

Name: _____



Emotional ABC's

Whenever you feel sad, you probably assume it's because something bad happened, or someone did something mean to make you feel this way. But there's a little more to it than that. Life happens, and then we react. But you have more power over how you feel than you might think, and that starts with learning your emotional ABC's:

A stands for **Action** or **Activating** event. In other words, something upsetting happens, or someone does something we don't like. In the space below, write an action, real or imagined, that would cause you to feel upset:

B stands for **Beliefs**. We form beliefs about why this happened or what it all means. We tell ourselves what to think about this thing that happened. In the space below, write down all the things you might think if this thing happened to you:

C stands for **Consequences**. When you put A & B together, you get C: The way you feel. Write down how the combination of A & B would make you feel:

We can't change A. Sometimes difficult things happen, and sometimes others are going to be rude or hurtful. That's just part of life. But we can change the second part of the equation: our attitudes and beliefs. If we change our ideas about all those things that happen, we can change the way we feel.

For example, let's say a kid bumps into you in the hallway at school and makes you drop your books, and then just stomps on by without saying they're sorry. That's an action that makes you upset. So you start to think about what happened and tell yourself things about what it all means: +Maybe this kid hates me. Maybe he's going to start bullying me all the time. Nobody at school respects me. What did I ever do to deserve this? I must not be very well liked.+

Naturally, thinking these thoughts makes you feel bad about what happened. But what if none of these thoughts were true? What if the other kid was just in a really big hurry? What if they were upset about something else that had nothing to do with you? What if someone else had pushed them into you and they were just trying to get away? What if they tripped and accidentally stumbled into you, and were then so embarrassed they just wanted to escape and hurry by? Change our thoughts and we can completely change how we feel about things.

Think about the action event you wrote about on the first page, and now try to think up as many alternate ideas as you can to explain this event and why it happened:


