



COGNITIVE DISSONANCE THEORY

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- **Cognitive dissonance** is the psychological discomfort we experience when we hold two or more conflicting beliefs, attitudes, or values simultaneously.
 - The theory of cognitive dissonance was developed by the psychologist **Leon Festinger**.
 - **Cognitive dissonance** theory postulates that an underlying psychological tension is created when an individual's behavior is inconsistent with his or her thoughts and beliefs. This underlying tension then motivates an individual to make an attitude change that would produce consistency between thoughts and behaviors.

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- A Cognition is a piece of knowledge, such as a:
 - **Thought**
 - **Belief**
 - **Attitude**
 - **Value**
 - **knowledge**

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- Dissonance commonly occurs in two primary scenarios:
 - **Attitude-Discrepant Behavior:** When one acts contrary to their customary attitudes or beliefs with little external justification (e.g., a person who values health smokes a cigarette).
 - **Post-Decisional Dissonance:** The tension that arises after making a difficult choice, particularly when the rejected alternative had attractive features.

BELIEF

smoking
cigarettes is
unhealthy



COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

unpleasant
tension state,
awareness that
belief and action
are inconsistent



I smoke
cigarettes

ACTION

solution

CHANGE ACTION

smoking
cigarettes is
unhealthy



I don't smoke
cigarettes
anymore

CHANGE BELIEF


the research
on smoking is
not conclusive



I continue to
smoke
cigarettes

DISSONANCE REDUCTION STRATEGIES

- **Changing the Attitude:** The individual directly alters the belief to align with the action already taken. Example: A person who believes smoking is dangerous but continues to smoke might start to believe that the health risks are exaggerated.
- **Adding Consonant Cognitions:** Generating or seeking out new justifications that support the action taken. Example: An expensive purchase is justified by focusing only on its few excellent features to outweigh the financial cost.

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- **Minimizing the Importance:** The person reduces the perceived significance of the conflicting belief or action. Example: Someone who acts unethically rationalizes that “it’s not a big deal” or “everyone else does it.”
 - **Effort Justification:** Overvaluing a goal or outcome for which one expended significant effort or suffered for. Example: After enduring a difficult and costly training program, a person rates the eventual outcome as much more valuable than it objectively is.