

HHM - 19 How to Recognize and Correct Unhealthy Thinking Patterns Part 2



David Sandstrom 0:00

Jesus said, The truth will set us free. But knowledge alone is not enough. It must be experienced. The truth never said anyone free until it was applied. So don't just listen to the show and not do these action steps and go on with your life. What I'm about to share with you just might be the breakthrough you been looking for. And you very well could turn the corner on your health outcomes here.

David Sandstrom 0:33

Welcome to the Holistic Health Matters Podcast where it's all about maximizing your health potential in body, mind and spirit, so that you could pursue the abundant life more effectively. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, Naturopathic Doctor and Biblical Health Coach. And this is episode number 19.

David Sandstrom 0:53

This is part two of a two-part series on recognizing and correcting unhealthy thinking patterns. In the last episode, Episode 18, we described the problem, we talked about 10 unhealthy thinking patterns outlined by Dr. David Burns in his book *The Feel Good Handbook*. So if you haven't listened to episode number 18, I recommend you go back and listen to that one now. Because I think you'll get a lot more out of this episode. If you do. It's not enough just to point out the problem. In this episode, I want to give you the solution to the problem. And I want to give you some simple, doable action steps to correct unhealthy or potentially toxic thinking patterns.

David Sandstrom 1:36

Everyone's heard of working out. I believe, if we really want to improve our health potential, sometimes we need to do some working in what I'm talking about is our self talk. Over the course of a year, termites destroy far more homes than hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. But the big, visible,

natural disasters get all the press. All the while, termites keep relentlessly eating away at our homes and destroying them from the inside out in far greater numbers. In the same fashion, our thoughts have a relentless nature to them, and they can eat away at our health. A leaky faucet that drips, one drop per second, over the course of a year will pour 2000 gallons of water down the drain. That's enough to fill a small swimming pool. And this leaky faucet metaphor is not bad because negative, stressful thinking patterns can produce what we call a cortisol drip. Everyone knows cortisol is a stress hormone. Over time, the chronic release of stress hormones can cause us harm and sometimes it can be devastating. I'm not advocating that if we're dealing with a serious health challenge, all we need to do is think positive thoughts. That's ridiculous. I am saying that if we want to maximize our health potential, our self talk must be addressed in the context of a comprehensive health building strategy. Our thoughts and emotions play a critical role in our physical well being. If we ignore this part of our makeup, well, it would simply be foolish.

David Sandstrom 3:19

Today, I want to introduce to you the A-B-C-D-E method for dealing with toxic thinking patterns. This method is a way of approaching and tackling these unhealthy thinking patterns. It's a combination of counseling techniques based on biblical truths. It's a framework that gives us the tools we need to overcome unhealthy thinking patterns. The first time through, it'll feel a little awkward. So I've created a downloadable PDF that will kind of hold your hand and guide you step by step through the process. Go to my website, DavidSandstrom.com/podcast, and go to the show notes for episode number 19. Remember, thoughts disentangle themselves over the lips, and at the ends of pencil tips. So I highly encourage you to go to my website, download that PDF and print it out and fill in the blanks and go through this process. It can be very, very helpful.

David Sandstrom 4:23

Jesus said, The truth will set us free. But knowledge alone is not enough. It must be experienced the truth never said anyone free until it was applied. So don't just listen to the show and not do these action steps and go on with your life. What I'm about to share with you just might be the breakthrough you've been looking for. And you very well could turn the corner and your health outcomes here. For our purposes, we're concerned with our body's physiological response to stressful thoughts how our

bodies respond to stress, stressful, unhealthy thinking patterns. Because thoughts have a relentless nature to them, they can trigger a chronic low level stress. stressful thoughts trigger our fight or flight reflex. And chronic stress will compromise important health building processes. Because our bodies are smart, they prioritize certain functions. For instance, if we're running away from a lion, we have very little need for non urgent processes like digesting food or eliminating toxins. Chronic stress will cause the relentless release of stress hormones, not only cortisol, but other catecholamines like adrenaline, and interleukin six, which is a pro inflammatory cytokine that our bodies produce in response to stress. Because of the way we're made, our bodies are far more efficient at building health when we're in a peaceful state. If we want to maximize our health potential, we want to be chronically pursuing peace, not stress.

David Sandstrom 6:06

So I want to give you the A-B-C-D-E method. Let's start out with the 35,000 foot view. A stands for activating event. B is for the beliefs or the thoughts that follow that activating event, the self talk. C stands for consequences or the outcomes to believing and thinking that way. D is for disputing those thoughts. And E stands for enjoying the energy shift. Now the A-B-C portion came about as a result of two notable thought leaders. The first was Dr. Albert Ellis. Ellis was an outspoken atheist. So you might be saying right about now, wait a minute, Dave. I thought this was a faith based show. Why? Why are you telling me to listen to an atheist? Well, all truth is God's truth. And just because someone doesn't share my faith in God, doesn't mean I can't learn something from them. Ellis developed rational emotive therapy. In his method, he had a fundamental principle. And that principle was this. He said, the external events, or our circumstances are not paramount. What matters most is the meaning we assign to those outside circumstances. In other words, it's not so much what happens to us. But how we react to what happens to us that matters most. The Bible has plenty of advice as to how we should react to life circumstances. For instance, First Corinthians 10, five, take every thought captive. And we're going to go over some more specifics on what the Bible has to say about all this in a minute. But anyway, the second thought leader, was a psychiatrist by the name of Aaron Beck. Beck expanded upon Ellis's work. And Beck developed what he called Cognitive Therapy. He talked about automatic thoughts. And Beck said, our response to external events, those internal responses or thought patterns that Ellis was talking about, follow a predictable pattern. Those thought patterns are

based on beliefs that we hold. And those beliefs are primarily formed in childhood. According to Beck, adults can challenge those beliefs and correct the thought patterns that follow. This is a very biblical view. First Corinthians 13:11 says, This is the Apostle Paul speaking, "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, I think like a child and reason like a child. When I became a man, I did away with childish things". So later to finally finish off this A-B-C method, a guy by the name of Nicholas Hall, who was the manager of the Stanford University, Graduate School of Business Behavioral Lab, added d and E to the A-B-C formula. And again, D stands for disputing unhealthy thinking, and E is for enjoying the energy shift.

David Sandstrom 9:18

All right, so let's break these down into a little more detail. A activating event. An activating event is any event that pushes our buttons. If we seem spring loaded to react negatively to a certain situation, that's probably an activating event for us. If something causes an argument with our spouse consistently, that's an activating event. The biblical basis for this John 16:33. "In this world, you will have trouble." The trouble comes when we get our buttons pushed and we trigger our stress response as a result. B stands for beliefs or the self Talk that follows the event in a biblical basis here is Proverbs 23. Seven, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Of course, we could also say for as a woman thinks in her heart, and so is she. Your self talk could look something like this, we could be rehashing a conversation we had with somebody from last week. And if we're having a conversation with someone that's not in the room, that's generally not a good thing. We may say to ourselves something like when she said that, I should have told her fill in the blank. The next time I see that guy, I'm going to tell him XYZ. None of this is good. That's all toxic thinking. C stands for consequences. So what are the consequences that will come about from believing and thinking that way? Some of the things to look out for are does it create relational discord, or strife? Does it cause us to lose sleep? Or do we miss out on some fun or potentially joyful event? And, of course, it goes without saying, the consequences we're really trying to avoid is triggering our stress response and the harmful release of stress hormones, the follows. The biblical basis here is Galatians, six, seven, for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. D. D stands for disputing the beliefs and the self talk. We compare our thoughts to what God says in the matter. A few years ago, that was a popular phrase, people people wear these wristbands that said, WWJD, or what would Jesus do? We should ask ourselves, how would Jesus react to this

situation if he were standing in my shoes? Second Corinthians 10. Five is the biblical basis here. It says, "We are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." Also Philippians four, eight, we're to dwell on the truth, whatever is true and dwell on these things. And finally, we're told to renew our minds Romans 12, to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And then the last portion is we enjoy the energy shift. When it comes to pursuing health, and peace is what we're after, not stress. Jesus said, these things I have spoken to you, so that in me You may have peace, John 16:33. And again, another passage from the book of John chapter 14, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you not as the world gives do I give to you, do not let your heart be troubled, nor Let it be fearful, John 14:27. Again, because of the way we're made, our bodies are far more efficient at critical health building processes when we're at peace, not stressed. One of the things I say quite a bit is, we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body. With this method, this A-B-C-D-E method of recognizing and challenging, unhealthy or toxic thinking patterns, we're aligning ourselves with God's designed for our minds.

David Sandstrom 13:25

So you've decided to make some improvements to your health and well being, you're listening to shows like this, where you can get information that can help take your health to the next level. The trouble is, getting educated and implementing effective strategies is time consuming, and can be expensive, not to mention, overwhelming. That's why I wrote my book, the Christians guide to holistic health. In my book, I have taken 20 years of research and experience as a natural and holistic health coach, and distilled it down to what you need to know to maximize your health potential in body, mind and spirit. And it's my contention, that we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body. My book, the Christians guide to holistic health will put you on the fast track to the vibrant health and vitality you've been looking for. By the way, many of my recommendations won't cost you a nickel. They're free. Because a lot of my message is simply aligning our lives more fully with the Word of God. That doesn't cost you a thing. If you'd like to avoid, overwhelm, and get some biblically based holistic health information that you can implement right away, go to my website, DavidSandstrom.com/book, and you can learn more and pick up a copy today. If that doesn't work, you can go directly to Amazon. It's available there in paperback, Kindle, and audible. Now let's get back to the show.

David Sandstrom 14:54

I don't normally do this, but for illustration purposes, I want to read an excerpt from my book *The Christians Guide to holistic help*. I was trying to re-word this for the podcast, but I feel like I just can't say it any better than this. So here we go, quote. Let's look at a hypothetical example of how this formula can be applied to our thinking in our lives. Sara and Jim have three kids and live in a big house in a nice neighborhood with good schools for their kids. Jim has a high pressure demanding job that pays well. Generally, each of them considers their relationship to be a good one. A activating event, we will have trouble. Sarah has been looking forward to their anniversary celebration on Friday night. They make dinner reservations at the best Steakhouse in town for seven o'clock. Sara arranges for the babysitter to arrive at six so that they won't be hurried or stressed. She takes some extra time getting ready and is wearing her new dress that is sure to knock Jim socks off when he gets home. It's now 6:30 and no sign of Jim. Sarah is beginning to get concerned. Seven o'clock comes and goes. And now the dinner reservations are lost at 7:15. And Jim calls and says that everything fell apart with the big project and his bosses requiring everyone on the team to work late. Be beliefs, self talk, or automatic thoughts. Take every thought captive. Sarah feels as though she's been abandoned. She thinks to herself. He's such a workaholic. If he really loved me, he'd say no to his boss's demands. This always happens when we make plans. Things are never going to change. Our marriage is as good as over. See the consequences of those thoughts, reaping and sowing. Sara calls her girlfriend that has recently divorced and unloads on her about what a lousy husband she has. her girlfriend adds fuel to the fire by suggesting that all men are the same. During this conversation, the kids heard a lot of men bashing and are starting to feel insecure in their six year old asked Sarah if she and dad are getting a divorce like her friend's parents did. D disputing the unhealthy thinking patterns dwell on whatever is true. Sarah pulls out her journal, it writes down her automatic thoughts. After reading them out loud, she realizes that she was engaging in a host of distorted thinking patterns. He's abandoned me is a form of emotional reasoning. The fact that Sarah feels abandoned doesn't mean she's been forsaken. The truth is, Jim feels horrible about what happened and can't wait to get home and give her a hug. He's such a workaholic is a form of labeling. And the truth is, she appreciates the fact that Jim is hardworking and a good provider. Furthermore, despite his highly demanding job, he's usually home by 5:30 and engages with the family quite well. If he really

loved me, he'd say no to his boss's demands, is a form of should or must thinking. This can also be a form of all or nothing thinking. Sara realizes that she's created an unrealistic standard with which to measure her husband's commitment. And deep down she knows Jim loves her. And this one incident doesn't negate all the love he's shown her over the years. This always happens when we make plans is a form of overgeneralization. Sara recognizes it by the fact that she used the word always. The truth is he doesn't always have to work late when they make plans. In fact, it rarely happens. Things are never going to change is a form of jumping to conclusions. Specifically, fortune telling. No one knows what's going to happen in the future. Sarah realizes that it's not at all fair to make this kind of prediction. She decides to stop playing God and talk to her husband about her hurt feelings instead. Our marriage is as good as over is another form of fortune telling. It's also emotional reasoning, an overgeneralization and a mental filter. Sara realized that this one statement is so loaded with distortions that she quickly rejects the idea and starts to feel better almost immediately. E, energy shift, be transformed. Let peace guard your heart and mind. Now, Sarah asked herself, how has my energy shifted as a result of the journaling exercise. Shortly after she started writing, Sarah felt tension releasing from her shoulders and a sense of peace. She now feels much more positive about her husband's commitment to their relationship. She even felt sympathy for him because of his many conflicting demands, she also made a resolution to refrain from calling her girlfriend until she's done the journaling exercise. This way, she can avoid doing further damage by rehashing all the distorted thinking patterns. When Jim got home, the two of them sat down and talked. Because Sarah had already diffused the distorted thinking patterns through the journaling process, she was in a much better position to share her hurt feelings in a non-combative way. Jim appreciated her calm demeanor, and as a result was eager to hear her out and empathize with what she was feeling. Sarah felt heard and validated. Together, they made plans to celebrate their anniversary the next week, Sarah's energy shift extended to the kids. She reassured the kids that mom and dad really do love each other. And even though they may say harsh things once in a while, they always work things through. Sarah saw an enormous sense of relief on their faces. By handling things in this fashion, Sara dramatically shifted her energy in a positive direction, and avoided unnecessarily triggering or stress response. Not only that, they both experienced a tremendous health benefit that flows from relational harmony. This is how we apply the mind to our health. To download a template of the A-B-C-D-E journaling method, go to my

website, DavidSandstrom.com. This process can be used with any activating event, especially the emotionally charged ones. However, it's most useful with relational conflict and quote.

David Sandstrom 21:41

So that was a little hypothetical story I made up for the book. But it's a good illustration of how you can use the A-B-C-D-E method to really alter the outcome of this activating event. It really works folks, I highly encourage you to go grab the free PDF download on my website, DavidSandstrom.com. Go to the show notes for episode number 19. In the show notes, I always post a full transcript of the podcast. You can read it there online, or you can download it, put it on your device and take it with you and read it later. If you're enjoying the show, tell your friends about it. I would appreciate you spreading the word. There aren't a lot of shows like this where you can get solid biblical advice on maximizing your health potential in body, mind and spirit without any new-age thinking creeping in. So share the show with someone you know. Tell them to subscribe, subscribing is always free. I believe they'll thank you for. As always, thank you for listening. I enjoyed serving you. That's it for now. I'll talk with you next week. Be blessed