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

The Talmud

According to REBT, our attitudes, our beliefs, 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 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.

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.”)

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

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

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

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.

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
### Demandingness

- **Self-demandingness**
  - We must always perform well and have everyone’s approval.
  - If not, we are incompetent and unworthy.
  - This results in 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 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, and 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

### Image of the Person

- **Human falliability:** 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.
  - It’s too complex to give a single rating, either too bad or too good.
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.

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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.

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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

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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)
The 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Activating Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Belief System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Disputing Irrational Belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Changing Irrational to Rational Beliefs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Something unpleasant happened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>It was awful and should never have happened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequence</td>
<td>You become upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispute</td>
<td>Why is it awful? Why shouldn’t it happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>It’s a disappointment, not a disaster I can handle it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irrational Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over Generalization</th>
<th>Failed one test therefore I will fail everything</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distortions</td>
<td>Black and white: I failed one test therefore I am a failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deletions</td>
<td>Forgetting that you passed other tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catastrophizing</td>
<td>Exaggerating mistakes and minimizing successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutes</td>
<td>Should, must, always, never: should never fail a test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condemning</td>
<td>He should be punished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortune Telling</td>
<td>Know I will fail that test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Got rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Can’t stand it. He has no right. I shouldn’t be. I’m going to get even. I’m a reject. I’m worthless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>I got depressed. Felt I was no good, cried. Threatened to kill myself, fought with my parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Why can’t you stand it? Why doesn’t he have the right? Why are you worthless and a reject?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>It is unpleasant but you can stand it. Actually he does have the right.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**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**

- Self-pity or Self-doubting
- Low Frustration Tolerance
- Awfulizing

- I deserve better
- You should be different
- Life shouldn’t be so hard
- I’m such a failure
- I’m worthless!
- I can’t stand it
- It’s terrible, awful, unfair

- Self-pity or Self-doubting
- Low Frustration Tolerance
- Awfulizing

**HOW TO BREAK THE VICIOUS CYCLE**

- Self-Pity: Practice unconditional self-acceptance
- Self-doubt: Question your assumptions
- Life shouldn’t be so hard
- I’m such a failure
- I’m worthless!

- Demandiness
- “Preferential Thinking”
- “Combat your rating”
- “Crank it up” on our scale

- Negative exaggeration
- Negative evaluation
- We “crank it up” on our scale

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