



ABCD EXERCISE

SELF-REGULATION SERIES

Our beliefs have a large influence on our feelings and actions. Most of the times, we don't even realize we have those beliefs until we stop and focus on them. To identify how our beliefs affect us, we first need to see the connection between adversity, belief, and its consequences (Seligman, 2006).

Afterwards, the next step would be dealing with our pessimistic beliefs. One way to do this is by disputing our own beliefs. Giving an argument and attacking our negative beliefs can change your reaction into a more positive one.

The goal of this worksheet is to become aware of any pessimistic beliefs you may have and change them into optimistic beliefs.

According to research, pessimists give up more easily. On the other hand, optimists do better at school, college, workplace, and is healthier and happier in general (Seligman, 2006). The good news is, optimism can be learned!

Adapted from Seligman's (2006) exercise in his book "Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life", this worksheet will help you become aware of any pessimistic beliefs that may come, how they affect you, and how to overcome them.

This exercise consists of four main concepts: adversity, beliefs, consequences, and disputations.

Adversity: Adversities are difficulties or misfortunes. When we encounter adversities, we react by thinking about it,

Beliefs: These thoughts would then become beliefs. These beliefs could become so habitual that we don't realize we have them. Our beliefs are how we interpret the adversity.

Consequences: Consequences are your feelings in result of the adversity.

Disputation: Give your beliefs an argument. This can change your customary reaction from dejection and giving up to activity and good cheer.

ABCD EXERCISE EXAMPLE

Let's start! Here's an example.

First start off by writing down the adversity you experience.

ADVERSITY

"I recently started taking night classes after work for my master's degree. I got my first set of exams back and I didn't do nearly as well as I wanted."

Next, write down what came to your mind when the situation happened.

BELIEF

What awful grades, Judy. I no doubt did the worst in the class. I'm just stupid. That's all. I might as well face facts. I'm also just too old to be competing "

from Martin E. Seligman. "Learned Optimism."

ABCD EXERCISE EXAMPLE

How did you feel regarding the situation that had happened?
Write down what you felt and what you did.

CONSEQUENCES

"I felt totally dejected and useless. I was embarrassed I even gave it a try, and decided I should withdraw from my courses and be satisfied with the job I have."

Now let's take a step back and pause.
Give yourself a logical argument to dispute your belief.

DISPUTATION

"I'm blowing things out of proportion. I hoped to get all As, but I got a B, a B+, and a B-. Those aren't awful grades. I may not have done the best in the class, but I didn't do the worst in the class either."

from Martin E. Seligman. "Learned Optimism."

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ADVERSITY

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CONSEQUENCES

Now let's take a step back and pause.
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DISPUTATION

Do this exercise any time you feel you are being too pessimistic. This exercise will help you see the situation in a more positive light, and eventually creating a more optimistic point of view.