

## Cognitive strategies to fight stress

Whether we experience stress or not does not depend on the situation but rather on our understanding of the situation. If we modify the way we perceive the situations and circumstances we will change the stress we experience

### ABC Model

Psychologist Albert Ellis is the creator of ABC model that helps to better understand our reactions to adverse events:

- A** is **adversity** – the situation that causes our reaction
- B** is **belief** – our understanding of the situation
- C** is **consequence** – our feelings or reactions caused by our beliefs

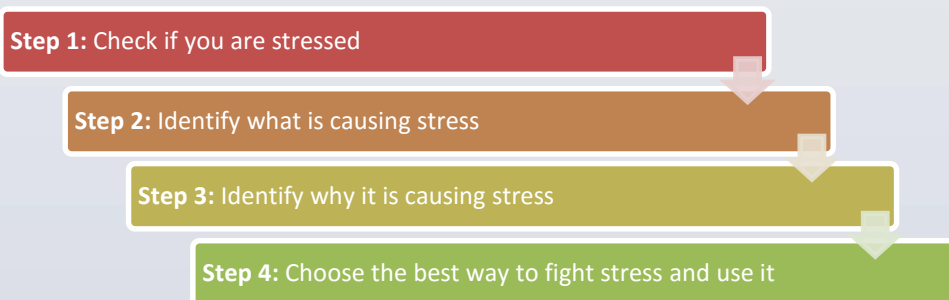


If we are able to control our beliefs we can influence our reaction to adversity. We need to change the way we think about the situation.

For example if you think about forthcoming exam:

- Think about new things you will be able to achieve if you prepare well
- Remember that your thinking is the key. If you think positively and believe you can manage, that the exam is just another routine task that is not too hard then you will see that you are less stressed and better control your emotions.

### Stress – what to do?



**To change an adverse situation into something positive ask yourself:**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do I gain in the current situation?</li> <li>• What options do I have?</li> <li>• What is the best thing to do now?</li> <li>• Did the situation result in something good?</li> <li>• How can I exploit the situation now and in the future?</li> <li>• What can I give to others after the experience?</li> <li>• Does the problem bring any good result?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did I learn?</li> <li>• How can I prepare for a similar situation in the future?</li> <li>• What can I do to fix the situation?</li> <li>• What should I stop doing to fix the situation?</li> <li>• How can I do what is necessary and give myself maximum pleasure?</li> </ul> |
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## When under stress, you may think irrationally

Constant worrying about the problem may make you expect the worst scenario. You may start to be more pessimistic and perceive difficulties as being larger than life.

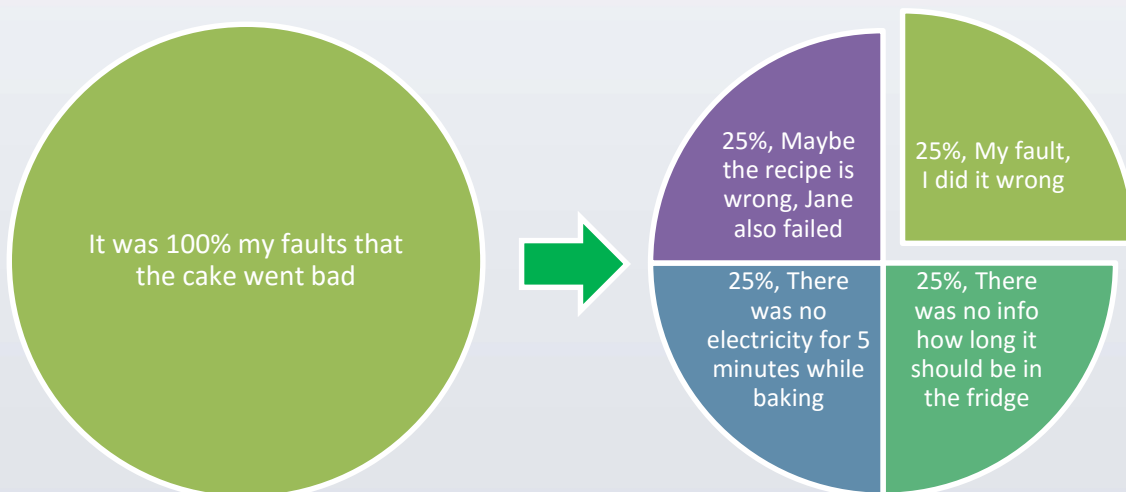
Stress can influence your way of thinking. Lack of rational attitude may hamper the positive approach.

If you think it affects you try to answer those questions with regard to your problem:

- What is the worst scenario?
- How would your friends react to the situation? What would they do?
- Is your thinking based on facts?
- Is there another view on the situation?

## Cake of shame

If you failed at something and believe that was all your fault and such thinking hampers your self esteem and makes you ill at ease do a little exercise to verify that it was all your fault.



## Conversation with yourself

Recall the situation that caused your problem. Write it down, name the emotions and thoughts that accompanied it (e.g. I failed the exam because I am stupid).

Rate (0-100%) how much you believe that idea. Answer the questions

- What are the proofs? What arguments confirm and what arguments deny this idea?
- Is there an alternative explanation? Can there be another cause of what has happened?
- What is the worst that can happen? What is the best scenario? Is it realistic?
- What is the effect of your belief in the truth of your idea? What would be the result of changing your thinking?
- What needs to be done with the problem? What will you do? What will you change?
- What would you advise to your friend?

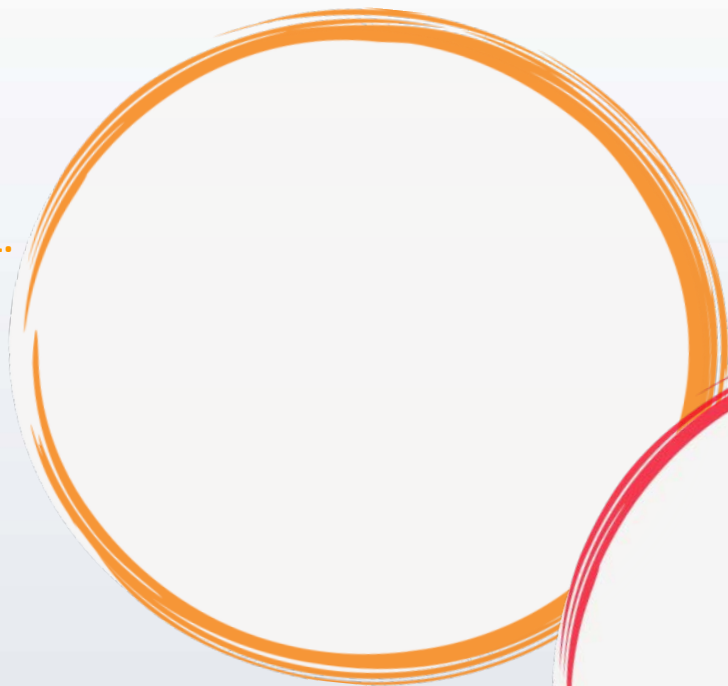
Rate again your belief in the idea.

After the exercise answer to yourself how does your thinking about the situation now relate to your thoughts at the beginning.

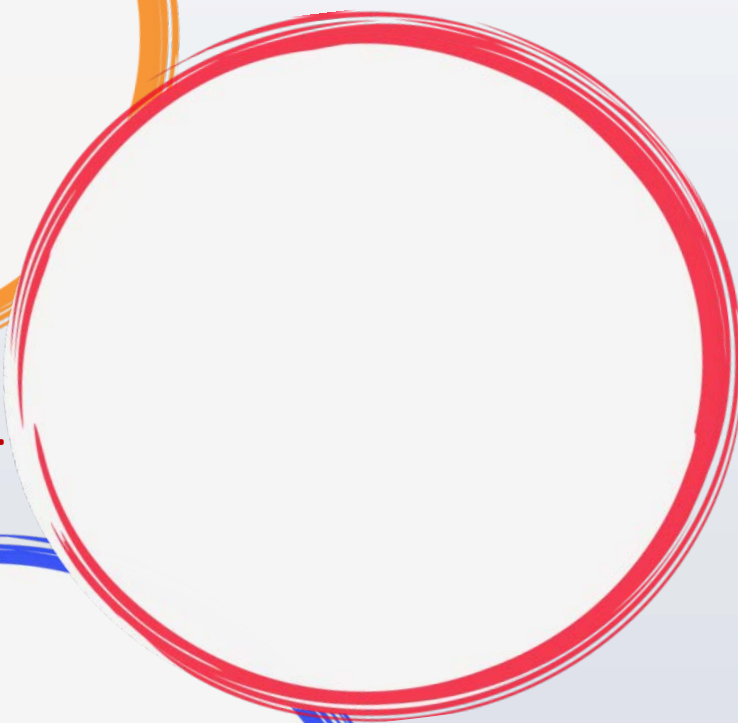
## Three good things

Being optimistic in a hard situation may be hard, but separating facts from fiction may help you control your worries. Try to name 3 good things that went well. Considering the causes of success may lift up your spirit and bring optimism.

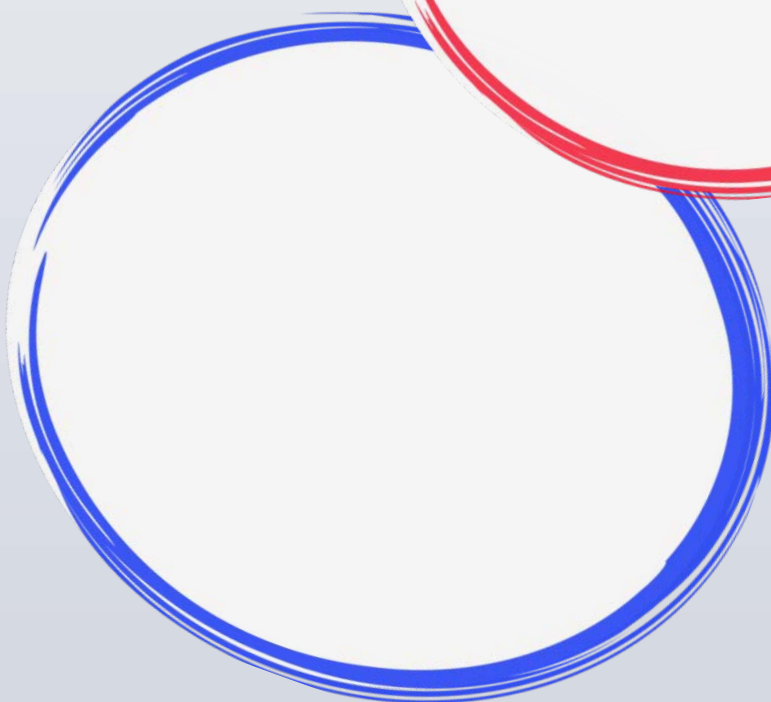
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Sources:

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