



Module V

Thoughts, Feelings and Behavior

The role of feelings on behavior

In most cases, people behave in a certain way based on how they think and feel. For example, if you are feeling angry and think you've been wronged, you are more likely to act aggressively. You may raise your voice or clench your fists.

This section will help you understand more about the way thoughts and feelings play a part in the choices you make each day. If you can be more in charge of the way you think and feel when you are making

choices, such as whether to drive impaired, you can stay away from dangerous behaviors and negative consequences.

Feelings don't just show up. They are influenced by events in everyday life. For example, if a friend teases you in front of a group of strangers, you may feel embarrassed and angry. If you reflect on the circumstances, you may assume your feelings of anger and embarrassment were caused by the event of your friend teasing you.

However, between the event (the teasing) and the feelings (embarrassment, anger), your thoughts, often referred to as self-talk, are what color the way you feel.

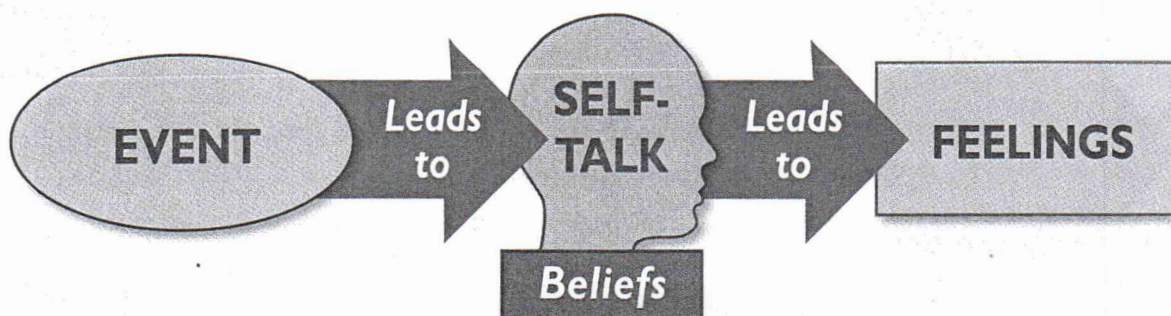
For example, if your self-talk tells you that your friend was trying to be funny, not disrespectful, you might find his actions harmless, even humorous. It is your self-talk that has determined how the event has made you feel.

Events and feelings

Most people assume their feelings are directly caused from events in their lives.



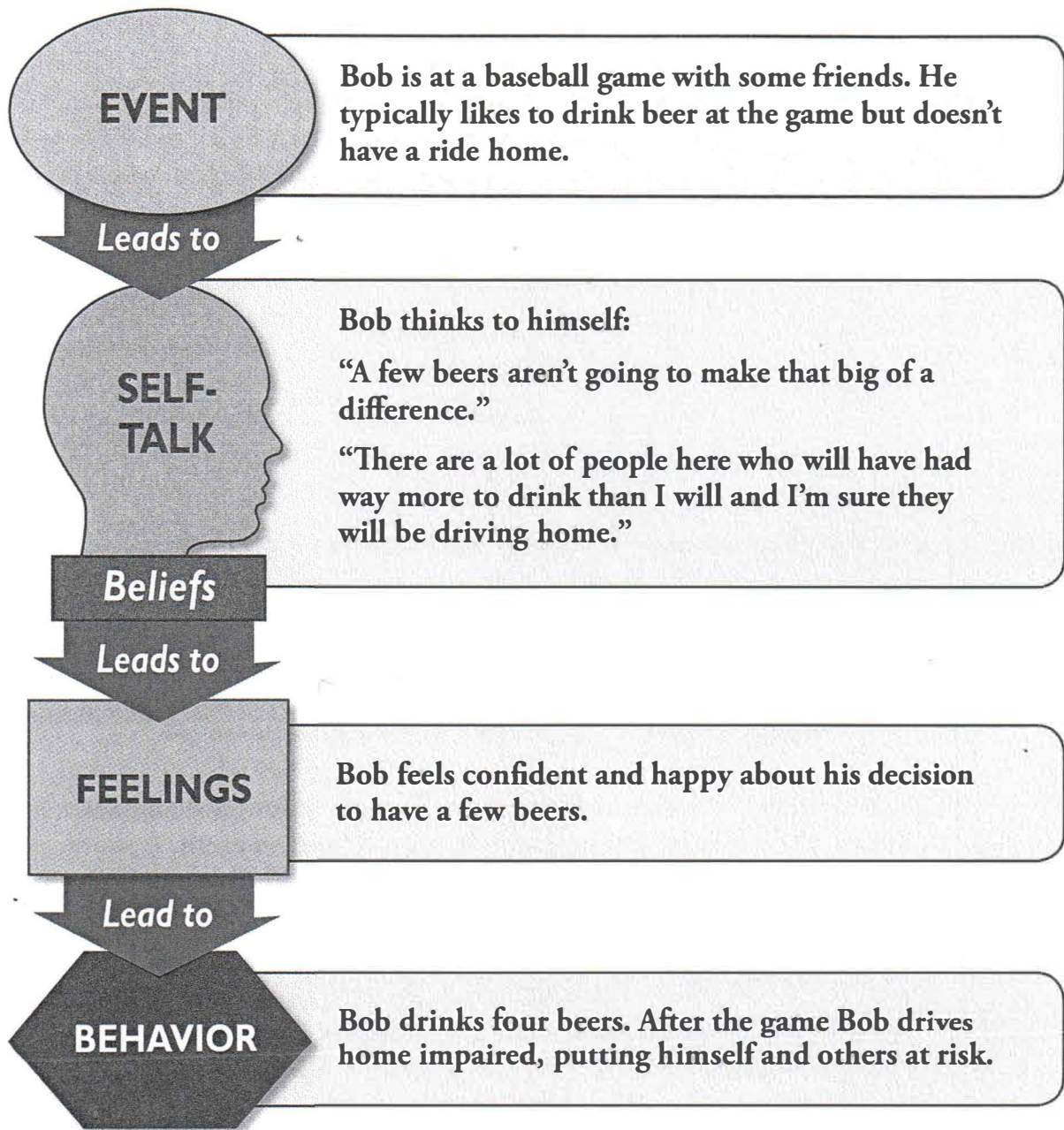
This is not an accurate picture of how feelings are formed. It does not take into account the beliefs, the self-talk, you have about yourself and an event. A more accurate picture of why you feel the way you do is represented below.



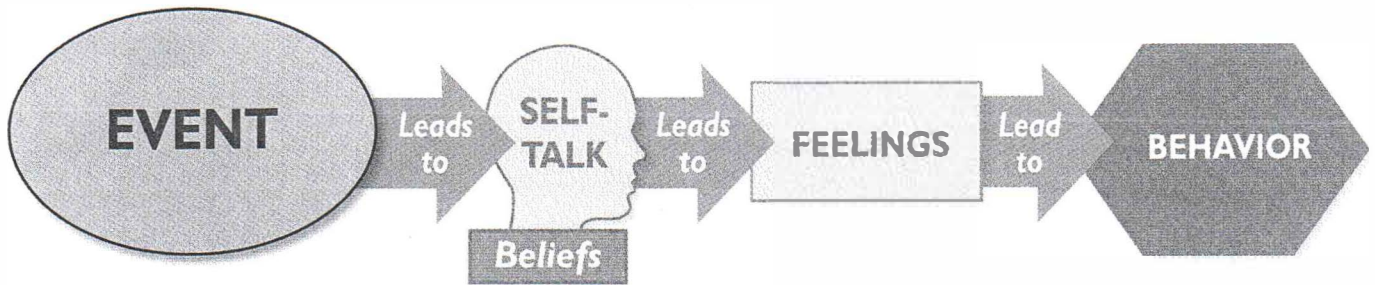
Putting it all together

The example below shows the role self-talk and feelings play in relationship to the person's behavior.

Note how Bob's self-talk allows him to have happy and confident feelings rather than feelings of concern or fear about driving home.



More on events



Some events or situations can be higher risk than others. Also, some can be avoided, while others cannot.

Since your goal is to stay away from driving while impaired, studying various situations that

you may experience that put you at risk is time well spent.

Examples of situations or events that may put you at risk of impaired driving

- Driving to the bowling alley where I normally drink a few beers.
- Going out to eat with Pat who likes to drink margaritas and expects to get a ride home from me.
- Getting a bad evaluation at work and stopping for a few drinks on my way home.
- Driving to a wedding reception that will include an open bar.

Describe three situations or events you may encounter that put you at risk of driving while impaired. Then provide one realistic strategy that can help you avoid driving in that situation.

Situation #1: _____

Strategy I can use: _____

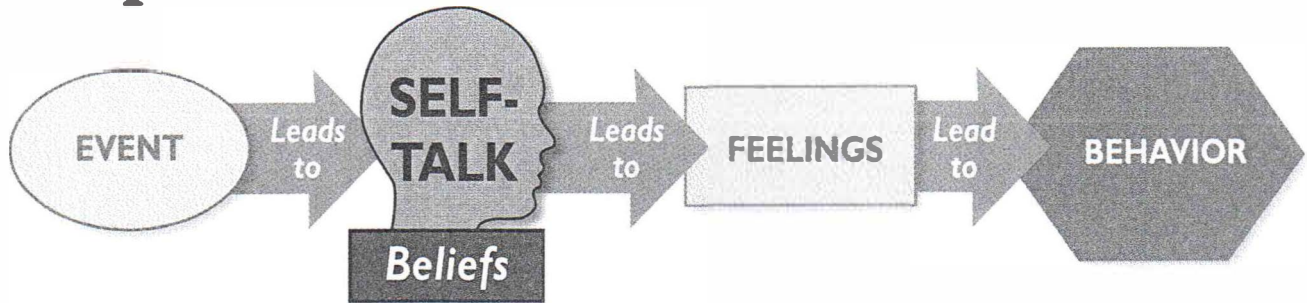
Situation #2: _____

Strategy I can use: _____

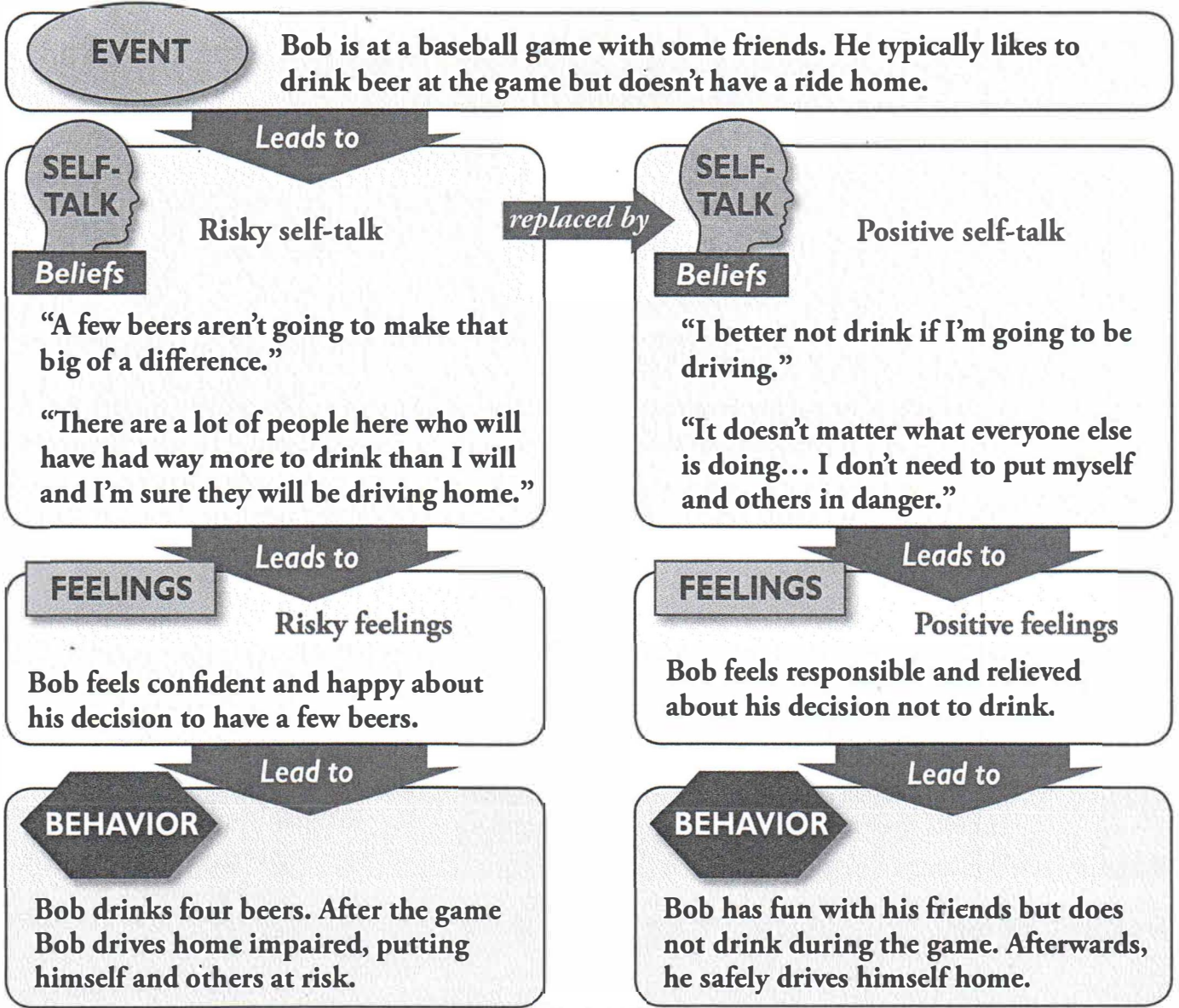
Situation #3: _____

Strategy I can use: _____

The power of self-talk



Just as some situations put you at greater risk for driving while impaired, so do some beliefs or self-talk. Your beliefs are always at work in the background, influencing how you feel and how you choose to act. Recognizing risky beliefs and replacing them with positive thinking is a good strategy to act responsibly. Rethink Bob's example on page 38. Look at how replacing risky self-talk changes his feelings and behaviors.



Changing your self-talk

Consider for a moment how important and empowering this understanding of changing your self-talk is in relationship to your impaired driving.

If you are able to recognize and challenge your self-talk, you

can influence how you feel and ultimately your behaviors.

Pause and listen to the little voice inside you. Ask yourself, "Is what I'm saying to myself helping me? Is it positive?"

If not, stop and challenge the risky thought and replace it with something that is supportive and encouraging of making a healthy decision.

Act as if you are having the self-talk on the left. Then give examples of alternative self-talk that may change the way you would feel and act.

Risky self-talk (beliefs)	replaced by	Alternative self-talk (beliefs)
"I only live a couple of miles away. It's not a big deal."	replaced by	_____
"I haven't had that much to drink. I can handle it."	replaced by	_____
"I don't want to leave my car here. It is easier to drive and take the risk."	replaced by	_____ _____ _____

Select one of the positive self-talk messages you wrote above and describe how it would influence the way you feel and act.

Positive self-talk: _____

How it would influence my feelings and behavior: _____

High-risk feelings



There are many kinds of feelings you can experience. Some may seem bigger and more intense than others. Identifying feelings that may increase your risk of engaging in unhealthy behaviors such as driving while impaired is a necessary step to working toward making changes to your behavior.

One strategy that works well for coping with high-risk feelings is

to take action with a prepared plan. This can include a physical or mental activity. This is done by giving yourself step-by-step instructions. It is like offering yourself helpful advice to handle high-risk feelings that may lead to driving while impaired.

In some situations your feelings are expressed by cues your body gives you. For example, if you are feeling nervous or anxious your heart may beat faster or your leg may shake.

By putting into action a physical activity such as letting your shoulders relax or exercising, you can often decrease your feeling's intensity.

Another plan to manage your high-risk feelings is to use mental instructions such as reminding yourself of the commitment you made to work through the feeling. Developing an image in your head will allow you the time to step back and adjust how you are currently feeling.

Examples of high-risk feelings

- Afraid
- Aggressive
- Bored
- Ecstatic
- Frightened
- Jealous
- Lonely
- Self-pity
- Tense

List two feelings that may be high-risk for you and describe a strategy you can use to help you manage the feeling.

1. High-risk feeling: _____

Strategy I can use to manage the feeling: _____

2. High-risk feeling: _____

Strategy I can use to manage the feeling: _____

Practicing what you've learned

Are you beginning to see that you have a choice of how to think, feel and behave? People

seldom intentionally behave in a manner that could have negative results. Rather, they

do not plan ahead and apply proven strategies that can keep them from acting irresponsibly.

Describe a situation in which you may be tempted to drive impaired. Write down what risky self-talk and feelings may occur that would lead you to drive while impaired. Then write alternative self-talk and feelings that would lead you to more positive results.

EVENT _____		
SELF-TALK Beliefs Risky self-talk _____ _____ _____	<i>replaced by</i> →	SELF-TALK Beliefs Positive self-talk _____ _____ _____
FEELINGS Risky feelings _____ _____	<i>replaced by</i> →	FEELINGS Positive feelings _____ _____
BEHAVIOR _____ _____	<i>replaced by</i> →	BEHAVIOR _____ _____

Practicing what you've learned (continued)

Here is another opportunity to practice what you have learned. Describe a situation in which you may be tempted to drive impaired. Write down what risky self-talk and feelings may occur that would lead you to drive while impaired. Then write alternative self-talk and feelings that would lead you to more positive results.

EVENT _____ _____		
SELF-TALK Beliefs Risky self-talk _____ _____ _____ _____	<i>replaced by</i> →	SELF-TALK Beliefs Positive self-talk _____ _____ _____ _____
FEELINGS Risky feelings _____ _____	<i>replaced by</i> →	FEELINGS Positive feelings _____ _____
BEHAVIOR _____ _____	<i>replaced by</i> →	BEHAVIOR _____ _____