

Guidelines for Completing ABCs

The best way to become aware of negative thoughts (& thus, in the future, be able to overcome them) is to notice when your mood changes for the worse & try to recognise what was running through your mind at that moment.



You can then record the following information on your ABC Record Sheet:

1. **The date**
2. **The emotion(s)** you felt. Give each one a rating out of 100 as to 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. For example, you might imagine yourself being unable to cope with a situation in the future. In this case, write down exactly what the image was, just as you saw it.

There may be times when you can't identify any specific thoughts or images. Asking yourself questions like, "What is the meaning of this situation?" & "What does it tell me about myself, my situation, &/or my future?" may give you a clue as to what is making you feel sad, anxious, angry, etc.

For example, an argument might mean to you that a relationship is at an end, or even that you will never be able to have a proper relationship with anybody.

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.