

Learning the ABC Model to Manage your Anxiety

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Sometimes we feel tense or nervous about a specific situation or an event. Because we feel that way, we automatically assume that there is something to be feared. However, if we pay attention to the various aspects of the situation, we may discover that the situation itself is not dangerous. But it is our interpretation of the event that makes us feel this way.

We need to recognize that it is a way of thinking that can make us nervous.

We typically don't pay attention to the order of things, but the process begins like this, like ABC:

A is for the Activating event

B is for the Belief or the explanation we give ourselves about the situation

C is for the Consequences of our beliefs. These are typically emotions and actions.

Let's take an example:

A: Activating Event

On my first day back at work my supervisor gives me a list of work that needs to be done.

B: Belief about the Activating event

I think I have to do it all and I believe there is so much to do, I won't have the energy to do it, and I won't have the time. My brain does not work as fast now, I feel tired easily, and I have not worked for a very long time.

C: Consequences of my Beliefs

I am anxious and I cannot even start the work.

Now I am going to use the ABC model in a more realistic way.

A is for Assessing all the Facts about the situation. I am asking myself the following:

Who? What? When? and Where?

And I am looking at the facts that will support or the facts that will not support my thoughts.

Who? My supervisor.

What? My supervisor gave me a list of work that needs to be done.

Where? My office.

When? This morning; but she did not tell me when the work needs to be completed.

Let's look at the facts:

What are the facts that support the thought that "I have to do it all today and I believe that there is no way that I can do it all"?

There are none! Just my thoughts. My supervisor did not specify when the list has to be completed by.

What are the facts that do not support my thought that "I have to do it all today and there is no way that I can do it all"?

My supervisor gave me a list of work that needs to be done with no specified deadline.

B is for recording my Beliefs about the Event, so those are based on facts this time.

My supervisor gives me a list of work that needs to be done. I do not know when the work needs to be done until I have checked with my supervisor.

C is for Consequences of my New Belief. I am going to check now with my supervisor when the work needs to be completed by. I am not as anxious now. I will see what my supervisor says and then consider the options.

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