



# Cognitive Dissonance: The Inner Conflict of Beliefs and Actions

Laura Chen\*

Department of Psychology, University of Sydney, Australia

## INTRODUCTION

Cognitive dissonance refers to the psychological discomfort experienced when an individual holds two or more contradictory beliefs, attitudes, or behaviours simultaneously. This theory, introduced by Leon Feininger in 1957, suggests that people are motivated to reduce this dissonance by changing their beliefs, adjusting their actions, or justifying their inconsistencies. Cognitive dissonance arises in everyday situations, such as when someone values healthy living but smokes or when a person believes in honesty but lies to avoid conflict. This internal conflict drives individuals to seek consistency in their thoughts and actions. For instance, a smoker may downplay the health risks associated with smoking to reduce the discomfort of their unhealthy behaviour. Feininger's theory of cognitive dissonance is built on the assumption that people seek psychological harmony between their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. When a dissonance, or inconsistency, arises between these elements, it produces discomfort or tension, which individuals are naturally inclined to resolve. This theory explains a wide range of human behaviours, from the justification of past decisions to the rationalization of new ones. A person who experiences cognitive dissonance will either change their behaviour to align with their beliefs or adjust their beliefs to justify their behaviour. This tendency to seek internal consistency is a key motivator in shaping human thoughts and actions. Cognitive dissonance is particularly powerful in shaping decision-making and attitude change [1,2].

## DESCRIPTION

One common manifestation of cognitive dissonance is buyer's remorse, where individuals experience discomfort after making a purchase, especially if the item was expensive or unnecessary. In such cases, people may attempt to reduce dissonance by focusing on the positive attributes of the purchase or minimizing its cost or flaws. This phenomenon is often exploited in marketing and advertising, where companies emphasize the

benefits of their products to reduce the likelihood of buyer's remorse. Understanding how consumers rationalize their choices helps businesses tailor their messaging to alleviate potential cognitive dissonance in their target audience. In addition to consumer behaviour, cognitive dissonance plays a significant role in political and social contexts. When people are confronted with information that challenges their deeply held beliefs or affiliations, such as political ideologies, they may experience cognitive dissonance. Instead of changing their views, individuals often engage in selective exposure, seeking out information that supports their existing beliefs and ignoring or discrediting conflicting evidence. This phenomenon can contribute to polarization, as individuals reinforce their pre-existing biases by surrounding themselves with like-minded perspectives and rejecting opposing viewpoints [3,4].

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, cognitive dissonance is a fundamental aspect of human psychology, illustrating how people strive for internal consistency between their beliefs and behaviour's. This powerful mechanism not only explains why individuals may act in ways that seem irrational but also sheds light on the processes behind attitude change, decision-making, and social conformity. Understanding cognitive dissonance helps explain why people sometimes stick to their beliefs despite contrary evidence, and how they justify behaviour's that contradict their values. It also highlights the importance of self-awareness and critical thinking in overcoming dissonance and fostering more rational, coherent decision-making processes.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author's declared that they have no conflict of interest.

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**Corresponding author** Laura Chen, Department of Psychology, University of Sydney, Australia, E-mail: [laura.chen@sydney.edu.au](mailto:laura.chen@sydney.edu.au)

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