

# The ABC of CBT

A way to understand emotional problems by putting your thoughts under the microscope



## A

### **A stands for Adverse Event or Activating Event**

This might be a thought, feeling, situation, person, place, activity, past, present or future, real or imagined. The trigger.

The Critical A - this is the aspect of the situation which you found most disturbing/upsetting/distressing



## B

### **B stands for Beliefs or Basic Attitudes**

triggered at A. These may be rational / healthy/helpful or irrational/unhealthy/unhelpful

#### **Unhelpful (irrational, unhealthy beliefs)**

Demands, catastrophising, low distress tolerance, negative global judgements about self / other / life

#### **Helpful (rational, healthy beliefs)**

Attitudes based in preferences, decatastrophising, high distress tolerance, unconditional acceptance of self / others / life



## C

### **C stands for Consequences of beliefs.**

This incorporates your experience. You can remember this part by asking what is your **BEAST**?

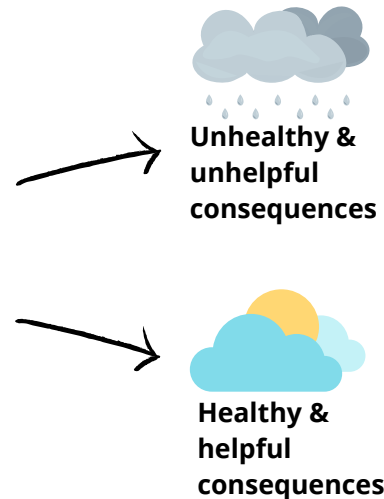
**Behaviours** - what did you do?

**Emotions** - what emotions did you feel?

**Action tendencies** - what did you feel like doing at the time?

**Symptoms / sensations** - what sensations or symptoms did you notice or focus on?

**Thoughts** - what were you thinking? What kind of thoughts were you having? Where was your attention focused?



The C (your experience) is coloured by your interpretation (B)

For an extra layer of complexity, be aware that any element of C can become a new A and a secondary cycle may exist.