

ABC'S PLUS D TO E! A NEW WAY TO MAKE THE ALPHABET WORK FOR YOU!

We can never stop thinking. It's part of being human. But we can learn to stop ruminating and how to make our thought processes work for us instead of against us. This workbook introduces you to the highly effective ABC technique. With practice it will help you to respond more constructively and positively to the things that go wrong in life.

The information in this worksheet is based on the work of Albert Ellis, David Burns and Wayne Froggatt. The aim is to show you how to take control of automatic negative thoughts (ANT's) and thereby lessen their effect on your moods and behaviours. It's really simple to learn and highly effective. It is perfect for both children and adults.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR ABC'S

When we encounter *Adversity*, we react by thinking about it in a certain way, which leads us to form *Beliefs*. Beliefs are often irrational and they in turn influence our feelings and actions, which create *Consequences*. Consequences can be positive or negative depending on how we look at things.

Adversity: What is the problem?

Belief: Why do you think it happened?

This question prompts you to examine how you think and how you feel about the event that caused the Adversity.

Consequences: What was the result?

Consequences can lead us to being more optimistic or more pessimistic about our life and the things that happen to us. Having a positive and optimistic mindset is better for us in the long run.

NOW WE CAN ADD SOME D'S AND E'S

Distraction – short-term techniques to get relief

- Stop! Help yourself snap out of it by wearing a rubber band on your wrist and giving it a snap! Or play a piece of music that has an optimistic message that reminds you that things will be ok.
- Come to your senses! Focus on something else that helps engage all your senses and it pleasant.
- Breathe! Give yourself a breath break. Breathe in fully. Imagine the air is flowing right through you and expanding out right out to your skin, cushioning you and filling you with a sense of support.

Dispute it – a long-term solution to ANT's

Disputing is the skill of learning how to argue or dispute negative thoughts instead of just accepting them or believing them to be true.

Disputing or debating negative beliefs is the best way to change your beliefs and feelings about things in life that you react badly to. Learning how to dispute automatic negative thoughts (ANT's) will give you a skill to last a life-time.

- Gather evidence: What is the evidence for and against?
- Generate alternatives: List as many interpretations as you can.
- Consider the implications:

What is the worst possible thing that could happen?

What is the best possible thing that could happen?

What is the most likely outcome? This is usually the middle ground.

Worst case scenario _____ Best case scenario.

Balanced thinking is the middle ground

Energise with a step-by-step plan! How can you increase the possibility of getting the best outcome? Break it down— what is the first thing you need to do? What is the next thing you need to do? Then what?

ANT'S



Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) are also known as common thinking errors. The key word here is 'common'. Everyone makes these kinds of thinking mistakes. However, we can do things to change them so we develop more flexible thinking skills.

Negative glasses. We only see one part of what is happening and that's the negative part! Even though most of our day was good, we dismiss it because one thing went wrong. This can put a real downer on a day.

Positives don't count. We dismiss or discredit positive events or doing well with a 'yes but...' statement so that we can maintain our belief that things are bad. This can also put a downer on the good things that are happening.



All or nothing thinking. This is where we see everything in absolute terms. It is either black or white but there is no grey area in the middle. Falling short of being perfect creates thoughts of being a 'complete failure' or 'never getting anything right'. A small disagreement with a friend results in an ultimatum.



Magnifying the negative and minimising the positive. Here the importance of negative things is exaggerated and blown out of proportion. When we get something wrong we jump to the conclusion that 'everyone' judged or laughed or watched.

Snowballing. With this thinking error, a single event can quickly snowball into a much bigger pattern of failure, defeat or personal criticism. Instead of just viewing it as an isolated incident it snowballs into more areas of life with more far reaching consequences that it really should. It is like seeing a cloud on a sunny day, and expecting a thunderstorm and therefore not enjoying the sunny day.

Mind reading: This thinking error makes the assumption that we know what other people are thinking. "I know he doesn't like me..." "I bet everyone thinks I'm odd..."

Fortune telling: This is where we often predict a negative future and feel certain about it. “I won’t be able to do it...”
“If I go, no one will talk to me and I’ll end up on my own...”



Emotional Reasoning: When our emotions become very strong they can colour the way we think about things and the way we see things. With this thinking error we mistakenly use our bad feelings to cloud our thinking. Ideally we should be open to new experiences and events so that positive experiences are ‘invited in’.

Labelling: This is where we attach labels to ourselves and think of everything we do in these terms. If we don’t do well at one thing, we consider ourselves a ‘loser’ at everything we do.

Setting-up for failure: It’s all too easy to set standard and expectations too high and then if we fail to achieve the unrealistic standards we feel like a failure and fail to recognise the progress we made along the way.



Personalising. This thinking error creates feelings of being personally responsible for external things we don’t have any control over. When things go wrong we feel it is our fault. A friend walks past us without saying ‘hello’, and we automatically assume we did something wrong.

“People and things do not upset us, rather we upset ourselves by believing that they can upset us.” Albert Ellis

This workbook was produced by Susan Wallace at Hypnosis Academy and Results Academy.
Helping therapists Be the Best,
Have the Best and Give their Best to their clients.

