



ABC-Check™ Guidelines

Intention **“May I clarify a perception with you?”*

ABC ***A-** Be as specific as possible and leave a doubt in the accuracy of your memory. *“I heard you say...”*

optional **B/C-** Share any part from B and/or C that could help the other person empathize. Be explicit that this is your interpretation, not *reality*. *“When I realized my name wasn’t on the meeting invite, the story that I told myself was...”*

Question **“Would you help me expand or challenge my thinking?”*

May I clarify a perception with you?

I heard you say “I have a PhD, you don’t”

The story I told myself was that my MBA is not as valued

and I was tempted to defend my experience.

Would you help me expand or challenge my thinking?

INTENTION

Activating Event

Belief

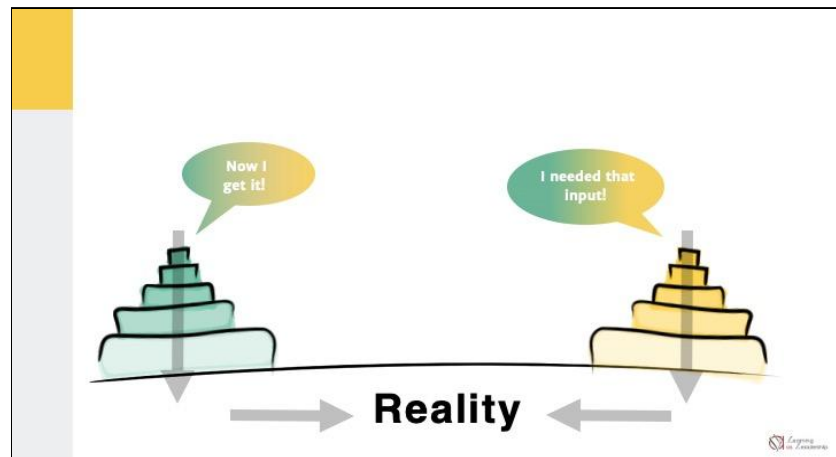
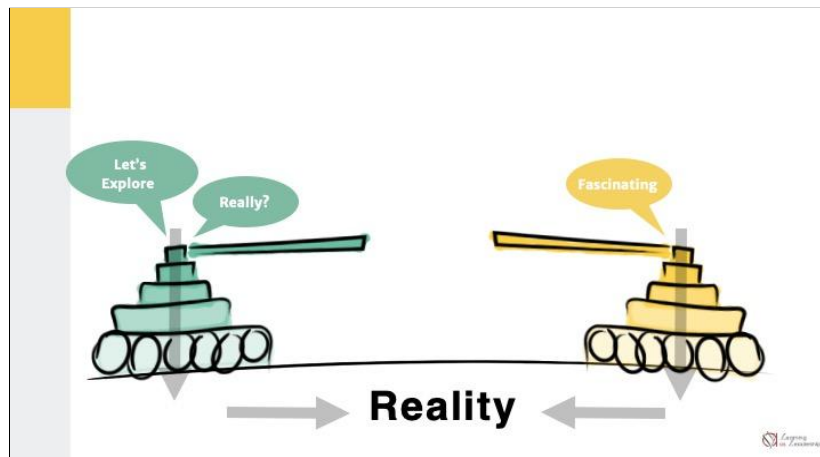
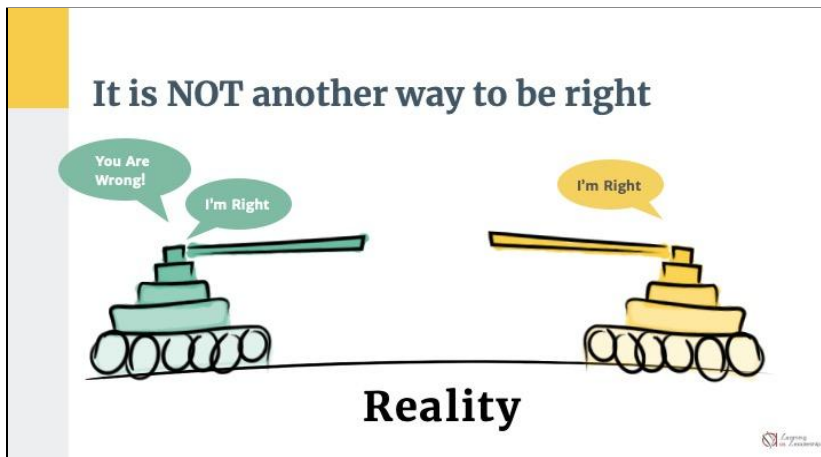
Consequent emotion and/or action

QUESTION

ABC-Perception Check™ Guidelines



The ABC-Check is a very simple, useful, and surprisingly powerful tool. Below we'll give you a number of guidelines to make it work for you. However, the most important thing is your intention. If you are using the tool to confirm your perception or seek reassurance for your Ego, it is more likely to create distance and awkwardness. You want to use this tool with curiosity to expand or challenge your understanding of the situation.





How to do an ABC Check

Intention

- **Start with your intention.**

Something along the lines of: *“May I clarify a perception with you?”*

This sentence has the advantage of simultaneously asking for permission.

- Other examples are: *“I see that I’m drawing conclusions that might be slanted or inaccurate, I would love to do a perception check...”*

“I would love to understand your perspective about this...”

“I want to check my own perception/assumptions...”

“I want to make sure I’m understanding accurately...”

“I’d like to clarify something I’m confused about...”

It can be helpful to also include a permission request at the end of the above statements: *“...May I do that?”* *“...Are you up for that?”*

- Confusing or less productive examples to avoid: *“Let me check that I got this right?”*
“You said something earlier that doesn’t sit right with me”

Expand to a TIP

- If your ABC-Check is on a delicate topic, with a challenging relationship, or just feels uncomfortable to share, expand your *Intention* to a **TIP** (=Topic Images Purpose) to heighten the likelihood of a productive exchange.

- Example:

- **(T)** *“I would like to circle back to something you said*

- **(I)** *“I’m afraid of appearing harsh, or overly-sensitive*

- **(P)** *“But I really want to create a safe and trusting relationship with you.*

- **(A of ABC-Check)** *“I heard you say... [etc]”*



ABC

- **Share the A (Activating event).** Be as specific as possible, the same way a camera would record this. This might point to something that was said or done, or to the absence of that (e.g., “I’m not seeing my input in the slide deck”)
- Include some doubt as you are referring to your own perception. Our memories are selective and unreliable, especially when Pinched.
 - “What I heard you say was...” is better than “When you said...”
 - Other useful examples: “My perception was that you said/did...” “My memory could be faulty but what I remember you saying/doing...”
- **Share from the B (Belief and thoughts) and C (Consequent Emotions and Actions) any elements that will help the other person** understand why you are asking for clarification and/or empathize.
- Make it extremely clear that you are aware that this is YOUR interpretation and not necessarily the reality. Something along the lines of: “When you said xxx, the story I told myself was yyy” or “When you said xxx, my interpretation was that yyy”

Question

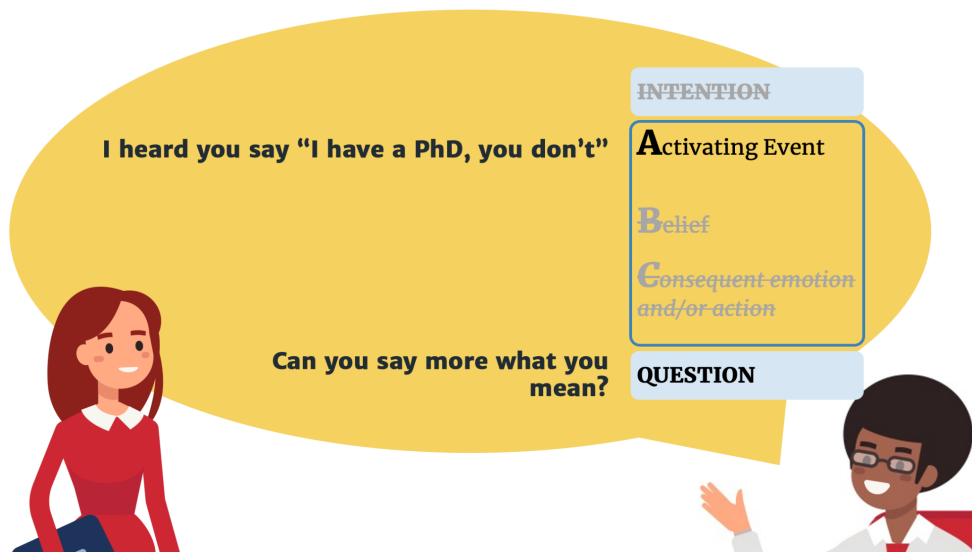
- **End with the Question.**
Something along the lines of “Can you help me expand or challenge my thinking?”
- Other examples are: “What can you share that might help me clarify my perception?” “What was your perspective/perception of what happened?” “Can you say more about what you meant? ... what was going on for you?” “Can you help me understand more fully?”
- Confusing or less productive examples to avoid are questions that
 - have your conclusions subtly embedded in them (i.e., “why did you discard my input?”)
 - jump to solutions because of your conclusions (i.e., “would you rather I don’t inform you next time?”)



A-Check

In some cases, you can just mention the Activating Event (A) and ask the person to expand on it (Question). Do this *A-Check* when:

- a super quick check-in seems sufficient and a longer question would seem awkward
- my B seems like mind chatter that wouldn't be helpful to share



When to do an ABC-Check

You can't use the ABC-Check unless you notice your Cue...

Pay attention and notice when you are feeling:

- A **small Pinch**. (You don't think you have time to sort it in writing in the moment, you are aware it will derail you if you just sit on it, and want to act constructively)
- **Surprised** by what the person is saying, notice a discrepancy, or want to make sure you're drawing the appropriate conclusion (not necessarily pinched)

Pay attention and notice when you have an impulse or even an urge to:

- **Explain**, justify or debate
- **Disconnect or walk away** from an interaction

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These two opposite reactions are the result of pinching yourself. If you use an ABC-Check before sorting your Pinch, pay even more attention to own your story and to be connected to the goal of expanding/challenging your thinking.

In various settings...

- In a conversation, instead of checking out, getting defensive, or simply running with unchecked assumptions
- When you experience any of the above cues with an email, decision, meeting invite, slide deck content, etc. In these cases, you usually have more time and might benefit from sorting your pinch first...

When I pinch myself...

- If you are in a reactive state, it's better to sort your pinch first and use the ABC-Check as the *next step* (box -4), which you will do from a more centered place. In fact, you may want to include in the *Intention* you will lead with (especially if it's a TIP) the ATS Purpose you capture in box -3 of your Pinch Sort.
- We often have very little sense of what is going on for others in our *Reframe* (box -2). The ABC-Check is great for drawing out what you are missing in a situation.

To check on how someone is doing...

- Aim to be very specific in your description of A. These might just be body language.

Example: *"I noticed that..."*

- **(A)** *...your **voice** is a little louder/you're talking faster*
...you haven't spoken up much in this meeting
... your brow is furrowed/you're sitting back with arms crossed
- **(Q)** *How are you doing? Is anything going on for you that would be helpful to express/talk through?"*
- If you are drawn to point to someone's feeling (e.g., you are frustrated, angry, shut down), realize this is a B. Use this diagnosis of the person's inner world to work backward to what a camera could record (their body language or voice intonation)

Example: Instead of saying, *"you are frustrated right now"* share your A first...

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- **(A)** *“It seems your **voice** got a little louder and that you started talking faster,*
- **(B)** *I interpret that (the change in your speech) as frustration.*
- **(Q)** *How are you doing? Is anything going on for you?”*