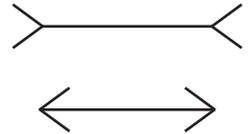
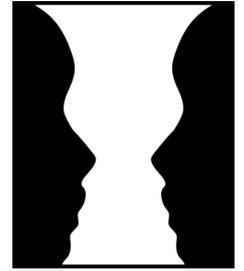


DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

The probably familiar images of two straight lines (of equal length) and a candlestick (or two faces) show us that things are often not as they first seem, and there's almost always a different perspective.



When there's a traffic accident, police ask for witnesses to come forward to describe what happened. They like to have as many witness statements as possible, so they can build up a broader picture and a more realistic version of events. In a traffic accident, there will be many different perspectives on what happened. The driver will have one perspective, another driver, or a passenger will have yet another perspective. Each onlooker who witnessed the accident



will have a slightly different perspective, depending on where they were, how far away they were, how much their view or vision was restricted, how much danger they felt they were in, what else was going on, how the accident affected them, what the accident means to them.



So it's the same principle with everything – each situation, event, conversation means something different to all those involved, and to those not involved. We give different meanings, according to our belief systems, and how we are affected by the event. We all have our own realities.

Anais Nin said: *“We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are”*

We look at situations, events, and interpret what other people say and do, according to our own set of past experiences, culture, faith, values, all of which help us form our beliefs about ourselves, about others, and about the world in general. The meaning we give events, the way we make sense of our world, is based upon our core belief system.

Our minds are constantly trying to make sense of our world, forming judgements and opinions about every situation, event, and interaction. Those judgements and opinions will be affected by our central or core belief system. It is as though we are looking at the world through distorted or coloured lenses – and everyone has their own personal prescription or colour for their glasses.

Core belief system comprises:

- How I think about myself
- How I think about others
- How I think about the world



Our core belief system is formed and influenced by:

- Past experiences
- Childhood upbringing
- Culture
- Faith
- Values
- Current circumstances
- Character traits, including genetic influences

Lens: distorted perception

Example:

Childhood Experience:

Bullied and hurt by others



Core Beliefs:

Others will hurt me.
The world is a dangerous place.
I'm useless and unlovable.
I must try to please others so they like and won't hurt me.



Situation or Event

See situations and events as threatening & dangerous

Interpret others words and reactions as critical or threatening.



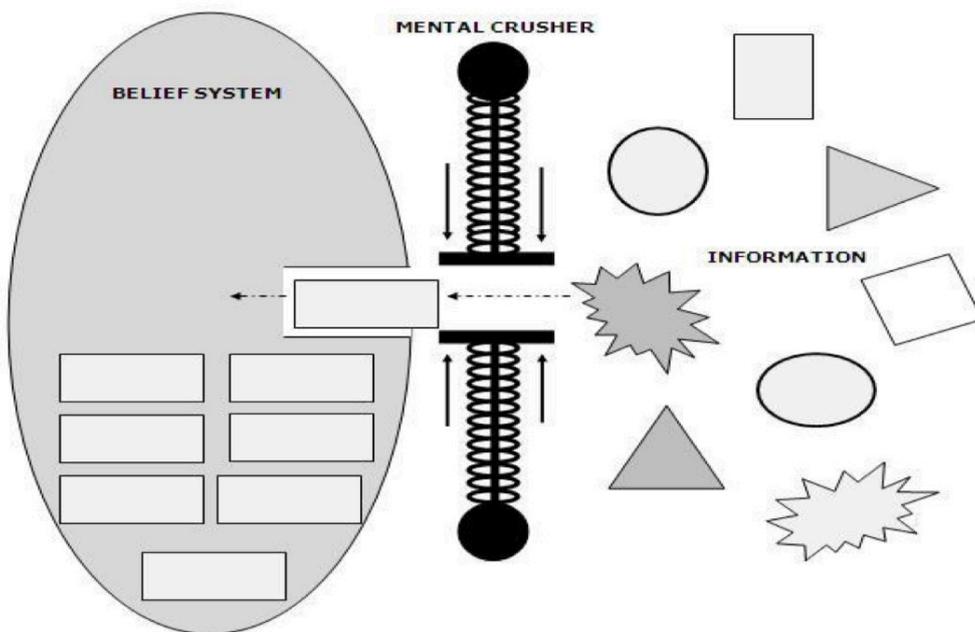
Behaviour: Passive, go along with what others want, don't talk, avoid eye contact

Emotions: Anxious, depressed, low self-esteem

Thoughts: I'm vulnerable, this is dangerous, I'm going to get hurt.

I'm useless and stupid. No-one likes me.

In the example above, even situations which others find enjoyable and relaxing, this particular person will experience it very differently, and feel threatened by others. A look, word or gesture intended to be friendly and kind, may be interpreted as "They don't mean that. They're only trying to be kind to me because they pity me". Or even, "They mean to hurt me". Their mind is interpreting the situation with the bias of "I'm vulnerable, others might hurt me, this is dangerous, I'm useless and unlovable". The mind will work to make any contrary information, fit with those beliefs. This is shown by "The Mental Crusher"



'The Mental Crusher' sits outside the entrance to our belief system, and only allows information or 'evidence' which fits with our own belief system to enter. Any contradictory evidence or information (any shape other than a rectangle) is rejected, or made to fit (crushed into a rectangle). In the diagram, the explosion shape is about to enter the Crusher. As it passes through (shown by the arrow), it becomes a rectangle – it's been crushed and distorted to fit. Therefore, our beliefs remain unchanged in spite of apparently contradictory evidence being out there. *Paraphrased from p. 58 of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Anxiety Disorders by Butler, Fennel & Hackman (Guilford 2008)*

In the case of our earlier example, the information that a person looked at me, is "crushed" and distorted ("they looked at me funny") to confirm that others dislike or mean to hurt me.