


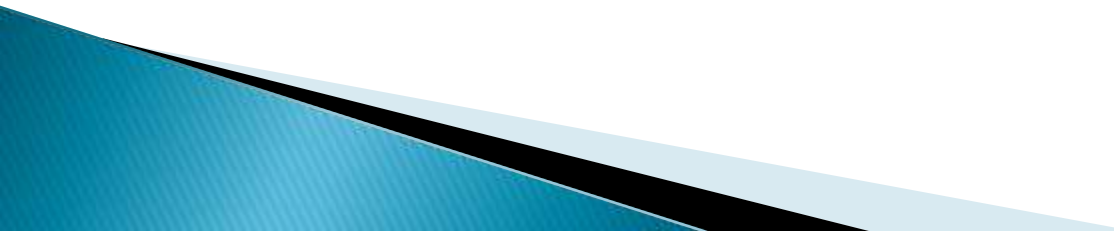
Cognitive Dissonance Theory



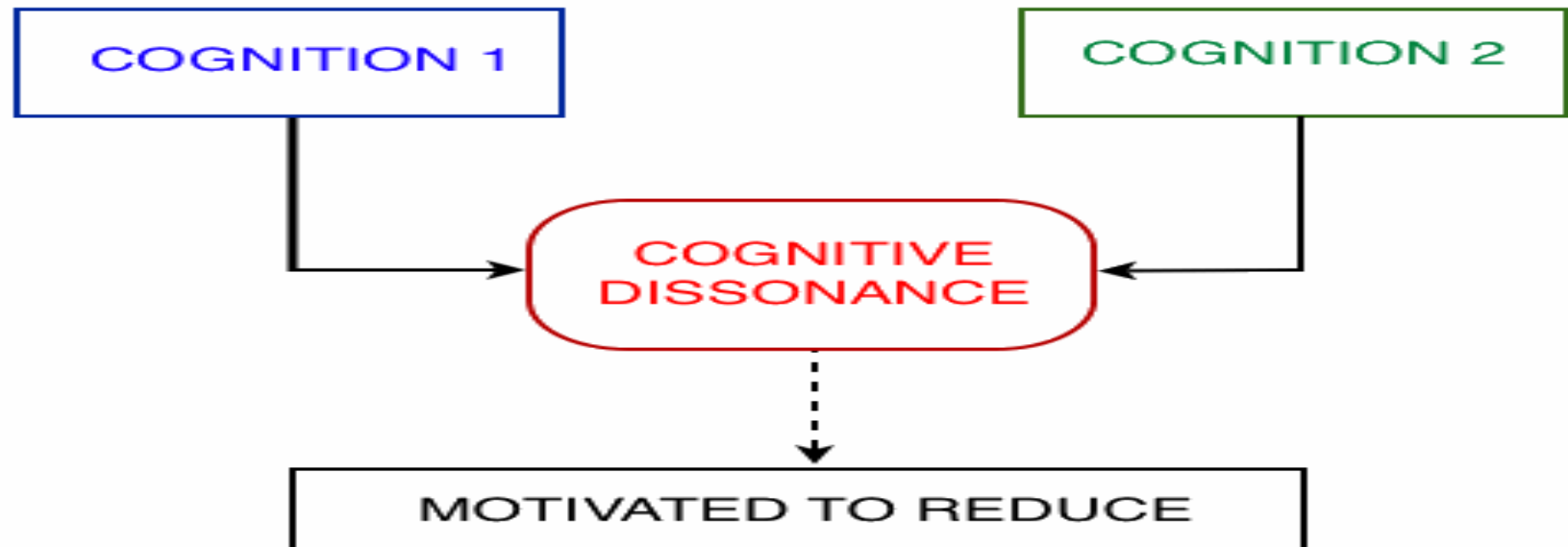
INTRODUCTION

- Cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable feeling caused by holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously.
 - The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, or by justifying or rationalizing them.
 - It is one of the most influential and extensively studied theories in social psychology.
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DEFINITION

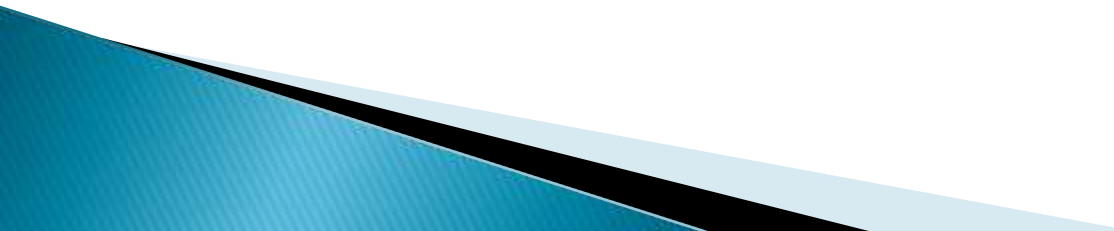
- ▶ Cognitive dissonance refers to a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors.
 - ▶ This produces a feeling of discomfort leading to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance etc.
 - ▶ For example, when people smoke (behavior) and they know that smoking causes cancer (cognition).
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- ▶ Dissonance occurs when a person perceives a logical inconsistency in their beliefs, when one idea implies the opposite of another.
- ▶ The dissonance might be experienced as guilt, anger, frustration, or even embarrassment.



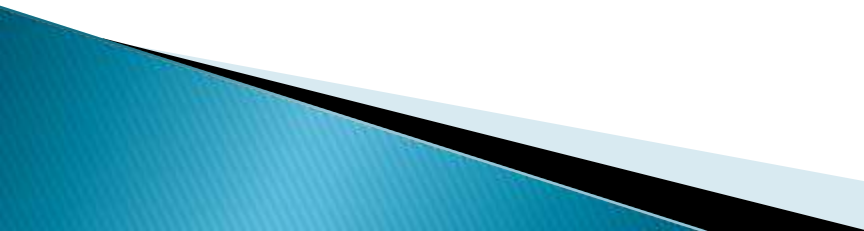
Why is Cognitive Dissonance Important?

Cognitive dissonance plays a role in many value judgments, decisions and evaluations. Becoming aware of how conflicting beliefs impact the decision-making process is a great way to improve your ability to make faster and more accurate choices.



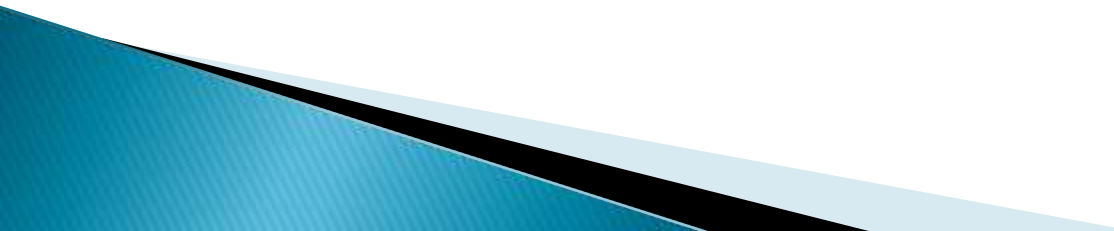
- ▶ **cognitive dissonance theory suggests that we have an inner drive to hold all our attitudes and beliefs in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance).**
- ▶ **Attitudes may change because of factors within the person.**
- ▶ **An important factor here is the principle of cognitive consistency, the focus of Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance.**
- ▶ **This theory starts from the idea that we seek consistency in our beliefs and attitudes in any situation where two cognitions are inconsistent.**

Leon Festinger (1957)

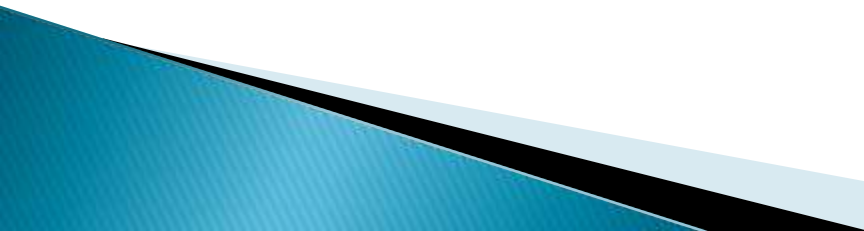
- ▶ Proposed cognitive dissonance theory, which states that a powerful motive to maintain cognitive consistency can give rise to irrational and sometimes adaptive behavior.
 - ▶ According to Festinger, we hold many cognitions about the world and ourselves; when they clash, a discrepancy is evoked, resulting in a state of tension known as cognitive dissonance. As the experience of dissonance is unpleasant, we are motivated to reduce or eliminate it, and achieve consonance.
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Cognitive Dissonance Theory


Examples

- ❑ A cognition can be considered a belief.
 - ❑ If you like to smoke then this can be considered a cognition.
 - ❑ If you like ice cream then this is another cognition.
 - ❑ Those two beliefs are not related to each other but if one of them became dissonant with the other then according to the Cognitive dissonance theory Cognitive dissonance will happen.
 - ❑ For example if you like to smoke but you know that smoking is harmful then that would result in Cognitive dissonance.
 - ❑ The Cognitive dissonance theory states that when two cognitions become dissonant Cognitive dissonance happens.
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- ▶ **Example 1:** Knowing that smoking is harmful (First cognition) while liking to smoke (second cognition). The Cognitive dissonance theory's conditions were met because those cognitions are dissonant

 - ▶ **Example 2:** Believing that lying is bad (First cognition) and being forced to lie (second cognition)
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Cognitive Dissonance Theory And Adaption

- ▶ People adapt to Cognitive dissonance in different ways.
 - ▶ For example a person might adapt by creating a new cognition, a second may adapt by changing his attitude and a third may adapt by changing his behavior.
 - ▶ In the next few lines I will give some examples for adaptation according to the Cognitive dissonance theory based on the previous two examples.
 - ▶ Example 1: In such a case a person could create a new cognition by claiming that lots of old people smoke since they were young and they are still healthy.
 - ▶ Example 2: In this case the person might change his behavior by not lying or even change his attitude by claiming that he believes in the lie
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Three Ways to Address Cognitive Dissonance

➤ *Change our behavior*

The first aspect we can look at is changing your behavior. If we have this internal conflict, we can at times change our behavior to help us deal with the conflict at hand.

➤ *Justify our behavior by changing the conflicting cognition*

Here, we are justifying why we are acting the way we act and again removing one aspect of the conflict.

▶ **Justify our behavior by adding new cognitions**

We can add new concepts, ideas, or behaviors to explain or justify conflicts

How to Reduce Cognitive Dissonance

There are three key strategies to reduce or minimize cognitive dissonance:

- ▶ Focus on more supportive beliefs that outweigh the dissonant belief or behavior
- ▶ Reduce the importance of the conflicting belief
- ▶ Change the conflicting belief so that it is consistent with other beliefs or behaviors

CONCLUSION

- The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, or by justifying or rationalizing them.
 - Cognitive dissonance is common in the work place. Employees need to increase their self awareness to counter it.
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