

Cognitive Dissonance Revisited

James F. Welles

Corresponding author: James F. Welles, P O Box 17, East Marion, NY 11939. **Mobile:** 954-531-5382. **Email:** jwelles103@aol.com .**Received date:** January 05 ,2018; **Accepted date :** February 08, 2018; **Published date:** February 19, 2018.**Citations:** James F. Welles, Cognitive Dissonance Revisited, J Neuroscience and Neurological Surgery. **Doi** [10.31579/2578-8868/025](https://doi.org/10.31579/2578-8868/025)**Copyright:** © 2018 James F. Welles. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Cognitive dissonance (cogdis) is defined as an uncomfortable condition resulting from holding contradictory beliefs. Obviously, stupidity helps in this process, in that the dumber a person is, the easier it is for her to hold contradictory beliefs. For us, we expand cogdis to cover the condition of a deeply held belief at odds with relevant behavior as in Crusaders who killed for Christ or a corrupt cop. In addition, we extend the principle beyond the individual to society in general, in that we find a culture may profess a belief which is contradicted by the conduct of its members, as when the institution of science is set up to protect errant members rather than correct their errors.¹

While it is reasonable to presume that a such dissonance creates a psychic tension which humans ache to resolve, this commonly is not the case:

people simply live with their contradictions. As Walt Whitman observed, "Do I contradict myself? Very well then. I contradict myself."² This is not much of a stretch, since one can posit that a behavioral system is an expression of an underlying belief system—so you have a behavioral belief system at odds with a theoretical/ethical belief system. The expected dissonance is common mitigated by word games, which reduce cognitive tension by redefining everything to suit the super-ego individual and society.

References

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