

Reasoning

Reasoning is term we use to describe the way people think things through and come to decisions and judgements. Research has shown that it's much more likely that we'll have suspicious thoughts — and those thoughts are likely to go on for longer and cause us more distress — if we do any of the following things:

Thinking fast not slow

The human brain operates two basic systems for decision-making. One involves carefully considering the options and evidence. It's the kind of logical reasoning we're expected to use at school or university and, as you might expect, it can be pretty hard work! The second system is rapid, unconscious, and much more influenced by our emotions — it's the gut feeling approach to making a judgement. The Nobel prize-winning psychologist Daniel Kahnemann calls these two systems *thinking fast and slow*.

The faster we think, the more vulnerable we are to paranoia. A decision or judgement made quickly isn't always going to be a mistake, but in general it's better to think through a situation carefully first. When we're anxious, we often rush to a decision, basing it on only a little bit of data. It's hard to take the time to think things through or gather more evidence when we're worried or afraid. But if we don't take the time to think slowly, if we don't gather and analyse the evidence for our thoughts and feelings, and if we don't talk things over with other people, we run the risk of jumping to the wrong conclusion. And that wrong conclusion may well be that other people are out to hurt us.

We're are less likely to be troubled by suspicious thoughts if we're able to think beyond our first paranoid reaction — if we can keep in mind that what we've seen or what we feel can be explained in other ways. It might be a question of remembering that we're feeling a bit stressed or down, and reminding ourselves of the effect that can have on the way we see the world.