



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

- Epictetus

The stoic philosopher Epictetus said, 'People are not disturbed by things, but by the view they take of them.' Our judgments of what is happening to us may be more important than what actually happens to us.

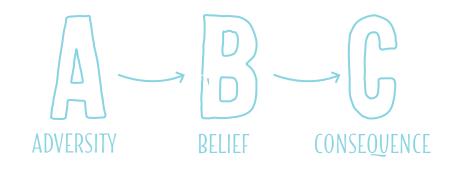
When we experience difficulties or adversities and blame them on being 'dumb' or 'unpopular' or 'hopeless', the consequences typically point away from resilience and promote stinking thinking. These are permanent, pervasive, and personal attributions about who we are. Unfortunately our children often make these attributions – and too often, they learn them from us.

When we experience difficulties or adversities and blame them on circumstances or things external to who we are, the consequences are more likely to grow resilience and promote healthy, optimistic thinking. When we see those bad things as not permanent, but temporary, and not as pervasive but instead as specific, and not personal but rather impersonal, we can shrug them off or move beyond them more easily.

This is not about avoiding responsibility. Rather, it's about identifying unhelpful beliefs that hold us (and our children) back, and changing those beliefs.

The ABC model teaches that we all experience adversity (A) and suffer consequences (C). For example, a child sits a test and fails. She tells you she wants to quit maths... or school. Her belief is likely to be that "I'm dumb". This pervasive, permanent, personal belief (B) leaves her feeling lousy and impacts on the consequences.

But what if we shifted that belief? Imagine she believed that the test was hard for everyone (impersonal rather than personal), or that she didn't study enough this time (temporary rather than permanent), or that maths has been getting tougher lately (specific rather than pervasive). Her beliefs may lead to different consequences and more resilient approaches to subsequent adversity.



Teaching a child to avoid stinking thinking requires lots of careful conversations, and even more careful modeling. What are we saying? What example are we teaching?

The activities below will be helpful for children older than around five (activity one) or seven (activities two and three).



When you hear your child complaining that "I can't..." or "I never..." or "I always...", gently question the validity of their statements. Ask them: "Can't?" "Never?" "Always?" and help them identify times where their statement was wrong.

## ACTIVITY 2: "I Remember When..."

At a time when things are calm, talk your child through the ABC model using experiences from your own life. Help them to see how your beliefs about adversity have led to negative consequences and also to positive consequences. Then ask your child to identify any unhelpful beliefs they've adopted to a challenge, and invite them to shift those statements to more positive and helpful ones.

Brainstorm some of your own experiences here so that you are prepared when the right time arises:

## ACTIVITY 3: Using the ABC Model

Ask your child's permission to work through the ABC model with them next time they encounter adversity and display some stinking thinking. Help them through real-life situations by questioning unhelpful beliefs and encouraging more positive ones. If they respond badly, wait for emotions to calm, and then try again.

**REMEMBER:** 

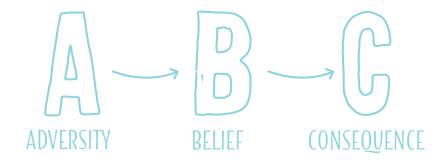
Just because you

BELIEVE

SOMETHING,

doesn't mean it's

TRUF



Try asking the following questions:

- 1 What was the adversity you experienced?
- 2 What were the consequences of that adversity?
- 9 What are your beliefs about the adversity?
- 4 How can changing your beliefs change the consequences?