

COGNITIVE MODELS OF DEPRESSION



How the way we think shapes the way we feel.
Negative thoughts don't just reflect depression
— they may fuel it.

Beck's Cognitive Triad

Depression often involves a repeating pattern of:

- Negative view of the self (“I’m worthless.”)
- Negative view of the world
 (“Nothing good ever happens to me.”)
- Negative view of the future
 (“Things will never get better.”)

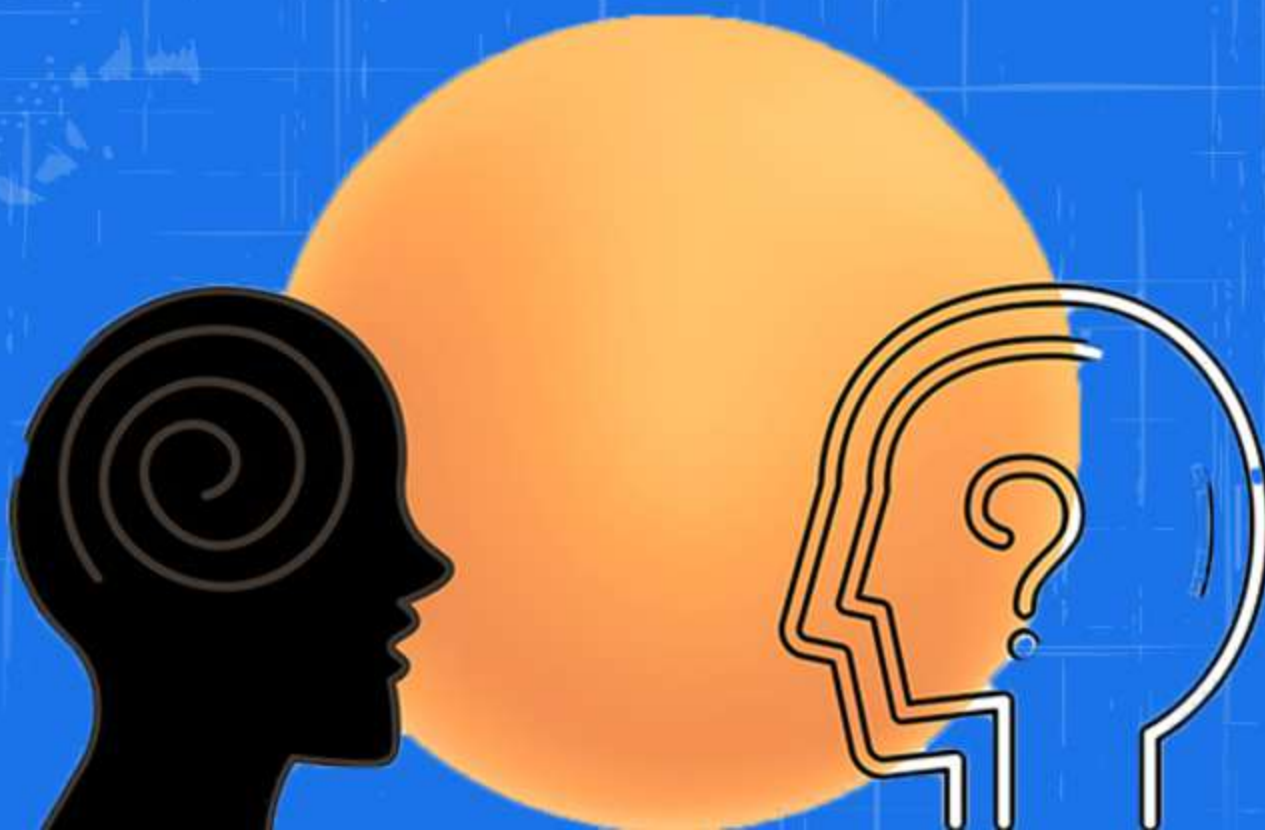
This is called Beck's Cognitive Triad — one of the most well-known models of depressive thinking.

Core Beliefs & Automatic Thoughts

Depression is linked to:

- Negative core schemas: deep beliefs about self, others, and life (“I am unlovable”)
- Automatic thoughts: quick, negative judgments that reinforce low mood

These thoughts may feel true — but they’re often based on faulty logic.





Common Cognitive Distortions

Some thought patterns are sneaky and self-sabotaging:

All-or-nothing thinking — “If I’m not perfect, I’m a failure.”

Overgeneralization — “This one rejection means I’ll never succeed.”

Mind reading — “They probably think I’m annoying.”

Catastrophizing — “This small mistake is going to ruin everything.”

These distortions reinforce hopelessness and self-doubt.

Attributional Styles & Learned Helplessness

How we explain events matters:

People prone to depression may blame themselves for bad outcomes — ... and believe those outcomes are stable, global, and unchangeable.

This is called a negative attributional style

It's linked to learned helplessness — the belief that effort won't change anything.

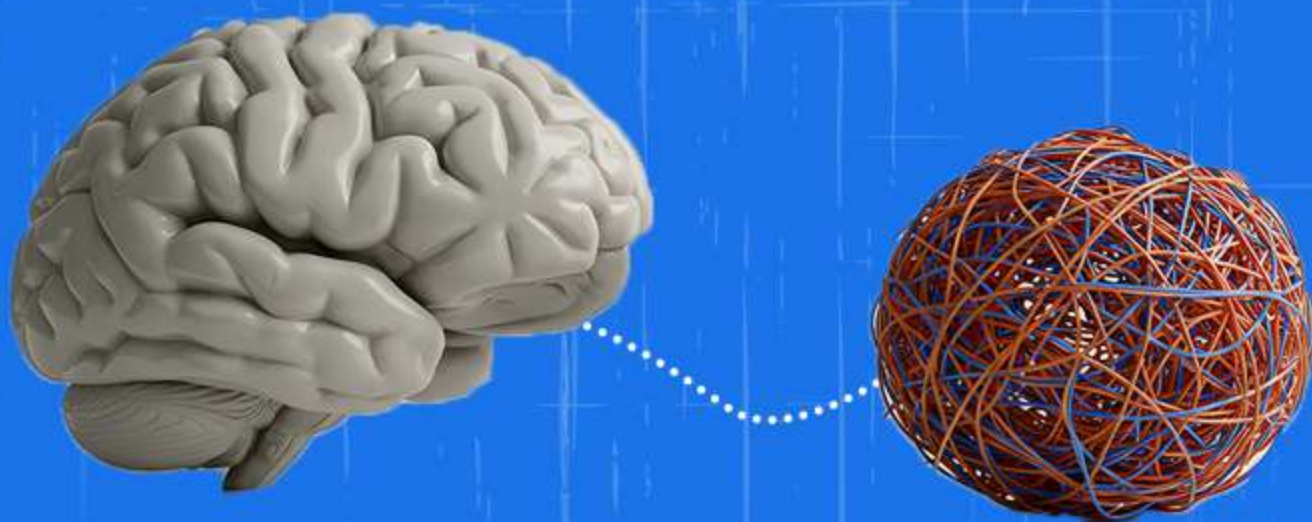


Thoughts Meet the Brain

Modern research shows that these thinking patterns are linked to:

- Overactivity in default mode network (DMN) — rumination & self-focus
- Dysregulation in amygdala + prefrontal cortex — emotion & threat response
- Genetic and neurochemical factors that influence how we process stress

Cognition and biology aren't separate — they interact.



What Helps

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is based on these models:

- It teaches people to identify, challenge, and reframe negative thoughts
- Boosts self-awareness and builds realistic self-beliefs
- Often combined with lifestyle changes or medical support

The goal: break the thought-emotion cycle.



Depression isn't just about how you feel —
it's about how your mind processes life.

But awareness is powerful.

When you change the pattern, you
change the path.



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