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THE FAITH FILLED THERAPIST

What is Confirmation Bias?

Confirmation bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, and remember information in a way that confirms our pre-existing beliefs. It affects how we process information, often leading us to focus on evidence that supports what we already think while ignoring or dismissing contradictory evidence.

This cognitive bias can impact our personal beliefs, relationships, decision-making, and emotional well-being. When it comes to self-perception, confirmation bias can reinforce negative self-beliefs, making it harder to see ourselves accurately and with compassion.

How Confirmation Bias Works

1. **Selective Attention** – We notice information that supports our existing beliefs while overlooking contradictory information.
2. **Selective Interpretation** – We interpret ambiguous situations in ways that align with what we already believe.
3. **Selective Memory** – We recall past experiences that reinforce our beliefs while forgetting or downplaying evidence to the contrary.

For example, if someone believes they are not good at their job, they may focus on minor mistakes as proof while dismissing praise or positive feedback.

The Brain, Scripture, and Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias is deeply rooted in the brain's wiring. Our brains are designed to conserve energy by relying on mental shortcuts, known as heuristics, which help us process information quickly. However, these shortcuts can also reinforce biases.

- **The Prefrontal Cortex:** This area is responsible for rational thought and decision-making, but it can be overridden by emotional biases when we're stressed or under pressure.
- **The Amygdala:** This part of the brain processes emotions, particularly fear and threat detection. When we receive information that contradicts our beliefs, the amygdala may trigger a stress response, making us resistant to change.
- **The Reticular Activating System (RAS):** This network acts as a filter for information, prioritising what aligns with our existing beliefs and discarding conflicting data.

Scripture reminds us of the power of renewing our minds: *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* (Romans 12:2). God has designed our brains with neuroplasticity—the ability to form new connections and shift patterns of thinking. This means that with intention and practice, we can rewire our thought patterns to align more with truth, grace, and growth.

Neuroplasticity: Undoing Confirmation Bias

The good news is that our thought patterns are not fixed. Through neuroplasticity, we can reshape our minds to align with God's truth rather than being trapped by past biases.

Ways to Rewire the Brain and Overcome Confirmation Bias

1. **Expose Yourself to Truth** – Regularly immerse yourself in God's Word and seek out perspectives that challenge limiting beliefs. Scripture tells us, *"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* (John 8:32).
 2. **Practice Cognitive Reframing** – When a negative thought arises, ask, "Is there another way to interpret this?" or "What does God say about me in this situation?"
 3. **Mindfulness and Self-Awareness** – Develop the habit of observing your thoughts without immediately accepting them as truth. *"Take every thought captive to obey Christ."* (2 Corinthians 10:5)
 4. **Journaling for Balance** – Write down both the evidence that supports and contradicts your beliefs to create a more balanced perspective.
 5. **Strengthen New Neural Pathways** – Speak life over yourself. Repeating scriptural affirmations, such as *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made"* (Psalm 139:14), can help build new, healthier thought patterns.
 6. **Engage in Critical Thinking Exercises** – Ask yourself, "What evidence would prove my belief wrong?" This helps to open your mind to alternative perspectives.
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Journal Reflections on Confirmation Bias

Recognising Past Confirmation Bias

Reflect on these questions to identify how confirmation bias has shaped your thinking:

- Can you recall a time when you automatically assumed something was wrong with you? What evidence did you focus on to support that belief?
- Were there any moments where someone gave you positive feedback, but you dismissed or downplayed it? Why do you think you did that?
- How has this belief (that something is wrong with you) influenced your decisions, relationships, or emotions in the past?
- If someone else had the same experiences as you, would you see them in the same negative light? Why or why not?
- Looking back, can you identify any alternative explanations for the situations where you felt inadequate?

Shifting Confirmation Bias Moving Forward

Use these reflections to consciously shift your thinking and build a more balanced self-view:

- What is one belief about yourself that you want to reinforce instead?
- What kind of evidence could you start looking for that supports the idea that you are whole, capable, or worthy?
- When you notice yourself slipping into self-doubt, what would be a helpful question to ask yourself in that moment?
- Can you think of a small daily practice that would help you recognise and embrace the good in yourself?
- What are three things about yourself—qualities, skills, experiences—that you can affirm as true and valuable today?

Practical Ways to Overcome Confirmation Bias

1. **Seek Out God's Perspective** – Instead of relying solely on your own view, ask, "What does God say about this?"
2. **Keep a Balanced Record** – Journal moments of success and positive feedback alongside challenges. *"Forget not all His benefits."* (Psalm 103:2)
3. **Pause and Question** – When a negative thought arises, ask, "Is there another way to interpret this?"
4. **Practice Self-Compassion** – Remind yourself that everyone has strengths and weaknesses, and no one is defined by their flaws. *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* (2 Corinthians 12:9)

5. **Surround Yourself with Encouragement** – Engage with people and resources that reinforce truth and encouragement rather than negativity. *“Encourage one another and build each other up.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
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Final Thoughts Becoming aware of confirmation bias is the first step towards changing it. By consciously noticing how we filter information and actively challenging limiting beliefs, we can cultivate a healthier, more accurate view of ourselves. Over time, this shift can lead to greater confidence, better decision-making, and deeper self-acceptance.

God invites us to renew our minds daily, replacing limiting beliefs with His truth. As we do this, we step into greater freedom and clarity. *“Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”* (Ephesians 4:23-24)

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