

ABCDE Tool - Instructions

Activating Event

What appears to be the cause of your emotional and physical distress?

The purpose of this is to simply state what happened. Most people falsely believe that this is the cause of their emotional distress as if no other reaction is possible.

Beliefs

What is the actual cause of your emotional and physical distress? There is likely a “should” or “supposed to” in here somewhere. Reduce it to one sentence that sounds absurd, really showing you how ridiculous your demand is. Reductio Ad Absurdum!

The purpose of this section is to state what belief(s) are actually causing the reaction, thus exposing why a different reaction, while *possible*, was not *available* to you.

Dominant Schema Pattern:

Which schema pattern (see Appendix I) do these beliefs likely belong to? Note: There might be more than one!

Consequences (emotional and physiological):

The purpose of this section is to help you identify the emotional label (e.g., sadness) and corresponding physiological correlates to that emotional label. This is your relationship to your beliefs.

Defensive Mode: Which schema mode (see Appendix II) does your small self use in its attempt to avoid the consequences outlined above?

Defense Mechanism: What specific defense mechanisms (see Appendix III) does your small self employ in its attempt to avoid the consequences outlined above?

Dispute

Use the words in your belief to form a dispute against each of the beliefs you outlined above.

Disputes may take the form of a question, as in, “How do I know what the future holds?”

The purpose of this section is to begin the process of breaking down the neural pathways that are causing you to experience things the way you are. You have to start seeing that your suffering is wholly dependent on your demanding that reality be different than it is and therein begin the process of formulating a new, 100% valid perspective that will lead to a more skillful reaction. Aligning your beliefs to reality is the only way forward. You’ll dispute each and every erroneous core belief you listed in the Beliefs section.

Envision / Intention.

Developmental Approach: How would things have gone if you didn’t have any of the beliefs mentioned above (emotional and physiological)? How do you intend to react the next time this arises, and how will you feel when you do that?

The point of this is to contemplate how things could have gone, how they will eventually go. You have to keep your eyes on the prize. Neurologically, you are activating the new neural pathways that will eventually lead to a different reaction. Don’t take this lightly, really visualize yourself adopting a new belief and reacting a different way. See if you can imagine the situation so powerfully that you once again feel the afflicted emotion arise, but you view and handle it very differently.

Fruitional Approach: Shift into the Great Self and rest in your core – grounded in awareness and the aliveness of your body. This is your home base. Then, re-do the Envision step.

You'll find that it's much easier to stay grounded when you are in touch with the ground inside you – your loving, compassionate, and cognizant awareness coupled with the energy and aliveness of the body. The combination of these (which are not separate) is the only ground you can actually stand on. So, stand on that ground and Envision yourself being the person you were always meant to be.