

The CBT of dating and being ghosted

By iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com CBT resources



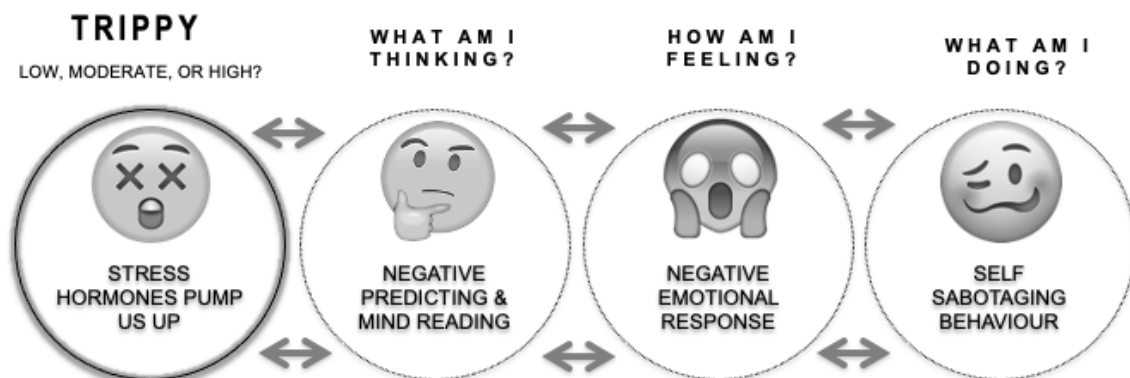
Dating is hard – self-sabotage is easy, but not inevitable.

Let's take a look at an example of how we process events - this post uses the example of a 'situational anxiety' of being ghosted for three days by somebody you had a few dates with.

Being 'ghosted' (somebody surprisingly ceasing all communication with you) is obviously a negative event, not a positive event, so we're probably going to be in the following mode:

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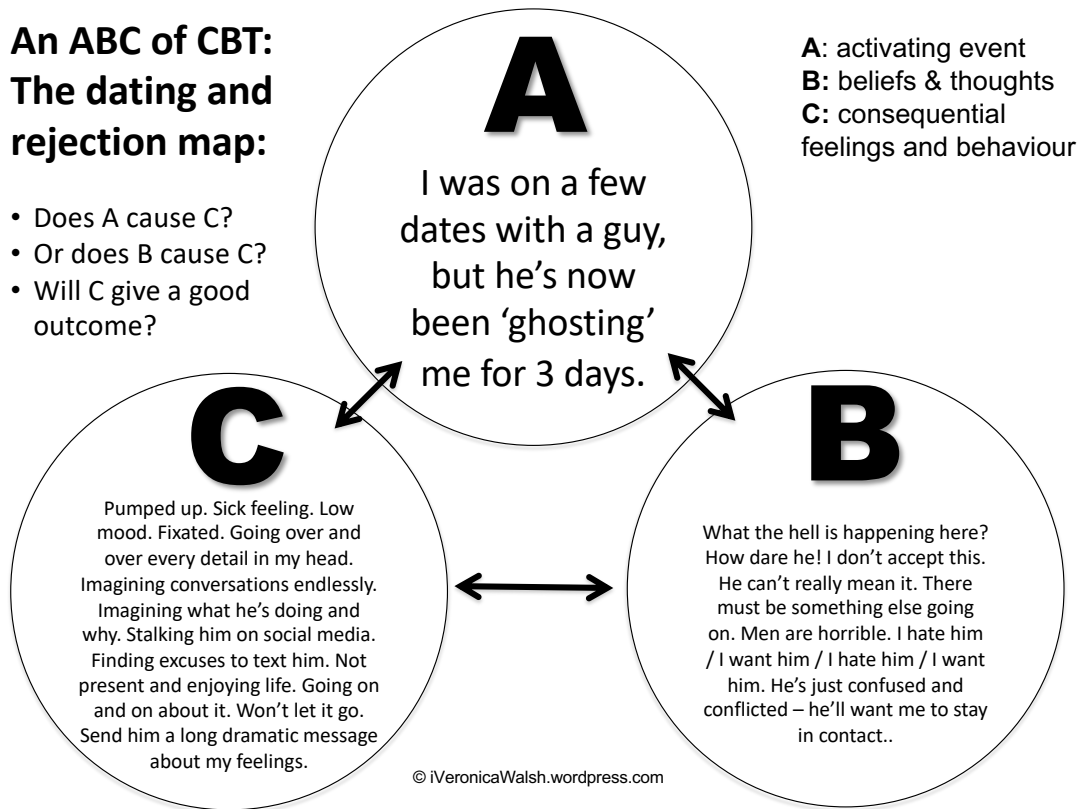
A stressful situation... use this model to track your situational anxieties



And we may fall into the self-sabotaging cycle: But we can change that.

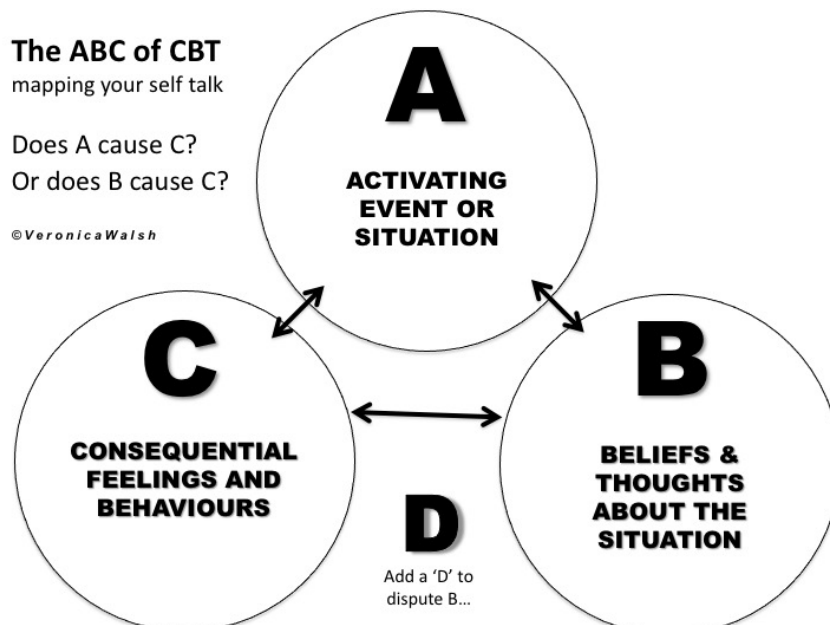
An ABC of CBT: The dating and rejection map:

- Does A cause C?
- Or does B cause C?
- Will C give a good outcome?



So - this modelling shows clearly the process of self-sabotaging drama - does the event itself cause the thinking and feelings and behaviour? Or does the thinking and feelings cause the behaviour?

Is the choice of response going to get a good outcome or a bad outcome? What would a better response be? How can I get what I want? How can I intelligently process events and respond in productive cool ways? What way would you map a negative event and your response? Can you 'dispute' the self-talk?




Let's break down a similar example of not getting an immediate reply to a message:

- **Situation/Event:** The person I'm dating has not responded yet to the text message I sent yesterday.
- **Thoughts and beliefs:** This is disgraceful – I will not, and can not, and should not have to tolerate this disgraceful behaviour.
- **Feelings physical and emotional:** stress hormones pumping, threat response on – angry and upset.
- **Behavioural choice:** Go over and over it in my head... Go on and on about it to friends who agree with me and get me riled up further. I send a long detailed text message saying: *"ok, forget it, you're clearly seeing someone else and are not really interested in me, you're a messer, don't contact me again..."*
- **Outcome:** He replies and says he's sorry, he was tied up and didn't realise there was a time schedule, and was going to reply today – but now thinks this is too much drama for him, and goodbye...
- **Behavioural response:** I send him another long message, listing things he did that I hadn't liked, I tell him I expect different behaviour and respect from a partner, and maybe I'm insecure because of previous experiences, but that we can go out and have a discussion about everything.
- **His response:** ghosts me.
- **Behavioural response:** I send another speech at the weekend –
- **His response:** still ghosting me...

Oh dear. Time to skill up with CBT...

Use the **ABC handout** shown on the next page as a template to map and plan emotionally intelligent responses to negative events. Catch your self-talk (thoughts and beliefs) about the event - and dispute and change it - dial down the drama, be *rational*. Design a new emotionally intelligent response - sometimes that means accepting reality and moving on - sometimes it's 'keeping a door open' and treating the event more casually, even if that involves acting skills where you're just pretending it's all cool, and allowing a relationship to grow organically - sometimes it's deciding that actually you do have healthy expectations and boundaries, and this guy isn't meeting them, so you should probably let it go, 'after all I barely know him - it's ok to be sad and disappointed, after all this is not a positive event for me and I'm not a robot - I'd PREFER him to be madly into me, but I can't DEMAND that - I can rationally accept that this is his choice of behaviour toward me right now, and I haven't really got a clue about his thoughts or feelings, I'm just guessing. Maybe I'm being overly dramatic. My guesses may be way off the mark. Angrily or sulkily messaging him with drama is definitely not going to get me what I want, that would be self-limiting and self-defeating, so for now I'm going to go for the time-honoured elegant option of no-contact from me until/if I hear from him - and I will change his name in my phone to 'DO NOT MESSAGE THIS GUY LOL ...'. Shake it off. Be cool. *Think different, feel different, behave different, get different outcomes.*

THE ABC OF CBT – blank template – create several versions with B and C outcomes

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

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Feelings are not facts, learning to evaluate and review our feelings and immediate self-sabotaging impulses, and to change our response to distressing situations and events, can be life changing. Be your own wise best friend and coach.

“There is perhaps no psychological skill more fundamental than resisting impulse. It is the root of all emotional self-control, since all emotions, by their very nature, lead to one or another impulse to act.”

— Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence

OK - good luck out there people - think different, feel different, behave different, and get a different outcome - with CBT.

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