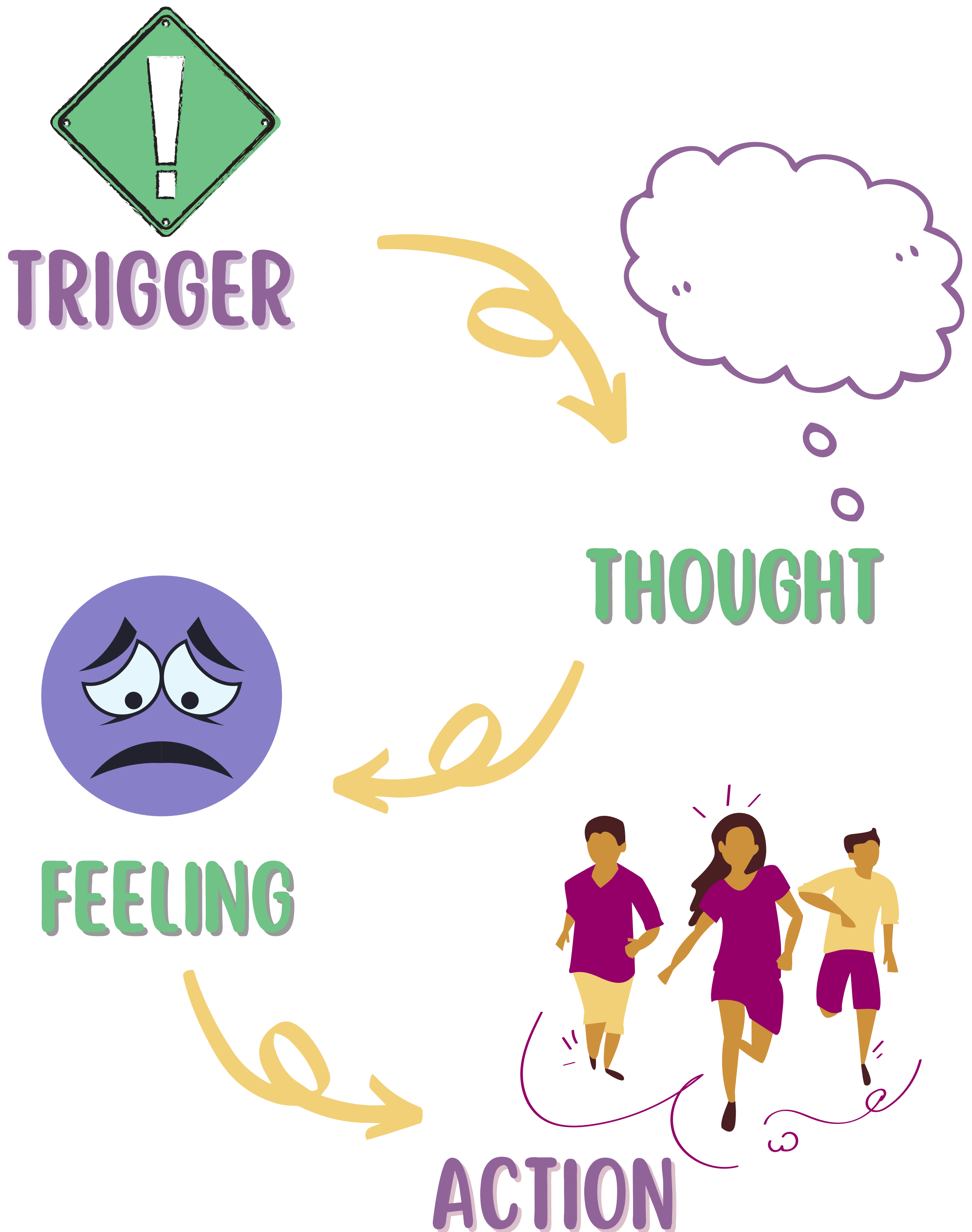


THE THOUGHT CYCLE



Psychology & Therapeutic Services

A TRIGGER (a situation or event) occurs, and our brain has a THOUGHT about it. The thought we have influences the way that we FEEL and then we ACT in a way that reflects this.

THE THOUGHT CYCLE



TRIGGER;
Something happens. This step covers only the facts of what happened, without any interpretation.

EXAMPLE: You sent a friend a message on Friday night and they haven't responded over the weekend.



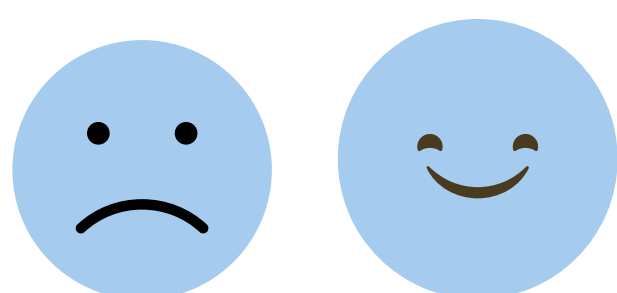
THOUGHTS:
The way we interpret the situation. Thoughts are not always accurate and can be helpful or unhelpful.

UNHELPFUL THOUGHT

EXAMPLE: What did I do wrong?

HELPFUL THOUGHT

EXAMPLE: They could be busy



FEELING:
We experience emotions based upon your thoughts about the situation.

FEELING

EXAMPLE: Worried, hurt, sad

FEELING

EXAMPLE: Neutral, okay, unfazed



ACTION:
You respond to the situation based upon your thoughts and feelings.

ACTION

EXAMPLE: Ignored your friend

ACTION

EXAMPLE: Check in with your friend at school on Monday

Do an experiment with me: think to yourself, as convincingly as you can:

1 AM A DUCK

Go ahead and repeat it a couple of times. Say it out loud if you want.

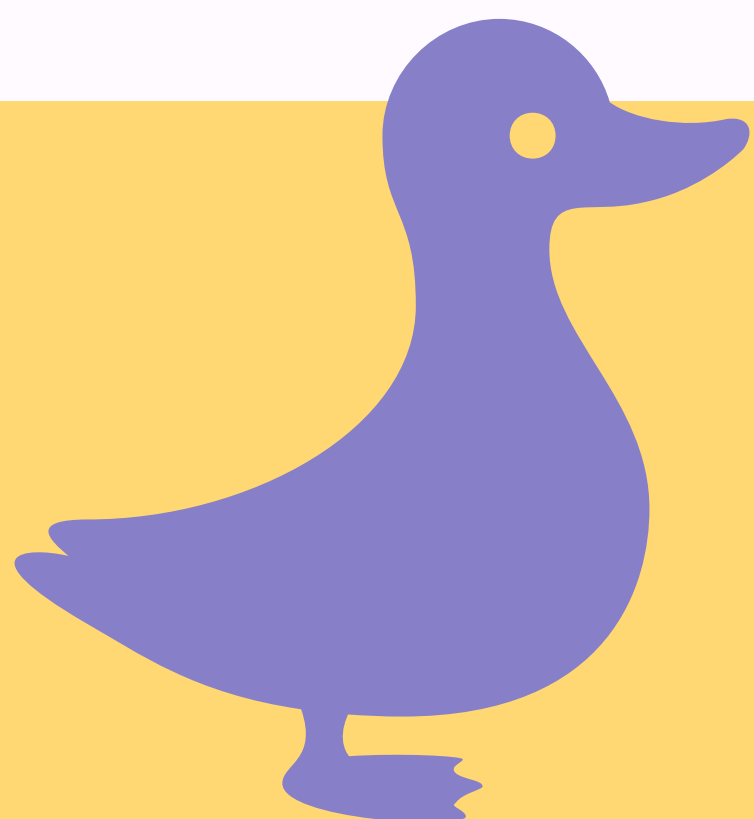
Did anything happen?

Has anything changed?

Do you have a strong desire to jump in the nearest pond?

Here's the lesson:

THOUGHTS ARE NOT
FACTS!



You are not a duck!

They don't have power unless we act on them. You didn't turn into a duck just now, because you are not your thoughts. In the same way, having the thought "I'm dumb" doesn't make it true and doesn't mean you are.

The next time your brain offers you an unhelpful judgment about yourself, perhaps try reminding your brain

1. you are not a duck
2. thoughts are not facts.

You might like to offer yourself a more helpful and truthful statement instead, like:

"I'm not perfect, but I'm doing the very best that I can."



CHALLENGING THOUGHTS

Unhelpful thoughts

Nobody likes me

I'm a loser

This is definitely
going to be
awful

It's all my fault

What if everyone
laughs at me?

I will never be any good

Why does this
always
happen to
me?

I can't do this

I shouldn't
have made
that mistake

Crying
is weak

No one understands me

Everyone is always
out to get me

I am a bad
person

My life is terrible

Ways to challenge unhelpful thoughts

What is a more
helpful thought?

What is another
possibility?

What would the
people who care
about me say?

If my friend had this
thought, what would I
tell them?

What is the worst
that could really
happen?

If the worst really did happen,
what could I do to deal with it
and who could help me?

What is the best
possible outcome?