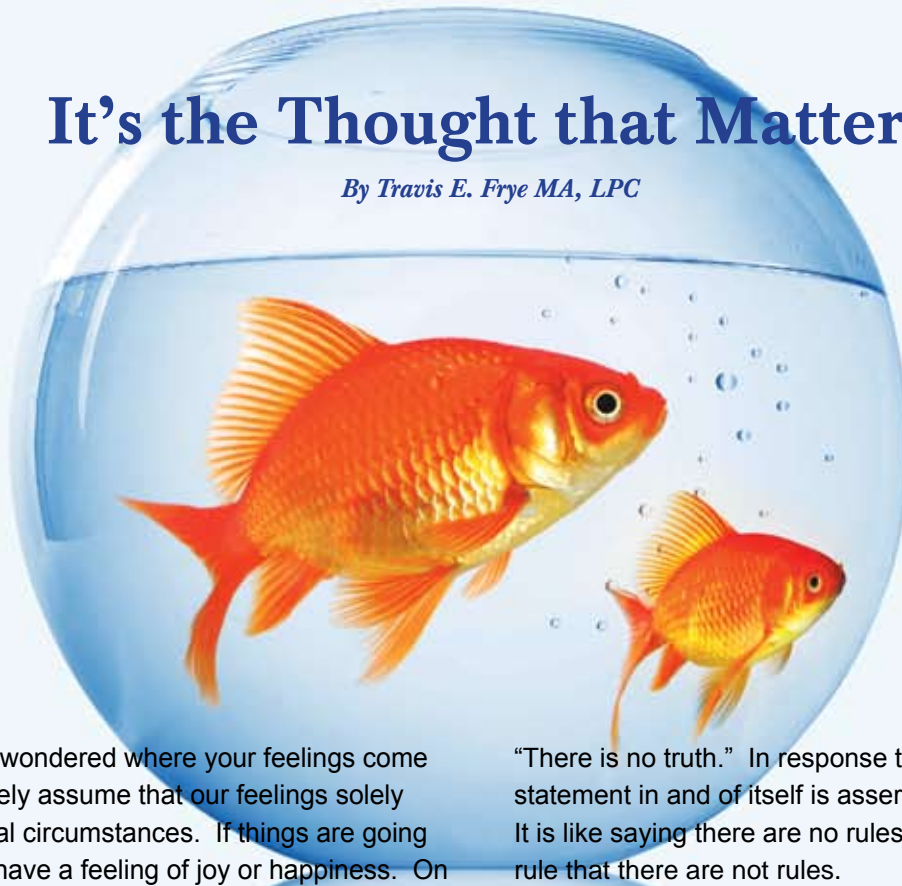


# It's the Thought that Matters

By Travis E. Frye MA, LPC



**Have** you ever wondered where your feelings come from? Many of us falsely assume that our feelings solely derive from our external circumstances. If things are going our way then we may have a feeling of joy or happiness. On the other hand, if life circumstances are difficult then we may have feelings of despair and sadness.

What I have come to learn is that while life events play a role in what feelings we experience they are not the main source. Feelings mainly derive from our thoughts and perceptions. In other words, it is not so much life events in and of themselves that cause us to feel, but more so the thoughts that we have about those events. Life events act as triggers of thoughts, which then result in emotional reactions.

Herein lies the problem for so many of us because our thoughts are often distorted and not reflective of reality. Now this is where I am going to get philosophical, so bear with me. All of us view reality through our own personal lens. It's like a goldfish in its fishbowl. All he really knows is his immediate surroundings. However, he can see a blurred and distorted view of the outside world. He just can't seem to see it with clarity until someone comes along and lifts him out of the bowl. Now he can see what was once vague. He has a clear view of the world around him and knows that there is a world much larger than he had thought before.

Like the goldfish our perceptions can become muddled. This is what is known as subjective reality. While subjective reality is reality, it is not the only reality that exists. We hear phrases such as, "What could be true for you may not be true for me," and "Truth is what you make it to be," or my personal favorite,

"There is no truth." In response to the latter comment, the statement in and of itself is asserting truth. It is self-refuting! It is like saying there are no rules. Well, there is at least one rule that there are not rules.

What does all of this have to do with our thoughts and feelings? Well, what we have to recognize is that like the goldfish, we know there is truth for us to discover as well. This is what is known as objective reality. Our perceptions of objective reality become blurry which results in strong emotional reactions. For instance, you don't get that job promotion you were hoping for. You might automatically think of yourself as a total failure and then generalize that you will never succeed in other areas of your life. These thoughts cause you to feel depressed and perhaps you even stop trying to excel in your work. This is blurry thinking.

In the next article I will continue our discussion on this topic. I will identify some of the most common cognitive distortions that we all battle. I will also offer some ideas on how we can move to a more objective viewpoint.

Travis E. Frye MA, LPC is trained in Marriage and Family Therapy, works as a parent educator/coach, and is certified as an anger management and grief and loss therapist. He is an Anthem resident and the owner of Crossroads Family Counseling Center, LLC.

*QUESTIONS? ASK TRAVIS! If you have questions or topics you would like Travis to write on please contact him at 623-680-3486/ [www.crossroadsfcc.com](http://www.crossroadsfcc.com)/ [info@crossroadsfcc.com](mailto:info@crossroadsfcc.com).*