



# BALANCING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

So, now that you have been practicing the ABC thought monitor using the previous exercise, we move on to practicing what we can do to manage these thoughts.

Just to recap, when you challenge your thinking by using the thought diary, you describe an activating event/situation and you identify your automatic and unhelpful beliefs and thoughts that have contributed to your experiencing distressing emotions (consequences). The next step from here is to use disputation to practice challenging your unhelpful thought. This process helps you to start balancing how you think with the intention to improve how you feel. Take some time to review the evidence for and against your unhelpful thought.

Just a quick note here, changing your thinking to improve how you feel is not just thinking the opposite of negative thoughts. Swinging the pendulum to the opposite extreme and being overly positive can sometimes be just as unhelpful. Instead, it is important to create a balanced thought process.

Balanced thinking means evaluating your thoughts and including the positives and the negatives – both of which are a part of our everyday lives. We would treat this as if it would be handled in a courtroom, trying to balance up the facts of a case, taking into consideration all of the available evidence and trying to take all emotion out of it.

Once you have completed step D, we would move on to the final step. Here I want you to create a balanced thought by asking yourself, “How can I rewrite my unhelpful thought to take into account all the evidence I have listed?” Write down your answer to this question. This becomes your new, balanced thought. A balanced and helpful thought or belief is one that takes into consideration all the evidence, objective information, and alternative

viewpoints. We may not be able to completely take the emotion out of it fully by balancing the thought, however with practice it is likely that you can bring the emotion level down significantly to a level where you can feel comfortable in managing the situation moving forward.

When you feel ready go to the next page, start by practicing the full ABCDE model, using the example below as a guide.

## PRACTICING YOUR ABCDE'S

### A - SITUATION

This may be either: An actual event or a situation, a thought, a mental picture or recollection

☞ E.g. Walking into a party

### B - THOUGHTS/BELIEFS

List all statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: “What was I thinking?” “What was I saying to myself?” “What was going through my head at the time?” Find the most distressing (hot) thought and underline it

☞ E.g. “What if I say something wrong”

☞ “Everyone will judge me”

### C - CONSEQUENCES

☞ Write down words describing how you feel

☞ Underline the one that is most associated with the activating event.

☞ Rate the intensity of those feelings (0 to 100)

☞ E.g. Panic (90)

☞ Stressed (60)

☞ Jot down any physical sensations you experienced or actions carried out.

☞ E.g. Heart pounding, lightheaded, dry mouth, fast breathing, Stopped for water.

## D - DISPUTING THOUGHTS

Take some time to consider evidence for and against your thought.

☞ E.g. “Sometimes when I am anxious I go quiet and feel uncomfortable”. Perhaps others are also feeling nervous being in a space with new people. Maybe others are caught up with their own thoughts and would likely not notice anything I said or did “wrong” even if it was to happen”

## E - EVALUATION/END RESULT

After looking at all the evidence for and against your hot thought, and having considered the disputation questions, replace the unhelpful thought with helpful, balanced thought/s. Finally, rerate the emotions felt after establishing the balanced thoughts when thinking about the situation.

☞ E.g. I might feel a bit uncomfortable when first arriving at the party, but this is completely normal and most people probably feel similar feelings. I know I have been to parties before and this has ended up going well and been nothing to worry about. As such I am likely to be more than capable to handle any tricky situations that may come up.

☞ E.g. Panic (25)

A-SITUATION	B - THOUGHTS/BELIEFS

C - CONSEQUENCES	D - DISPUTING THOUGHTS

E - EVALUATION/END RESULT

A-SITUATION	B - THOUGHTS/BELIEFS

C - CONSEQUENCES	D - DISPUTING THOUGHTS

**E - EVALUATION/END RESULT**

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**A-SITUATION**

**B - THOUGHTS/BELIEFS**

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**C - CONSEQUENCES**

**D - DISPUTING THOUGHTS**

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**E - EVALUATION/END RESULT**

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