

A Professional School Counselor's Guide  
To Help Students in Grades 3-8 Help Themselves

WRITTEN BY  
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## The A.B.C.s of C.B.T.

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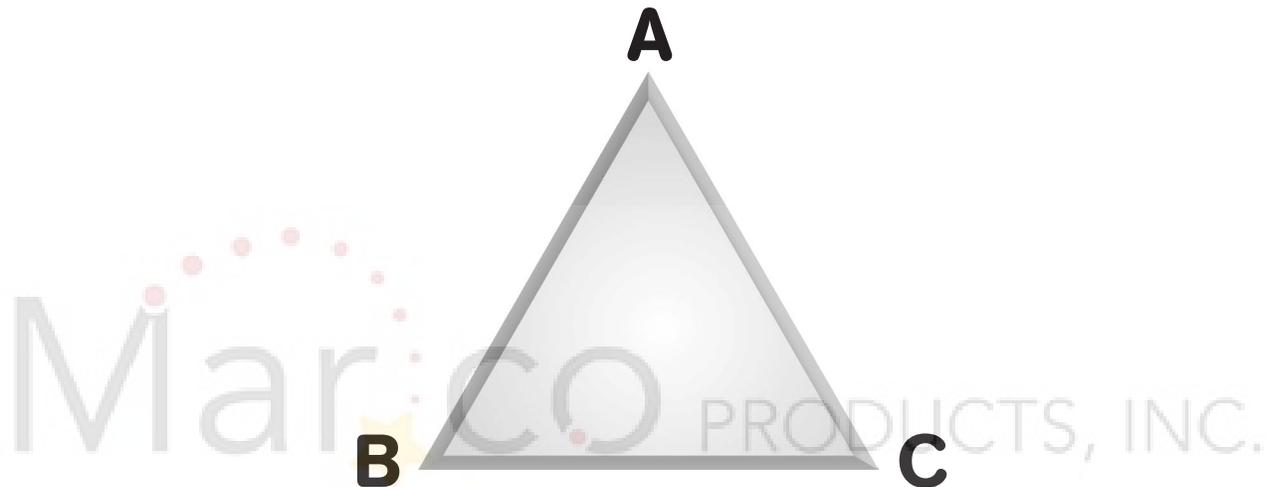
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## CHAPTER 3

# A.B.C. Thoughts

Thoughts take star billing in Cognitive Behavior Theory. These thoughts form a triangular A.B.C. pattern.



**A** = Activating or actual event

**B** = Belief or automatic thought about the event

**C** = Consequences (feelings and behaviors resulting from the thought)

The actual event (A) is neutral, impartial, and devoid of meaning. When an event occurs, it often triggers a belief (B) or thought about what happened. This thought might be accurate or it might be a distorted or inaccurate reflection of reality. The consequences (C) of the thought is the triggering of feelings and behaviors.

Teaching the A.B.C. formula is an important first step in helping students to help themselves. Cognitive shift is the key to change as the students learn to ask themselves if their thoughts are true reflections of reality, and if their thoughts are helping them reach their goals or taking them in the right direction.

It is important for students to understand that their thoughts are the catalyst for both their emotions and actions (behaviors). For example, a student may report he or she feels frustrated or inadequate. It is essential students search for and target the thought that preceded the feelings.

The success of C.B.T. hinges on one's ability to grasp that events themselves are neutral. It is one's thoughts about the event that produce either negative or positive feelings resulting in an action or inaction. Obstructive thoughts may take different forms, but are nonetheless unhelpful

## LESSON 2

# Recording and Understanding Thoughts

Suggested Grade Levels: 3-8

Time Frame: 30-45 Minutes

## Materials Required:

### For the leader:

- Thought Bubbles Worksheet* (page 58 or CD)
- The Girl with Negative Thoughts* or a similar picture (page 59 or CD)
- Computer or Interactive whiteboard to display PDFs of the worksheets (optional)

### For each student:

- 3 copies of the *Thought Bubbles Worksheet* (page 58 or CD)
- Student notebook

## Purpose:

To help the students understand the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors

## Pre-Lesson Preparation:

Print/copy one copy of the *Thought Bubbles Worksheet* for the leader and three copies for each student. *Optional:* have the PDF of the worksheet ready to display on a computer or interactive whiteboard.

Print/copy the picture of *The Girl with Negative Thoughts* to show the students or have the PDF of the picture ready to display on a computer or interactive whiteboard.

## Lesson Instructions:

### Thought Bubbles Worksheet Activity Overview

Cognitive Behavior Therapy focuses on thoughts with an almost surgical precision. Thoughts are the basis of feelings and actions. Events themselves are neutral, but our thoughts or interpretations about these events are laden and powerful. This might be a new concept to some who are accustomed to stating their feelings to justify action or inaction. Considerable care and attention is given to helping the students discover the thoughts they have before their feeling(s) develop. Thoughts are the precursors to feelings and behaviors. In C.B.T., the most important battle is the battlefield of the mind.

2. Show each of the following *C.B.T. Animal Characters Mini-Posters*. Discuss the following six characters in more detail:

**LABELING LEOPARD** (PAGE 65)

Labeling Leopard believes everything has its **SPOT**, and neatly labels everyone and everything. Once assigned a label, the labels are rarely changed. Things are neatly put into labeled boxes and sealed. Labels are affixed and almost always permanent.

**CATASTROPHE CAT** (PAGE 66)

A routine set back becomes a **CAT**astrophe in the mind of **CAT**astrophe Cat. A fairly routine obstacle becomes insurmountable and assumes epic proportions. **CAT**astrophe Cat immediately thinks of the worst possible scenario. Most events, from the minor to the major, are met with overreactions.

**BADGERING BADGER AND SHOULD SHARK** (PAGE 67-68, PRESENTED TOGETHER)

This particular thought pattern, plagued by shouldizing and musturbation, takes two different forms and thus has two characters. The character choice depends on the individual experiencing the often-repeated critical words such as should, must, have to, or ought to. **BAGERING** Badger epitomizes constant **NAGGING** while the treacherous **SHOULD** Shark embodies bold inflexibility. Both characters have a way of making one feel guilty, frustrated, and inadequate. Badgering Badger and Should Shark keep us locked into expectations and the fear that we will disappoint others.

**FAIRNESS FALCON** (PAGE 69)

Fairness Falcon is obsessed with the fairness in life and becomes visibly upset with any instance of impartiality. He carefully watches and judges if things are being handled in a **FAIR** and impartial manner. Fairness Falcon will accept no compromise on this issue and becomes irate when he perceives he is being treated in an inequitable manner. He takes the issue of fairness personally believing he alone is the target, which often leaves him resentful and angry.

**PUFFER FISH** (PAGE 70)

Puffer Fish can make herself bigger or smaller. Puffer Fish tends to either downplay or overplay events. Puffer Fish sees things way out of proportion to how they actually are. Reality is either **PUFFED UP** and exaggerated or underestimated with Puffer Fish.

3. *Optional*: Display the *C.B.T. Characters Posters* in the room as a reminder of the lesson.
4. Remind the students to bring their notebooks to the next session.

## LESSON 7

# A.B.C. Worksheet: Rethinking the Situation

Suggested Grade Levels: 3-8

Time Frame: 30-45 Minutes

## Materials Required:

### For the leader:

- C.B.T. Animal Characters Mini-Posters* (from previous lessons)
- C.B.T. Characters Posters* (from previous lessons)
- Dogmatic Dog* picture (from previous lessons)
- The Insidious Shadow* picture (from previous lessons)
- A.B.C. Worksheet: Rethinking the Situation* (page 74 or CD)
- Computer or interactive whiteboard to display PDFs of the worksheets or posters (optional)

### For each student:

- 3 copies of the *A.B.C. Worksheet: Rethinking the Situation* (page 74 or CD)
- Student notebook

## Purpose:

To teach the students how to rethink or reframe a distressing thought

## Pre-Lesson Preparation:

Gather the mini-posters, pictures, and posters used in the previous lessons.

Print/copy one copy of the *A.B.C. Worksheet: Rethinking the Situation* for the leader and three copies for each student.

## Lesson Instructions:

### Homework Review

Discuss the students' *Simple A.B.C. Worksheets* assigned as homework in Lesson 6.

### C.B.T. Animals Characters Activity Instructions

1. Display the *Dogmatic Dog* picture, *The Insidious Shadow* picture, and each of the *C.B.T. Animal Characters Mini-Posters*. Briefly review each character's associated traits.



"The way I  
SEE the situation,  
he must have cheated!"

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# Filtering Flamingo

IGNORES SOME EVIDENCE  
WHILE OVEREMPHASIZING  
OTHER EVIDENCE

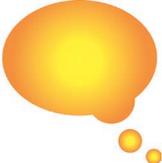
SIFTS, **SHADES** AND FILTERS  
EVENTS TO ALTER REALITY

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# A.B.C.D.E.F. Worksheet 1



<b>A</b> <b>ACTUAL EVENT</b>	<b>B</b> <b>BELIEFS</b>	<b>C</b> <b>CONSEQUENCES</b>		<b>D</b> <b>DISPUTE</b>	<b>E</b> <b>EVALUATE</b>	<b>F</b> <b>FUTURE PLAN</b>
WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE?	WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?	HOW DID YOU FEEL?	HOW DID YOU REACT?	QUESTION YOUR THOUGHTS	SCRUTINIZE YOUR THOUGHTS	DO WHAT WORKS!
 <p>What happened? Give details.</p>	<p>What thoughts or images popped into my head?</p>  <p>What meaning did I attach to my thoughts?</p>	 <p>What emotions did I experience?</p> <p><b>SCALING</b> Rate your feelings: 1...2...3...4...5 MILD STRONG</p>	<p>How did I behave?</p> <p>What physical sensations did I experience?</p> <p>Where did I feel those sensations in my body?</p>	<p>How important is this event?</p> <p>Is what I am thinking true?</p> <p>What else might be going on?</p> <p>How might this event be described in a different way? (GOOGLE EARTH VIEW)</p> <p>Is there something I should do less of or more of?</p> <p>What would others say about this situation?</p>	<p>What is causing me distress?</p> <p>Is my reaction in proportion to the event?</p> <p>Is what I am thinking a fact or my opinion?</p> <p>What is the best resolution for me? For others? For this situation?</p> <p>Are my ideas helpful?</p> <p>How does looking at this event from a different perspective make me feel?</p>	<p>What could I do differently?</p> <p>What strategies would be effective?</p> <p>What can I focus my time and attention on to help me feel better and gain balance?</p> <p>What things can I do that to help me cope more capably when faced with a distressing event?</p> <p>How could I respond to a similar situation in the future?</p> <p><b>SCALING</b> Rate your feelings again: 1...2...3...4...5 MILD STRONG</p>