

## LEARN TO USE THE ABCS

One of the most powerful ways we can regain control of our lives is by making use of the A-B-C method outlined by psychologist Albert Ellis. He suggests we experience activating events all around us that we have little control over. Activating events can happen in a variety of settings. These could occur through daily hassles you encounter in the environment (daily work stress, financial worries, self-esteem), life changes (work or school worries, family divorce or conflict, losing an important relationship), environmental stresses (construction noises outside the apartment, heating or cooling problems in your apartment, frustration from living in close quarters with other people), chronic pain (from past surgery, illness, or injury), or acculturation stress (moving from another country or geographic region, living in a religiously different area).

While we cannot control the activating events, we are able to control the beliefs we tell ourselves about these events. This helps our reaction lead to a more positive consequence rather than a negative one. Consider the following scenario:

Activating Event	Negative Belief	Negative Consequence
The power goes out and your alarm doesn't go off. You are late for an important appointment.	You think no one will understand and they will judge you for missing the appointment.	You skip the appointment and don't reschedule because you think they are going to judge you for not being on time.

You can't control losing power, but you can control how you approach the problem. Look at how a new, positive belief leads to a more positive consequence:

Activating Event	Positive Belief	Positive Consequence
The power goes out and your alarm doesn't go off. You are late for an important appointment.	You recognize that you can't change the past and that you just need to move forward.	You apologize for being late, explain what happened, and reschedule if necessary

Think about something that annoyed you recently that was outside of your control. It could be something an issue with someone you work with, a friend not showing up, or unforeseen circumstances that messed up a plan that you had for a long time. Consider your initial reaction (belief) and what kind of outcome (consequence) this led to in your life.

Activating Event	Positive Belief	Positive Consequence

What different belief could have led to a more positive outcome? Think about some of the obstacles to holding this belief.