

# The Cognitive Triangle





What are thoughts, feelings and behaviours?

How do thoughts, feelings and behaviours influence each other?



# Positive and Negative Thoughts

Discuss the following points with an adult.

1

Come up with as many positive thoughts as you can that someone might have in the morning, before school.

2

Come up with as many negative thoughts as you can that a person might have in the morning, before school.

For now, just focus on the thought, rather than how the person might be feeling, or what they might do.



# Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours

Different thoughts we have can trigger a range of emotions.

Think about the negative thoughts that you have just discussed and look at the feelings words below. Think carefully about one of the negative thoughts and decide which feelings word best describes how you would feel if you had that negative thought.

embarrassed

worried

overwhelmed

angry

nervous

tearful

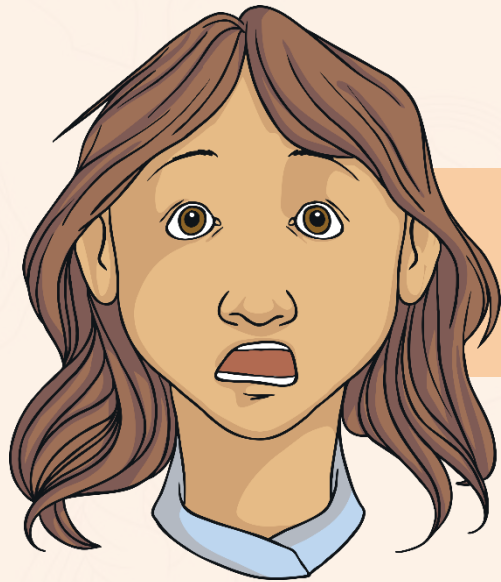
stressed

frightened

jealous

# Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours

Let's look at an example of a negative thought someone might have and how that thought might make them feel.



Oh no, it's our class assembly today.  
I hate speaking in front of people.

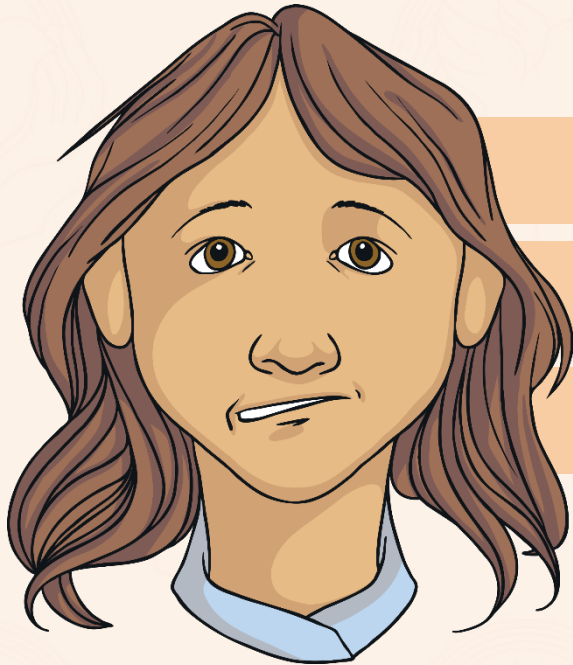
How do you think this thought will make the person thinking it feel?

What emotion will they experience, connected to this thought?

# Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours

The thoughts we have can make us feel a certain way.  
And the way we feel can affect our actions (what we decide to do).

The child who is not looking forward to speaking in the class assembly is probably feeling nervous, worried, anxious and even frightened.



How might these feelings affect their actions?

What might they do?

Why might they behave in this way?

# Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours

The way we feel can influence our behaviour.

There are lots of things that might happen when someone is feeling nervous or anxious.

Something that often happens is that the person **avoids** doing the things that make them feel that way.

The child in our example might decide they simply cannot speak in the class assembly, so they don't participate.

This is called **avoidance** and it doesn't help in the long run. If we keep avoiding things that make us feel bad, then we never get better at doing them and we don't allow ourselves the chance to build confidence.





# The Cognitive Triangle

What does **cognitive** mean?

The word **cognitive** means to do with the process of thinking and other mental processes – that means things we do with our minds.

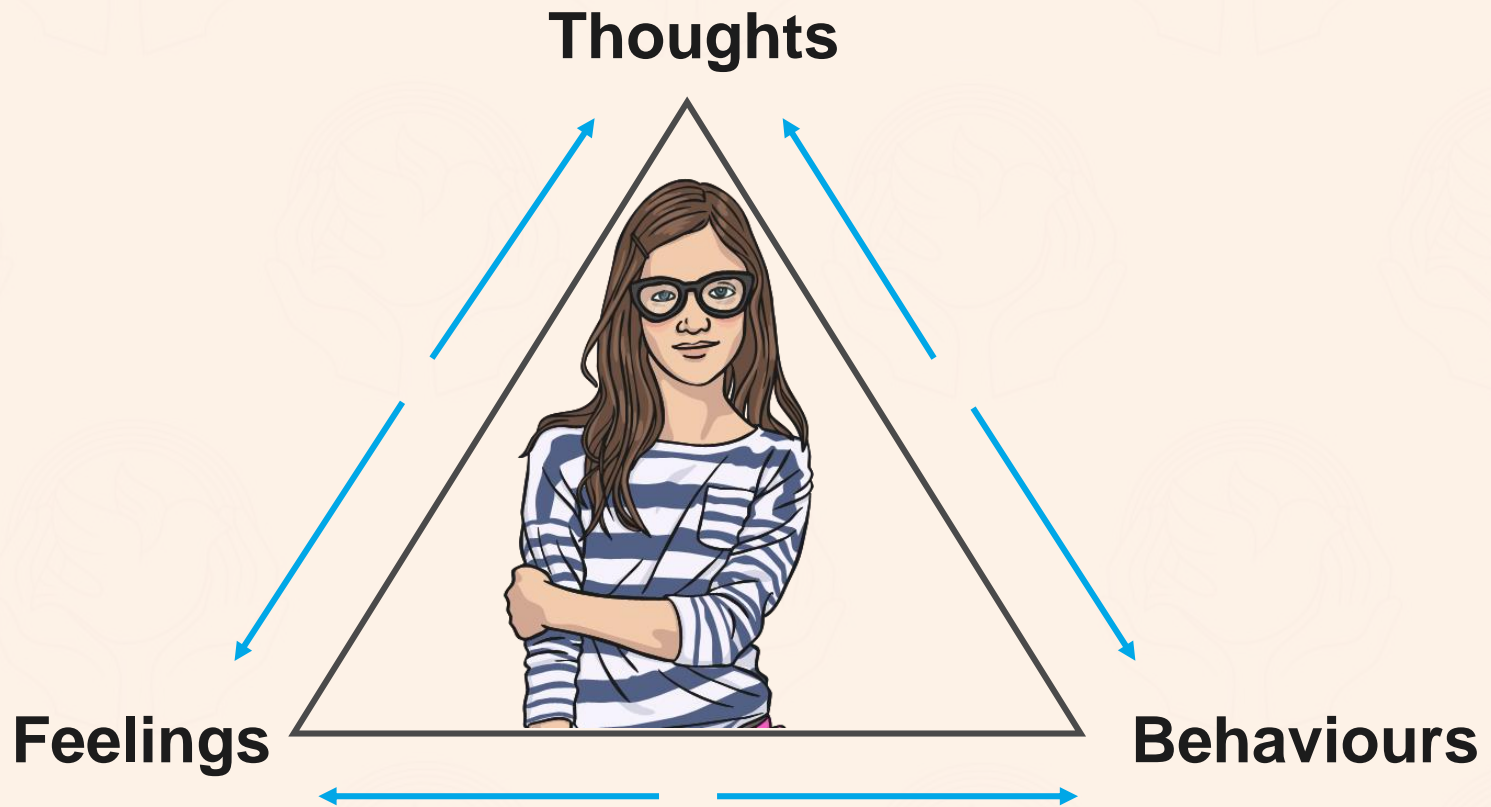
Our **cognitive** functioning includes memory, judgement, reasoning and emotional responses.





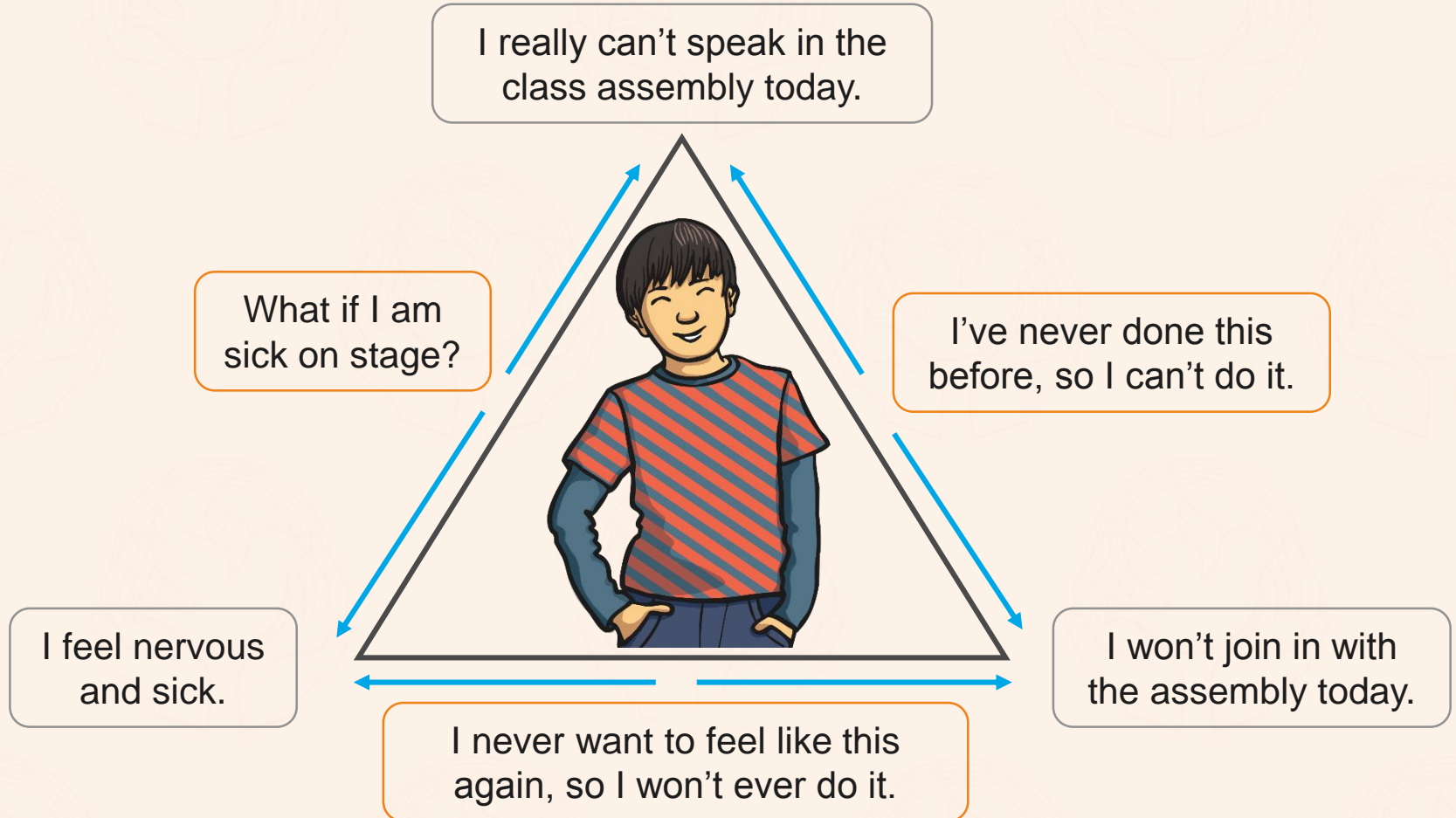
# The Cognitive Triangle

Our thoughts, feelings and behaviours are all closely linked and each one affects the other two. It can be shown in a diagram using a triangle.



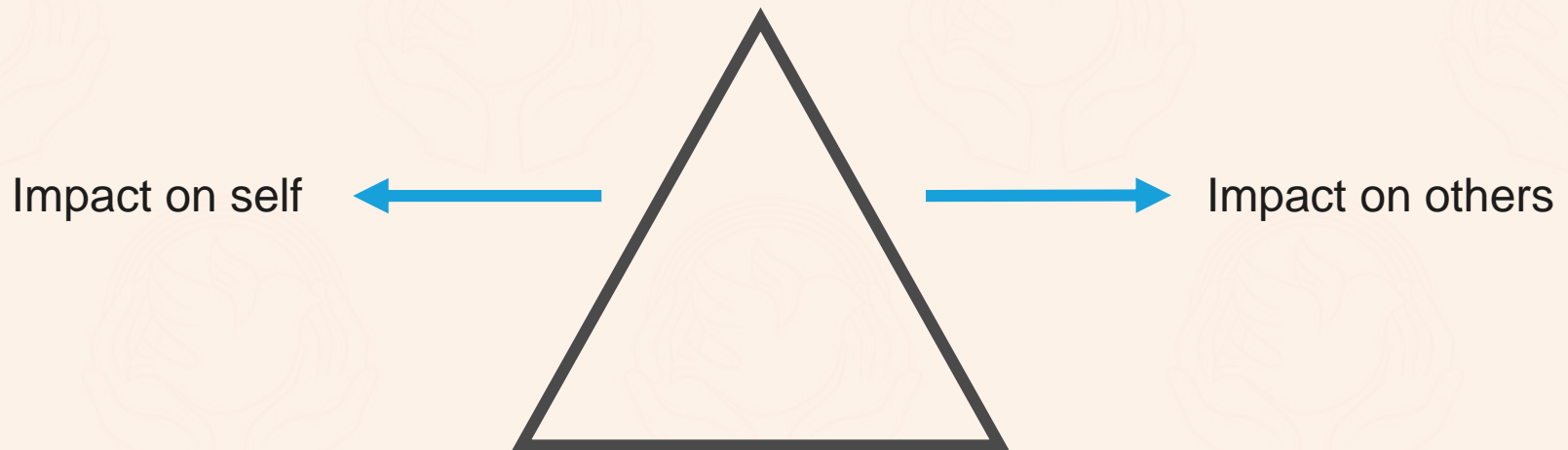
# The Cognitive Triangle

Let's look at the example of the child and the class assembly.



# The Cognitive Triangle

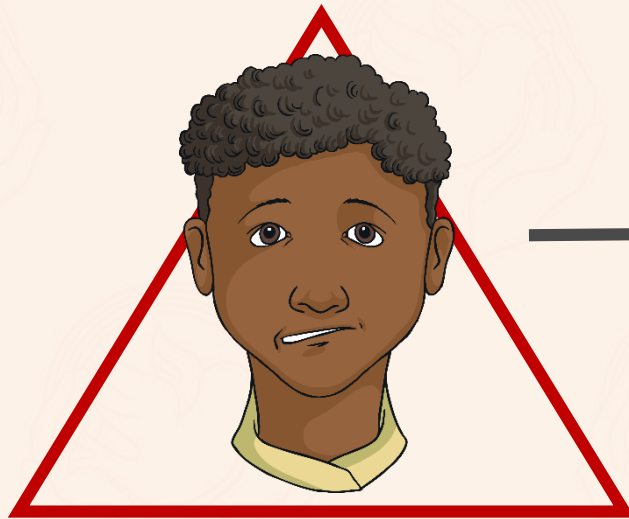
- What impact has this negative thought had on the child and their behaviour?
- Will anyone else be affected by this child's behaviour?
- Will it help the child next time they are faced with a similar situation?



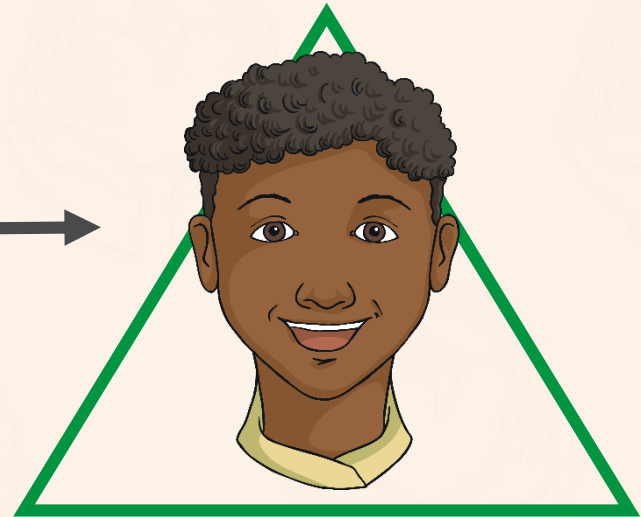


# The Cognitive Triangle

This cognitive triangle can be positive or negative. If it is negative, it can be hard to break the cycle. Recognising that we are having negative thoughts and how they are impacting on our feelings and behaviour is the first step to changing it into a positive triangle.



Negative thoughts,  
feelings and behaviour

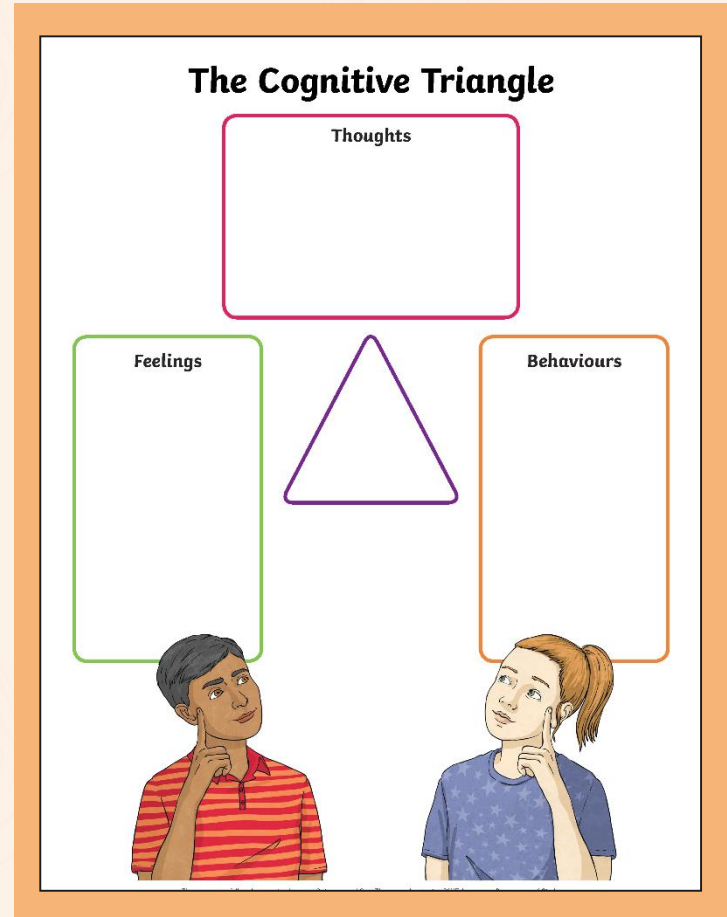


Positive thoughts,  
feelings and behaviour

# The Cognitive Triangle

You are now going to have a go at fitting a scenario into the cognitive triangle – thinking about how our thoughts, feelings and behaviours can all be linked and can affect each other.

Choose a scenario on the next slide (you may choose to do multiple scenarios). Use the sheet to write down the thoughts, feelings and behaviours that the person in the scenario might experience.



Cognitive Triangle Scenario Cards



**Your friend has brought in a photo of their new puppy. You have always wanted a dog.**

Cognitive Triangle Scenario Cards



**Your mum has put a baby photo of you on Facebook and lots of your friends have seen it.**

This resource is fully in line with the Learning Outcomes and Core Themes outlined in the PSHE Association [Guidelines of Study](#)

Cognitive Triangle Scenario Cards



**It is Sports Day, but you cannot participate because you have your leg in a cast.**

Cognitive Triangle Scenario Cards



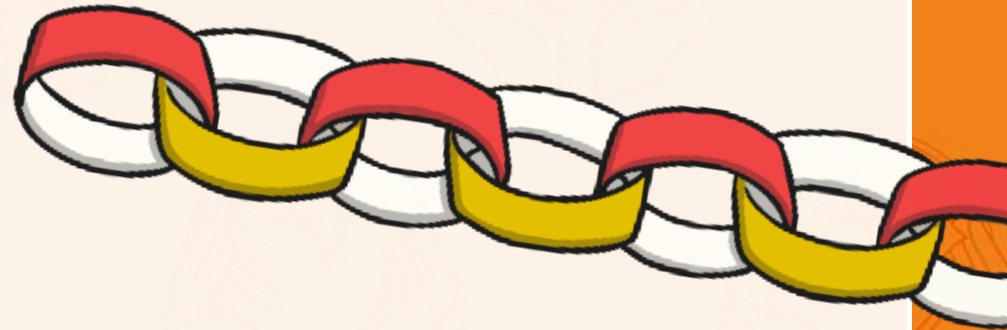
**There is a new child in the class and they have been asked to sit next to you.**



# The Chain Reaction

The way we think affects the way we feel and the way we feel affects the way we act, or behave.

Our behaviour reinforces the way we think and so the chain goes on and on.



<b>thought</b>
<b>feeling</b>
<b>behaviour</b>

# The Chain Reaction

Think carefully about a negative thought that you recently had or one you often have.


Write the thought on the top strip, then think about how that thought makes you feel.

Write that on the second strip, then consider how this thought and feeling might make you behave.

Write the behaviour on the last strip. Cut them out and fasten together to form a chain.

**Think Positive**

I understand the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviours.  
Think about a negative thought you have had recently. Write the thought on the top strip, the feeling you felt on the second strip and what you did or how you behaved on the third strip. Then cut out the three strips and make them into paper chain links.



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# The Chain Reaction

Once you have made a negative paper chain, you are going to make a positive one, on the same subject.

Think about how you could change the initial thought from a negative one to a positive one.

Consider how you would then feel differently and how you would behave differently.





# Turn a Negative into a Positive

Let's think again about the child who didn't want to speak in the class assembly.

With an adult, discuss how the thought, feeling and behaviour could all be positive, instead of negative.

Draw a triangle and label the thought, feeling and behaviour on the three corners.

