

One Minute ABC

By Dr. Michler Bishop, Member, SMART Recovery[®] Board of Directors

This one is for our Facilitators, to help avoid burn out. It's also a way of doing an ABC on a sheet of paper, flipchart, or blackboard that seems to make doing ABCs easier for new facilitators.

1. Start by putting a C in the middle on the left margin of a piece of paper or chalkboard or flipchart. (*Note:* You can do this as a group, providing everyone at the meeting with paper and pen.)

The C traditionally stands for Consequences, but we do not mean the consequences of having drink. We mean the consequences of thinking crookedly, for example, "had a drink" or "relapsed" or "went gambling." In this case, I am going to put, "Walking home, feeling depressed about the meeting."

2. Next go to the top of the page and write an A and directly below it, a B.
3. Now try to uncover the irrational beliefs that are contributing to the C—walking home feeling depressed about the meeting and perhaps about your performance as a facilitator. (We'll fill in the A later.)

Perhaps you are saying to yourself:

- a) I should have done a better job tonight.
 - b) There were only three people from last week's meeting.
 - c) I'm losing more people than I'm gaining.
 - d) We have to figure out how to run better meetings or we will never grow in this city.
 - e) Other groups are growing, what's wrong with me.
4. Now figure out what is rational in what you are telling yourself and what is irrational. Look especially for irrational beliefs hiding so-to-speak under or behind the seemingly rational self-statements.

For example, (b) "There were only three people from last week's meeting" is probably simply a fact, but maybe you're really thinking, "Oh my god, there were only three people from the last meeting. I'm losing everybody." The "Oh my god" may be a disguised form of awfulizing, and the "I'm losing everybody" is probably both an overgeneralization (You are not, in fact, losing everybody.) and hiding underneath it are probably several demanding statements: "I mustn't be losing everybody. I must keep everybody. I must do better."

5. Next figure out what contributed to your beliefs, the A or A's. In this case, it's "running a meeting."
6. Now write a D under the C, for Disputing. Keep in mind that we only write questions in this section—questions that challenge the validity and rationality of the B's.

For example:

- a) Where is it written that I must have done a better job tonight?
 - b) Why **MUST** I do better?
 - c) Is that really correct? Haven't I read on SMARTCAL that most groups lose far more attendees than stick?
 - d) Why do we **HAVE TO** find out how to run better meetings?
 - e) What do I mean: "Wrong with me"?
7. Finally, write an E below those questions. The E stands for more Effective beliefs and techniques to help you feel and do better—and think less crookedly.
 - a) It will be nice when I do a better job, but this is a learning experience, and it will probably take some time before I figure it out.
 - b) I would like to do better—that is a good goal—but I don't **HAVE** to do better, and I will only burn myself out if I think that way.
 - c) In most groups, only one or two out of ten people actually become active members. A lot of people have to come through the door before a real group forms.
 - d) I **AM** probably figuring it out, but being demanding about it is just going to make me miserable. That won't help.
 - e) There is nothing wrong with me. That is just some of my old, crooked, knee-jerk thinking. That sounds like my dad (or mom) talking to me. I may not always run a good meeting, but that does not make me a less-good person. In fact, I **AM** learning and I **AM** providing a real service to my community and I **AM** helping some people who probably really appreciate it. That is enough.

I hope this helps you find running meetings more enjoyable and less stressful. Keep it up, and Good Luck.