

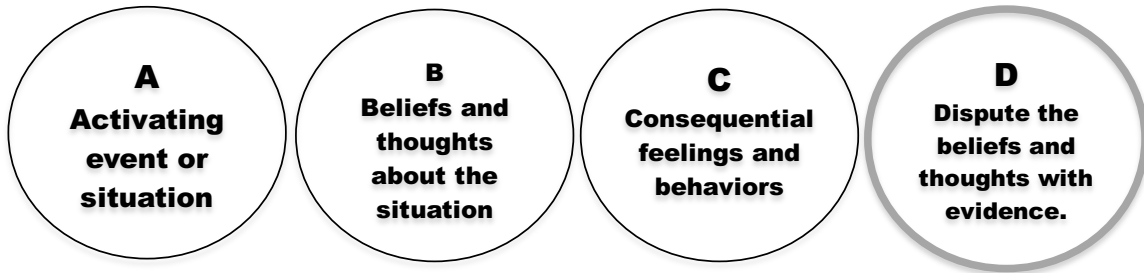
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# The ABC of CBT

**The ABC of CBT Mini Workbook – identifying and disputing self-talk:**

CBT persuades us that events, no matter how challenging, only INFLUENCE how we feel and behave, our *Attributional Style* (how we are explaining it to ourselves), plus our nervous system, will together create our feelings and behaviours. What are you thinking? Do you need to rethink? Use this classic model to build the skill of awareness and self-management through your thinking HQ.

- A** – the activating event or situation
  - B** – your beliefs and thoughts about the event or situation
  - C** – the consequential feelings and behaviours
- And then adding a **D** column, to DISPUTE and edit the beliefs and thoughts with rational thinking.



### The ABC of CBT

**The ABC column form is the staple CBT worksheet** - it helps us to build awareness of how we are explaining the world to ourselves – we use it to track and map thoughts that cause feelings and behaviours. These simple forms help us to build self awareness and to see patterns of bad habits over time – and most importantly, they help us to see when our thoughts and assumptions are often irrational, illogical and unhelpful, so that we can dispute them and replace with rational evidence based cool self talk, and change how we feel and behave to new healthier models..

See the following ABC examples that show clearly the effect of disorted thinking on feelings and behavior:

<b>A = <u>A</u>ctivating Event</b>	<b>B = <u>B</u>eliefs and thoughts</b>	<b>C = <u>C</u>onsequences</b>
(What's happening?)	Thinking that....	... makes me feel...
My boss asked me to do a presentation.	I am going to hugely embarrass myself. It's going to be awful. My mind will go blank, my voice will shake, I'll tremble, and my breathing will go funny. Everybody will laugh at me. It's not fair. I can't do it.	Adrenaline spike – threat response on - anxious, afraid, annoyed, can't concentrate on putting together the content... feel ill, can't stop thinking about it, procrastinate, plan to get out of it...
I can see on social media that two of my friends went out last week – without me!	They excluded me deliberately. They don't like me. Do they hate me? I bet they were talking about me. They're horrible. I'm not going out with them next week. I'm going to ignore contact from them. They can get lost! Oh, I can't stop thinking about it...	Adrenaline spike – threat response on - angry, humiliated, embarrassed, anxious, worried. Burning hot and pumping up when I think about it. Can't stop thinking about it. Re-running scripts over and over in my head. Bitching to others about it, looking for reassurance and validation. Hate-stalking them online.
I have an interview!	I haven't a hope of getting this job. There'll be hundreds of applicants that would be more suitable than me. I'll be nervous and tongue tied and rubbish. There's no point in going. It's not worth putting myself through this, after all I know what will happen, I can't cope.	Adrenaline spike – threat response on - anxious, nervous, can't face preparing properly / procrastinating, overthinking it, imaging myself at the interview doing very badly...

## **A guide to help you to examine and question your thoughts and beliefs:**

Develop rational thinking skills, dispute and reframe... Language matters.

What are you saying to yourself? Are you a reliable narrator? Preciseness of language could change your life.

Learn how to build awareness and self-regulation by 'thought-stopping' and editing and disputing unhelpful/irrational language, and replacing it with cool rational evidence based language instead. Design a new narrative.

Apply the following to your thoughts and beliefs about any particular problem or situation to help you dispute and reframe:

- Is this kind of thinking healthy or unhealthy?
- Is it rational or irrational?
- Is it helpful or unhelpful?
- Am I using one or more of my Bad Thinking Habits?
- Which one(s)?
- Am I using emotional reasoning (oh my feelings! Remember feelings are not facts – what are the facts?)
- What is the evidence for this thought or belief? Is there any evidence against it?
- Am I getting things out of proportion? 30%? 50% 90%?
- Is that a bit dramatic and unhelpful?
- How does accepting these thoughts and beliefs make me feel and behave?
- Has thinking this way been helpful in life so far?
- Am I only noticing the perceived negatives and not noticing the positives?
- What would I advise my best friend if they were thinking this way?
- What is the rational calm evidence based alternative view of this situation?
- What is it more true to say?

**Dispute and reframe.** – be rational, use clear precise language.

—————> *See the following pages for ABCD 'disputing' examples.*

**Add a D column to dispute and reframe –examples templates:**

When our journaling shows up distorted unhelpful thoughts and beliefs, the next step is to *challenge and edit them* (dispute them with evidence and facts and alternative healthy thinking, so that you will feel differently and behave differently, to be happy...) – so we add a fourth column ‘D’...

<b>A = Activating</b> Event / situation	<b>B = Beliefs and thoughts</b> about the situation	<b>C = Consequential</b> feelings/behaviour	<b>D = Dispute and reframe</b> (what would a cool rational version of you say ?)
<b>What’s up?</b>	<b>Thinking that....</b>	<b>... makes me feel / do...</b>	<b>THOUGHT STOP AND REFRAME</b>

*Is that healthy or unhealthy? Rational or irrational? Helpful or unhelpful? What is it more true and rational to say? E.g. :*

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
My boss asked me to do a presentation.	I am going to hugely embarrass myself. It’s going to be awful. My mind will go blank, my voice will shake, I’ll tremble, and my breathing will go funny. Everybody will laugh at me. It’s not fair. I can’t do it.	Adrenaline spike – threat response on - anxious, afraid, annoyed, can’t concentrate on putting together the content... feel ill, can’t stop thinking about it, procrastinate, plan to get out of it..	<p>Negative predicting as an absolute fact that ‘I AM’ going to ‘hugely embarrass’ myself is overly dramatic and irrational. I don’t have a crystal ball, and what exactly does that mean anyway? It would be more correct to say ‘I am worried that I’ll be very nervous and that it will show, but I don’t really know how it will pan out’.</p> <p>The same goes for ‘everybody will laugh at me’. That’s negative mind reading and not very likely! I have no <i>absolute</i> evidence that these predictions are rational and helpful. It’s more true to say that I have evidence that I am uncomfortable doing public speaking, and that it may very well be noticeable, but it’s not true or helpful to say that I literally can not and should not do it - it’s more true to say that I’d rather not, and that I’d prefer if I had no discomfort at all, but that I can tolerate it even if I’m a bit shaky and even if others see it, and the more I prepare the less stress hormones I will have.</p> <p>The cost is too high of living a small life because of nuisance stress hormones. To refuse to do it, and / or to call in sick, would be irrational self sabotage. 74% of people have public speaking anxiety – so it’s abnormal not to have it! I can do it, even if I don’t do it the way I irrationally think I ‘should and must’, I can do my best and that’s good enough.</p> <p>I will ‘thought stop’ and disagree with and derail these unhelpful overly dramatic predictions as they occur rather than accepting them and running them over and over in my head.</p>

A	B	C	D
<p>I can see on social media that two of my friends went out last week – without me!</p>	<p>They excluded me deliberately. They don't like me. Do they hate me? I bet they were talking about me. They're horrible. I'm not going out with them next week. I'm going to ignore contact from them. They can get lost! Oh, I can't stop thinking about it...</p>	<p>Adrenaline spike – threat response on - angry, humiliated, embarrassed, anxious, worried. Burning hot and pumping up when I think about it. Can't stop thinking about it. Re-running scripts over and over in my head. Bitching to others about it, looking for reassurance and validation. Hate-stalking them online.</p>	<p>It is a negative event from my point of view, and I'm not a robot so I'm going to have a negative response to a negative event – but the healthy appropriate negative responses are sadness, disappointment, and even annoyance – but burning humiliation and unhealthy anger are a bit over the top and are not helpful for me. What would a cool high esteem version of me think and feel and do in this situation?</p> <p>Of course I'm worried about my status with them, but I don't know for a fact that I was excluded deliberately, or that if I was that it's a big deal or a permanent situation.</p> <p>Have I ever been out with a friend without inviting another? Did that mean I'm an horrible person, or that I never wanted to hang out with the one I didn't invite again?</p> <p>Do people have human rights that they can make plans that aren't always about me? Can I DEMAND to be always included in everything, or is that irrational? It's more rational to say I'd prefer to be included in everything, but demanding it is not realistic or rational. (Evidently!).</p> <p>It's not healthy for me to obsess about revenge on them, or to go on and on about it to myself and others. It's a bit ridiculous. I'm going to dial it down. I can make a decision to live with this and accept it and the uncertainty surrounding it. I do not know the circumstances of what happened and I shouldn't assume the worst, it's probably not a big deal but I can make it a big deal with the way I'm responding. And, even if there is conflict, I don't have to join in. Just because someone thinks little of you, you don't have to agree with it.</p> <p>'Cool me' might just say casually, 'I see you were out last week, it's a pity I missed that, don't forget to give me a shout out next time' - rather than creating messy self sabotaging upset– and would carry on with business as usual, even if I am a bit more wary of them and less certain of my social safety with them now. I'm ok, it's ok.</p>

A	B	C	D
<p>I have an interview!</p>	<p>I haven't a hope of getting this job. There'll be hundreds of applicants that would be more suitable than me. I'll be nervous and tongue tied and rubbish. There's no point in going. It's not worth putting myself through this, after all I know what will happen, I can't cope.</p>	<p>Adrenaline spike – threat response on - anxious, nervous, can't face preparing properly / procrastinating, overthinking it, imaging myself at the interview doing very badly...</p>	<p>Stating 'I haven't a hope' is irrational negative predicting, that's just a worry, not a fact. It would be more rational to say that I'm worried that I won't get it, and that other applicants might be more suitable for the job than me – and well maybe that will turn out to be true, but so what? The fact that I have an interview means my skillset is in the area they want, so I might very well get it if I prepare. If I don't get it I won't die, and it won't mean I'm worthless, it would just mean I didn't get chosen for this particular job, somebody else did, and that's ok.</p> <p>Yes, I expect I will probably be nervous, but that's perfectly normal and most people are nervous at interviews. To say 'I will be rubbish' is ugly and irrational, rubbish is of no value to be thrown out, if I believe descriptions like that no wonder I feel this bad..</p> <p>The same goes for 'tongue tied, what is that about? It's not rational to imagine my tongue literally 'tied' and being unusable, I will change that statement, it's silly. It's more true to say I might babble or stutter a bit and not say exactly what I intend to say in the way that I intend to say it (like most other humans on the planet in high stress situations).</p> <p>Saying 'I can't cope' maximises my discomfort, I can in fact cope - it would be more correct to say I'm not coping as well as I'd like to cope.</p> <p>It's not helpful or rational to opt out of it because of overly dramatic negative predicting, it's more rational to say that opting out would be self sabotaging, and that I do not know what will happen, but that I can show up and do my best, and my best is good enough for me. Interviews are stressful, I'm not making everything up, but I am distorting and exaggerating things. *breathe it down, I've got this...</p>

Do you see how your self-talk language matters? Edit edit edit – be cool and moderate.

Thought-stop and dispute irrational thinking with the ABCD model. Write it down first, to build the skill of doing it laser fast as a mental task later. Bake it in as a philosophy for living, all day every day.

**A Blank ABCD form guide...**

**Reminder** – THOUGHTS CAUSE FEELINGS WHICH CAUSE BEHAVIOURS – DISPUTE AND EDIT DISORTED THINKING

**Tips for disputing:** Is that thinking healthy or unhealthy? Helpful or unhelpful? Rational or irrational? How does believing it make me feel and behave? What would I advise my **best friend**? What is it **more true** to say?

<b>A =</b> Activating Event / situation	<b>B =</b> Beliefs and thoughts about the situation	<b>C =</b> Consequential feelings/behaviour	<b>D =</b> Dispute and reframe (what would a cool rational version of you say ?)
What's up?	Thinking that....	... makes me feel / do...	<b>THOUGHT STOP AND REFRAME</b>

*Is that healthy or unhealthy? Rational or irrational? Helpful or unhelpful? What is it more true and rational to say? Examples:*

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>

(Note: you may create the ABCD table on a blank sheet if you don't wish to write in your workbook – or simply write down thoughts and beliefs on one side of a notebook, and 'clean them up' with cool rational reframing on the opposite side...)

Use this simple table to journal your ABC...:

**A simple ABCD thought form template:**


Activating event or situation	Beliefs and Thoughts	Consequential feelings & behaviours	Dispute / reframe



A chunky box ABCD thought form template:

# THE ABC OF CBT - MAP YOUR HABITS OF THINKING FEELING & BEHAVIOUR

<b>A</b> ACTIVATING EVENT OR SITUATION	<b>B</b> BELIEFS AND THOUGHTS
<b>C</b> CONSEQUENTIAL PHYSICAL FEELINGS (THREAT RESPONSE – NERVOUS SYSTEM)	<b>C</b> CONSEQUENTIAL EMOTIONAL FEELINGS
CONSEQUENTIAL BEHAVIOUR	CONSEQUENTIAL EMOTIONAL FEELINGS



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