



COGNITIVE REFRAMING

Exercise File

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ABC - Activating Event, Beliefs and Consequences

[Cognitive reframing](#) is based on the ABC model constructed by Albert Ellis, one of the fathers of cognitive therapy. A stands for Activating Event, B for your underlying beliefs and C for consequences in your thinking patterns and feelings. Please follow the steps below.

Step A: Accurately describe the negative event that happened to you. The event that bothers you and leads to dysfunctional thinking is called an activating event. As the first step, try to describe what happened as accurately as possible.

Step B: Identify your underlying beliefs. Try to identify as many underlying beliefs as possible around the event that happened. Help yourself with the following questions:

- What caused the situation to happen?
- What do you think should happen and why?
- What does the event say about you?

Activating Event, Beliefs and Consequences

Step C: Thinking and feeling consequences. The consequence of what happened interpreted through your beliefs results in a certain way of thinking, feeling and acting.

- C1: Write down all of your automatic thoughts. (*I'm a failure...*)
- C2: Identify all the negative emotions that situation causes you to feel. Write down the feeling and intensity on a scale from 0 % to 100% (*for example Anger - 80 %*).
- C3: What's your automatic behavioral reaction on the situation (*I feel sorry for myself*)

This should give you a really good overview of how you currently see the event, what are your underlying beliefs and how you feel, think and behave as an automatic response to the event. Now it's time to do cognitive reframing. To achieve that we will add D – Dispute and E – Effective change to our model.

DE - Dispute, Cognitive reframing and The final effect

Step D: Dispute. Dispute is about challenging your thoughts and beliefs in order to see reality more accurately. It's about finding a better frame that enables you to neutralize the situational emotions and act more rationally. D1 - Answer the questions below:

- If the same thing happened to your best friend or someone you love, what would be your interpretation of the event then?
- How would [enter the name of your role model] interpret this situation?
- What are other potential explanations besides blaming yourself?
- What was under your control and you could have done better, and what was completely out of your control?
- What are all the counterarguments to your underlying beliefs? Your past accomplishments, the things you do have, the praise you got, everything that proves the event is an exception.
- What's the worst thing that could realistically happen and how bad would that be?
- What difference will this one-time event make in a month, a year or a decade?
- Are you sure that you are completely powerless in the situation? List all the moves you can make to get yourself in a better position.
- Is thinking this way helping the situation or making it worse?

Dispute, Cognitive reframing and The final effect

Step D: Dispute. D2 - The new frame: What is the most positive and constructive interpretation of the event you can think of after the dispute? Write it down.

Step E: Effect. Write down the final effect. The final effect should be a more accurate view of the situation with a better narrative, disarmed negative thoughts and feelings, and an action plan for performing better in the given situation.

- E1: Write down all of your new thoughts about the event
- E2: Write down your new feelings about the event (feeling, intensity)
- E3: Write down the action plan you will put in motion