

A + B = C Classroom Activity

Target Grade Level: Secondary

Educator Instructions: This activity is intended for use with a classroom of students to proactively teach a general, cognitive problem-solving process. First introducing it in response to a specific student problem or crisis is not recommended, as students are less able to learn new skills in these situations. Two case scenarios are provided. Choose the one that is most applicable to your students.

Oral Directions: *All of us have had times when how we behaved got us into trouble or made someone else feel angry or sad. Sometimes, we wish that we could make it turn out differently the next time we are in a similar situation. The $A+B=C$ Process can help us to see how our thoughts and beliefs influence how a situation turns out. In most situations, there is an A – which stands for an Activating event. This is what happens first. Sometimes, it is something that is easily seen, like an event or an interaction between people. Sometimes, it is not so easy to see, but still is part of the Activating event – like experiences prior to the event, our mood or stress level, or even if we are hungry or tired.*

We often have a thought or Belief about the Activating event that influences how we react. The thought or Belief is the “B” in this equation. How we behave or react to the event and the resulting outcome of the situation is the “C” or Consequences. Just like an addition problem in math, if you change one of the numbers that you are adding together, the sum will be different. In this lesson, we will learn that if we want to change the “C” – the outcome of an event – changing our “B” – our thoughts or beliefs – will help to make that happen.

Educator Instructions: Have a student read the example scenario. Go through the example response, noting the A, B, C and alternate B and C.

For the exercise, students are asked to come up with an experience in which they did not like the outcome. Some students may need support in this, so prompts such as “Think of a time you got into trouble” or “a time you felt angry, embarrassed, ashamed, or disappointed” or “a time you made a friend or family members upset.” Have them write out the event in detail in the Student Scenario section. Ask students to determine the A, B and C of the event. Then ask students to imagine it had turned out differently and they were able to create an alternate “C” where the outcome was more positive. You can use prompts, such as “What would you have liked to have happened?” or “How could the story have an ending that you like better?” Students should be challenged, if appropriate, to describe an alternate outcome in detail, not simply, “I did not get into trouble.”

Students should be asked to think about the Alternate “B” – What thoughts or beliefs would you have to have to create this outcome? Engage students in an age appropriate discussion of their ability to use their brains to change their thoughts and beliefs. It might be helpful for the teacher to share an appropriate personal example to model self-reflection and flexible thinking.

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A Activating Event	B Belief & Thoughts	C Consequences	Alternate B	Alternate C
<i>Describe what happened that started the event. Consider adding any possible underlying or unseen events that contribute to the situation.</i>	<i>What thoughts entered your mind when "A" occurred? What did you believe about the event?</i>	<i>What happened, as a result? What did you do, as a result? How did you react? How did others react?</i>	<i>Choose an alternate thought and belief.</i>	<i>Describe the likely outcome that would result from the alternate thoughts and beliefs.</i>

Example Scenario: Javon spends all night writing a paper on the book To Kill a Mockingbird for his English Literature class. He has written a 4-page paper, which is twice the number of pages assigned. When he walks up to his teacher, Mrs. Johnson, to hand her his paper, she takes it but does not make any comment to him. Javon moves slowly to his seat and puts his head on his desk to sleep for the remainder of class.

Example Response:

A	B	C	Alternate B	Alternate C
<p>Javon turns in a 4-page paper.</p> <p><i>Underlying A:</i> Javon has struggled academically in school and has been told he does not try hard enough.</p>	<p>Mrs. Johnson does not care about me or how hard I worked. It was all for nothing. I'll never do well in school.</p>	<p>Javon puts his head down and sleeps through class.</p>	<p>Javon allows for the possibility that Mrs. Johnson was distracted and that perhaps she will speak to him later.</p>	<p>Javon continues to pay attention in class and engages in a great class discussion about the book.</p>

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Example Scenario: Hailey sees her best friend Tegan whispering and laughing with Emily in the lunchroom. Hailey runs out of the lunchroom and later posts on social media that Tegan is a traitor and she will never speak to her again.

Example Response:

A	B	C	Alternate B	Alternate C
<p>Hailey sees Tegan and Emily whispering and laughing.</p> <p><i>Underlying A:</i> Hailey is worried, because her mom is in the hospital.</p>	<p>Tegan and Emily are talking about me and making fun of me.</p>	<p>Hailey posts negative comments about Tegan on social media.</p>	<p>Tegan and Emily are having fun. I should join them.</p>	<p>All three laugh and talk together.</p>

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Student Scenario: Describe an event or a problem you had with an outcome you did not like. Make sure to include what happened before, during, and after the event.

Fill in the A, B and C from this event. Now consider how an alternate B (thought or belief) may change C (the outcome).

A	B	C	Alternate B	Alternate C