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## Why Do I Feel This Way?

**Mental health** | How past experiences can affect today's behaviors and feelings.

By CYNTHIA L. WHITAKER  
For The Telegraph

Many people ask me, "Why do I feel this way?" or "Why do I do the things I do?" People ask because they don't know why they get angry at someone who asks for help or who gives feedback. Or, they don't understand why they avoid speaking up or expressing their opinions. Or, they don't understand other things about their personality and behaviors.

For many people the reason why these feelings and behaviors happen, even when they don't want them to, is because past experiences can affect today's behavior. For example, if someone grows up being told they don't do anything right or being yelled at for expressing their opinion, then they learn to think their opinion is not right. As a result, they now might look like someone who is afraid to speak up or express an opinion. Another example is if someone grows up in a home and school where they were picked on a lot, they may now have low self-esteem and have strong reactions to feedback. There are many other examples of how some-

one's past experiences affect the behaviors and feelings of today. The point is that we all learn to think, feel, and behave certain ways from our experiences, not just from our genes received from our families.

Of course, all of us have different experiences. Some people have many positive experiences, but others are not so lucky. Negative experiences are also different and range from being alone or misunderstood to being abused again and again. These different experiences can affect different people in different ways because our experiences interact with our genes. Some people act a bit shy or get nervous in new situations, others might get angry easily. These types of behaviors do not necessarily mean that a person has a disorder and might be managed by learning what you are sensitive to and learning skills to change your behavior. Other people can develop psychological disorders from negative experiences. The most common is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is well known as a disorder in the military. Someone goes into the military, experiences negative things, and then has many symptoms of anxiety

or anger after the negative experiences. Over the years, there has been a lot of research to prove that PTSD can also happen from negative childhood experiences, especially negative experiences that happen again and again. Someone with PTSD is sensitive to any experience that reminds them of past negative experiences. For example, if you were picked on growing up, you might now be sensitive to feedback or any situation that makes you feel judged. People with PTSD also can react strongly to an experience that reminds them of past negative experiences. For example, you might react strongly to something that others think is no big deal because it reminds you of something negative from childhood.

Not all negative experiences lead to PTSD or a psychological disorder, but all negative experiences can affect our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. If you need someone to talk to about your past negative experiences, the services provided at Greater Nashua Mental Health Center are available to you. We offer a wide array of behavioral health programs, including treatment for substance use disorders, and for individuals challenged with both mental health and substance misuse simultaneously. Our services are available for



Different experiences affect each individual differently and can shape a person's behavior.

all ages from children to older adults, and no one is ever turned away due to the inability to pay. In addition, we are the state-wide providers of behavioral health services for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Don't go it alone. We're here to help. Contact Greater Nashua Mental Health Center today. For an appointment call our intake line at (603) 402-1574. For general information call our main number at (603) 889-6147. Our videophone number is (603) 821-0073. To speak to someone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if you are in crisis, call 1-800-762-8191.

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Mental Health Center**

at Community Council

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or visit [www.gnmhc.org](http://www.gnmhc.org) for details.