**THINKING OR COGNITIVE LIFE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES**

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**Plan:** To explore, discuss and illustrate Theory A, B and C using a most recent event episode or situation.

**Theory A, B and C Technique (Intermediate and Advanced Level)**

The Theory A, Theory B and Theory C ‘technique offers the perpetual worrier or anxiety sufferer a choice of’ three alternative possible outcomes of an event’ or an anxiety provoking or difficult situation. ‘These options provide an excellent means for working through the’ person’s ‘worst fears or anxiety about whether a certain, action or environmental factor’. The benefits of the Theory A, B and C ‘technique is:

* in reducing anxiety levels by working through the different possible outcomes of an event, helping provide an alternative less dramatic perspective on a specific worry or fear and an opportunity to review what the likelihood may be of the worst-case scenario actually coming true’.
* a chance to help your brain to shift its resources and capacity from a wasteful investment and outcomes to a productive investment and outcomes.

**Theory A:** There are three options to Theory A:

*Option 1:* The situation is most likely to ‘trigger the feared outcome to materialize’, so ‘the individual’s worst, catastrophic fear coming true if their fears are correct’. Is it a problem that has happened before without a resolution and there is a real fear or concern that it may happen again? If yes, then invest in finding a solution and in problem solving.

***Example: ‘Theory A possibility:*** If I fly, I will be violently sick and pass out.

*Evidence For my view:* I felt slightly nauseous and a little bit dizzy when I flew to Paris last year.

*What I must do if it this is true:* always travel by boat or car or train instead’.

*Option 2:* If there is a real problem and there is a real solution for it. Is there a practical solution that can be implemented? If yes, then invest on understanding and planning the solution and take baby steps or hierarchy of problem solving to implement the solution. Avoid or reduce investing on thinking about the problem because it will get you nowhere, changes nothing and it will end up in more frustrations for you and other people. No point putting so much efforts thinking about a situation or a problem that has a practical solution (just get on and begin the solution with baby steps).

Option 3: If the question is: ‘Do I have a problem here?’ Then focus on yourself-may be self-nurturing, self-compassion, or looking for your interest. If the questions is: ‘Do we have a problem here?’. Then focus on consensus and not run off with your own emotions and decisions.

**Theory B:**

The situation is least likely to ‘trigger the feared outcome to materialize’, so it ‘is more about a worry of a feared result rather than a definite catastrophe’. Is it only a worry about a problem that is yet to happen? If a situation looks like a real problem, but it has not happened yet or it is in the future or it is not within your control. Then stop investing so many hours in trying to solve in your head a problem that has not existed yet or is still distant or may never come to be a real problem. You may:

* *Option 1 scripting:* Write out and down all you are thinking of this futuristic problem or situation. This will help to pull the situation from your head and let you see it written down. This may give your brain space for other useful tasks. This may also give you some clarity on whether some aspects of the situation may require some forward or advance planning, actions or a resolution. If yes, apply Theory A to those plannable and resolvable aspects.
* *Option 2 distraction and postponing worry:* Find a distraction that is beneficial to you or to other people so that the time you would have invested in wasteful thinking could be put to a gainful use. You can also set a particular time aside when you want to do all the worrying and/or the scripting so that worrying does not take over your whole day or life at the expense of other important things in your life and in the lives of people around you.
* *Option 3 A*dvance planning and resolutions: If practical for you, pull back the situation from the future and make it a present problem and solve it by applying Theory A.

**Example, ‘*Theory B possibility:*** If I fly, I am worried I will be violently sick and pass out.

*Evidence for my view:* I do get terribly anxious but I have never actually vomited or fainted before.

*What I must do if this is true:* face my fears gradually, fly regularly and use coping strategies such as relaxation and meditation’.

**Theory C:**

If there is a real problem and you have tried every humanly known solution, but nothing or not much have changed positively. Is it a problem that defies every known human solution? *If yes, then* you may consider:

* *Option1 Benefits Focusing:* Explore and focus on what you can benefit from the situation.
* *Option2 Exiting:* Exit the situation if it is practical to do so.
* *Option 3 Positive Acceptance of Reality:* If option 1 and 2 are not practical for you, then learn to accept the situation as your new reality and then focus on investing on your existing and new values, things, actions, behaviours, relationships etc. that shall help you cope resiliently with this new reality.

**EXAMPLES OF THEORY A, B, AND C.**

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| **Theory A** | **Theory B** | **Theory C** |
| ‘The problem is ...  *I have a wound on my toe after toe-jumping in the garden’.* | ‘The problem is **worry** that ...  *I may injure and have a wound on my toe if I go toe-jumping in the garden’.* | The problem is ...  *I have a bullying manager and my employers have no money to increase my salary.* |
| Evidence  *I have these signs, symptoms and difficulties:*   * *Bleeding* * *Pain* * *Can’t wear shoes.* | Evidence   * *Doctor tells me it is not a wound, but only minor temporary blister spots.* * *The blisters ‘are worse when I am stressed’ or wears too small toes.* * *‘Focusing on my symptoms makes them worse’.* * *‘Reassurance makes my symptoms better’* * *‘I’ve had these symptoms a long time and they have not got any more serious’* | Evidence   * *Other colleagues have put in grievances against this manager.* * *HR and senior managers have investigated and the bullying manager is still bullying.* * *I’m working overtime to meet deadlines.* * *The company is at the verge of bankruptcy.* |
| ‘What do I need to do if Theory A is true?’  *‘Go to the doctor’ or Pharmacist and ask to be treated’ straight away’ or use first aid if the wound is not major.* | ‘What do I need to do if Theory B is true?’  *‘Learn how to deal with my worry’* | What do I need to do if Theory C is true?  Exiting technique: Apply for a new job and when successful, resign from the current sinking firm. Before submitting resignation letter, if I want, still submit a corporate bullying grievance and taken them to employment Tribunal for emotional and career damages. |
| **Theory A** | **Theory B** | **Theory C** |
| *­ ‘There is a problem with my appearance’* | *‘I have a body image problem’* | *­There is a problem with my appearance and many doctors advised against plastic surgery due to extreme risk of skin cancer.* |
| *“Th­eory A is the theory that you have been acting on for the last X years, it argues that the problem you have is your appearance”*  **‘What are the implications of following Theory A’ that doesn’t lead to a significant shift in the problem with all the solutions already tried?**  *“It means that you have to try very hard to hide or alter your appearance. Unfortunately, your solutions then become your problem and cause increasing handicap”* | *“­Theory B is that you have a body image problem. This problem makes you excessively self-conscious about your appearance. This has probably developed from some of your early experiences of being teased & bullied. Have you niced that solving it as an appearance problem makes your preoccupation and distress worse?”*  *“Would you be prepared to act as if it were Theory B for at least 4 months? You can always go back to theory A if it’s not working.”*  *‘If theory B were true what would this mean in how you act?’* | *Theory C is that you have a problem with appearance. Though there is a medical solution, you have exhausted consultations and come to a point that there is nothing can be done for you.*  *If theory C Option 3 Positive Acceptance of Reality ‘were true what would this mean in how you act?’* |

1. **What lessons have I learnt from the above?**
2. **What Action Points am I taking away to reflect on and put into practise (bring to live) in at least one new personal, relational or workplace situation?**
3. **To feedback to myself and to anyone else (e.g. therapist if any) in a week or 2 on my completed Action Points, the feelings of doing, and the lessons of doing the Action Points.**