

Cognitive Dissonance

Psychology

The discomfort of inconsistency, and the ways it gets resolved.

Festinger's theory, and the classic demonstration.

1

Hold two inconsistent cognitions

'This task was boring' and 'I told someone it was interesting'.

2

Experience discomfort

The inconsistency is aversive.

3

Reduce it

Change a cognition, add a consoling one, or minimise the importance.

4

The cheapest change wins

Usually the attitude, because behaviour has already happened.

FESTINGER & CARLSMITH

Paid \$1 to lie: rated the task as enjoyable

Paid \$20 to lie: did not

\$20 justified the lie; \$1 did not, so the attitude moved

Insufficient justification is the key: with a strong external reason, no dissonance arises and no attitude change follows.