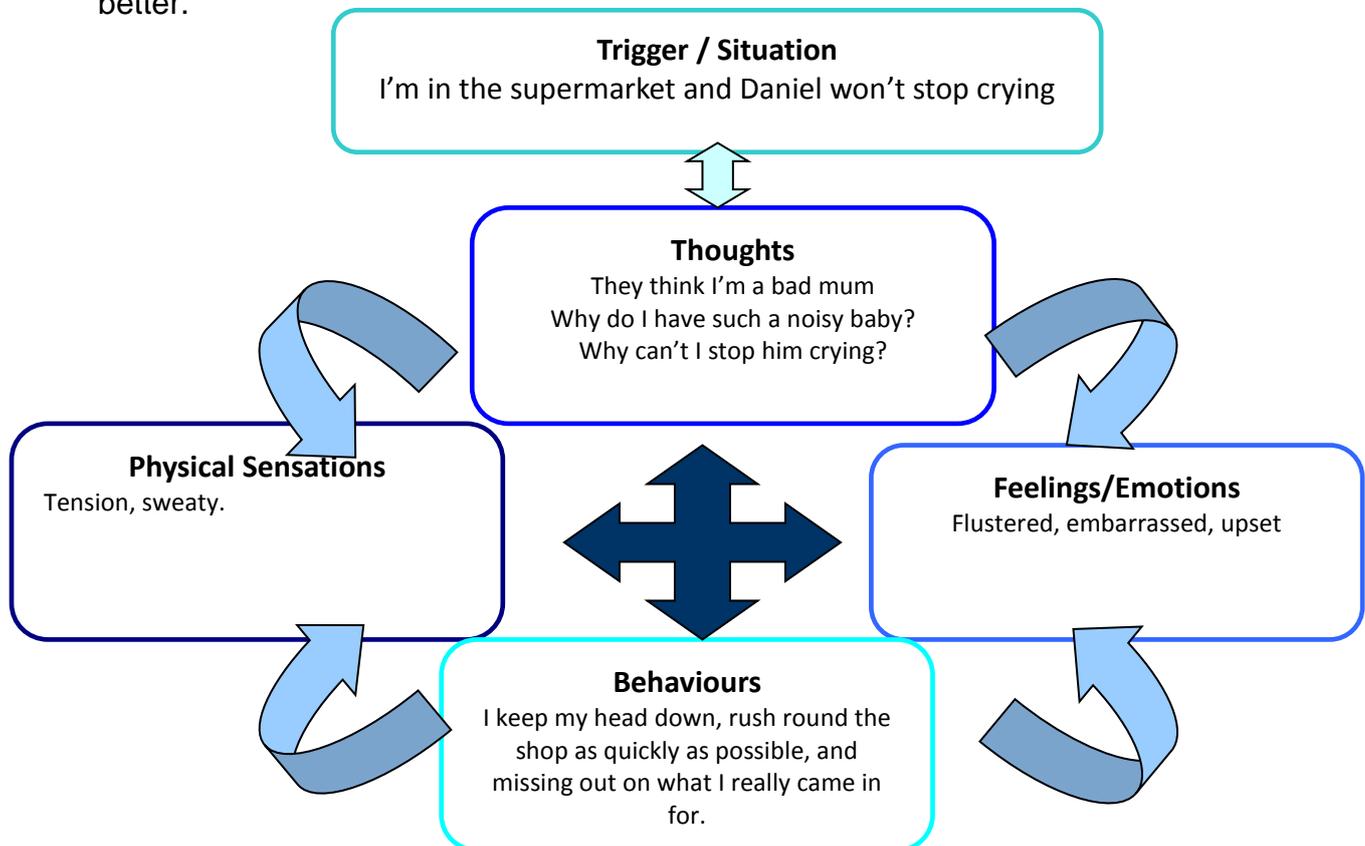


Thinking about Thinking

Amy, mother of six month old Daniel is in the supermarket. Daniel is not very settled today. Amy thinks maybe he is teething as he does seem to be chewing on his hand a lot lately and he seems flushed and irritable.

Below is what is called a 'hot cross bun formulation'. It shows how in any one situation, it is possible to observe our thoughts, physical sensations, feelings and behaviours. The formulation shows how all these affect each other. This leaflet shows how if one can change one aspect of the situation (one's thoughts), it can lead to improvement in the other areas and ultimately lead to feeling and coping better.



Questioning Thoughts

Step 1: The first step before we can question our thoughts is to recognise that a thought is not necessarily a fact. Notice the difference between these two sentences.

FACT: The sky is grey and the clouds are dark and heavy

THOUGHT (or opinion): The sky looks angry and threatening. It's going to rain soon.

It would be hard to argue the FACT above, but another person might have the THOUGHT 'The sky looks cold and heavy. It's going to snow soon'. This shows that a thought is really just a thought and is not necessarily a fact.

Step 2: Question your thoughts with the following:

- How would someone else view this situation?

My friends would say it doesn't matter what others think and that babies cry for lots of reasons. They would point out that Daniel is teething

- What advice would I give to someone else in this situation?

I would say to my friend that no-one is likely to think that I am a bad mother. They might actually feel a bit sorry for you as they have been in that situation too!

- Is my reaction in proportion to the event?

Not really. If I take my time I'll still only be in there for 30 minutes. He might stop crying soon anyway. If he doesn't, he is bound to fall asleep in the car on the way home. I really do need to get this shopping as that is important too.

- Is this really as important as it seems?

No. I bet there are loads of people in here that don't really care whether Daniel is screaming or not.

Step 3: Summarise. Now that I can see this differently, what can I conclude?

Daniel's crying isn't really a big deal. He is probably just teething.

Amy was able to challenge her thought and bring about a more helpful way of coping:

