Example 1

Kassie is a second-semester Sophomore from Syracuse, NY and is visiting the Academic Advising/Career Services office for the first time. She is nervous because she knows that she needs to pick a major before the end of the semester, but feels that, at this point, she cannot decide on a major. She knows that what she chooses will determine what she does for the rest of her life, so she needs to pick the right one. If she does not choose correctly, she will be a failure.

Verbal Cues?

- “She needs to pick the right one.”
- “If she does not choose correctly, she will be a failure.”

What are some of the effects of this type of thinking?



Case Example 2

Client: “It’s not even just about the classes. I just can’t seem to find any interest in anything that I am doing. I’m not passionate about anything and it’s so frustrating!”

Verbal cues?



Verbal Cues

- “I just can’t seem to find any interest in anything that I am doing.”
- “I’m not passionate about anything”



A Different Example

- “I understand where you are coming from, but I need to be secure when I get out of college. There is no way I can get a job that is important outside of studying Medicine, Business, Engineering, or Law. There are majors that get people jobs and there are majors that do not. I do not want to be one of those people who have zero job options after graduation.”
- Verbal cues?

The Different Example Breakdown

- There is no way I can get a job that is important outside of...
- I do not want to be one of those people who have zero job options after graduation
- If you are curious about the reasoning behind their thoughts, ask!



Let's Reflect for a Second



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The Impact of Thoughts

- **Positive Thinking can help someone:**

- Stay motivated when answers are hard to find
- Actively seek necessary information needed to make a decision
- Avoid distraction
- Think clearly and realistically about the good and bad aspects of a career decision
- Make better use of the opinions of others
- Get help when necessary
- Execute decisions

- **Negative thinking can lead someone to:**

- Discouragement when answers are unclear
- Avoid doing what it takes to get necessary information
- Be easily distracted
- Confusion about the good and bad aspects of a career decision
- To feel overwhelmed by the opinions of others
- Avoid getting help when necessary
- Avoid making a choice

Steps for Helping Students with Pervasive Negative Thoughts

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How Do I Challenge Negative Career Thoughts?

- Not an exact science...
 - Empathize
 - Reflect
 - Challenge
 - Ask how the way they are thinking about something is working for them. Is the thought encouraging them to try to learn more or holding them captive (stuck)?
 - Is what they are thinking always true?
 - Catastrophize when necessary
 - So there are NO philosophy majors that have ever had a high paying job after graduation?

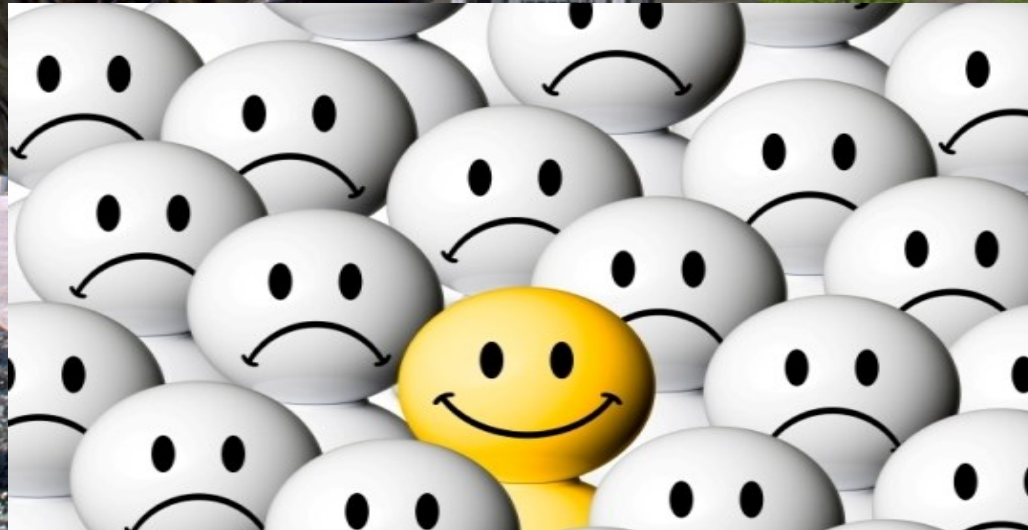
How do I Help Someone Alter Their Negative Thoughts?

- It is not **YOUR** responsibility to change someone's thinking
- Try to understand where they are coming from and challenge when necessary
- Reframing Exercise



Reframing Exercise

- How many of you have done this before?
- How was this for you?
- What do you think is the purpose of this exercise (next slide)?



The Impact of Thoughts

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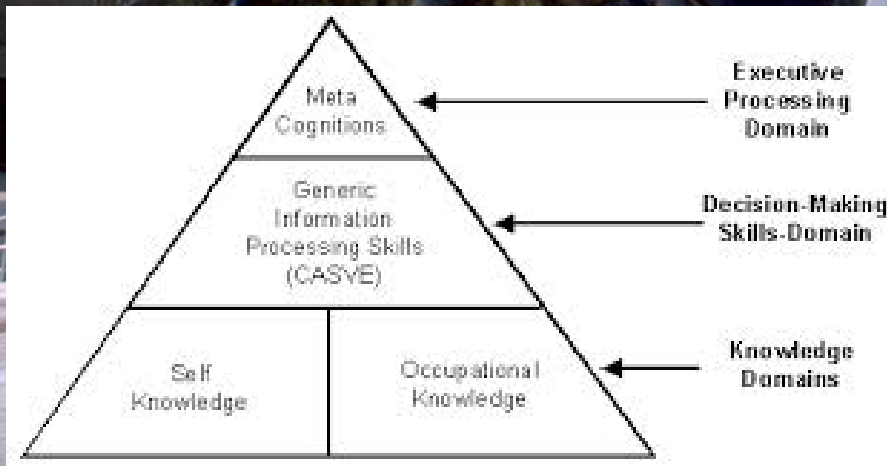
To Sum it Up...

- Positive thinking = action
- Negative thinking = “stuck”ness

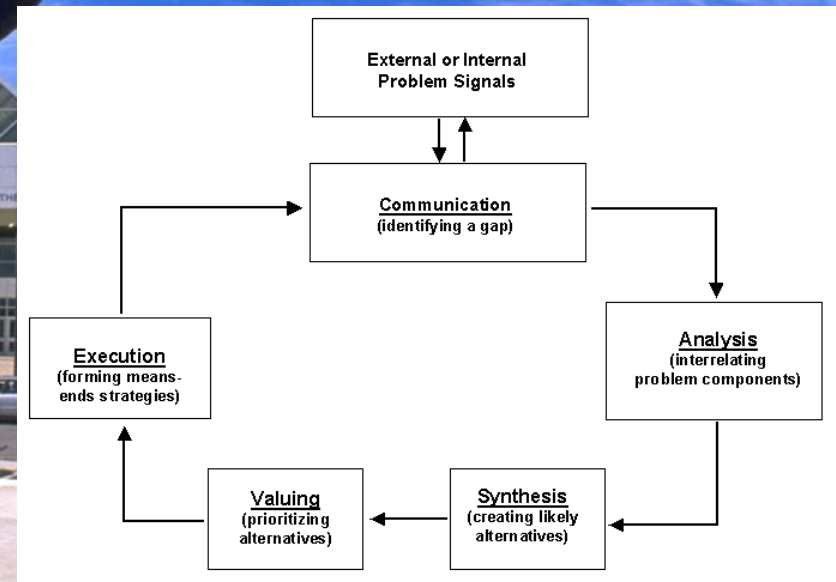


Cognitive Information Processing

Knowing



Doing



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Questions?

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