

A-B-C Theory of Emotional Disturbance

"Men are disturbed not by things, but the view which they take of them."

1st century A.D. Epictetus

It is not the event, but rather our interpretation of it that causes our emotional reaction

Activating Experience

Woman friend breaks the news she is going out with another man and therefore wants to break off the relationship with you.



B. Belief about (or interpretation) of the experience

"I must really be a worthless person"
"I'll never find another great woman like her."
"She doesn't want therefore no one could possibly want me."

and/or

"This is awful. Everything happens to me."
"That witch! She shouldn't be that way."
"I can't stand the world being so unfair."

C. Upsetting emotional consequences

Depression



Or
Hostility



D. Disputing of irrational thought

"Where is the evidence that because this woman wishes to end our relationship, that I am a worthless person." or "That I'll never be able to have a really good relationship with someone else." Or "Even that I couldn't be happy alone?" or "why is it awful that I am not getting what I want?" or "Why shouldn't the world have injustices?"

E. New Emotional consequence or effect

Sadness: ("well we did have a nice relationship, and I'm sorry to see it end- but it did have its problems. Now I can go out and meet new friends.")

Or

Annoyance: ("It's annoying that she was seeing someone else but it is not the end of the world.")

