

# RATIONAL-EMOTIVE-BEHAVIOR THERAPY

*We do not see things as they are; we see things as we are.*

The Talmud

## REBT: THE BASICS

- According to REBT, our attitudes, our belief, our thoughts -- the way we think about events and the meanings we give to them -- directly affect how we feel and behave. This is commonsense to most people, making REBT more user-friendly than other therapies.

## REBT: THE BASICS

- REBT teaches that even though people are determined to some extent by their genetic givens, their upbringing, their family background, etc., they *can* change.
- REBT focuses on *techniques* rather than insight. It teaches people *how* to change.
- REBT encourages them to accept their limitations *while* working on self-change.

## REBT: THE BASICS

On a deeper level, REBT teaches a profoundly radical (for some) philosophy:

- ▶ Unconditional Self Acceptance (USA)  
(Rate your behavior, not your self.)
- ▶ Unconditional Other Acceptance (UOA)  
(Rate what others do, but not them.)

Note: This is not a new idea; it is over 2000 years old. Christ also preached it (“Judge the sin, not the sinner.”)

## RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY: THE BASICS

- R = Rational People think of “rational” in many ways, for example, reasonable, helpful, functional...

## RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY: THE BASICS

R = Rational... Most people realize that when they think more rationally and reasonably, their life goes better. So this piece makes sense to them.

E = Emotive Most people understand that their emotions are affected by what happens to them and how they think about those events.

B = Behavior Most people accept that what they *do* (*their behavior*) affects how they think and feel.

T = Therapy...but it can also mean Teaching or Training, especially in the context of SMART Recovery®

## REBT: THE BASICS

- Rational - does *not* mean cold and calculating
- Rational thinking
  - reflects preferences rather than demands
  - is flexible
  - is realistic
  - is functional, helpful, useful -- in terms of someone's long-term goals and values

## REBT: THE BASICS

Irrational thinking includes:

- ▶ demandingness
- ▶ inflexibility / rigidity
- ▶ awfulizing / catastrophizing
- ▶ I-can't-stand-it-it is (low frustration tolerance, LFT)
- ▶ all-or-nothing thinking
- ▶ personalizing
- ▶ emotional reasoning

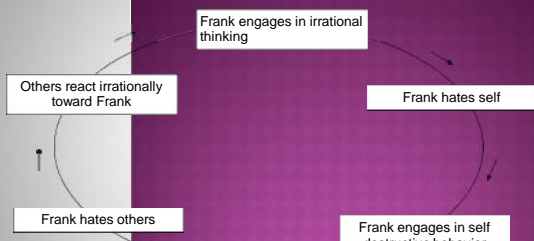
## REBT: THE BASICS

Irrational thinking does not work for us. It does not help us obtain our medium and long-term goals

## REBT AND THE NATURE OF PEOPLE

1. **"What disturbs men's minds is not events, but their judgment of events." (Epictetus)**
2. People are neither good nor bad if they respond to others with a rational belief system.
3. If they react with irrational beliefs, they view themselves and others as evil, awful, and horrible whenever they fall short of their expectations.
4. They think crookedly about their desires and escalate them in a self-defeating manner into musts, shoulds, oughts and demands.
5. In assimilating these irrational beliefs, people become emotionally disturbed and feel negative feelings.

## THE CIRCLE OF IRRATIONALITY



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## THREE AREAS OF IRRATIONAL BELIEFS

- I must be perfect.
  - It is awful when I am not perfect therefore I am worthless
- Others must be perfect.
  - If people don't treat me fairly and honestly they should be utterly damned
- The world must be a perfect place to live
  - Pleasure is better than pain therefore life is horrible when I am in pain

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## DEMANDINGNESS

- Self-demandingness
  - we must always perform well and have everyone's approval;
  - if not, we are incompetent and unworthy.
  - results: self-hatred, anxiety, depression, procrastination, withdrawal, and obsessiveness.
- Other-demandingness
  - refers to the idea that people we encounter must always be considerate and fair;
  - if they are not, they are unworthy, bad, and deserve to be punished.
  - effects: anger, hurt, jealousy, vindictiveness, and violence.
- World-demandingness
  - implies that our life conditions should be enjoyable, hassle-free, safe;
  - if not, the world is horrible and unbearable.
  - results: anger, depression, self-pity, low tolerance, withdrawal, phobias, and addictions

## ORIGIN AND MAINTENANCE OF PROBLEMS

- No elaborate theory about acquisition
- Humans have a strong biological tendency to think and act irrationally and environmental factors contribute to emotional disturbances.
- Humans are open to influences of societal teachings by not being critical to socialization messages they receive, although they vary in suggestibility.
- Ellis believes that humans are not disturbed by their experiences, rather bring their ability to disturb themselves.
- Therefore humans have a large role in creating their disturbances.
- They deepen and intensify their already constructed disturbance

## DISTURBANCES ABOUT DISTURBANCES.

- According to Ellis, it is bad enough that individuals have irrational beliefs, but they turn these beliefs into new activating events which cause new irrational beliefs.
- Ellis refers to this as disturbances about disturbances.
- Thus, if an individual does not get a job promotion that he wants, he may say to himself, "I feel terrible and hopeless," and feels depressed.
- This consequence can then turn into a new activating event, and the individual can say, "This is really awful that I'm so depressed and hopeless."
- Now a new consequence is even greater than the original consequence.
- For Ellis, words such as "have to" and "must" are consequences that lead to more irrational

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## CONTD.....

- **Musterbation:** Albert Ellis's phrase to characterize the behavior of clients who are inflexible and absolutistic in their thinking, maintaining that they must not fail or that they must have their way.
- **Low frustration tolerance:** Inability or difficulty in dealing with events or situations that do not go as planned, for example, getting very angry because someone does not do as you ask.

## IMAGE OF THE PERSON

- Human fallibility: Humans are by nature fallible and not perfect
- Human complexity and fluidity: Always in flux
- Show evidence of irrationalities, counter to the teachings of parents. Procrastinate, adopt other irrationality after giving up former, go back irrespective of earlier efforts
- Despite this tendency, they have great potential to work to change their biologically based irrationalities.

## SELF-DAMNATION VS. SELF-ACCEPTANCE

- Self-Damnation:
  - It occurs when I fail to do what I must or do I must not.
  - Results in global negative ratings and devilifying. I am undeserving of pleasure, should rot in hell as a devil.
- Self-Acceptance:
  - The REBT alternative is unconditional self acceptance as a fallible human being
  - Its too complex to give a single rating, either too bad or too good.

### DISCOMFORT DISTURBANCE VS. DISCOMFORT TOLERANCE

- Two types of disturbances:
  - Ego disturbance:** Demands from self or others. e.g. You will approve me or I'll be less worthy.
  - Discomfort disturbance:** Life conditions: must feel comfortable- It's awful if not; I can't stand if not. e.g. "You must approve of me and give me what I must have."
- DT is the primary criteria of psychological health in REBT
- DT can facilitate long term goals while tolerating the deprivation of attractive short term goals which are self defeating.

### A-B-C THEORY OF PERSONALITY

- The A-B-C model refers to what happens when an activating event (A) leads to emotional and behavioral consequences (C).
- The emotional and behavioral consequences are not caused by (A) the activating event but by the individual's belief system (B).
- Irrational beliefs occur when the activating event (A) is an unpleasant one.
- Irrational beliefs (B) can then partly cause difficult emotional and behavioral consequences (C).

### THE RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR A-B-C THEORY OF PERSONALITY

- A - ACTIVATING EVENT
- B - BELIEF SYSTEM
- C - CONSEQUENCES



### A-B-C PREMISE

- Ellis believes that it is not the activating event (A) that causes positive or negative emotional and behavioral consequences (C), but rather it is that they interpret these events unrealistically and therefore have irrational belief system (B) that helps cause the consequences (C). The "real" cause of upsets is themselves and not what *happens* to them.

### THEORY OF COUNSELING

Humans have irrational beliefs

- It is absolutely necessary to be loved by everyone for everything we do
- One should be completely competent, adequate, and achieving in all possible respects

### THEORY OF COUNSELING

There are five categories of irrational beliefs

- Self-defeating (I am a failure)
- Dogmatic (unrealistic preferences/wishes)
- Antisocial (destroys social group)
- Unrealistic (misunderstanding reality)
- Contradictory (originating in false premises)

## THEORY OF COUNSELING

- People choose their beliefs and can choose to change
- Goal of REBT is to teach people to think and behave in a more personally satisfying way
- Teach people to take responsibility for their own logical thinking and the consequences and behaviors that follow it

## REBT COUNSELORS

- direct the process of therapy
- are skilled teachers, communicators, and problem solvers
- have a sense of humor they use appropriately in counseling
- are not afraid of taking risks such as challenging their clients
- focus on the present as they explore and question their clients' irrational thoughts
- accept themselves as flawed and work on their own irrational beliefs

## ABC'S OF REBT

A	Activating Event
B	Belief System
C	Consequences
D	Disputing Irrational Belief
E	Changing Irrational to Rational Beliefs

## GENERAL EXAMPLE

Event	Something unpleasant happened
Belief	It was awful and should never have happened
Consequence	You become upset
Dispute	Why is it awful? Why shouldn't it happen?
Change	It's a disappointment, not a disaster I can handle it

## IRRATIONAL FACTORS

Over Generalization	I failed one test therefore I will fail everything
Distortions	Black and white: I failed one test therefore I am a failure
Deletions	Forgetting that you passed other tests
Catastrophizing	Exaggerating mistakes and minimizing successes
Absolutes	Should, must, always, never: I should never fail a test
Condemning (others)	He should be punished
Fortune Telling	I know I will fail that test

## ANOTHER EXAMPLE

A	I got rejected
B	I can't stand it. He has no right. It shouldn't be. I'm going to get even. I'm a reject. I'm worthless
C	I got depressed, felt I was no good, cried, threatened to kill myself, fought with my parents
D	Why can't you stand it? Why doesn't he have the right? Why are you worthless and a reject?
E	It is unpleasant but you can stand it. Actually he does have the right.

## REB EDUCATION

### Teach Children

- The joy of playing games just because they are fun
- Significant achievements rarely come easily and nothing is wrong with working long and hard to achieve one's goals
- They are not bad people when they do not meet their goals
- Perfection is not required to be a worthwhile person
- Popularity and achievement are not necessarily related and being worthwhile does not require 100% popularity
- Not to take themselves and situations too seriously by turning minor setbacks into catastrophe

## DISCOVERIES IN THERAPY

1. Client treated once a week progressed as well as those he treated daily.
2. He found he got faster results when he took a more active role.
3. He discovered that interjecting advice and direct interpretation yielded faster results than passive psychoanalytical procedures
4. Developed a rationalist philosophy
  - Change behavior through confrontation
  - Change irrational beliefs to more rational ones

## THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF IRRATIONAL THINKING



## HOW TO BREAK THE VICIOUS CYCLE

