

Monitoring Thoughts & Feelings: *using the ABC method*

When talking about experiences or thinking about what actually happened, it can be very helpful to recognise the important parts of the experience:

- the situation or activity (sometimes referred to as the **A**ctivating event)
- the immediate thoughts and **B**eliefs that you experienced in that situation (*what went through your mind, what you were saying to yourself*) – for some people, this may also include images or pictures that went through their mind
- your feelings (*how you felt*), physical sensations and actions (*what you did*) that were **C**onsequences of thinking in a particular way during the situation

This is often referred to as the A-B-C method, which is an example of a basic cognitive (*thoughts*) behavioural (*actions*) model for considering experiences.

Introductory Exercise

Have a think about one or two of your own recent experiences, perhaps a time when you felt low, disappointed, annoyed, irritated or worried. Use the following mini-worksheet to help you work out the event, your thoughts and feelings at the time, and what you did.

A: Write a few words about the situation you were in
activity / event **Where were you? Who were you with? When?**

B: What was going through your mind at the time?
thoughts **What were you saying to yourself?**

C: How were you feeling?
feelings **How intense or severe was this – rate this between 0 & 100.**

C: What did you do? What didn't you do?
actions

Many people find it helpful to use this ABC method as a basic structure for keeping a diary to monitor their thoughts and feelings, and to learn how to review and respond to unhelpful thoughts.

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