

ABC's of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Out of 100 students getting a grade of “B” in English, some will be very upset and a few will be very happy. Some will be upset because they will think they have been robbed of their deserved A. Some will be quite happy because they have never before received that high a grade in English.

The grade did not cause the misery to those students who were unhappy. It couldn't have. If it was the cause, everyone would have been unhappy. That was not the case.

There is an amount of time between an activating event, a trigger, and the consequences of that event. During that time a person thinks or forms beliefs about the activating event and those beliefs are the cause of the consequences.

To overcome the negative consequences, a person can dispute their own beliefs and think of or create more healthy beliefs. When this happens, a person feels better. The new belief must be true and healthy to the person believing it.

Therefore the ABC's of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy are as follows:

A: Activating event, the trigger, the source of the thoughts not the cause of consequences.

B: Beliefs and thoughts about the event.

C: Consequences of the beliefs and thoughts: becoming upset, depressed, angry, embarrassed, etc.)

D: Dispute the logic of the beliefs by looking for cognitive distortions in the belief: e.g. all or nothing thinking, fortune telling, “must's”, “should's” and “ought's”. E.g. I deserved an “A” in that class – I was robbed!

E: Come up with an Effective new belief that is *true and healthy* for you. E.g. “Bummer, I got a “B” in that class, next time I will pay more attention, diligently prepare for tests and be on time with every assignment.

F: Feelings will then subside.

A widely accepted tool to work through this process, until it is automatic, is a Daily (or event by event) Mood Log. Email me for a copy.