

Eating Disorders: The Cognitive Model



This activity will help you to:

- Understand and recall the assumptions of the cognitive model of abnormality
- Apply the assumptions of the cognitive model to eating disorders
- Explain how distortions in thinking could lead to ED symptoms

The Cognitive Model

The cognitive model of abnormality assumes that behaviour is guided by thinking processes. Consequently, biases, errors or faults in thinking processes could lead to behaviour that is incomprehensible to the observer and damaging to the person that does it.

Thinking Errors in Eating Disorders

Here are a few typical thinking errors associated with anorexia and bulimia. For each error, suggest how it could lead to maladaptive behaviour.

Thinking Error	Possible Effect on Behaviour
One biscuit ruins a whole day of dieting. As long as I have blown it I might as well go the whole way and have all those foods I don't allow myself to eat.	
I don't know who I'd be without this illness. I'm the one who's known for not eating.	
I'm nearly at my ideal weight, then I'll stop dieting. I just need to lose a few more pounds and then I'll look fine and I'll be fine.	
If I stop taking laxatives I'll get fat.	