

ABCDE Method of Gaining Conscious Control

Background: Your boss gave you a challenging new assignment and the impression that failure to achieve the expected goals would be damaging to your career while success would be a boost to your career.

Activating Event

You meet with your direct reports to outline the new assignment and your brilliant plan for execution and they respond with doubting questions, skepticism and low energy.

Belief

You interpret their behavior to mean that they do not support you. Your negative self-talk says: “Without their active and enthusiastic support, it will be impossible for me to succeed with this assignment. Maybe they want to see me fail!”

Consequence

You respond with fear and anger. Your reptile brain (designed to perceive danger) invites you to picture failure as job loss leading to being fired. You focus on every disappointment you’ve ever had. This focus reinforces what may be an irrational thought pattern. Let’s now check the facts.

Debate and Dispute

As you feel your emotions skyrocketing out of control, you invite yourself to stop and think, just in time - before you go out to say something really stupid to your directs. You decide to walk yourself through a series of questions designed to help you think rationally:

Where’s the proof?

“Are there alternative, more logical explanations for the activating event?”

“If this had happened with a colleague, and he asked for my advice, what might I say to help him change his beliefs?”

“Have I ever been in a similar situation before, had similar beliefs, and then discovered I was wrong?”

“If I have been in this situation before, what have I learned that I can apply now?”

This discipline helps you recall that it has really helped to go back to people and ask them about their response, i.e., get more data. You go back and check out your thoughts: “I noticed that people had pretty low energy in our last meeting. Why was that? What did I miss?” Such questions can get you the information that you need to correct the problem.

Emotional Effect

Debating and disputing your irrational thoughts is likely to reduce your intense fear and anger to appropriate concern. When you are consumed with fear and anger, it is unlikely that you will think clearly or make your best decisions. You can think pretty clearly and behave effectively when your feelings are at the concerned level. To be clear, the results of this exercise will not make everything great, but these steps are likely to bring things within manageable bounds. Thus, by focusing on your emotions and those of others you gain more control over your intellect.

A Activating Event	
B Belief	
C Consequence	
D Debate and Dispute	
E Emotional Effect	