

# The Elephant, the Rider and the Path

**The metaphor of the Elephant, the Rider and the Path is a model for behaviour change defined by Jonathan Haidt.**



Image source: [youtu.be/X9KP8uiGZTs](https://youtu.be/X9KP8uiGZTs)

He uses a metaphor of a rider (our rational side) riding an elephant (our emotional side) to describe how and why we think, feel and act in the ways we do (our behaviour).

This model also helps us understand how we can change our behaviours.

## **The model explained:**

The elephant is our emotional side.

The rider is our rational, thinking side.

The path is the way forward to our goal.

The rider can tell us where we want to go, but our emotions (the elephant) don't always let us go that way; our emotions often dominate us.

This is why, even when we know we should be doing something, our emotions can stop us or slow us down.

You can help someone change their behaviour using the following steps:

1. give the rider (the rational side) clear directions
2. motivate the elephant (by tapping into our emotions)
3. shape the path, remove obstacles and show the way to change.