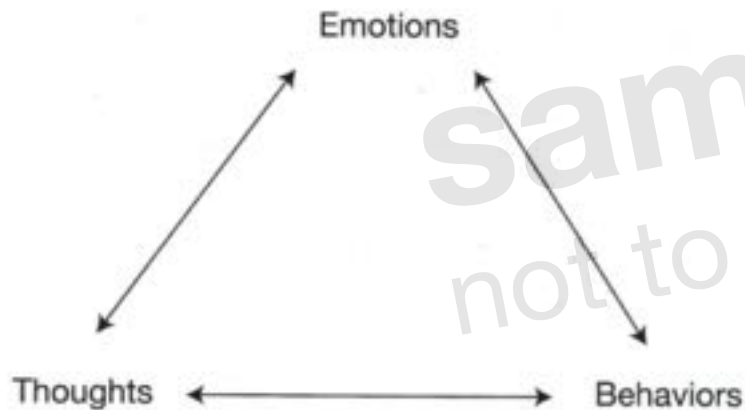


## Thoughts, Emotions, and Behaviors

So far you've been practicing naming your emotions and figuring out their purposes. The next important thing you need to know is the difference between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Quite often we get these three things mixed up. For example, if someone asks you how you feel, and you respond, "I feel like people just don't understand me," this isn't actually an emotion, but a thought. We often mix up behaviors and emotions as well; you might think it's not good to get angry, but what you're probably thinking of is the behavior that often results from anger. It's okay to get angry, but it's not okay to yell at other people or throw things because you're angry. We tend to mix up how we feel, think, and act mainly because these three things are so closely connected.



This diagram shows how our emotions affect our thoughts and behaviors, our thoughts affect our emotions and behaviors, and our behaviors affect our thoughts and emotions. In every situation, we experience these three things—we have thoughts about it, we have feelings about it, and we behave in a certain way. Add to this the fact that all three can happen very quickly, and it's no wonder we often get them confused! To be more effective at managing your emotions, you need to learn to separate these three things.

## 9 thought, emotion, or behavior?

For each sentence, circle whether it's a thought, emotion, or behavior. When you're done, you can check out the answers on page 148.

- |  |         |         |          |
|--|---------|---------|----------|
| 1. I hate school.  | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 2. I'm worried about my exams next week.                               | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 3. I can't wait to get a new MP3 player.                               | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 4. I do my homework.   | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 5. I argue with my parents.  | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 6. I'm never going to have a relationship.                             | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 7. I'm so angry I didn't get to go to the concert.                     | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 8. I surf the Internet.  | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 9. I love my new dog.  | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 10. I get ready to go to the mall with friends.                        | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 11. I don't like the sweater my grandmother bought me for my birthday. | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |
| 12. I'm hurt that my sister wouldn't take me to the movies with her.   | Thought | Emotion | Behavior |

Don't worry if you had a hard time with some of these—most people are not used to trying to think this way, so it's natural that it will take some time for you to get used to separating your thoughts from your emotions and your behaviors. Make sure you work on this, though, as it will help you to have more control over your emotions and the behaviors that result from them.

# what's your communication style? 37

Before you can change a pattern, you first have to be aware of it. Look at the following questions to help you get an idea of what your communication style is; you'll likely be able to see that you behave in many of these ways sometimes, so when you're thinking about each question, put checks beside the ones that seem to describe you best. When you've finished, add up the number of check marks in each section to see which communication styles you use most often.

## Passive

- I try to push my feelings away rather than express them to others.
- I worry that expressing myself will cause others to be angry with me or to not like me.
- I often hear myself saying "I don't care" or "It doesn't matter to me" when I do care, and it actually does matter.
- I try not to "rock the boat," keeping quiet because I don't want to upset others.
- I often go along with others' opinions because I don't want to be different.

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

## Aggressive

- I am concerned with getting my own way, regardless of how it affects others.
- I often yell, swear, or use other aggressive means of communicating.
- My friends are often afraid of me.
- I don't really care if others get what they need as long as my needs are met.
- I've heard others say that I have an "It's my way or the highway" attitude.

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

## activity 37 \* what's your communication style?

### Passive-Aggressive

- I have a tendency to be sarcastic in conversations with others.
- I tend to give people the silent treatment when I'm angry with them.
- I often find myself saying one thing but really thinking another.
- I'm generally reluctant to express my emotions in words, resorting instead to aggressive behaviors, like slamming doors.
- I try to get my message across in more subtle ways for fear that expressing myself will cause others to be angry with me or to stop liking me.

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

### Assertive

- I believe that I have the right to express my opinions and emotions.
- When I'm having a disagreement with someone, I can express my opinions and emotions clearly and honestly.
- In communication with others, I treat them with respect, while also respecting myself.
- I listen closely to what other people are saying, sending the message that I'm trying to understand their perspective.
- I try to negotiate with the other person if we have different goals, rather than to focus only on getting my own needs met.

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Now take a look to see if you scored higher in one area. You might find that you tend to have the same communication style on a regular basis, or you might notice that you have traits of some or all of the styles, depending on the situation and the person you're communicating with.