



ACTIVITY: 'NOISE IN THE NIGHT'

TIME: 15+ minutes
SIZE: Whole of class
SPACE: No special requirements
RESOURCES: Whiteboard

The aim is to revisit the A-B-C-D Model in a different way. NB: An alternative is to select Helpful Thinking & Self-talk, Unit 1, from the Essential Skills Module, where this activity is supported by a DVD clip.

The result should be a firmer understanding that while we cannot control all events, we can control the way we think about them, and consequently how we feel about them and what we do as a result.

1. Draw up a blank table including the column headings (see example below).
2. Explain the scenario: you are home alone in bed. It is dark and quiet. Suddenly, you hear a loud, unexpected noise.
3. Under 'Event' write in 'Strange noise in the night.'
4. Ask questions in the following order, writing responses in the table:
 - I. How do you feel?
 - II. What are your physical symptoms?
 - III. What do you do?
 - IV. Why did you do that (i.e. what were you thinking)?

EXAMPLE RESPONSES:

EVENT	THOUGHTS?	FEELINGS		DO?
		EMOTIONS?	SYMPTOMS?	
STRANGE NOISE IN THE NIGHT	I HATE BEING ALONE	ANXIOUS	CLAMMY	LOOK FOR MOBILE PHONE
	THIS IS DANGEROUS	SCARED	HEART POUNDING	PULL BLANKETS OVER YOUR HEAD
	I'M ALL ALONE!	APPREHENSIVE	PALE	LISTEN INTENTLY
	SURELY IT'S NOTHING	SILLY	FLUSHING	TELL YOURSELF NOT TO BE SILLY
	IT MIGHT BE A BURGLAR	CURIOUS, ANGRY	ALERT	GRAB CRICKET BAT

NB: This represents an ideal example where responses about feelings and actions are lined up to be consistent with relevant thoughts (e.g. apprehensive and pale, and listening intently, are results of the thought, I'm all alone!). Since your students will generate responses in a more haphazard fashion, you may not be able to 'line up' associated thoughts, feelings, and actions so neatly. Don't be concerned; what is important is that students understand, and you emphasise, the thoughts–feelings–actions link.

Draw up a second blank table with the same headings.

5. Explain that NOW you hear the same noise, but this time you know it is the neighbour's dog that often comes out this time each night to rummage in the garbage bin.
6. Ask the same questions in the same order, writing sample responses in the columns, e.g. Feel? Annoyed. Symptoms? Slight flush. What do you do? Fume about the neighbour. Why did you do that (i.e. what were you thinking)? For example 'I'm sick of that dog and I must talk to my neighbour about it.'
7. Highlight that a whole raft of different responses – nervousness, anger, excitement, etc. – all resulted from the one common event. Emphasise again the thoughts–feelings–actions link.

DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

- Take on the thought 'There's a burglar in my house!' and consider how that thought makes you feel; now challenge that thought, changing it to 'I'm sure it's just that rotten dog.' Does this second thought result in different feelings?
- Brainstorm some other real-life instances where people might have a variety of reactions to the same event.
- Brainstorm a list of events that have the potential to cause stress and anxiety (e.g. sudden illness, exams, asking someone for a date, auditions or sports tryouts). But remember the amount of stress and anxiety you feel is linked directly to how you think about the event. So changing the way you think is the most effective way to control your feelings and actions, and thus reduce stress and anxiety. If time permits, brainstorm some potentially helpful self-talk for some of these generated events.