

Guidelines for Completing ABCDs

Once you have learned to become aware of your negative thoughts, the next step is to evaluate your negative thoughts, & think of some alternate, more helpful, thoughts. You can then record the following information on your ABCD Record Sheet:



1. **The date**
2. **The emotion(s)** you felt. Give each one a rating out of 100 for how bad it was (0 = no emotion, 50 = moderate degree of emotion, 100 = an emotion as strong as it could be)
3. **The situation** that was occurring when you started to feel bad. Where were you, who were you with, what was going on?
4. **The automatic thought(s)** that were running through your mind at the time you started to feel bad. Try to record them as accurately as possible. Also record how much you believe them (0 = not at all, 50 = moderately, 100 = completely). Some of your thoughts may take the form of images in your mind's eye, rather than words. You might, for example, imagine yourself being unable to cope with a situation in the future. Write down, exactly what the image was, just as you saw it.
5. **Some alternate thoughts** What are some alternate thoughts or explanations? How much do you believe them? (0 = not at all, 50 = moderately, 100 = completely)
6. **Outcome** What are the feelings associated with the alternate thoughts, & how does this change the outcome?

Common Problems in Recording Negative Thoughts

1. **Timing** – It's best to record your thoughts & feelings when they occur. We know, however, that this is not always possible. In this case, make a mental note of what has distressed you, or jot down a reminder on scrap paper. Then set aside time in the evening to make a proper written record. Run through an 'action replay', trying to recall in as much detail as possible what happened, how you felt, & what your thoughts were.
2. **Avoiding writing down your negative thoughts** -. You may say to yourself, "I'll do it later", or "It would be better to forget all about it". You may be afraid that your negative thoughts will overwhelm you, or think that they will seem silly. It is quite natural to want to avoid thinking through unpleasant experiences, but doing so will not help you make progress in managing your current negative feelings. If you find yourself making excuses, this is probably because you have hit upon something important, so make yourself write it down. Ignoring the thoughts will not make them go away.