



The ABC's of Emotional Intelligence

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Do you ever find yourself reacting negatively or self critically to a comment made by a colleague? As a result, the conversation takes an unproductive turn and you may become frustrated, defensive or angry. You can feel it happening, but are powerless to pull yourself out of the reactionary pattern.

I witnessed just such an interchange between my client and their boss recently. What I heard as a neutral comment given in a neutral tone/manner sent my client into the "I'm not good enough"; "She doesn't like the job I am doing" place. As a result, she began to talk faster, listen less and lose her focus on the point she was trying to get across. Later, we debriefed the whole incident using the ABCDE method* and were able to identify some behavioral patterns that were limiting my clients' ability to show up as the powerful focused leader she is.

The ABCDE method is a way of gaining conscious control over our thinking and building new behavioral patterns that increase our leadership effectiveness. We are all human and we interpret the world around us and our interactions in our own unique way based on our beliefs and patterns of behavior and thought. Our emotions trigger our thoughts and behaviors. It happens so quickly that we often don't see the connection between what we are feeling and how we are acting/re-acting. The ABCDE method is a practical tool that can help you move from REACTION to PROACTIVE CHOICE in your response. Here is how it works:

The letters are an acronym designed to help you remember the sequence of events to be studied:

- A** - Activating Event
- B** - Belief
- C** - Consequence
- D** - Debate and Dispute (the belief)
- E** - Emotional Effect (of debate and dispute)

The ABC's of Emotional Intelligence - continued

A – What was the activating event? It could be a meeting you just came out of, a conversation you had, something you read in an e-mail or a single comment made by a peer, co-worker or boss.

B – Belief – how are you interpreting what happened? What is the story you have made up about what took place or what the meaning of it all was?

C – Consequence – because of your Belief, how did you respond? Did you become quiet, more outspoken, get red in the face, talk faster, roll your eyes? What was your reaction – externally (that others may have seen); as well as internally (that others may not have seen).

D – Debate and Dispute – so as you feel yourself reacting, stop and think: Where is the proof? Are there other more logical explanations for the Activating Event? Have I ever been in a similar situation before, had similar beliefs, and then discovered I was wrong? If I have been in this situation before, what did I learn that I can apply now?

E – Emotional Effect - Debating and disputing your thoughts is likely to reduce whatever emotion you are feeling to a more appropriate level. When you're emotions are high, it is unlikely that you will think clearly or make your best decisions. You can think pretty clearly and behave effectively when your feelings are at the concerned level. Regular practice with this tool can help you move from REACTING to PRO-ACTIVELY CHOOSING your response, making you a more effective and consistent leader.

The paradox for many who have been ignoring emotional data is that, by allowing yourself to focus on emotions, yours and those of others, you actually gain more control over your intellect.

Coaching provides the tools, forum and support for clients to strengthen their Emotional Intelligence, thereby enhancing and empowering their leadership. Learn more at: <http://enerpace.server277.com/pdf/Enerpace%20EQ%20Tool.pdf>

About the Author: Diana Atkins is an Enerpace Affiliate Coach specializing in leadership development. She is passionate about partnering with her clients to lead courageously while challenging them to explore and create what they want in their lives. Her areas of expertise include communication, decision-making, motivating and building relationships, time management, work-life balance and much more. Diana is an MBA, a Certified Professional Co-Active Coach, a Certified Professional Behavioral Analyst and a PCC through the International Coach Federation.

* ABCDE Method from *The EQ Edge* - S. Stein & H. Book