

## ***The A,B,C, D and E of Emotional Self-Awareness***



Emotions can have destructive consequences. Even a positive emotion, like love, can keep one day dreaming all day and divert us from focus on other important people or tasks. Who among us has not had an emotion take us down a path we later regretted?

Albert Ellis, considered the father of rational behavior, proposed a helpful “system” to help people identify and manage their emotions. The “system” can be remembered by the acronym, ABCDE.

**A=activating event.** When you feel an emotion, ask, “what triggered this emotion?” Was it a thought? Was it a situation?

**C= consequence.** What is the consequence that resulted in the emotion you identified? Did anger cause you to withdraw? Did hurt cause you to lash out at another?

**B= beliefs.** What thought process is/was going on in your mind after the activating event that led to the consequence? What is the self-talk you engaged in that caused you to interpret the event the way you did? How did this produce the consequence? These beliefs can be beliefs that have been programmed into your mind since childhood, but still greatly affect the way you interpret events.

**D=debate.** If the emotion is destructive, debate it. Is your feeling able to be interpreted in another way? Debate the validity of the belief you hold. If someone says you are worthless and will never amount to anything, debate that. Ask others to help you debate it. Hopefully, at the end of this process, you have better identified the negative beliefs behind your emotions, and ultimately, behind your behavior.

**E=effects.** Now that you have analyzed your emotions in this way, perhaps the effect or consequence has changed. You have grown and hopefully, you deal with these and other emotions in a constructive way.

This is a great exercise in emotional intelligence. If we can learn to identify and manage our own emotions, channeling them for good, we can also help others do the same. This will increase our own ability to develop as leaders and to develop the leadership skills of others.

(adapted from The EQ Edge, by Book and Stein, 34-53)

### ***Assignment:***

- Identify one emotion that is limiting you presently. Take some time to walk through the A,B,C,D and E of this exercise to try to limit its negative influence in your life right now.

***(for further leadership development resources and opportunities, consult [www.ascend-international.com](http://www.ascend-international.com))***