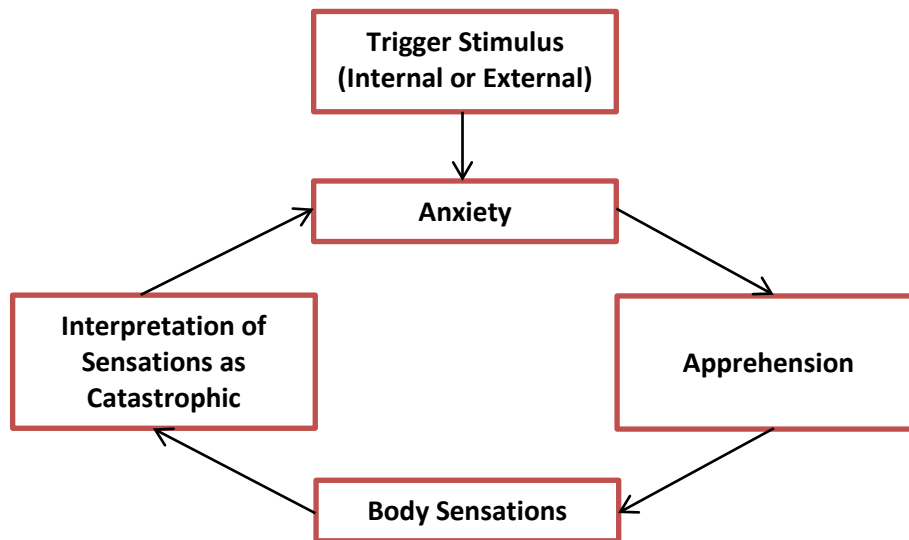


Activity 3.2

Testing a Theory of Panic Disorder



This is a schematic (diagrammatic) representation of Clark's (1986) theory (or model) of panic disorder. In this theory, perception of a threat triggers apprehension followed by a focussing on bodily sensations caused by that apprehension. Finally, these bodily sensations are catastrophically misinterpreted as threatening. This then creates a vicious cycle of cause-effect events that precipitates a panic attack.

If this theory meets Popper's criteria as a scientific theory, then we should be able to generate testable hypotheses from it which will either confirm the theory or falsify it. Below are a few examples of testable hypotheses from this theory. See if you can think up any more.

Testable hypotheses

In individuals diagnosed with panic disorder:

1. Perceiving a threat should lead to increased apprehension (as measured by increased levels of anxiety).
2. Perceiving a threat should eventually lead to enhanced discrimination of body sensations.
3. Increasing discrimination of body sensations should trigger catastrophising.
4. Inducing catastrophic interpretations of bodily sensations should lead to increased perception of threat.