

# Facilitator Guide: ABC For Urges

## Introduction: Why the ABC for Urges Tool Matters

### You Say:

"Urges happen, but they don't just come from nowhere. Often, they're linked to how we interpret situations—what we tell ourselves in the moment. The ABC tool helps us break this down so we can respond differently.

This version of ABC is focused specifically on urges, helping us understand what triggers them, what we believe in that moment, and how we can change those beliefs to reduce the urge or respond differently."

### Key points to highlight:

- The ABC tool is based on **cognitive-behavioral principles**.
- It helps participants **explore how thoughts influence urges and reactions**.
- The goal is to shift from **unhelpful to more helpful beliefs**.

## Step 1: Introduce the ABC Model (Urge-Focused)

**You Say:** "Here's how the ABC model works when you're dealing with an urge:

- **A = Activating Event** – What happened just before the urge?
- **B = Beliefs** – What were you telling yourself?
- **C = Consequences** – What was the emotional response and how strong was the urge?

Then we add:

- **D = Dispute** – What's a more helpful way to think about it?
- **E = Effect** – How does that new belief change how you feel or respond?"

### Facilitator's Role:

- Use a whiteboard, screen, or worksheet to walk through each step.
- Offer an example or invite a volunteer to use a real urge.
- Keep it collaborative and non-judgmental.

## Step 2: Walk Through an ABC Together

**You Say:** "Let's use a real or shared example of an urge to see how this works."

Start with **C (Consequences)**:

- What was the urge?
- How strong was it?
- What did you feel or want to do?
- What was the outcome? (I fought it- I gave in to it)

Then ask about **A (Activating Event)**:

- What situation led to the urge?
- What was the most upsetting or triggering part?

Then explore **B (Beliefs)**:

- What were you telling yourself in that moment?
- What thoughts made the urge stronger?

Now move to **D (Dispute)**:

- Turn the unhelpful beliefs into questions.
- Which of those thoughts were unhelpful?
- How could you challenge them?
- What's a more helpful belief?

Finally, reflect on **E (Effective New Belief)**:

- With this new belief, how do you feel?
- What would you do differently in response to the urge?

**Facilitator's Role:**

- Write responses down as you go.
- Encourage honesty without pressure.
- Highlight the emotional and behavioral shift between C and E.

**Step 3: Encourage Practice and Reflection**

**You Say:** "You can use the ABC tool anytime an urge shows up. Over time, it helps you catch and challenge the beliefs that make urges feel overwhelming."

**Optional Reflection Questions:**

- What part of this process stood out to you?
- How might it help to pause and challenge your thinking next time?
- What's one situation where you might try using ABC this week?

**Facilitator Quick Tips:**

- Avoid rushing—give space for reflection.
- Emphasize that urges are temporary and manageable.
- Offer printed or digital ABC worksheets focused on urges.

**Summary**

The **ABC Tool (Urge Focused)** helps participants explore how their thoughts contribute to urges. By identifying and challenging unhelpful beliefs, they can learn to manage urges more effectively and make choices that support their long-term recovery goals.