

THE SELF TALK CONNECTION

People often believe that events, situations and the actions of others directly create the feelings and emotions they experience. For example, if we listen to ourselves we might hear the words, “John made me happy”, “the boss made me angry”, “the children made me furious”, “the holiday relaxed me”. Can you hear the assumptions underlying these words? The general assumption being, that someone or something other than yourself, was directly responsible for the feelings you experienced.

We come to these conclusions automatically without consciously thinking about the accuracy of these assumptions. If we were to stop and analyse the process that links the external event and our emotional responses we would find that there is not a direct connection. Something is happening at the same time which is filtering information through a network of beliefs, expectations and assumptions which is stored in our brain. In other words, it is the network of beliefs that interprets the external events and cause us to feel and respond in certain ways. It is this system of beliefs that forms the power house of your feelings and responses.

For simplicity, we will call:

	The external event an “activating event” or “A”
	The “beliefs” a “B”
	The feelings that follow a “consequence” or “C”

Now, I will help you become aware of the additional process that occurs in between the ‘A’ and the ‘C’. The best way to become aware of this quite complicated process is to fill out these ABC self talk analysis forms.

How to use the ABC forms

You will notice that the form is divided into three sections.

- **Begin with the first section – A**
Simply write down the event or situation as it happened. Record it in the same way that a video camera might record it, “simply the facts”. This means that you do not include your thoughts about why the situation happened, who was responsible and how you felt about it. Just describe the event crisply without further embellishment.
- **Now go to section three = C**
Write down in a list, the words that best describe your feelings. When you have written down these words, rate the intensity of each emotion from 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more intensely you felt the emotion. When you have finished, also write down any actions you may have carried out. For example, “slammed a door”, “smiled at your neighbour” or “shouted at your cat”.
- **Now look at the situation or event and the feelings you experienced, and complete section two = B**
List all the thoughts, attitudes, expectations and beliefs you had about ‘A’ that caused the feelings and actions in Section ‘C’. When you have completed the list, rate how much you believe each one of the statements on a scale from 0 to 100. The more firmly you believe each statement, the higher the number of your rating.

Homework

Fill out one of these self talk ABC forms each evening. Think about something that you found a little difficult to handle that day, and analyse it using the above method.