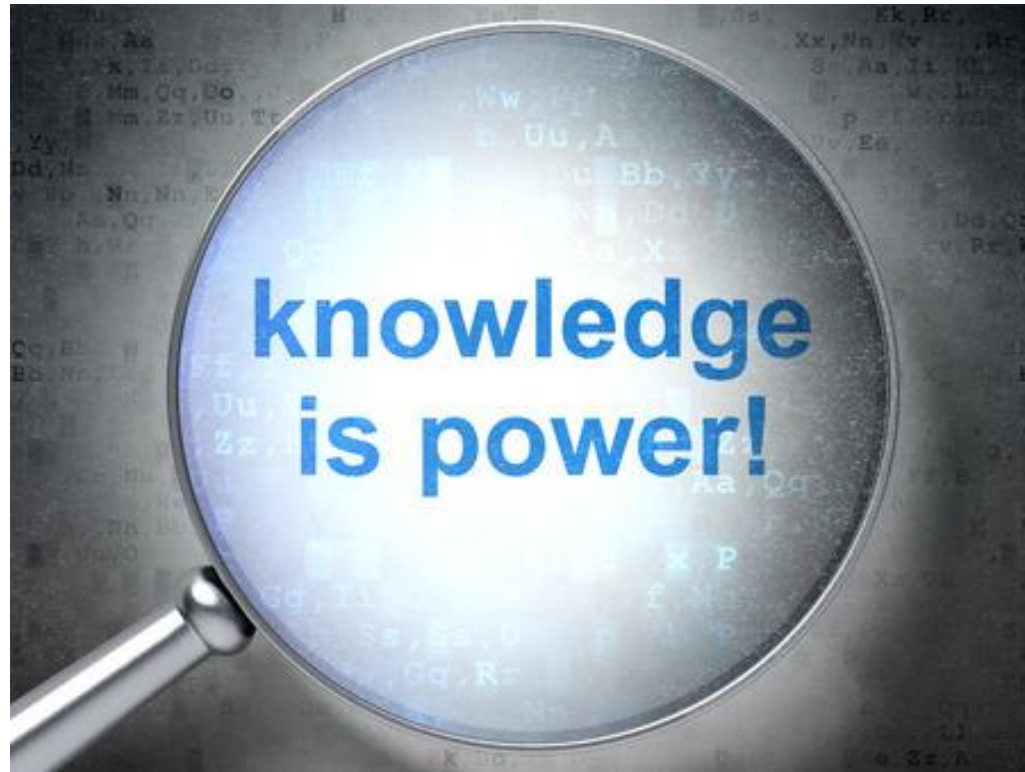


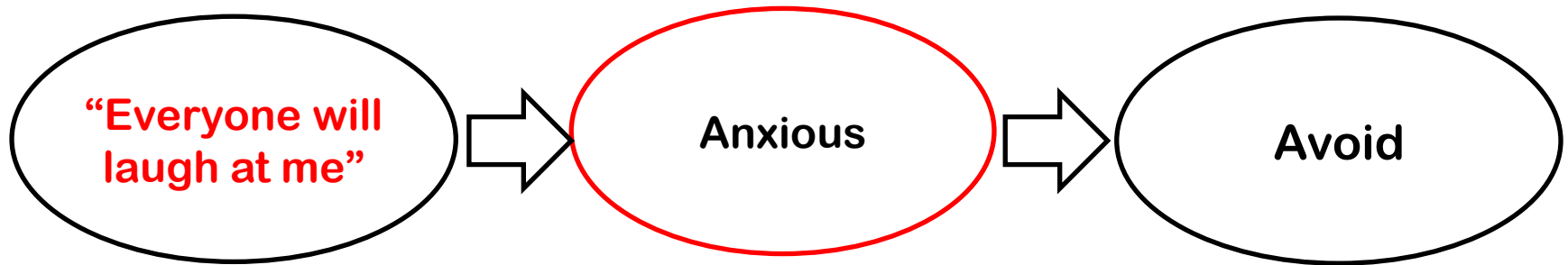
Behavioural Experiments



What are Behavioural Experiments?

- **In a Behavioural Experiment you put your beliefs to the test**
- **This can be very helpful, because faulty beliefs are often at the root of emotional problems such as depression and anxiety.**

What we *believe* affects how we *feel* and what we *do*:



Some Examples

- Ron – “There’s no point getting out of bed”
- Linda – “I have no control over my worries”
- Mia “When I speak in public it is obvious that I am nervous and everybody thinks I am a terrible speaker”.

Mia's Public Speaking Anxiety



- Mia has anxiety about public speaking, a very common problem.
- Now she has been promoted and will have to give presentations at work as part of her new role
- Mia feels motivated to try to address her problem
- She is curious about trying a behavioural experiment

Mia's Behavioural Experiment

Step 1

What belief needs testing?

- What belief is driving Mia's anxiety about giving a presentation?
- Mia decides it's this belief:
- *“When I give a presentation it is obvious I am very nervous and everybody thinks I am a terrible presenter ” (90% belief in this)*

Step 2

Come up with an alternative more positive belief



- Mia's alternative belief
- “Although I am very nervous it may be that not everyone notices this and maybe some people think I am an OK presenter” (10%)

Step 3

Designing a behavioural experiment



How can Mia find out which of these beliefs is correct?

“When I give a presentation it is obvious I am very nervous and everybody thinks I am a terrible presenter”

or

“Although I am very nervous it may be that not everyone notices this and maybe some people think I am an OK presenter”

How to test Mia's beliefs

... some ideas



- Presenting in front of her bathroom mirror to see how well she comes across
- Video recording herself and then watching it, rating how nervous she looks and how well she presents
- Asking a live audience for feedback

Step 3

Designing the experiment (continued)



- Mia goes for option 3 and decides to volunteer for the next in-house presentation and to ask colleagues for feedback
- She designs a form asking two questions
 1. How nervous do I look when presenting?
 2. How good am I at presenting?
- She asks the audience to answer the questions honestly, on a scale 0-10

Step 4

Conducting the experiment



Step 5 – Learning from the Experiment

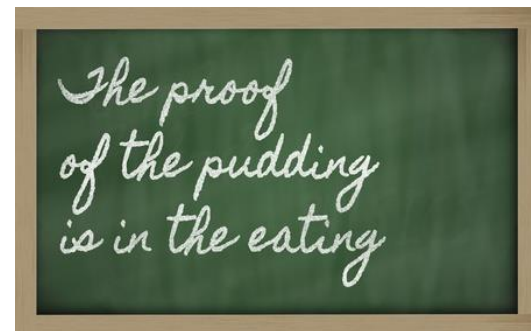
a) Reviewing the results

- The audience said

How nervous do I look when presenting? 4/10

How good am I at presenting? 7/10

- This gives her pause for thought about her original beliefs



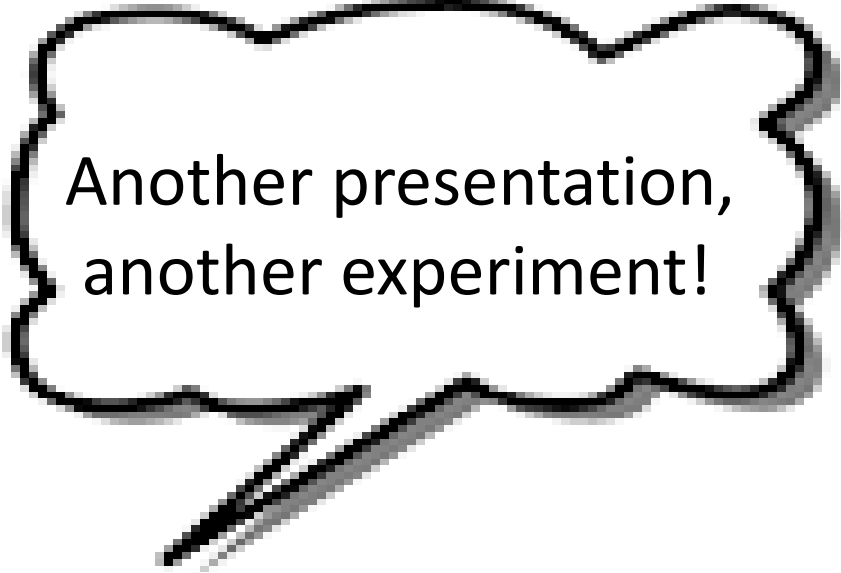
Step 5 – Learning from the experiment

b) Rerating your beliefs

- Given the evidence of the experiment you re-rate how much you believe your original belief and the alternative
- *“When I give a presentation it is obvious I am very nervous and everybody thinks I am a terrible presenter” Before - 90%, After - 30%*
- *“Although I am very nervous it may be that not everyone notices this and maybe some people think I am an OK presenter” Before - 10%, After - 70%*

Step 6 – Next steps

- What further experiments might be helpful?



Another presentation,
another experiment!



Putting it all together

The 6 steps to successful behavioural experiments

1. Decide which belief to test
2. Consider an alternative, more positive belief
3. Design an experiment to discover which belief is right
4. Conduct the experiment
5. Review the results of the experiment and rerate your beliefs
6. Decide what further experiments could be useful

How could Ron and Linda test out their beliefs?

- Ron – “There’s no point getting out of bed”
- Linda – “I have no control over my worries”

Behavioural Experiments for Ron and Linda –some ideas

- Ron – “There’s no point getting out of bed”

On alternate days stay in bed or get out of bed and record how it affects his mood

- Linda – “I have no control over my worries”

Try jotting down her worries and then postponing worrying about them until her “worry time”.

Troubleshooting

- I didn't do the experiment!
 - A step by step approach gradually challenging your fears may be helpful.
 - Think in advance about what problems are likely to be encountered and how to deal with them.
- It didn't go as I hoped
 - The point of the experiment is to find out what will happen, so either way you can't lose – knowledge is power.
- I'm not sure what I learnt?
 - Design and record your experiment using the Behavioural Experiment Record sheet available at the TalkPlus web site.

Take Home Message

- You have the ability to test out beliefs that are causing you problems
- Just follow the 6 steps we've described in this talk
- The result can be very empowering!



Next steps

- What beliefs are causing you problems or holding you back?
- All worksheets including a blank record sheet, Mia's example record sheet and a PDF of this presentation are freely available at <https://www.talkplus.org.uk>
- Why don't you print off them off and design your own behavioural experiment today?
- Good luck!