

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: The Basics

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REBT: The Basics

- ▶ REBT is a self-help / self-management type of therapy.
- ▶ REBT is popular because it makes sense to most people, and they can and do *use* it.
- ▶ REBT helps them better manage their thoughts feelings and behaviors, so it is ideal for SMART Recovery®, as well as for people with multiple, interacting psychological and addictive problems.

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 is useful to SMART Recovery® because the Institute (see www.rebt.org) offers many self-help pamphlets, books, tapes, videos, pocket-sized cards, etc.
- ▶ REBT is also the only cognitive-behavioral therapy that encourages people to examine their philosophy of life - their goals, values, etc. -- and how their philosophy affects their self-help efforts (see SMART Recovery's® Point 4)

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 of REBT 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.

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

Rational Emotive Behavior

Therapy: The Basics

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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's ABC(DE) Technique

- ▶ A = Activating Event
- ▶ B = Beliefs (both rational and irrational (IB's))
- ▶ C = Consequences
- ▶ D = Disputing
- ▶ E = More Effective ways to think, feel and behave.

ABC: Part I

Many people are A - C people.

- ▶ They believe: “You made me angry.”
- ▶ They believe the A - your remark or action - caused the C, their anger.
- ▶ Your behavior caused their anger.

ABC: Part I

REBT argues, no, their Beliefs...between the A and the B -- largely determine how they feel.

- ▶ A (Activating) - He yelled at me.
- ▶ B (Beliefs) - I can't believe he dared to yell at me That's totally unprofessional. He should never have acted that way. I can't stand it. I want a drink (and I have to have what I want when I want it). I can get a way with it. It won't matter.
- ▶ C (Consequences) - Anger, drinking, etc.

ABC: Part I

- ▶ The ABC is the diagnostic step in the ABC technique.
- ▶ Doing an ABC helps people feel empowered and more hopeful that they can understand and, ultimately, control their own thoughts, feelings and behavior more effectively.

ABC: Part II

In order to feel and act differently, someone doing an ABC moves on to the D and the E.

D (Disputes) - in this step, you dispute or question or challenge your irrational beliefs:

Where is the evidence that no one should ever yell at me?

Where is it written that a boss must always behave professionally?

Why is it so awful? Why isn't just a "hassle not a horror?"

Where is the evidence that "It won't matter."

ABC: Part II

E - then they move on to figure out more **EFFECTIVE** thoughts, feelings and behaviors

- ▶ I don't like it, but I can stand it.
- ▶ Because I really do not like people yelling at me, I will talk to him later when he calms down. But I will remember that I don't always get what I want.
- ▶ I will try to feel annoyed and determined (to keep my job) rather than enraged.
- ▶ I will go exercise or go to yoga class tonight because I always think better after I do that.

THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF IRRATIONAL THINKING

I deserve better –
poor me!

I'm such a failure

I'm worthless!

**Self-pity or
Self-doubting**

– Life shouldn't be so
hard

– You should be different

– I should be different

Demanding-ness

■ **Low
frustration
tolerance**

■ **Awfulizing**

I can't stand it

It's terrible, awful, unfair

Negative exaggeration

Negative evaluation

We “crank it up” on our
scale

HOW TO BREAK THE VICIOUS CYCLE



REBT: The Basics

REBT teaches people tools with which to better manage our lives:

1. Cognitively - ABC's, reframing, CBA's
2. Emotively - REI, shame attacks
3. Behaviorally - role playing, homework
4. Chemically - medicines, nutrition, etc.
5. Spiritually - meanings, goals, values, hedonic calculus

Doing an ABC for Urge Coping: Part I

C -- the potential lapse or relapse.

Doing an ABC for Urge Coping: Part I

B -- Work backwards in time. Identify/uncover the B's.

C -- the potential lapse or relapse.

Typical B's to Watch For

Rational and irrational beliefs, and cognitive distortions [shoulds, musts, awfulizing, wonderfulizing, LFT (low frustration tolerance)]

1. I can't stand what I feel.
2. I deserve it.
3. It's not fair (poor me). Life should be fair / should be better.
4. I'll just have two.
5. A drink would help...and I must have what I want now.
6. I can't stand not going to a prostitute/ gambling/drugging.
7. I can get away with it.
8. It won't matter.
9. I'm going to do it anyway, eventually.
10. Screw it.

Doing an ABC for Urge Coping: Part I

A's -- Identify/uncover the Activating Events

**B's -- Work backwards in time.
Identify/uncover the Beliefs.**

1. It's not fair (i.e. It should be / must be fair).
2. I want a drink (and I should / must have what I want).
3. ?

C -- the potential lapse or relapse.

Potential A's

- ▶ **Event(s) /Trigger(s) - real and imagined; internal and external**
 - ▶ the opportunity to use/drink/etc.
 - ▶ urges; conditioned responses
 - ▶ unpleasant emotions
 - ▶ unpleasant physical sensations
 - ▶ pleasant emotions
 - ▶ pressure from others
 - ▶ conflict with others
 - ▶ socializing
 - ▶ testing personal control

Doing an ABC for Urge Coping: Part I

A's -- my girlfriend is on a business trip

B's --

1. I can get away with it.
2. It won't matter.
3. I'll just have two.
4. ?

C's - feelings of excitement, entitlement, etc;
lapse/relapse

Doing an ABC for Urge Coping: Part II

Ask members how they might Dispute the IB's
Disputes are always questions.

They help you dispute and/or examine the
rationality, validity, helpfulness, etc. of your
IB's.

*What do you mean by 'I can get away
with it'?*

*Where is the evidence you can just have
two?*

What are your long-term "wants?"

Doing an ABC for Urge Coping: Part II

Ask Individual Members to Suggest More Effective...

- ▶ thoughts, for example, counter-statements to the IB's:

I may be able to get away with it tonight, but I won't always, and the tradeoff is not worth it.

- ▶ behaviors (things they could DO):

exercise, fill out a worksheet, review your pros and cons, go to a meeting,...

- ▶ feelings - self-determination instead of self-entitlement and self-pity; acceptance instead of excitement

...which will increase the likelihood I will remain abstinent.

Dealing with Lapses and Relapses

KEY POINTS:

- ▶ Emphasize acceptance of self *with* "slips"
- ▶ Review --
 - ▶ the A's and B's before the slip
 - ▶ the B's and C's afterwards
- ▶ Rehearse -- Better Ways to Maintain Abstinence

General Irrational Beliefs which May Affect How Well You Function as a Facilitator

- ▶ I must do very well almost all the time.
- ▶ I must have everyone's approval.
- ▶ People should be different.
- ▶ I should be different.
- ▶ The world should be different.

Specific Irrational Beliefs which May Affect How Well You Function as a Facilitator

1. I must run a good meeting.
2. I must help people who are in serious trouble.
3. Everyone has to like my meeting.
4. I am losing control of this meeting, as I mustn't. It would be terrible if I lost control of this meeting.
5. It would be terrible if other people thought they could run a better meeting.
6. No one must ever appear as if he/she is bored.
7. It would be awful to fail at running good meetings.