

# The Inner Affects the Outer



Research has shown that our inner thoughts significantly influence how we interact with the outer world. What do I mean by “inner thoughts?” Inner thoughts are the inner dialogue or “self-talk” that occurs as we’re experiencing the world around us.

Many times we’re not even aware of these conversations in our head and the repeated messages they bring. Sometimes we’re very aware because we’re intentional about them. If you’ve ever used positive self-talk like, “I can do this, we’ve got this!”, that’s a great example with a likely positive affect.

If you’ve ever beaten yourself up or been self-critical, that’s another example. Sometimes these conversations come from repeated words we’ve heard when we were young. Others get projected onto us from society, and we adopt them as our own truth or engage with them without thinking about it.

As part of being an emotionally intelligent human, we work to become aware of these conversations and their impact on us. As we become more self-aware we can start to catch the conversations in our head and work with them to either change or edit them, delete them, or stop engaging in them.

These conversations have a huge impact on us. It’s important to understand their impact so we can work with them. I encourage you to start a conversation with family and/or team members to share the four most common ways we engage in inner thoughts and what impact we’re seeing.



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## Here are five examples of self-talk:



**Positive Self-Talk:** These are affirming, encouraging, or optimistic thoughts that can boost confidence and reduce stress. Examples include:

- “I am capable of doing this task well.”
- “Even though this is challenging, I can overcome it.”
- “I deserve happiness and success.”



**Negative Self-Talk:** These thoughts are self-defeating or pessimistic, which can hinder performance and lead to stress or anxiety. Examples include:

- “I can’t do this. It’s too hard.”
- “I always mess up.”
- “No one likes me or values my work.”



**Neutral Self-Talk:** These thoughts are objective or factual statements without emotional bias. Examples include:

- “I have a meeting at 3 pm.”
- “Today is Tuesday.”
- “I am reading a book.”



**Analytical Self-Talk:** These thoughts involve reasoning, problem-solving, or reflecting on experiences or information. Examples include:

- “If I practice every day, I will improve my piano skills.”
- “Why did I react that way to the situation?”
- “What are the pros and cons of this decision?”



**Future-Oriented Self-Talk:** These thoughts project into the future and can either be positive, negative, or neutral depending on the context. Examples include:

- “I’ll ace that presentation next week.”
- “If I don’t study, I might fail the exam.”
- “I’m meeting a friend for lunch tomorrow.”



## Here is a list of the ten most common impacts that self-talk can have on us.

- 1. Cognitive Bias:**\* Our inner thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions create cognitive biases that shape our interpretation of external events. Research indicates that cognitive biases can affect our decision-making, judgment, and behavior, leading to both positive and negative outcomes. For example, confirmation bias can make us seek information that confirms our existing beliefs and ignore contradictory evidence, impacting our ability to objectively assess situations.
- 2. Self-Fulfilling Prophecy:** Our inner thoughts can shape our expectations, and these expectations can influence our behavior in ways that bring about the predicted outcome. Known as the self-fulfilling prophecy, research has demonstrated that when we hold positive or negative beliefs about ourselves or others, our actions align with those beliefs, ultimately influencing the outcome. This phenomenon highlights the power of our thoughts in shaping our reality.
- 3. Emotional Regulation:** Our inner thoughts play a crucial role in emotional regulation and expression. Research suggests that the way we interpret and label our emotions internally affects how we express them externally. For instance, individuals who engage in cognitive reappraisal by reframing their thoughts about a situation tend to have better emotional regulation and can respond more adaptively to external stimuli.
- 4. Social Interactions:** Our inner thoughts impact our interpersonal interactions. Research has shown that the way we perceive ourselves, such as self-esteem and self-confidence, influences our communication styles, assertiveness, and social behaviors. Positive self-perception tends to result in more positive interactions, while negative self-perception can hinder effective communication and social engagement.
- 5. Mindset and Motivation:** Our inner thoughts and mindset influence our motivation and subsequent behavior. Research on growth mindset, for example, indicates that individuals who believe that their abilities can be developed through effort and learning tend to have higher levels of motivation and resilience. Conversely, individuals with a fixed mindset, who believe that their abilities are fixed and unchangeable, may be less motivated to take on challenges or pursue growth opportunities.
- 6. Confidence and Performance:** Research suggests that our inner thoughts, particularly self-beliefs and self-talk, influence our confidence levels, which in turn affect our performance in various domains. Positive self-beliefs can enhance self-confidence, motivation, and persistence, leading to improved performance. Conversely, negative self-beliefs can undermine confidence and hinder performance.



- 7. Attitude and Behavior:** Our inner thoughts shape our attitudes, which subsequently influence our behavior. Research indicates that positive thoughts and attitudes are associated with pro-social behaviors, empathy, and cooperation, leading to more positive interactions with others. Negative thoughts and attitudes, on the other hand, can contribute to hostility, conflict, and poor interpersonal relationships.
- 8. Perceived Control:** Inner thoughts play a role in our perception of control over the events and circumstances in our lives. Research has shown that individuals who believe they have control over their lives tend to be more proactive, resilient, and adaptable. They are more likely to take initiative and exert effort to shape their external environment, resulting in more constructive and successful interactions.
- 9. Emotional Contagion:** Our inner thoughts and emotions can influence the emotional states of those around us. Research has demonstrated that emotions can be contagious, spreading from person to person. When we exhibit positive thoughts and emotions, such as enthusiasm or optimism, it can positively impact the emotions and moods of those we interact with, fostering more positive and harmonious social dynamics.
- 10. Decision-Making:** Our inner thoughts and cognitive processes heavily influence our decision-making. Research has shown that our beliefs, biases, and thought patterns can affect how we assess risks, evaluate options, and make choices. For example, a pessimistic mindset may lead to a more cautious and risk-averse approach, while an optimistic mindset may lead to more risk-taking behavior. These decision-making tendencies impact our interactions and outcomes in various contexts.

It is important to note that individual differences and contextual factors also play a role in how our inner thoughts affect our interactions with the outer world. Nevertheless, these key points highlight the significant influence of our inner thoughts on our perceptions, emotions, behaviors, and social interactions.

These points further emphasize the significant role our inner thoughts play in shaping our interactions with the outer world, impacting our confidence, attitudes, behavior, perceived control, emotional states, and decision-making processes.



## \*Cognitive Bias

A cognitive bias refers to a systematic pattern of deviation from rationality or objective judgment in thinking and decision-making. It represents a tendency for the human mind to process information and make judgments in ways that may be illogical, irrational, or inconsistent with the principles of probability and logic. Cognitive biases can affect various aspects of our thinking, including perception, attention, memory, and interpretation of information.

Cognitive biases arise from the brain's attempt to simplify and make sense of the vast amount of information it encounters. They can result from heuristics (mental shortcuts) and inherent limitations in our cognitive processes. While these biases often serve as efficient mental tools, they can sometimes lead to errors in judgment, faulty reasoning, and inaccurate assessments of reality.

### Examples of a cognitive bias:

1. **Confirmation Bias:** The tendency to search for, interpret, or favor information that confirms our preexisting beliefs or hypotheses while ignoring or undervaluing contradictory evidence.
2. **Availability Heuristic:** The tendency to rely on immediate examples or instances that come to mind easily when making judgments about the frequency or probability of events. This bias can lead to overestimating the likelihood of events that are vivid or memorable.
3. **Anchoring Bias:** The tendency to rely heavily on the initial information (the "anchor") encountered when making judgments or estimates, even if subsequent information contradicts or should outweigh the initial data.
4. **Halo Effect:** The tendency to generalize positive or negative impressions of a person based on a single prominent trait, such as physical attractiveness, likability, or expertise. This bias can influence judgments across various domains, including social, professional, and personal contexts.
5. **Overconfidence Effect:** The tendency to overestimate one's abilities, knowledge, or accuracy of judgments. It often leads to unwarranted confidence in one's decision-making and a failure to adequately consider potential risks or limitations.
6. **Framing Effect:** The framing effect occurs when the presentation or framing of information influences our decision-making or judgments. Our choices can be swayed by how information is presented, whether it is framed in a positive or negative context. For instance, people tend to be more risk-averse when options are framed in terms of potential losses and more risk-seeking when framed in terms of potential gains.



- 7. Bandwagon Effect:** The bandwagon effect refers to the tendency to adopt or believe something because many others do, regardless of the underlying evidence or logic. It is the idea that the popularity or prevalence of a belief or behavior can influence individual decision-making, leading to conformity and a desire to align with the majority.
- 8. Fundamental Attribution Error:** The fundamental attribution error is the tendency to attribute others' behavior to internal, stable characteristics (such as personality or disposition) while underestimating the impact of external situational factors. In other words, we often overemphasize personal factors when explaining the actions of others while downplaying the influence of external circumstances.

Being aware of these biases can help us approach decision-making and judgment with a more critical and rational mindset.

These are just a few examples of cognitive biases among the many that have been identified. Recognizing and understanding these biases can help individuals make more informed decisions, challenge their own thinking, and mitigate the potential negative effects of biased reasoning.

