The ABCDE Exercise

Taken from *The EQ Edge: Emotional Intelligence and Your Success* by Steven Stein and Howard Book

1. Draw five columns, as shown below.
2. Think of an upsetting situation you experienced over the past week. In the C (consequence) column, write down what your unpleasant feelings were and what behaviours accompanied them.
3. Write down the incident – the activating event – that seemed to trigger this upsetting situation in column A (activating event).
4. The key aspect of the ABCDE approach is to now capture your Bs: that almost imperceptible, easily overlooked self-talk triggered by the activating event. See if you can pin down what went on in your mind right after the activating event. Write these in the B (belief) column.
5. Your next task is to actively debate, dispute and discard the maladaptive, self-defeating beliefs that give rise to your Cs. Submit every element of your internal monologue to rigorous examination. Write your answers in the D (debate, dispute and discard) column.
6. Finally, in column E, write down the effects of filling in column D – how debating, disputing and discarding have shifted your understanding and beliefs about the activating event and, consequently, your feelings and behaviours.

The power of the ABCDE approach is that defusing illogical, maladaptive beliefs allows more rational and adaptive beliefs to emerge, and shifts your Cs to more effective, adaptive feelings and behaviours.

This tool has also been used extensively in the professional world with excellent results.

Activating Event	Beliefs	Consequences	Debate	Effects