

## P1 Understanding reinforcement

Skinner's theory of operant conditioning is based on the idea that learning takes place through reinforcement. Skinner identified two types of reinforcement:

1. positive reinforcement where the consequences following a behaviour are experienced as desirable
2. negative reinforcement where carrying out a behaviour removes something unpleasant.

It is important to know that negative reinforcement and punishment are not the same. Negative reinforcement occurs when something unpleasant stops happening. This approach to reinforcement is rarely used in care work because care practitioners do not deliberately set up situations which are unpleasant. Punishment, by contrast, occurs when something unpleasant starts to happen. Behaviourists do not use punishment to change behaviour. They work, instead, through rewards.

### Your assessment criteria:

- P1 Explain the principal psychological perspectives
- M1 Assess different psychological approaches to study

*Can you think of examples of punishments and negative reinforcements that are relevant to health and social care settings?*

## M1 Assessing the behaviourist approach

The strengths and weaknesses or limitations of the behaviourist approach to psychology are summarised in Figure 8.1 below.

Figure 8.1 An assessment of the behaviourist approach.

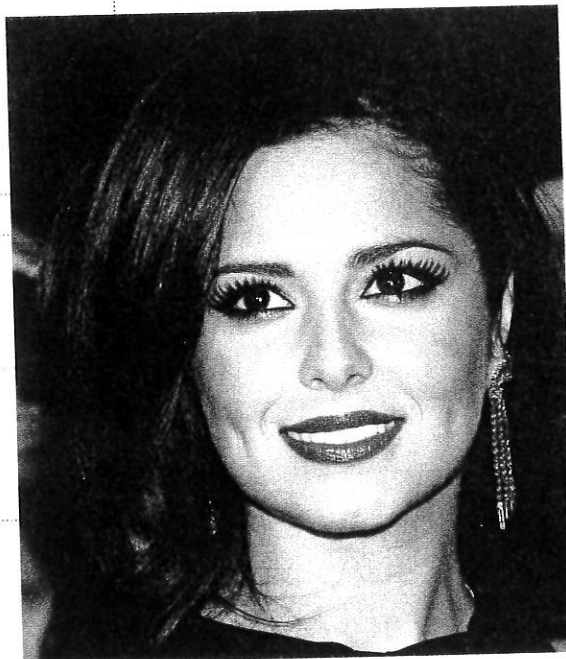
Strengths	Weaknesses or limitations
1. The behaviourist approach has been widely used in health care settings to successfully modify (e.g. phobias) and motivate (e.g. weight loss) behaviour change.	1. Behaviourism reduces human behaviour to a simple stimulus and response model. This fails to take into account inner mental processes or wider cultural and environmental influences on behaviour.
2. Behavioural assessment and treatment is relatively quick, inexpensive and solution-focused.	2. Some care practitioners and psychologists are critical of behaviourism for being manipulative and for failing to address the underlying causes of an individual's problems.
3. Changes in behaviour can be easily measured, monitored and observed.	3. Behavioural treatments work well in controlled environments, especially with animals. They have a more limited application to the real-world behaviour of human beings.

crime. Jonjo says he learnt to think of himself as a 'pot head' – which is what one police officer called him.

1. How did the ideas other people had about Jonjo's behaviour affect his self-concept?
2. What factors caused Jonjo's drug-taking behaviour to escalate?
3. Explain how the Jonjo's situation can be explained by the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### M1 Assessing the social learning theory approach

The strengths and weaknesses or limitations of the social learning theory approach to psychology are summarised in Figure 8.3 below.



Social learning theory asserts that people learn behaviours, attitudes and values from role models such as Cheryl Cole.

Figure 8.3 An assessment of the social learning theory approach.

Strengths	Weaknesses or limitations
1. Recognises that influences on human behaviour are broader and more complex than simple stimulus-response factors.	1. Ignores the role of biology and thinking (cognition) in human learning and behaviour.
2. Shows how other people (role models) play a key part in the way people learn behaviour, as well as attitudes and values.	2. Doesn't recognise the roles of the unconscious and early experiences in understanding an individual's behaviour.
3. Sees the person as making some active choices (through observation and imitation) in what they learn and how they behave.	3. Ignores the human experience of emotions and the powerful ways they can affect learning, behaviour and development.

individual's self-concept is strongly influenced by the judgements they make about themselves and by what they believe others think about them. For example, a negative self-concept can develop if a person **internalises** critical comments that others make about them ('you're hopeless') and then think and act as if this is true. Rogers was also concerned with the importance of self-esteem and the role of the 'ideal self' in the way that we make judgements about ourselves. Humanistic psychologists such as Rogers (1961) claim that a mismatch between the ideal self and actual self can lead to psychological and emotional problems.

### Key terms

**Internalise:** incorporate into yourself attitudes and values that have been learnt

## M1 Assessing the humanistic approach

The strengths and weaknesses or limitations of the humanistic approach to psychology are summarised in Figure 8.5 below.

Figure 8.5 An assessment of the humanist approach.

Strengths	Weaknesses or limitations
1. Recognises that the complexity of human emotions and relationships affects the way people develop and behave.	1. Based on relatively vague, unscientific concepts that can't be tested easily.
2. Provides useful concepts for developing supportive and ethical human relationships.	2. Encourages people to focus on self-fulfilment and perfecting themselves – can be seen as narcissistic.
3. Sees people as capable of resolving their own problems in an individual way.	3. Focuses on the individual rather than on the influence of others or their broader social or cultural surroundings.



### What do you know?

1. How, according to social learning theory, are some human behaviours learnt or acquired?
2. Describe how a role model can influence a person's development and behaviour.
3. Explain how 'majority influence' (group pressure) can affect a person's judgement and behaviour.
4. What is a self-fulfilling prophecy?
5. Summarise Maslow's explanation of human development.
6. According to Carl Rogers, how does self-esteem develop?

## M1 Assessing the psychodynamic approach

The strengths and weaknesses or limitations of the psychodynamic approach to psychology are summarised in Figure 8.10 below.

Figure 8.10 An assessment of the psychodynamic approach.

Strengths	Weaknesses or limitations
1. Effective for treating mild, anxiety-based problems but less suitable for treating more serious and enduring mental health problems.	1. Based on a theory and concepts that are difficult for many people to grasp, and which some distrust or find hard to believe.
2. Recognises the influence of the unconscious and the individual's 'inner' mental and emotional life on behaviour, emotion and development.	2. Places the therapist in a very powerful position – they are seen as having the 'expertise' to analyse and treat the individual. This may lead to abuse of power or may feel disempowering for those receiving treatment.
3. Aims to find and resolve the root causes of an individual's problems.	3. Can be very time-consuming, taking a long time to resolve an individual's problems or reduce their distress.



### What do you know?

1. Identify two pioneers of the psychodynamic perspective in psychology.
2. Describe the parts played by the id, ego and superego in the human personality.
3. Explain the role of the unconscious in human behaviour.
4. Identify the stage of childhood psychosexual development that is linked to toilet training.
5. Describe the effects of two ego defence mechanisms on behaviour, giving an example of each.
6. Explain what Erikson meant by the term 'psychosexual crisis'.

## M1 Assessing the cognitive/information-processing approach

The strengths and weaknesses or limitations of the cognitive/information-processing approach to psychology are summarised in Figure 8.13 below.

### Reflect

*Can you think of any events or experiences in your life that have caused you to change the way you think about or present your 'self' to others? Does Kelly's personal construct theory help you to understand why and how this occurred?*

Figure 8.13 An assessment of the cognitive/information-processing approach to psychology.

Strengths	Weaknesses or limitations
1. Research studies show that cognitive therapies (see Figure 8.14) are very effective for people suffering from mental disorders.	1. The cognitive approach seems to suggest that people can simply think their way out of problems and be self-sufficient. This fails to recognise the social, cultural and biological complexity of many health and social care problems.
2. The cognitive approach deals directly with the thoughts or emotions that are causing a person distress.	2. The cognitive approach doesn't seek out or address the origins of irrational thinking or emotional problems. It simply addresses the symptoms.
3. The approach recognises that a person's mental abilities develop and change over time.	3. People aren't totally controlled or purely influenced by brain activity – human behaviour and experience are the result of complex interactions between a variety of nature and nurture factors.

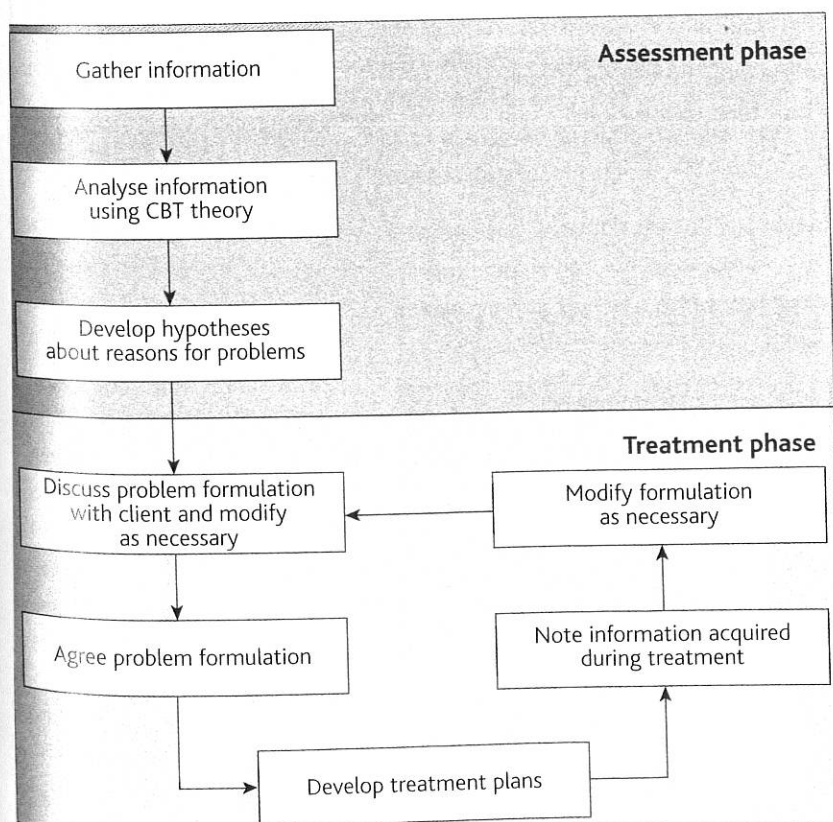


Figure 8.14. The Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) process.

## M1 Assessing the biological approach

The strengths and weaknesses or limitations of the biological approach to psychology are summarised in Figure 8.16 below.

Figure 8.16 An assessment of the biological approach to psychology.

Strengths	Weaknesses or limitations
1. Biological processes can be observed (e.g. brain scans) and measured (e.g. serotonin levels), enabling causes of psychological problems to be identified.	1. Complex human behaviours can't always be reduced to physical causes. Other environmental factors and inner mental processes may play a part too.
2. The claims and theories of biological psychology apply to all human beings, making them very useful to practitioners working with diverse populations.	2. This approach doesn't explain why individuals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds may have different patterns of behaviour. As human beings with the same physiology, according to the biological approach, we should all behave in a very similar way.
3. Treatments that correct physiological problems and imbalances can be developed and used in a precise, evidence-based way.	3. Biological explanations of psychological problems tend to lead to biological treatments. These are not always successful and may have side-effects (medication) or cause physical damage (psycho-surgery).

## What do you know?

1. Identify two psychologists who developed and used a cognitive/information-processing approach to psychology.
2. Describe the main features of Piaget's theory of children's intellectual development.
3. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the cognitive perspective in psychology?
4. What do biological psychologists investigate?
5. Using your own words, summarise Arnold Gessell's theory of maturation.
6. Using two examples, explain the links between human physiology (the biological approach) and an individual's behaviour or mental state.

## Investigate

*Investigate the use of physical treatments that tend to be associated with the biological approach to psychological distress. These include:*

- medication
- electro-convulsive therapy
- psychosurgery
- physical exercise.

*Produce a summary explaining what each treatment involves, highlighting the connection between an individual's physiological processes and their behaviour or psychological experiences.*

have learning disabilities, mental health problems or dementia and with children experiencing 'tantrums'. Self-harm, violence, inappropriate sexual behaviour, selective incontinence and vandalism are all common types of challenging behaviour. Behavioural analysis and treatment of challenging behaviour tries to identify the causes, triggers and consequences of the behaviour. Operant conditioning principles are then used to help the person develop new, more socially acceptable ways of behaving.



The behavior of young children can be very challenging at times.

## D1 Evaluating behaviourism

Figure 8.18 An evaluation of behaviourism.

Strengths	Weaknesses/limitations
1. Behaviourism is a scientific and testable way of understanding and treating psychological problems.	1. Views human behaviour as being like a ping pong ball, continually being batted between stimulus factors and automatic responses.
2. Has many practical uses and can help people to modify or change their behaviour relatively quickly.	2. Ignores the influence of human consciousness, emotions and thinking abilities on human psychological development and experience.
3. Provides a way of understanding individual differences in behaviour because it focuses on an individual's particular circumstances and ways of responding.	3. Restricts its focus to observable behaviours only, ignoring a range of other factors (the unconscious, genetics, cognition, biological processes) that can influence psychological experiences.

*On balance, are you persuaded that behaviourism has a useful part to play in health and social care settings? What, for you, are its main strength and its main limitation?*

## D1 Evaluating the psychodynamic approach to health and social care provision

Figure 8.20 An evaluation of the psychodynamic approach.

What does it offer?	What are its limitations?
1. Psychodynamic therapies are effective with certain types of people (articulate, introspective) and certain types of disorders (anxiety-based, linked to attachments and early experiences).	1. Psychodynamic therapies tend to focus on past experiences rather than the current difficulties a person faces.
2. These therapies seek out the root causes of people's problems and try to resolve them.	2. Digging deeply into a person's problems and past experiences can produce more distress (making the person feel worse) before a solution is found and symptoms are relieved.
3. The psychodynamic approach can be used with individuals or groups.	3. Costly and time-consuming, requiring a specially trained therapist.



### Reflect

*On balance, are you persuaded that psychodynamic theory has a useful part to play in health and social care settings? What, for you, are its main strength and its main limitation?*



### What do you know?

1. Identify two ways of using the behavioural perspective in health and social care practice.
2. What behavioural principle is aversion therapy based on?
3. Describe the process of systematic desensitisation.
4. How can operant conditioning principles be used to promote and shape an individual's self-care skills?
5. What is social reinforcement and how can it be used in health and social care settings?
6. Explain how behavioural principles can be used to help an individual experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder?

or a 10-mile fun run in aid of a fertility charity and noticed that the pop star would be running too, he decided to take part himself. Joe's physical fitness improved considerably as a result of the 3 months of training he undertook to prepare for the run. At the end of the run, Joe also had a strong sense of emotional wellbeing and satisfaction, and felt he had achieved something important.

1. Which social learning theory principles help to explain Joe's behaviour and feelings in this scenario?
2. How has a role model helped to deliver health education messages in this situation?
3. What psychological impact did the use of a role model have?



## D1 Evaluating social learning theory

Figure 8.21 An evaluation of social learning theory.

What does it offer?	What are its limitations?
1. Combines behaviourist with cognitive principles. This provides a powerful, practical way of promoting learning and behaviour change.	1. Does not take into account different levels of ability or an individual's stage of intellectual development – it assumes everyone is capable of learning through observation.
2. The principles of social learning theory are simple, widely used and are seen as effective in educational settings and in care settings where teaching living skills is a feature of care practice.	2. Does not take into account the fact that people learn through experimenting and innovating, as well as by observing and imitating others – it underplays creativity.
3. Outcomes can be easily observed and are measurable.	3. Doesn't explain how to motivate people to learn through imitation – it just suggests that this is what happens and that all people can be motivated in the right circumstances.

*On balance, are you persuaded that social learning theory has a useful part to play in health and social care settings? What, for you, are its main strength and its main limitation?*

## D1 Evaluating the humanistic perspective

Figure 8.25 An evaluation of the humanistic perspective.

Strengths	Weaknesses or limitations
1. The humanistic perspective encourages psychologists to accept that there is more to human behaviour and psychological experience than observable behaviour.	1. The humanistic focus on the individual and self-fulfilment can be seen as selfish and narcissistic.
2. Humanism is based on a positive view of human nature that emphasises individual responsibility.	2. Critics see the humanistic perspective as assuming an overly optimistic view of the world. It doesn't recognise that some people are unable to achieve self-fulfilment because they face significant social disadvantages, for example.
3. The ideas and concepts of the humanistic perspective are flexible and can be applied widely in health and social care settings.	3. The ideas and theories of the humanistic perspective can't be tested. They are seen as vague and unverifiable by those who want scientific evidence of effectiveness.
4. The humanistic perspective is based on values that are inclusive and supportive of all human beings.	4. The humanistic perspective suggests that everyone is capable of achieving self-actualisation and self-fulfilment. This may only be true of very talented and socially advantaged people.
5. The humanistic perspective is very client-centred and has enabled a large counselling industry to grow and develop.	5. Humanistic psychology ignores the unconscious – it recognises only those thoughts and behaviours that people are aware of.



### What do you know?

1. Identify one way in which the principles of social learning theory can be used in health or social care practice.
2. What part can positive role models play in promoting health and wellbeing?
3. Outline two strengths and two contrasting weaknesses of social learning theory.
4. Identify three humanistic concepts that are used in health and social care work.
5. Describe how the focus of the humanistic perspective compares to that of the social learning theory perspective in psychology.
6. Outline two strengths and two contrasting weaknesses of the humanistic psychological perspective.



### Reflect

*On balance, are you persuaded that the humanistic perspective has a useful part to play in health and social care settings? What, for you, are its main strength and its main limitation?*

## D1 Evaluating the cognitive approach to health and social care provision

Figure 8.27 An evaluation of the cognitive approach to health and social care provision.

What does it offer?	What are its limitations?
1. A scientific, evidence-based approach to psychology.	1. It is criticised for treating a person's symptoms rather than the causes of their problems.
2. It can be applied quite widely in the health and social care field.	2. It is reductionist and deterministic, suggesting that complex human psychological processes and experiences can be explained largely in terms of brain functioning.
3. A relatively quick, low cost and effective way of helping people to deal with personal distress and cognitive problems.	3. The cognitive approach ignores the influence of human emotions, consciousness and free will on behaviour and psychological experiences.

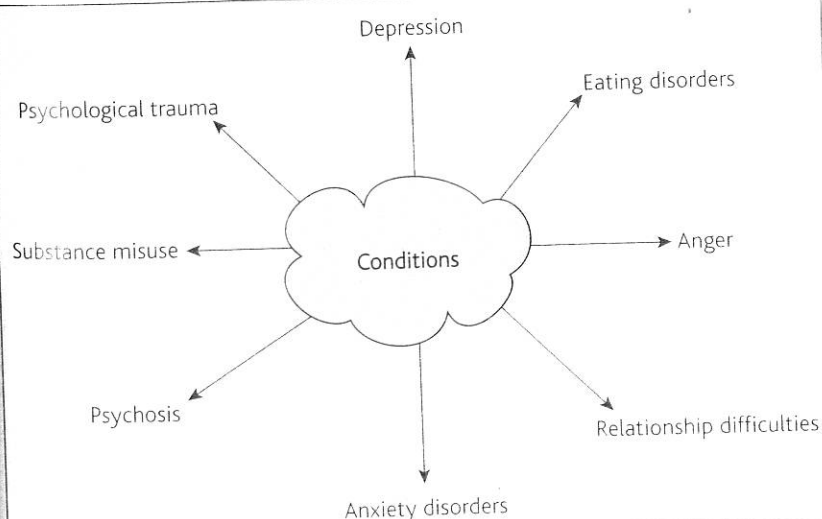


Figure 8.28 Conditions that can be treated using a cognitive approach.

## D1 Evaluating the biological approach to health and social care provision

Figure 8.30 An evaluation of the biological approach to health and social care provision.

What does it offer?	What are its limitations?
1. A rigorous scientific approach to psychology.	1. It is sometimes seen as too simplistic, suggesting that biological factors are the key to understanding complex human psychology.
2. A range of practical applications that are used in the treatment of health and social care problems – particularly mental illnesses, autism and other brain-related disorders.	2. Reductionist and deterministic, reducing the complexities of human experience to simple, predictable biological processes.
3. Evidence that nature (biology) does play an important part in human experience and that this links to nurture (environmental) influences.	3. Ignores individual psychological differences that result from social, cultural and personal experiences.



*On balance, are you persuaded that the biological perspective has a useful part to play in health and social care settings? What, for you, are its main strength and its main limitation?*

### ✓ What do you know?

1. Identify two uses of the cognitive psychology perspective in health and social care practice.
2. Describe how the cognitive perspective can be used to understand and treat either depression or post-traumatic stress disorder.
3. Identify two ways in which the biological perspective in psychology has contributed to understanding or interventions in the health and social care field.
4. Describe an example of the link between genetics and a health disorder.
5. Explain how biological psychology has contributed to an understanding of the health problems experienced by shift workers.
6. Outline two ways in which the cognitive and biological perspectives in psychology are similar and two ways in which they differ.