

**Homework:**

Activating Events, Beliefs, Consequences (ABC) & Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Estimated Time Needed to Complete Activity:

Approximately 20 min

Introduction:

Stressful experiences activate the release of stress hormones (i.e., adrenaline, cortisol, norepinephrine). These are the hormones meant to help us survive—they actually redirect blood flow to areas of our body that will help increase our chance of survival, such as, our muscles. For this reason, the experience of stress can sometimes trigger increased pain for those that have physical injuries. These are also the hormones responsible for our experience of increased heart rate, increased energy, increased alertness, increased focus, and overall faster reaction times. While these can all be quite handy in helping us survive a life threatening experience, they can also cause significant health issues when the experience of stress is prolonged. Interestingly, you don't have to be in a stressful event for a long time for these health issues to occur; in reality, just thinking about stressful events, or the possibility of future stressful events, can trigger the ongoing release of stress hormones when we don't really need them. Thus, learning to identify events that may trigger stress (activating events), which may in turn trigger negative thoughts (beliefs), which may lead to excessive worry or fear (consequences), may be helpful in increasing our ability to problem-solve, and help reduce the possibility of increased pain, anxiety, and other health issues that may hinder the recovery process.

Activity Goals:

- Step 1: Learn to identify activating events (A).
- Step 2: Learn to identify beliefs resulting from activating events (B).
- Step 3: Learn to identify consequences resulting from activating events and beliefs associated with those events (i.e., unhelpful thoughts/thought distortions) (C).

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Step 4: Learn to use cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to find evidence to dispute and/or challenge unhelpful thoughts/thought distortions.

Steps 1-3: Stressful Experiences and Unhelpful Behavior

(A) Activating Event	(B) Beliefs/Thoughts (i.e., thought distortions/unhelpful thoughts) Triggered by A	(C) Consequences (i.e., feelings resulting from A & B	Possible Unhelpful Behavior
My physical therapy appointment is in a couple of days.	<p>“This is just going to make me feel more pain.”</p> <p>“My physical therapist won’t understand my pain symptoms.”</p>	Stress, worry, and anxiety triggered by the unhelpful thoughts that may be causing sleep problems, irritability, problems with concentration, etc.	Left unchallenged, thought distortions/unhelpful thoughts may trigger so much fear that it will stop you from participating in something that may be helpful. For instance, in this example, the individual may choose to avoid physical therapy, which may have helped improve physical functioning and/or assisted with pain management.

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Step 4: Using CBT to Change Behavior

(A) Activating Event	(B) Beliefs/Thoughts (i.e., thought distortions/unhelpful thoughts) Triggered by A	(C) Consequences (i.e., feelings resulting from A & B	(CBT) Cognitive- Behavioral Therapy (I.e., find evidence to challenge the unhelpful thought)
<p>My physical therapy appointment is in a couple of days.</p>	<p>“This is just going to make me feel more pain.” “My physical therapist won’t understand my pain symptoms.”</p>	<p>Stress, worry, and anxiety triggered by the unhelpful thoughts that may be causing sleep problems, irritability, problems with concentration, etc.</p>	<p>The reality is, there’s no sure way of knowing for certain what physical therapy will do until you experience the physical therapy—this would be like predicting the future. Instead, it may be helpful to understand that feeling worried about experiencing something new is warranted, but not a predictor of what will result from the experience.</p>

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Practice: Use this table to practice identifying how activating events, beliefs and consequences (ABCs) associated with those events may have led to unhelpful behavior in the past.

(A) Activating Event	(B) Beliefs/Thoughts (i.e., thought distortions/unhelpful thoughts) Triggered by A	(C) Consequences (i.e., feelings resulting from A & B	Possible Unhelpful Behavior

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Practice: Use this table to practice using cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to challenge unhelpful beliefs and thoughts that may be creating barriers to recovery.

(A) Activating Event	(B) Beliefs/Thoughts (i.e., thought distortions/unhelpful thoughts) Triggered by A	(C) Consequences (i.e., feelings resulting from A & B	(CBT) Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (I.e., find evidence to challenge the unhelpful thought)