

## ABC-DE

An ABC may help me to look at **THE DEGREE** to which I might be UNNECESSARILY and UNHELPFULLY upsetting MYSELF.

**Rather than an ABC making me a door-mat**, I might STILL passionately and in a bit calmer manner put my case. I might still **CHOOSE TO** give myself **THE RIGHT to ASK** to be TREATED WITH **RESPECT and CONSIDERATION**. I might CHOOSE TO do that at any time.

### The ABC Model

**A** = The Activating event or THOUGHT

**B** = MY Belief/perception about the event or THOUGHT

**C** = Consequence or MY EMOTIONAL REACTIONS to the event

**D** = Dispute my closely held belief

**E** = Effective New Belief

My '**A**' might take time to unpack.

What might a camera see?

What might an observer say was happening or had happened?

Attempting to take out some of the 'emotional interpretation.'

**The 'C' is commonly identified before the 'B' might be teased out.**

The process is commonly done A C B – or **C A B** (recognize a 'feeling' first).

**Whenever I appear to be having, or have had, an UNHELPFUL or EXTREME, NEGATIVE or LIMITING emotional reaction, then an ABC may perhaps be helpful?**

It is perhaps unlikely, that I will be able to do an ABC in the MIDDLE of an emotional reaction. More likely, especially early on, to maybe DO IT A BIT LATER WHEN I HAVE PERHAPS CALMED-DOWN a little. GREAT when I get to the point of SOMETIMES catching an EMOTION or DEMAND of mine early.

**uB** = unhelpful Belief or thought that I might have.

**D** - Dispute the unhelpful Belief in **B** - by attempting to turn it into the answer to an OPEN-ENDED QUESTION - more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer - and looking for proof, or 'truth,' or an alternative way of looking at it.

**E** - Effective new thought – looking to substitute something helpful - non-demanding - a **preference** - instead of a **uB**.

The **three P's** of PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT: Practice, Practice, and Practice.

The **four P's** of BuILD: Planning, Practice, Persistence, and Patience.

**It is recommended that an ABC is done in writing.**

### ABC - a crash course.

An 'ABC' is an exercise that is designed to be used in a common life situation – it comes from REBT, Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, which is a form of 'cognitive,' or thinking, training. I might learn to do this technique straight out of a book, or off my computer screen. I might CHOOSE TO use it to examine a belief I have, or a thought I am having - as some of the thoughts I have may be causing me unnecessary distress. An "ABC" might be an exercise that might **help me avoid being victimized by a thought of mine.**

A common example is the issue of someone else's behaviour '**making me angry.**' This is a very common way of expressing something. In fact it distorts the situation it attempts to describe. A much more accurate description of "someone making me angry" is to say that **I FEEL angry about their behaviour.** Rather than them making me anything, they are simply **behaving in a way that I AM CHOOSING TO get angry about.** I notice their behaviour and then I become angry. **The responsibility for the anger is more mine, rather than theirs.** This might sound strange at first, though thinking about problematic anger and frustration this way may help me to alter it.

REBT theory says that **it is generally UNHELPFUL and self-defeating for me to get all worked up about someone else's behaviour.** My anger is based on a faulty ASSUMPTION, which is that the other person SHOULD behave in the way I want them to. When I think about it, what the other person 'SHOULD' do, is often not necessarily what they 'DO' do. **This is likely a very important element of the equation – reality.** They do what they do - then I 'automatically' get angry about it – then I feel quite upset for a while - possibly VERY upset. It's like walking around with a big 'pushbutton' on my forehead that says '**Push here to aggravate.**' How USEFUL might this response be to another's behaviour, for ME as a person?

Since it seems they are very likely going to do whatever it is they do anyway, then it might make my life a great deal easier if I CHOOSE TO not get angry about it and CHOOSE TO not give away my peace of mind. The missing part of the puzzle, and the part that is the really crucial part, is **what I THINK about what they do.**

For example, if I really believe that they MUST NOT do whatever they are doing, and then they still continue to do it, then the DEMAND that I have inside my head that says, 'they MUST NOT do that' will put considerable pressure on me from the inside to do something about it - which I am very often unable to do. **Often, it just isn't possible to control another persons' behaviour.** So this will 'automatically' help me feel upset; frustrated; ineffective; angry; desperate; hurt; enraged; and so on. Because I cannot translate the DEMAND 'they MUST NOT do that' into reality. Most external phenomena I simply cannot control. The problem is that I am DEMANDING something that I cannot get. **It might be better for my peace of mind if I simply PREFER to get what I want to get** – rather than DEMAND it.

How much easier might it be when I CHOOSE TO **become aware** of this and **make a choice** to change the DEMAND 'they MUST NOT do that' into **a more helpful alternative** – '**I would PREFER that they do that less often.**' Once I **downgrade the DEMAND** a little toward a simple '**preference**,' the heat is turned down a little and I might participate easier.

An ABC might be used to analyse a situation and help me look at my thinking about it - so that without trying to change external reality, I might FEEL different about it. I might still WORK to alter my external reality – that might still be my CHOICE.

To try this ABC exercise for myself, I might pick any situation where someone's behaviour is 'making me upset' and see what it is I might be thinking about it - what is DEMANDING, or unhelpful – I might look to change it into something more helpful - a PREFERENCE. It probably isn't helpful to demand that people behave in the way I want them to! It might be OK for me to ASK them to – the choice remains theirs. Here is an example, using drunken people making a lot of noise late at night, as they pass by outside where I live.

#### A. - Activating situation or thought

Drunk people walk past my home, making some noise, waking me up.

#### B. - unhelpful Belief I might have about A

They MUSTN'T! make any noise! They SHOULDN'T! make any noise!

#### C. – emotional Consequence of having that belief about A

When noisy drunken people pass in the street outside late at night and wake me up I feel angry. It feels bad. I lie awake feeling angry and upset and I don't get back to sleep for a long time.

#### D. - Dispute the unhelpful Belief in B by turning it into a question and answer

Why mustn't they make any noise? Where is that commandment written in stone? Well, it isn't. Just because I 'say' they mustn't, how does it then follow that they won't? It doesn't.

E. - Effective new thought - substitute something helpful or non-demanding instead of uB. Drunken people often tend to be noisy, I WOULD RATHER THEY WEREN'T, and it's no big deal. It is very common that drunk people make some noise on their way home and are inconsiderate. I CHOOSE TO stay calm about this, and I CHOOSE TO stop even noticing it because it is not a problem for me. When this happens I will say 'Ah, the drunk people who pass in the night' (taking care to spell it right) and go back to sleep.

An ABC exercise might be really short;

A. - Activating situation - Drunks walking past outside, making some noise.

B. - unhelpful Belief I have about A - They 'SHOULDN'T' make any noise

C. - Consequence of having that belief about A - I Feel angry, etc. - Might be noticed before B seen

D. - Dispute the unhelpful Belief in B - WHY 'shouldn't' they make any noise?

E. - Effective new thinking - Drunk people do tend to make noise, it's what they're good at - it's like a natural talent for them. I will CHOOSE to be OK about this and accept it.

I might go on and do this on another situation that 'bothers' me and work to **reclaim my peace of mind** - simply looking for a DEMAND! and attempt to turn it a bit more into a 'preference.' Here's another one...

**A. - Activating situation - I tried to do something and didn't succeed**

**B. - unhelpful Belief I have about A - I MUST ALWAYS be successful! I HAVE TO BE!**

**C. - Consequence of believing B - I feel bad, depressed, etc.**

**D. - Dispute the unhelpful Belief in B - Where is it written in stone that I MUST! ALWAYS! be successful?**

**E. - Effective new thinking to replace B - While I would prefer to be successful every time, to be realistic, that isn't very likely. When I'm not successful I might CHOOSE TO be disappointed with the result, and try to get back to feeling OK within myself and have another go, when possible.**

What other thing might I think or believe? One of these might be a case where I might find a 'uB' - unhelpful Belief;

I MUST NOT feel 'overwhelmed' by a responsibility

I CAN'T STAND IT when I feel *bored, sad, lonely*, etc

People MUST not take me for granted

Email lists SHOULD be how I expect them to be

Other people SHOULD behave in the way I want – they SHOULD be 'fair'

I SHOULD be able to have a drink

I NEED a drink or drug – 'NEED' is often interpreted internally as MUST HAVE – a sneaky 'MUST'

They MUST see it my way

I MUST NEVER display weakness

The sun MUST shine tomorrow

People who do a 'bad' thing MUST ALWAYS be punished

I might look for an **Activating** situation, **uB** or **iB** or an emotional **Consequence** of my own and do this exercise with it. **It might be easier to start with the C - the Consequence of the A and work back to see what the B might be.**

Whenever I 'feel upset' it might be useful to see if an ABC might be done on my thinking about the situation – especially a **DEMAND** I might be living into.

**I might feel a little better afterwards.**

When I CHOOSE TO get into the habit of doing this checking regularly, I might feel a whole lot better overall.

This might be a **TOOL** rather than a theory. Success with this, and another cognitive technique, might be dependent on **MY USING IT** – perhaps writing out my own example - an ABC is seen to be better done in writing.

**Practice.** To develop a skill of any sort has been shown to benefit from **Planning, Practice, Persistence** and **Patience** – patience especially with **my flawed humanness** and **some believe in my innate capacity to learn, grow and evolve.**