

Chapter 5 – The Stories We Tell Ourselves

CBT is a widely used therapeutic approach that focuses on identifying and changing negative thought patterns and behaviors that contribute to emotional distress and psychological issues. The ABCDEF model is a tool within CBT that helps individuals understand the connections between their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Here's what each letter in the ABCDEF model stands for:

1. **A: Activating Event:**

- This refers to the specific situation, event, or trigger that sets off a chain of thoughts, emotions, and reactions. It's the starting point of the cycle.

2. **B: Beliefs:**

- Beliefs are the thoughts or interpretations you have about the activating event. These can be both conscious and automatic, shaping your emotional response.

3. **C: Consequences:**

- Consequences are the emotional and behavioral outcomes that result from your beliefs about the activating event. These can include feelings like anxiety, anger, sadness, as well as actions you take or avoid.

4. **D: Disputation:**

- Disputation involves challenging and questioning the accuracy and validity of your beliefs. It's about critically examining whether your initial thoughts are based on evidence or assumptions.

5. **E: Effective new thoughts:**

- Effect represents the emotional and behavioral changes that occur after disputing and challenging your initial beliefs. This step focuses on changing your emotional responses and reducing distress.

6. **F: New Feelings and Behaviours:**

- This is the final outcome of the process. By challenging and changing your beliefs, you're likely to experience different emotions and engage in behaviors that are more aligned with reality and healthier for your well-being.

In essence, the ABCDEF model illustrates how our beliefs about a situation influence our emotional and behavioral responses. By identifying and challenging negative or irrational beliefs, individuals can alter their emotional reactions and promote healthier ways of thinking and behaving. This process is a fundamental aspect of CBT and empowers individuals to manage their thoughts and emotions more effectively.

Remember that working with the ABCDEF model often requires practice and guidance, especially when addressing deep-seated beliefs and thought patterns. If you're interested in using this model for self-improvement, it might be helpful to consult with a trained therapist who specializes in CBT techniques.

- Three tools to deal with our thoughts:
 - So, what do you want? Or 'I'm the kind of person who...'
 - Pattern interrupt – I can't do it YET
 - Where's Jesus in this? What is he saying to me?

Chapter 6 – The Power of Listening

- Listening
 - To God's story
 - To Her story
 - To My story

The power of healing that can come through listening. Listening helps us to connect with others, and the result is often that we both grow.

****Why Listening to Others' Stories is Powerful:****

1. ****Empathy and Understanding:**** Listening to someone's story allows you to step into their shoes and understand their experiences, emotions, and perspectives. This cultivates empathy and helps build bridges of understanding between people.
2. ****Validation:**** When you actively listen to someone's story, you validate their feelings and experiences. This can provide a sense of validation and comfort, making the storyteller feel heard and acknowledged.
3. ****Learning and Wisdom:**** Each person's journey is unique, and their stories often carry valuable lessons, insights, and wisdom. Listening to their experiences can expand your own understanding of the world.
4. ****Connection and Bonding:**** Sharing stories fosters a sense of connection and bonding between individuals. It's a way of saying, "I value your experiences, and I'm here to support you."
5. ****Inspiration:**** Hearing about someone's challenges, triumphs, and growth can inspire you to overcome your own obstacles and pursue your goals.
6. ****Cultural Exchange:**** Listening to stories from people of different backgrounds and cultures exposes you to diverse perspectives, enhancing your cultural awareness and promoting inclusivity.

****Tips for Being a Good Listener:****

1. ****Be Present:****
 - Focus your attention on the person speaking. Put away distractions like your phone or other tasks.
2. ****Maintain Eye Contact:****
 - Show that you're engaged by maintaining appropriate eye contact.
3. ****Show Interest:****
 - Use verbal cues like "I'm listening" or "Tell me more" to encourage the speaker. - Nod or use facial expressions to show you're actively following their story.
4. ****Avoid Interrupting:****
 - Let the speaker finish their thoughts before responding. Avoid jumping in with your own experiences unless relevant.
5. ****Ask Open-Ended Questions:****
 - Encourage the storyteller to elaborate by asking open-ended questions like "Can you tell me more about that?" or "How did that make you feel?"

6. **Practice Empathetic Responses:**

- Reflect back what you've heard to show that you understand, such as saying, "It sounds like that was a challenging situation."

7. **Respect Silence:**

- Sometimes people need a moment to gather their thoughts. Don't rush to fill silences.

8. **Avoid Judgment:**

- Listen without passing judgment or offering unsolicited advice unless asked for.

9. **Stay Curious:**

- Approach conversations with a genuine curiosity about the speaker's experiences and perspectives.

10. **Remember Details:**

- Take mental notes of key details and refer back to them as the conversation progresses.

11. **Practice Active Listening:**

- Paraphrase or summarize what the speaker has said to ensure you've understood correctly.

12. **Be Patient:**

- Some stories might be difficult to share. Give the speaker time to express themselves.

By honing your listening skills and genuinely engaging with others' stories, you not only enhance your interpersonal relationships but also contribute to a more compassionate and connected world. Listening is sometimes the best gift you can offer to someone.