

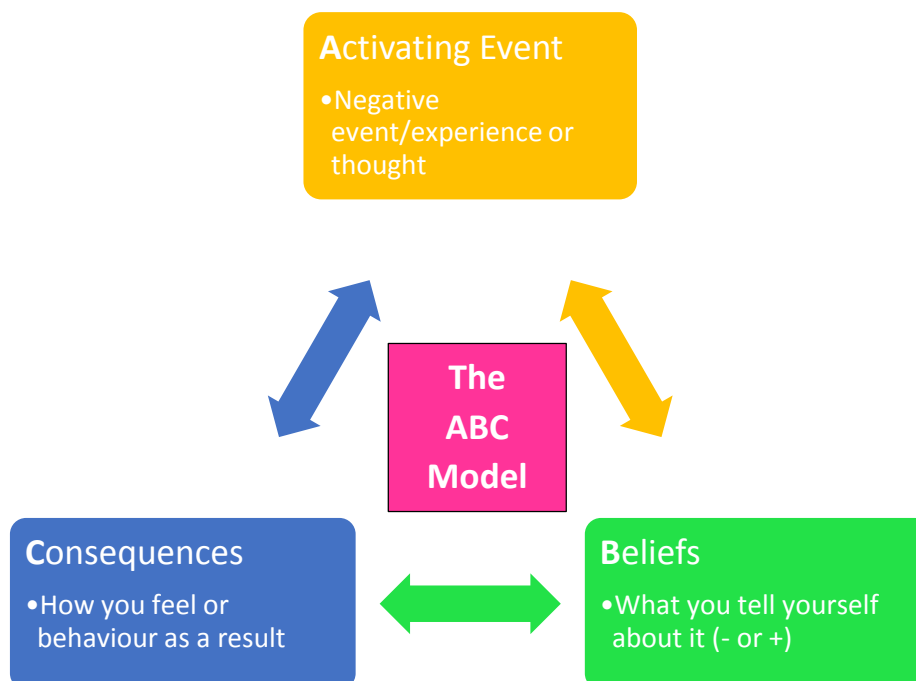
Managing unhelpful thoughts using CBT

This article comes to you during week 8 of the lockdown. Recent announcements have caused uncertainty and unrest for many people. So we thought this week’s article could focus on coping with these kinds of churned up thoughts and worries and introduce you to some ideas from CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) that may help.

First off, have a look at this [1 minute video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRijYOJp5e0) which introduces what CBT is =>

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CBT uses The ABC Model – as shown in the diagram below. The thinking is that if you are purposeful about what you tell yourself about an adverse experience or thought, you can influence the consequences of that in a positive way:



Applying this to Coronavirus, there are probably a number of ‘Activating events’ that you have already experienced and you will have had conscious (and subconscious) thoughts and responses (Beliefs) to these, resulting in an action or feeling (Consequence).

Have a look at the 3 tables below as examples and see if you can connect with any of these:

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Activating event | Shops, restaurants, pubs, they’re all going to go under and out of business | |
| | Negative | Positive |
| Belief | The economy is going to crash, unemployment will go up, there will be another awful recession, my favourite shops will go bust, I’ll never get to the pub again | The economy is threatened but there is a lot of financial help out there to support these businesses. It is right to follow guidance and keep others safe by distancing, shops and pubs will survive, I will get out again, this <u>isn’t</u> forever |
| Consequence | Hopelessness | Hopeful |

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| | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Activating event | Coronavirus is an unseen virus, I might have it, me or my loved ones will die | |
| | Negative | Positive |
| Belief | I/my loved one will get infected, we all will eventually, I don't want to be alone on ICU | I know how to protect myself and my household; there are lots of safety measures I can take that are in my control to keep myself and my family safe |
| Consequence | Worried, panicked, fearful | Calm, sense of safety |

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Activating event | Supermarkets ran out of food, it will happen again, I won't have supplies | |
| | Negative | Positive |
| Belief | I don't have enough food in my stocks, it's not safe to go out, I can't get a delivery slot, I won't be able to survive | I can make a list of the basic essentials I need – cupboard and freezer; I can go at off peak times so less people are there; supermarkets are very good at enforcing social distancing so shopping is safe |
| Consequence | Helpless, frantic | Stability, order, control |

Notice how, for the same thought (activating event) you can have two very different processes (beliefs) and from each of these follow different outcomes and emotions (consequences).

I wonder if you can come up with your own table like this, where you identify how you usually or typically respond to situations or thoughts and what the alternatives could be.

The idea behind this exercise is that you will be planting new seeds in your brain for alternative responses, practising these in 'real life' creates new neural pathways in your brain which in turn allows new habits to form.

We hope this week's article offers something useful. See if you can put aside 10 minutes to give the exercise a go, you never know what you might find out about yourself. Keep safe.

Tash, Catherine, Rach, Frankie and Sarah x