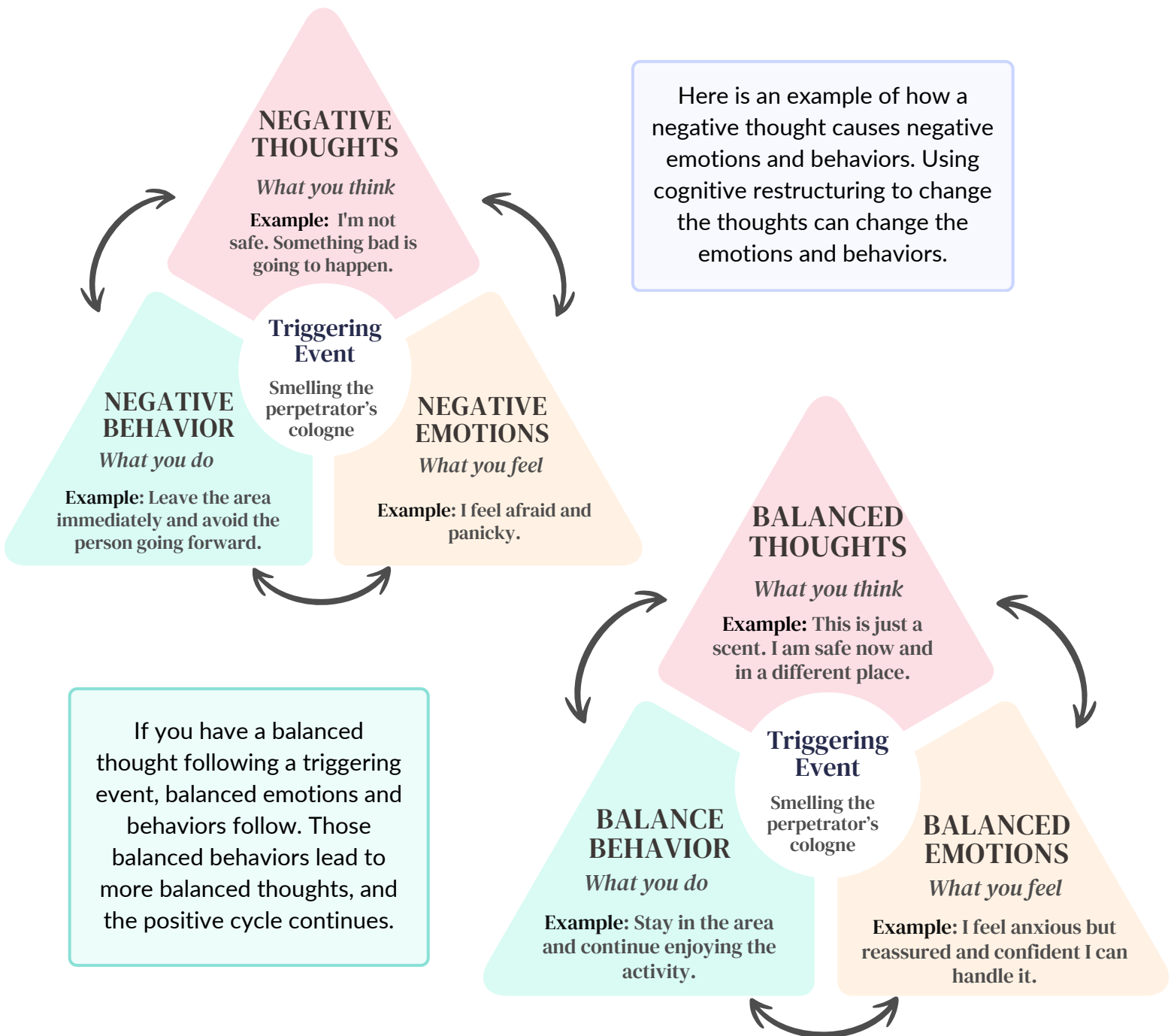# Cognitive Restructuring

Cognitive restructuring is a CBT technique that involves recognizing negative and unhelpful thoughts, examining the evidence for and against these thoughts, and developing more helpful alternative thoughts. **For someone who has experienced trauma, cognitive restructuring can help interrupt and change the negative thought patterns that contribute to feelings of fear, helplessness, or anxiety.**

NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

What you think

Example: I'm not safe. Something bad is going to happen.

Triggering Event

Smelling the perpetrator's cologne

NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

What you do

Example: Leave the area immediately and avoid the person going forward.

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

What you feel

Example: I feel afraid and panicky.

> Here is an example of how a negative thought causes negative emotions and behaviors. Using cognitive restructuring to change the thoughts can change the emotions and behaviors.

> If you have a balanced thought following a triggering event, balanced emotions and behaviors follow. Those balanced behaviors lead to more balanced thoughts, and the positive cycle continues.

BALANCED THOUGHTS

What you think

Example: This is just a scent. I am safe now and in a different place.

Triggering Event

Smelling the perpetrator's cologne

BALANCE BEHAVIOR

What you do

Example: Stay in the area and continue enjoying the activity.

BALANCED EMOTIONS

What you feel

Example: I feel anxious but reassured and confident I can handle it.

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Cognitive Restructuring

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THOUGHT	EMOTION	BEHAVIOR
What you think in a situation	How you feel	How you handle the situation
Ex: I'm not safe.	*Ex: I feel afraid and panicky.*	*Ex: Leave immediately and avoid it going forward.*

It's important to understand that our automatic thoughts affect our feelings and influence our behavior.

You can recognize unhealthy thought patterns that are making your trauma symptoms worse by practicing cognitive restructuring. Use the questions below each time you're experiencing unwanted thoughts that lead to unhealthy behaviors.

Thought:

Is my thought factual?

What evidence do I have to support my thought?

What would someone else say about the situation?

Is it possible to view this situation differently?

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Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our strict editorial standards ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com

300+
Companies Reviewed

2,350+
Hours of Firsthand Experience

1,150+
Data Points Analyzed

Best Online Therapy

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

Best Online Psychiatry

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

Best Mental Health Apps

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

Therapist Directory

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.

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