

THE ABC METHOD OF DEALING WITH UNMANAGEABLE FEELINGS

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The ABC's

A way of coping with one form of personal unmanageability...

UPSET FEELINGS

The ABC's

People tend to be upset with themselves, others or the world around them. The upset may take the form of feelings of depression, anxiety, and guilt. When these feelings become intense or prolonged they become unmanageable. The consequences of these intense or prolonged upset feelings may be resorting to alcohol or drugs as a way of trying to manage these feelings.

The ABC's

What caused us to become upset? What brings about our upset feelings? No situation or person can upset us or make us feel bad. It is our viewpoint or thinking about something, not the something itself that is upsetting. Another person or a situation does not make us feel angry, anxious, depressed or guilty. We upset ourselves by our view or attitude toward those things.

The ABC's

We are responsible for creating our own feelings toward these things. When we judge or evaluate things in a negative way, then our feelings will usually be upset feelings. When we judge or evaluate things in a positive way, then our feelings will usually be pleasant feelings. We are not upset by things, but our thinking about those things. In other words, we feel the way we think.

The ABC's

Our thinking produces our feelings, but it does not stop there. When we feel a particular way, we often will act on those feelings. That is, actions usually follow our feelings. What we do will often depend upon how we felt about a particular situation. When we get angry we may yell, when we get depressed we may withdraw.

The ABC's

A person having upset feelings may behave in a self defeating way. The behavioral consequences following upset feelings may be resorting to mood altering substances- chemical dependency. (Example: An acquaintance passes you without saying hello. UPSET FEELINGS of depression. Behavioral consequences of withdrawing to your room and drinking...

The ABC's

...followed by more self-blame and then more upset feelings of guilt followed by more drinking.) “OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE. Upset feelings may become part and parcel of our own chemical dependency. The use of alcohol or drugs becomes a way of dealing with upset feelings. (We become dependent on mood-altering substances to change our mood/feelings.)

The ABC's

The ABC process is a new skill that you will be learning. It is a constructive way of dealing with our upset feelings. It is a problem solving process for reducing upset feelings and behaving responsibly. It is a skill that can apply as a part of your A.A. program. What are some of the advantages of using the ABC process to deal with our upset feelings?

The ABC's

If we are less upset about a situation, there will be less need for turning to mood altering substances as a way of dealing with upset feelings. The ABC process provides some assistance in dealing with the personal unmanageable of upset feelings.

The ABC's – The Serenity Prayer

Being less upset allows us to look at situations realistically and figure out constructive ways to deal with situations more clearly.

*God grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.*

The ABC's

Realistic GOALS (E) for an alcoholic are:

1. SOBRIETY - Use the ABC process as a way to deal with upsetting feelings, so that bad feelings will not lead to drinking or using other drugs. Goal – Maintain SOBRIETY!
2. FEELING GOOD - (Serenity) Use the ABC process to continue to FEEL GOOD, to avoid bad feelings, to maintain serenity.

Defining The ABC's

Dealing with unmanageable feelings.

Defining The ABC's

A. Activating Event - Something happens or is about to happen. The situation about which you are having some emotional feelings.

B. Belief System - Your beliefs, thoughts, or attitudes about the situation (A). What you tell yourself.

- ***Rational Beliefs*** are represented by a level of thinking that is in touch with reality and responsibility.
- ***Irrational Beliefs*** include automatic thinking that is based on three words; should, must, and demand.

Defining The ABC's

C. Consequences – There are two types of Consequences, Emotional & Behavioral.

- **Ca.** - *Emotional Consequences* -Your emotional reactions as a result of our beliefs (B). How you feel.
- **Cb.** - *Behavioral Consequences* - What you do as a result of your feelings (C). How you behave or act.

D. Disputing the Upsetting Beliefs:

- Challenging or questioning your thinking (B).

Defining The ABC's

E. Establishing Realistic Personal Preferences:

- Setting goals for yourself regarding the situation (A).
- Realistic alternatives to your upsetting beliefs (B).

F. Finding Constructive Actions to take:

- Looking for the positive options you have to achieve your personal preferences or goals (E).

G. Goal Achievement:

- Choosing a positive option (F) and acting on it.
Behaving responsibly.

The ABC Process

Reframing situations that lead to unmanageable feelings.

The ABC Process

1. Start with your upset feelings (**C - *Consequences Emotional and Behavioral***) . Identify them.

Your upset feelings are clues or signals that you are telling yourself upsetting things. You may have to become a better observer of your feelings. This means getting in touch with your feelings. “What am I really feeling?”

The ABC Process

2. Counter-act your upsetting beliefs with a positive self-message such as; “Slow down, easy does it. Don’t get so upset.”

The ABC Process

3. Clarify the situation for yourself. Look at the situation (**A - *Activating Event***) about which you are having upset feelings (**C – *Consequences Emotional and Behavioral***). You may need to become a better observer of reality. “What is really going on in the situation about which I became upset?”

The ABC Process

4. Identify your upsetting beliefs (**B - *Belief System***) about the situation (**A - *Activating Event***). Look at your “shoulds” and “awfuls”. Clarify your expectations. “What am I telling myself?”

The ABC Process

5. Challenge (**D** - *Disputing the Upsetting Beliefs*) your upsetting beliefs (**B** - *Belief System*). “Where is my evidence? Prove it.”

The ABC Process

7. Find (**F - Finding Constructive Actions to take**) the constructive actions you could take to achieve your personal preference (**E - *Establishing Realistic Personal Preferences***). Make a list of the positive options that you may have. “What constructive action can I take to achieve my personal preferences or goals?”

The ABC Process

6. Change your unrealistic upsetting beliefs (**B – *Belief System***) to realistic personal preferences. Set constructive goals for yourself (**E – *Establishing Realistic Personal Preferences***). “What do I really want out of the situation?”

The ABC Process

8. Choose (**G - *Goal Achievement***) a constructive option and act on it! The end result of the ABC process is positive action on your part. Behaving responsibly has the consequences of thinking and feeling more positive about yourself.

The ABC's In Action

The ABC's In Action

A. Activating Event - The situation that's starts the unmanageable feelings.

- *That driver cut me off.*

B. Belief System: Your beliefs, thoughts, or attitudes about the situation (A). What you tell yourself.

- *No driver must ever cut me off; they should never ever do so. They should be arrested for doing so. I demand that they be arrested!*

The ABC's In Action

C. Consequences (Emotional and Behavioral) – Emotional consequences such as anger, rage, and discontent that forces unacceptable behavior.

- *When drivers cut me off I get really angry so I honk, yell, and tell them to..! Afterwards it takes a while to get myself calmed down again.*

The ABC's In Action

- D. Dispute irrational beliefs** with two questions.
1. Where is the evidence that proves you should, must, demand?
 2. Who are you to demand such consequences in the first place?
 - *Where's the evidence that says no driver is going to cut me off? Who made me king of the DMV that decides how people should or must drive?*

The ABC's In Action

Create Your Own Example

- A. Situation (Activating Event)
- B. Irrational Beliefs of Should, Must, or Demand.
- C. Emotional Consequences
- a. Your Feelings
 - b. Your Behavior
- D. Dispute your Shoulds, Musts and Demands.
“Where is the evidence?” (None)
“Who are you?” (Not God)
- E. Emerging New Beliefs
Reframe situation and beliefs
- F. Finding Constructive Action To Take
- G. Goal Achievement - Maintains Sobriety & Serenity.



Twelve Common Irrational Ideals

Twelve Common Irrational Ideals

1. It is a dire necessity to be loved and approved of.
2. I SHOULD be THOROUGHLY competent, adequate and achieving in ALL possible respects.
3. Some people ARE bad, wicked or vile and SHOULD (or MUST be) punished.
4. If things do not go (or stay) the way I very much want them to, it would be AWFUL, CATASTROPHIC or TERRIBLE.

Twelve Common Irrational Ideals

5. Unhappiness is externally caused and I CANNOT control it (unless I control the other person).
6. One SHOULD remain upset or worried if faced with a dangerous or fearsome reality.
7. It is EASIER to avoid responsibility and difficulties than to face them.
8. I have a RIGHT to be dependent and people (or someone) SHOULD be strong enough to rely in (or take care of me).

Twelve Common Irrational Ideals

9. My early childhood experiences MUST continue to CONTROL me and determine my emotions and behavior.
10. I SHOULD become upset over my and other peoples problems or behavior.
11. There is invariably ONE right, precise, and PERFECT solution and it would be TERRIBLE or CATASTROPHIC if this perfect solution is not found.
12. The world (and especially other people) SHOULD be fair and justice (or mercy) MUST triumph.

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

1. The belief that you must have love or approval from almost everyone for almost everything you do.

(People must love or approve of me. “I must please everyone.” “I should be loved.” The demand for acceptance and approval.)

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

2. The belief that you should be thoroughly competent, adequate and achieving in all possible respects to be worthwhile.

(“I must not make mistakes or do poorly.” “Making mistakes is terrible. “I must be right.” “I should be perfect.” The demand for perfection.)

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

3. The belief that certain behavior is awful and people who behave that way are no good and should be punished.

(“People should be punished for their wrong doings.” “I am a bad person because of what I did.” Self blame/other-blame.)

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

4. The belief that it is awful when things do not go the way you would like them to go.

(“Things should always go the way I want them.” “It’s terrible when things go wrong.” “I shouldn’t be frustrated.” “I must have things my way.” Demanding your way/non-acceptance of reality.)

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

5. The belief that your emotional upset is caused by external pressures or other people and you have little ability to control or change.

(“My upset feelings are caused by the way others act or what happens to me.” “I can’t control my feelings.”
Avoidance of responsibility to change.)

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

6. The belief that if something may be dangerous or fearsome I should be very worried and upset about it.

(“I should worry and be anxious about threatening things.” “Threatening situations have to keep me terribly worried.” “I should worry about problems.”)

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

7. The belief that it is easier for you to avoid facing many life difficulties and self—responsibilities than to face up to them.

(“Self discipline and self responsibility are too hard for me to do.” I shouldn’t have to do unpleasant things to change. Avoidance of responsibility/the easy way out.)

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

8. The belief that your past is all important and that because something once strongly influenced your life, it should keep determining your feelings and behavior today.

(“The effects of my childhood and my past still have to control my life.” “I can’t change.” Excuse for not changing.)

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

9. The belief that people should be different from the way they are.

(“People should behave differently.” “People should do things my way.” “I can’t stand the way certain people act.” “People should be the way I want them to be.” “I should have my own way.” “I must be right.” Demanding others change/nonacceptance/avoiding responsibility to change.)

Ten Common Irrational Ideals

10. The belief that you can achieve human happiness through inaction or by passively and uncommittedly enjoying yourself.

(“I can get my way by sitting back and not asserting myself.” “You shouldn’t look for trouble.” “You shouldn’t take chances.” “Don’t rock the boat.” Avoidance of responsibility/fear of failure.)