

Introduction to Psychology

In general, psychology is defined as the scientific study behavior and mental processes and how they are affected by an organism's:

- physical state (biological),
- mental state (psychological), and
- external environment.

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Level of Analysis

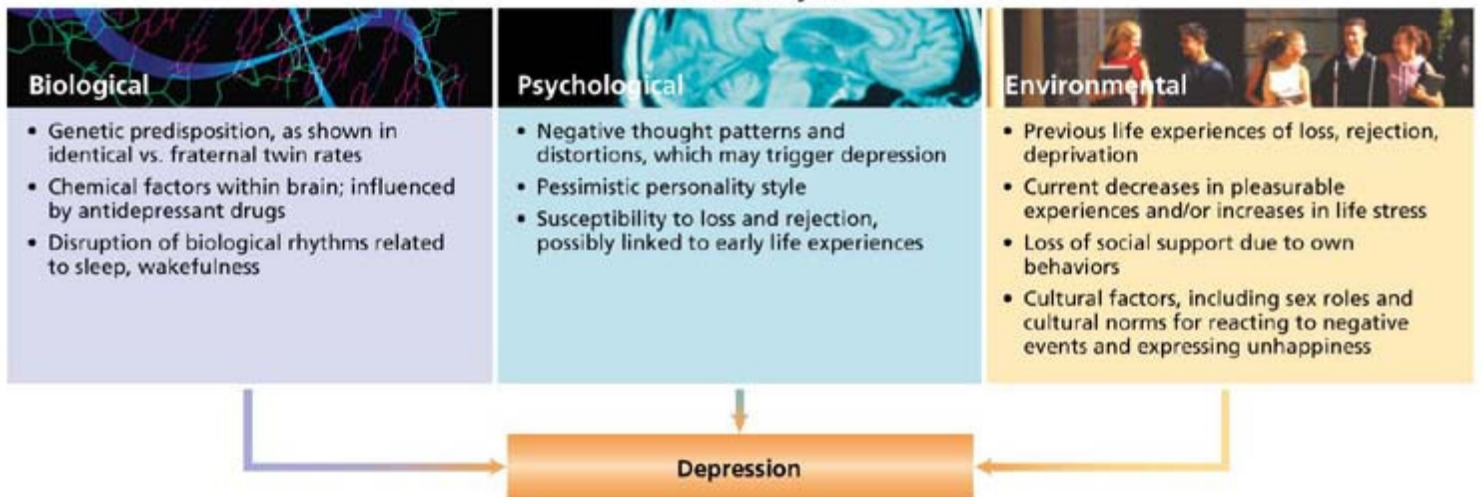


Image source: Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behavior, (2004), Passer and Smith

People are often unaware of the factors (and might deny) the influences on their behavior and thinking.

Taking a psychology course should demonstrate how complicated human behavior is. To understand it, we need to understand multiple perspectives of psychology.

Your Behavior Can be Influenced Without Your Awareness

One theme in psychology is that your behavior can be affected without your awareness. Many decisions, judgments, evaluations are made unconsciously and we justify them after the fact.

If you aren't aware of how you are being influenced, you will make the same choices (sometimes bad) and/or take the wrong action to address the problem.

As an example of how your decisions can be influenced without your awareness, the following comes from an article 3 Obvious and 4 Not So Obvious Ways Buffets Make Money by John-Erik Koslosky, Dec 12, 2013.

1 - Big cost, little portion

Pricier items on the buffet line – like meat or fish – are cut into smaller pieces. Rationally, a person would just take two pieces instead of one. But in reality, a diner is more likely to follow society's unwritten rule, taking a single smaller piece and moving on down the line.

2 - Tricky serving dishes

The size of serving dishes further plays on our conscience. If there's a small chafing dish with a few pieces of baked haddock, we're a lot less likely to take more than one piece. At the big, full trays of potatoes and rice, we're more likely to scoop out a heaping spoonful. And those starchy, filling, lower-cost items are often positioned earlier in the line, leaving you with less room on your plate by the time you reach that meat.

3 - Serving utensil subterfuge

If that weren't enough, smaller serving utensils also help reinforce the behaviors that benefit the restaurant. Spoons in the inexpensive starches are big. Tongs, spatulas, or forks used to move more expensive proteins to your plate may be smaller, and less geared toward moving large quantities of food at a time.



The Blind Men and the Elephant

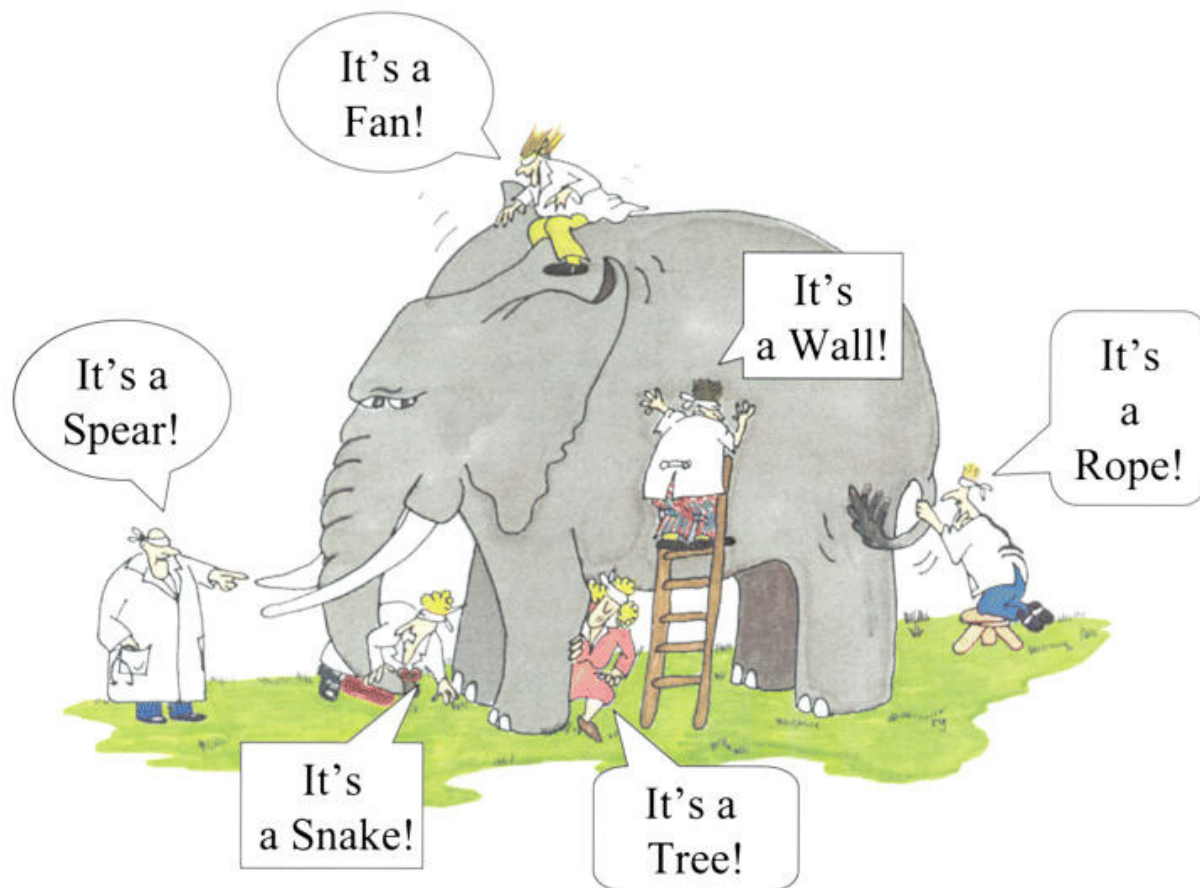


Image source: www.foodinfo.org.nz

There is a metaphor for our understanding of reality in that it is limited. Our ability to understand reality is limited to where we are looking. Blind women and men only know a small part of reality and can disagree because they are looking at different parts of reality (the elephant). In order to understand the reality of the elephant, you need to understand multiple perspectives.

Understanding psychology is similar. In order to understand thinking and behavior, you have to understand different perspectives.

Video: Awareness Test

- 1) Expectations ([REDACTED]) influence what you see and don't see. It is easier to [REDACTED] when you expect it.
- 2) People are not very good at multi-tasking. You can fail to notice small things when you are not expecting them.
- 3) You can be influenced without your awareness.
- 4) We are unaware of our unawareness.

Video #1 of 5: Beliefs that Make You Fail...or Succeed

- There are no quick fixes
- You can spend lots of time with an ineffective strategy and get nowhere

Beliefs that make you stupid

- 1) Learning is fast
- 2) Knowledge is composed of isolated facts
- 3) Being good at a subject is a matter of inborn talent
- 4) I'm really good at multi-tasking

Metacognition: A student's awareness of their level of understanding a topic.

Those with low metacognition are unaware of what they understand and don't understand. Those with high metacognition are aware of what they understand and don't understand.

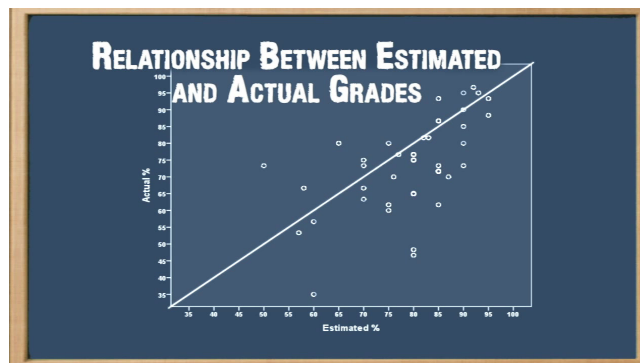


Image source: Beliefs That Make You Stupid, part 1