

Chapter 5: Realize R # 9

CBT- 3 Column

You can use this exercise to realize why you are reacting the way you are.

From now on, be aware of your reaction. Whenever you see yourself reacting undesirably, **ask yourself;**

“Why am I reacting in ways that are not helping me and adding to my stress?”

Identify your underlying thoughts and beliefs that are giving negative meaning to your experience and alter them to more adaptive thoughts. You can use three columns to help you do that.

A: Event	B: Automatic Thoughts	C: Reaction: Feelings/Words/Behavior

In column A, write down the event that triggered your reaction. In Column C, write down your reaction. Your reaction could be your feeling, your words, your behavior, or all three.

Now for column B, ask yourself; “what were my automatic thoughts that made me feel or behave this way.” You list all that comes up. Once you come up with your thoughts, review each one and find if you have proof that the thought is really true or you are reacting to past attitudes and beliefs. What is that belief and is it helping you feel better (adaptive) or it is leading to undesirable feelings and behaviors (maladaptive)? If it is maladaptive, what could be an alternative thought and belief that is more rational and helpful (adaptive)? You then replace your thoughts. Repeating this exercise will help you reprogram your mind as you will find that your automatic thoughts will become more adaptive gradually.

When you start reflecting on your automatic thoughts in this manner, initially, it may take few days before you can process and reprogram your thoughts. As you practice, the time between the triggering event and your ability to reflect will decrease. You will be able to do it after few hours, then few minutes and pretty soon you will be able to catch your maladaptive thoughts as they are happening and change them to adaptive thoughts and respond differently at the moment.

What If?

If you don't realize your underlying thoughts and beliefs, you will continue to react the way you are and facing undesirable consequences. If you develop the ability to realize these underlying thoughts, attitudes and beliefs, you will get the power to gradually mold them leading to more desirable results. So, go ahead reflect; what were my thoughts when I reacted that way and what could be alternative thoughts? Fill the three columns and continue doing it to train your brain to be able to do it easily.
