
How to Quickly Identify Your ABCs

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Thanks

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Sources and Recommended Reading

1. *SMART Recovery Family and Friends Handbook*. Allen, Roxanne, editor. SMART Recovery Publishing, 2012.
 2. *A Primer on Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy*, 3rd Edition. Dryden, Windy, et al. Research Press, 2010.
 3. *REBT Questions*. London, Terry. Goose Publishing, 1995.
 4. *The Three Faces of Love*. Hauck, Paul A. 1984
 5. *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything – Yes Anything*, Revised Edition. Ellis, Albert. Robinson Books, 2006.
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Quotes:

“Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of things.”

– Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, Chapter 5.

“There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.”

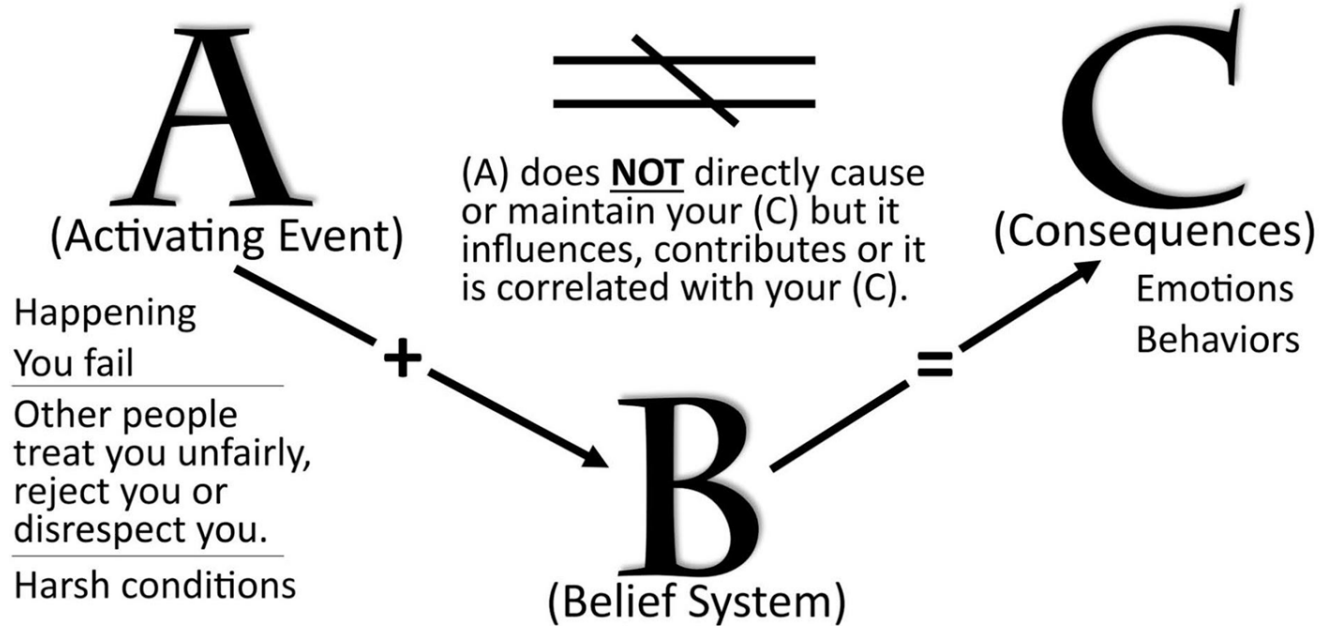
– William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2.

REBT in a nutshell:

Rigid and extreme attitudes are at the core of emotional problems.

Flexible and non-extreme attitudes are at the core of the solutions to these problems.

The ABC's of Emotional and Behavioral Management



These are your SELF TALKS which can be rational or irrational about the (A) which mainly and much more directly causes and maintains your (C).

A: What is an ACTIVATING EVENT ?

Falls under one of three categories:

- 1) I failed, I could fail, or I could face discomfort.
- 2) You mistreat, reject, or disrespect me, or you will.
- 3) Harsh or unfavorable life conditions.

A can be actual, inferential, or a combination of both!

A can also be referred to as Adversity.

B: What is a BELIEF?

In this context, it specifically refers to our interpretations and appraisals of our Activating Event.

B reflects our Basic Attitudes, terminology proposed by Windy Dryden in 2016. Dryden considers referring to **B** as Belief as confusing and misleading.

Our Beliefs are Rational or Irrational

Rational:

I prefer or want. It's unpleasant, uncomfortable, inconvenient, or disappointing. I performed poorly. You treated me badly. This particular condition is lousy.

Irrational:

I need or must have. This is awful, terrible, catastrophic, and devastating! I am all bad! You are scum! All of life is shit!

4 Types of Irrational Beliefs

Labeling

I am a failure. You are scum.
Life is shit.

Awfulizing

It's truly terrible! I won't survive, or even if I do I can't cope and life will never be worth living.

Demanding

I must! How dare you?! Life ought to be or should!

Low Frustration Tolerance (LFT):

Low Frustration Tolerance (LFT):
aka whining: It's too hard. It's not fair. I deserve better. I can't bear it.

C: What is a Consequence?

- 1) Emotional only
- 2) Emotional and Behavioral

Emotions can be HEALTHY or UNHEALTHY, depending on what we tell ourselves at *B*.

Negative Emotional Consequences: Healthy and Unhealthy

HEALTHY

Annoyance

Frustration

Concern

Regret

Remorse

Sadness

UNHEALTHY

Anger

Resentment

Anxiety

Shame

Guilt

Depression

The Connection Between B and C

Rational B: I did a lousy job and prepared inadequately, as I wish I hadn't. I am disappointed in my performance, and wish I had done much better.

Healthy C: Regret or Remorse

Irrational B: I am a bad presenter and therefore a bad professional because I did such a terrible job. This is all just awful. I cannot bear the thought of my failure!

Unhealthy C: Guilt or Shame

Differentiating What Healthy and Unhealthy Emotions Feel Like

Unhealthy:

Mind racing.

Guts churning.

Jaw clenching.

Shoulders shrugging tightly.

Heart pounding.

Heart sinking.

Body warming, especially my face.

Healthy:

Focused.

Rational.

Decisive.

Body is relatively at ease, possibly a mild tingle of concern or annoyance felt, or a moderate “heaviness” of sadness.

REBT basics to remember

- There are only 3 categories of **A**.
 - It is common to be UNAWARE of our **B**'s, especially in the moment of adversity.
 - Look for all 4 categories of **Irrational Beliefs**, though sometimes 2 or 3 are enough to work with.
 - Memorize the Vocab Exchange and the list of Healthy and Unhealthy Negative Emotions
-

Vocabulary Exchange!

Instead of NEED, try saying WANT

Instead of MUST, try saying PREFER

Instead of ALWAYS, try saying OFTEN

Instead of NEVER, try saying SELDOM

Instead of AWFUL, try saying UNPLEASANT

Instead of TERRIBLE, try saying UNCOMFORTABLE

Our words reflect our thoughts, so let's be flexible and non-extreme in our speech and self talk!

Emotions: Unhealthy versus Healthy

UNHEALTHY

HEALTHY

Anxiety

Concern

Depression

Sadness

Anger

Annoyance

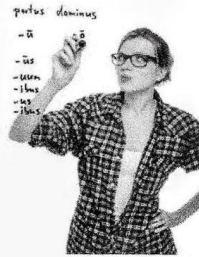
Resentment

Frustration

Guilt

Regret

Exchange Vocabulary



Upset feelings are usually caused by the way we are thinking about what is happening, not the events themselves. To change your feelings (and your behavior), try the following "Exchange Vocabulary."

This idea was given to me by a client, who related it to an exchange list for unhealthy foods. When you first try this new way of thinking, it might not feel right. The more you do it, however, the more natural these realistic beliefs will become.

I think you will like the results, but prove it for yourself by giving it a fair try.

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Word Exchange Table

<i>Instead of thinking:</i>	<i>Try thinking:</i>
Must	Prefer
Should	Choose To
Have To	Want
Can't	Choose Not To
Ought	Had Better
All	Many
Always	Often
Can't Stand	Don't Like
Awful	Highly Undesirable
Bad Person	Bad Behavior
I am a Failure	I Failed at

Statement Exchange Table

<i>Instead of saying:</i>	<i>Try saying:</i>
I have to do well.	I want to do well.
You shouldn't do that.	I prefer you not do that.
You never help me.	You rarely help me.
I can't stand my job.	I don't like my job.
You are a bad boy.	That behavior is undesirable.
I'm a loser.	I failed at this one task.
I need love.	I want love, but I don't need it.

Emotional Vocabulary Exchange: REBT does not endeavor to eliminate emotions. Quite to the contrary! Emotions are very useful and part of the human advantage --- When Appropriate!

<i>Instead of saying:</i>	<i>Exchange With:</i>
Anxious	Concerned
Depressed	Sad
Angry	Annoyed
Guilt	Remorse
Shame	Regret
Hurt	Disappointed
Jealous	Concern for my relationship

The hula hoop

Inside my hula hoop:

My body, my mind, my actions, my words, my thoughts, my emotions, my opinions, my values, my dreams, and my wishes.

Outside:

Literally everything else in life. Most of life's factors are beyond anyone's influence, some is!

Self Help Forms

Dryden REBT Form

Ellis DIBS Form

ANB REBT Self Help Form

APPENDIX 3

BLANK DRYDEN REBT FORM (DRF)

Situation =	
Adversity ('A') =	
<p>Basic Attitudes ('B') (Rigid and Extreme)</p> <p><i>Rigid</i> =</p> <p><i>Extreme</i> =</p>	<p>Basic Attitudes ('B') (Flexible and Non-extreme)</p> <p><i>Flexible</i> =</p> <p><i>Non-extreme</i> =</p>
<p>Consequences ('C') (Unhealthy and Unconstructive)</p> <p><i>Emotional</i> =</p> <p><i>Behavioural</i> =</p> <p><i>Thinking</i> =</p>	<p>Goals ('G') (Healthy and Constructive)</p> <p><i>Emotional</i> =</p> <p><i>Behavioural</i> =</p> <p><i>Thinking</i> =</p>

- 1) Write down a brief, objective description of the situation you were in.
- 2) Identify your 'C' – your major disturbed emotion, your unconstructive behaviour and, if relevant, your distorted and/or ruminative subsequent thinking.
- 3) Identify your 'A' – this is what you were most disturbed about in the situation. (Steps 2 and 3 are interchangeable.)
- 4) Set emotional, behavioural and thinking goals at 'G'.
- 5) Identify your rigid/extreme basic attitude, i.e. rigid attitude + awfulising attitude, unbearable attitude or devaluation attitude.
- 6) Identify the alternative flexible/non-extreme basic attitudes that will enable you to achieve your goals, i.e. flexible attitude + non-awfulising attitude, bearability attitude or unconditional acceptance attitude.

OVERLEAF

- 7) Examine (at 'D') both your rigid/extreme attitudes and flexible/non-extreme attitudes and choose one set to operate on. Give reasons for your choice. Which set would you teach a group of children, for example, and why? Remember that you are choosing attitudes that will help you to achieve your emotional, behavioural and thinking goals. The effects of dialectical examination (or 'E') should be your goals at 'G'.
- 8) List the actions you are going to take to achieve your goals.
- 9) Examine 'A' and consider how realistic it was. Given all the facts, would there have been a more realistic way of looking at 'A'? If so, write it down.

'D' (Dialectical Examination) =

Taking Action =

Examine 'A' =

DRF COMPLETED BY CHARLES

Situation = <i>I arranged a meeting of my colleagues where I would talk to them about my plans for the future of the project we have been working on. The meeting will take place in the boardroom and I have invited 20 of my colleagues.</i>	
Adversity ('A') = I will say something foolish	
Basic Attitudes ('B') (Rigid and Extreme)	Basic Attitudes ('B') (Flexible and Non-extreme)
Rigid = <i>I would prefer not to say anything foolish at the meeting and therefore I must not do so</i>	Flexible = <i>I would prefer not to say anything foolish at the meeting, but that does not mean I must not do so</i>
Extreme (Self-Devaluation) = <i>Saying something foolish at the meeting would be bad and would prove that I am a defective person</i>	Non-extreme (Unconditional Self-Acceptance) = <i>Saying something foolish at the meeting would be bad but would not prove that I am a defective person. It would prove that I am a fallible human being capable of acting foolishly and non-foolishly</i>
Consequences ('C') (Unhealthy and Unconstructive)	Goals ('G') (Healthy and Constructive)
Emotional = Anxiety	Emotional = Concern
Behavioural = <i>Writing down what I want to say word for word and over-rehearsing so that I don't say anything foolish</i>	Behavioural = <i>Making notes for what I want to say at the meeting without writing it out word for word and rehearsing my talk without over-rehearsing it</i>
Thinking = <i>If I say anything foolish, everyone will lose respect for me</i>	Thinking = <i>If I say something foolish, recognising that I will get a mixed response. Realise that only a minority will lose respect for me if I do say something foolish</i>

'D' (Dialectical Examination) =

Of course I don't want to say anything foolish while talking to my colleagues, but I do need to recognise that it is possible that I may do so. My rigid attitude tries to eradicate that as an event and the only thing that that achieves is anxiety. My flexible attitude acknowledges my preference and recognises the grim reality that my preference does not have to be met. Accepting that helps me to be concerned about me saying something foolish, but not anxious about it.

Assuming that I am defective if I say something foolish at the meeting is ridiculous. Doing that would mean that I would equate my whole being with that one aspect. This is not only false; it is bad logic too. I am fallible, that's a fact, and if I show that to myself before I go to the meeting, while I am talking and afterwards too, then I would be seeing myself as I am and not as I am demanding I must be: a perfect being who never says anything foolish. I would never dream of teaching that to my son and I am going to stop teaching myself that...right now!

Taking Action =

Give talks to my work colleagues while reviewing my flexible/non-extreme attitude

Examine 'A' =

While there is no guarantee that I will say something stupid, there is still the possibility that I will even when I overprepare and write out a word-for-word script of what I want to say. Given that, it's best for me to assume that this is a possibility and to learn to deal with it.

A (ACTIVATING EVENT)

- Briefly summarize the situation you are disturbed about (what would a camera see?)
- An A can be *internal* or *external*, *real* or *imagined*.
- An A can be an event in the *past*, *present*, or *future*.

IB's (IRRATIONAL BELIEFS)

To identify IB's, look for:

- **DOGMATIC DEMANDS**
(musts, absolutes, shoulds)
- **AWFULIZING**
(It's awful, terrible, horrible)
- **LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE**
(I can't stand it)
- **SELF/OTHER RATING**
(I'm / he / she is bad, worthless)

D (DISPUTING IB'S)

To dispute ask yourself:

- Where is holding this belief getting me? Is it *helpful* or *self-defeating*?
- Where is the evidence to support the existence of my irrational belief? Is it *consistent with reality*?
- Is my belief *logical*? Does it follow from my preferences?
- Is it really *awful* (as bad as it could be)?
- Can I really not *stand* it?

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C (CONSEQUENCES)

Major unhealthy negative emotions:

Major self-defeating behaviors:

Unhealthy negative emotions include:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Rage
- Low Frustration Tolerance
- Shame/Embarrassment
- Hurt
- Jealousy
- Guilt

RB's (RATIONAL BELIEFS)

To think more rationally, strive for:

- **NON-DOGMATIC PREFERENCES**
(wishes, wants, desires)
- **EVALUATING BADNESS**
(It's bad, unfortunate)
- **HIGH FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE**
(I don't like it, but I can stand it)
- **NOT GLOBALLY RATING SELF OR OTHERS** (I—and others—are fallible human beings)

E (NEW EFFECT)

New healthy negative emotions:

New constructive behaviors:

Healthy negative emotions include:

- Disappointment
- Concern
- Annoyance
- Sadness
- Regret
- Frustration

A (ACTIVATING EVENT)

My boss criticized me severely
and treated me unfairly

- Briefly summarize the situation you are disturbed about (what would a camera see?)
- An A can be internal or external, real or imagined.
- An A can be an event in the past, present, or future.

IB's (IRRATIONAL BELIEFS)

He never should
treat me that way!
I can't stand his
unfair treatment!
He's a very nasty
and rotten person!

To identify IB's, look for:

- DOGMATIC DEMANDS (musts, absolutes, shoulds)
- AWFULIZING (It's awful, terrible, horrible)
- LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE (I can't stand it)
- SELF/OTHER RATING (I'm / he / she is bad, worthless)

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D (DISPUTING IB'S)

Where is the evidence
that my boss must
treat me fairly?
Does it follow that
because his treatment
of me is unfair
I can't stand it and
cannot be happy
at all?
Does his bad treatment
make him a totally
rotten person?
Will holding my
irrational beliefs
help or hinder me?

To dispute ask yourself:

- Where is holding this belief getting me? Is it helpful or self-defeating?
- Where is the evidence to support the existence of my irrational belief? Is it consistent with reality?
- Is my belief logical? Does it follow from my preferences?
- Is it really awful (as bad as it could be)?
- Can I really not stand it?

C (CONSEQUENCES)

Major unhealthy negative emotions:

Anger

Major self-defeating behaviors:

Stayed out of work for three
days and sulked

Unhealthy negative emotions include:

- Anxiously
- Depression
- Rage
- Low Frustration Tolerance
- Shame/Embarrassment
- Hurt
- Jealousy
- Guilt

RB's (RATIONAL BELIEFS)

There is no evidence
that my boss must
treat me fairly.
Even though his
treatment is unfair
I can stand it and
still experience happiness.
His bad treatment of
me makes him a person
who can treat people
badly—but because
he does many other
things he is never a
totally bad person.
Holding my irrational
beliefs will not change
him, make me angry or
unhappy or make him
treat me worse.

To think more rationally, strive for:

- NON-DOGMATIC PREFERENCES (wishes, wants, desires)
- EVALUATING BADNESS (It's bad, unfortunate)
- HIGH FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE (I don't like it, but I can stand it)
- NOT GLOBALLY RATING SELF OR OTHERS (I—and others—are fallible human beings)

E (NEW EFFECT)

New healthy
negative emotions:

Disappointment
and frustration.

New constructive
behaviors:

Confront my boss
unangrily and
assertively.

Healthy negative emotions include:

- Disappointment
- Concern
- Annoyance
- Sadness
- Regret
- Frustration

REBT SELF - HELP FORM The A-C-B-D-E's of REBT

A = Activating Event: Deal with the here and now; get to the point of your issue; no need to tell a full life history! My activating event is _____.
 Either **YOU FAILED**, were **REJECTED / TREATED UNFAIRLY**, or **WORLD CONDITIONS** got in the way of what you wanted but you really had no control of it but demanding that it shouldn't have!

C = Consequences (emotional): There is empowerment when you ask the question this way, "**How did YOU MAKE YOURSELF FEEL when "A" happened?**" versus re-enforcing victimology, "And how did *THAT* / *THEY* MAKE *YOU* feel?"....because **NO ONE** can make you feel inferior without *your* consent!

frustration, irritation, annoyance OR	ANGER, RAGE, HOSTILITY	concern OR	ANXIETY
sadness, sorrow, grief OR	DEPRESSION, DESPAIR, Self-Pity	regret, remorse OR	GUILT
feelings of inadequacy, worthlessness OR	JEALOUSY	disappointment over being rejected OR	SHAME / EMBARRASSMENT

C = Consequences can be **SELF-DEFEATING BEHAVIORS** such as abusive drug use, procrastination, overeating, aggressive & passive behaviors.

B = Beliefs. This can be rational or irrational. There is empowerment when you ask the question this way semantically, "**What were YOU TELLING YOURSELF when YOU MADE YOURSELF FEEL.....**"

"MUST"urbation / Disturbance occurs when you take a wish, want, desire to a **HAVE TO / MUST!**

Belief #1: Making DEMANDS You are saying <u>a version</u> of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How dare you! It has to be this way! She must because....! He "should" (must) 	D = DISPUTE Belief #1: FIRST, show <u>you are</u> empathetic! State what the person really wants in a <u>rational</u> way....then DISPUTE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> But why MUST s/he do what you prefer? Prove to me that s/he has to! 	E = Effective Coping Statements Create 2 – 3 BRIEF statements. Whenever you hear yourself saying _____, you will replace it with _____. Practice it until you BELIEVE it!
Belief #2: AWFUL - IZING You are saying <u>a version</u> of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's awful that... How terrible that... This is absolutely horrible! 	D= DISPUTE Belief #2: FIRST, show <u>you are</u> empathetic! State what the person really wants in a <u>rational</u> way....then DISPUTE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life REALLY ISN'T worth living anymore because of <u>this</u>? Is this really the WORST thing that can happen to you? 	E = Effective Coping Statements Create 2 – 3 BRIEF statements. Whenever you hear yourself saying _____, you will replace it with _____. Practice it until you BELIEVE it!
Belief #3: L.F.T. = Low Frustration Tolerance You are saying <u>a version</u> of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can't stand this anymore! This is too hard! Basically, you are whining... 	D = DISPUTE Belief #3: FIRST, show <u>you are</u> empathetic! State what the person really wants in a <u>rational</u> way....then DISPUTE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why CAN'T you BEAR what you find hard to deal with? 	E = Effective Coping Statements Create 2 – 3 BRIEF statements. Whenever you hear yourself saying _____, you will replace it with _____. Practice it until you BELIEVE it!
Belief #4: Labeling / Damning yourself & others You are saying <u>a version</u> of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am a bitch! They're stupid M-Fs! What a failure I am! This makes me a loser! 	D = DISPUTE Belief #4: FIRST, show <u>you are</u> empathetic! State what the person really wants in a <u>rational</u> way....then DISPUTE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does this mistake you/them a TOTAL idiot, failure, loser? Or are you just a fallible human being who made a BAD mistake? 	E = Effective Coping Statements Create 2 – 3 BRIEF statements. Whenever you hear yourself saying _____, you will replace it with _____. Practice it until you BELIEVE it!

Can You Identify A, B & C in These Examples?

Ex. 1

“I am livid that this jackass just cut me off and brake checked me! How dare he do that!”

Can You Identify A, B & C in These Examples?

Ex. 2

“If I do a bad job at this presentation, my peers will reject me and see me as the fraud that I am. That would just be so awful I couldn’t bear it.”

Can You Identify A, B & C in These Examples?

Ex. 3

“I slipped up last night and drank for the first time in three weeks. I’m so ashamed of myself!”

Can You Identify A, B & C in These Examples?

Ex. 4

“That guy over there mean mugging me is making me mad. I need to go set him straight or else I’ll look like a wimp.”

Can You Identify A, B & C in These Examples?

Ex. 5

“I hate that I can’t smoke weed when I see my favorite band next month.”

Can You Identify A, B & C in These Examples?

Ex. 6

BONUS: Wanna try some Disputations?

- REBT is not “Suck it up and deal with it, at least you didn’t die” therapy (most of the time).
 - Disputations are most effective when unmet preferences are acknowledged and disappointment/discomfort is validated.
 - Give grace to yourself and empathy to others when attempting to practice REBT disputations.
-

Types of Disputations: Empirical

- 1) DEMAND: Where is the evidence that something MUST be the way I want it? Does anyone HAVE TO do anything just because I want them to? (“There is none, and they certainly do not.”)
 - 2) LABEL: Is it realistic to assume I am inadequate because I am not accepted by someone? (“It is NOT realistic.”)
 - 3) LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE: Is this something I truly cannot bear and cannot stand? (“No, I could bear it even though I don’t like it one bit.”)
 - 4) AWFULIZING: How is this awful? In my life experience, is there any reason to think it will kill me, make life not worth living, or be something I can never cope with ever in the rest of my life? (“This is regrettable and unpleasant, but ultimately a temporary inconvenience and setback.”)
-

Types of Disputations: Logical

1. How does acting or performing badly make me ALL BAD forever? If I am bad, does that mean I have never and will never do anything good? (“No, it just means I did badly, not that I am bad!”)
 2. Does it make any logical sense that I MUST be treated fairly by everyone at all times? (“No, I don’t need it even though I want this!”)
 3. Where is the connection between my preference for something and the necessity of having it? (“Only in my head!”)
 4. Am I drawing logical conclusions from these facts? (“Not at all!”)
-

Types of Disputations: Functional

1. Does thinking/feeling this way change the situation (does it change "A")?
("NO!")
 2. Does thinking/feeling this way make it easier to deal with the situation?
("NO!!")
 3. Do I like thinking or making myself feel this way? ("Sometimes!!! But it is only a short term feeling of smug satisfaction, not a long term solution.")
 4. What will happen if I continue to hold onto these beliefs? ("I will continue to be angry, anxious, and depressed.")
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Contact and Questions

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