



Anxiety disorders 4: the cognitive approach

Module PSYB2

Section C – Individual Differences

3.2.5 anxiety disorders

What we will be learning about

Cognitive psychologists agree with behaviourists on quite a few things. In particular, they agree that abnormal behaviour has lots to do with the things a person learns from their environment. However, cognitive psychologists think that behaviourists focus too much on what a person does and not enough on how the person thinks. In this topic we will learn how cognitive explanation for abnormal behaviour are based on the idea that people feel and behave in abnormal ways because they process information abnormally, a bit like a computer that has developed a fault. This view of anxiety disorders would suggest that a successful treatment should aim to change the way the patient thinks because this will affect the way they feel and act. Cognitive therapies based on this idea are currently very popular so we shall examine the issue of how successful they are in treating anxiety and, at the same time, consider some of the problems that are faced by psychologists trying to research abnormal behaviour and the effectiveness of different treatments.

What you could be tested on

| | A01 – knowledge & understanding | A02 – application, analysis & evaluation | A03 – methods, statistics & ethics (how science works) |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--|
| You must be able to... | State the main assumptions of the cognitive approach to abnormal behaviour (role of mediating cognitive processes; constructivist outlook). Outline one or more cognitive explanations of phobia & OCD Describe cognitive therapy/CBT in the treatment of anxiety disorders. | Distinguish between the cognitive and behavioural aspects of CBT. | Outline some ways of investigating cognitions in anxiety patients. |
| You should be able to... | Describe one or more research studies of cognitive influences on phobia/OCD and one or more research studies of cognitive treatments of phobia/OCD. Outline the link between cognitive processes and specific symptoms of phobia/OCD. | Interpret evidence from studies in terms of what it tells us about cognitive contributions to anxiety disorders. Assess the cognitive view of anxiety disorders in terms of support from evidence, strengths and weaknesses. | Analyse how quasi-experimental methods could be used to compare anxiety patients with controls. Assess strengths and weaknesses of research methods used by the cognitive approach. |
| You could be able to... | Explain the links between the cognitive model of abnormality and cognitive treatments for it. | Evaluate cognitive explanations and treatments for phobias and OCD. | Consider ethical issues of drug treatments in terms of a cost-benefit analysis. |

