

## **Rational-Emotive Therapy**

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Rational Emotive Therapy (RET), sometimes called as Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT), is a form of therapeutic psychology that has emerged from behaviorism. Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) is one of the cognitive-behavioural approaches to counselling and psychotherapy that was established in the mid-1950s by Albert Ellis.

Rational-Emotive-Behavior Therapy (REBT) is a therapy that consciously uses cognitive, emotive, and behavioral techniques to help clients. REBT theorists stress that human beings have choices. The control of ideas, attitudes, feelings, and actions is specific to the person who arranges a life according to personal dictates. Having little control over what happens or what actually exists, people do have choices and control over how they view the world and how they react to difficulties.

The goal of REBT is to replace irrational beliefs (which are rigid, inconsistent with reality and illogical) with a new set of rational beliefs (which are flexible and non- extreme). As Ellis has cited, irrational beliefs have the following characteristics:

- (1) Rigid and extreme
- (2) Inconsistent with reality
- (3) Illogical or nonsensical
- (4) Proneness to produce dysfunctional feelings
- (5) Proneness to lead to dysfunctional behavioral consequences
- (6) Demanding
- (7) Awful zing and terrorizing
- (8) Depreciating human worth

Rational beliefs which help the client live longer and happier are developed through REBT. Since REBT is a form of tolerance training, three of the most important approaches to achieve tolerance are: unconditional self-acceptance, unconditional other-acceptance, and unconditional life acceptance. In general, REBT is an approach which is problem-focused, goal-directed, structured and logical in its practice, educational focused, primarily present-centered and future oriented, skills emphasized and having largely active and directive therapist. This means that in this approach the therapist points out to the client that he/she has irrational beliefs and tries to help the client to discontinue the cycle of irrational beliefs. The goal is setting new beliefs which are rational. Being active and directive, the therapist challenges the client's irrational beliefs. This is done by using cognitive, affective and behavioural techniques.

## **Theory of Personality**

### **Biological Basis**

According to Ellis, REBT suggests a biological tendency for human behaviour. People have a biological tendency to think irrationally and dysfunctionally. Also, from Ellis point of view, people have the power to work toward changing their dysfunctional thinking and behaviour by the application of cognitive, emotive, and behavioural methods.

### **Social Basis**

From Ellis' point of view, social interest has a rational concept. "Most people choose to live and enjoy themselves in a social group or community. If they do not act normally, protect the rights of others and abet social survival, it is unlikely that they will create the kind of world in which they themselves can live comfortably and happily". Nevertheless, although it is preferable to be valued by others but we do not have to think that we must be valued by others and become a prisoner of their approval.

### **Psychological Basis**

Ellis believed that healthy people have an internal locus of control. What makes human beings disturbed is that they concentrate on external events as the source of their disturbances. In reality, people's negative interpretation of events leads to problems and make them unhappy. In

fact, human being's by their present thoughts, feelings, and actions maintain their self-disturbing". People's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours strongly include and interact with each other. This can be explained through the ABCDE theory.

### **ABCDE Theory**

For rational explanation of personality, Ellis introduces ABCDE theory. At point A are Activating Events. At point B are Beliefs. These beliefs lead to emotional, behavioural, and cognitive Consequences. Rational beliefs lead people to functional consequence, and irrational beliefs lead them to dysfunctional consequences. At point D are Disputing the client's irrational beliefs. This process leads to E which is efficient rational beliefs. In general, the main aim of REBT is to change dysfunctional feelings and maladaptive behaviours into functional feelings and adaptive behaviours. This is done by changing the core rigid thinking (i.e., demandingness) and its derivatives (e.g., catastrophizing/ awfulizing, frustration intolerance, and global evaluation) into flexible thinking and acceptance attitude.

### **View of Human Nature**

According to Ellis, the philosophers found that human beings who are natural constructivists largely disturb themselves about adversities because they choose to add to these adversities their own irrational beliefs. Ellis added to this that the nature of people is such that when they think they also feel and behave; when they feel they also think and behave; and when they behave they also think and feel. Their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours strongly include and interact with each other.

"The central theory of REBT says that people largely disturb themselves by thinking in terms of absolute imperatives- shoulds, oughts, and musts". Therefore, thinking in terms of absolute imperatives is the reason of disturbance and maladaptive behaviour in human beings.

### **Key Concepts**

1. Rational-emotive-behavioral therapy focuses on present events and the person's reaction to those events.

2. According to REBT, people have almost complete responsibility for their ideas and for their feelings.
3. The role of the counselor is to attack the false beliefs that cause negative reactions to events.
4. It is better for people to focus on negating specific behaviors than to develop a negative self-image.
5. The "A, B, C, D, and E" approach shows how problems develop and how to treat them.
6. Effective strategies with children include direct teaching of concepts, such as teaching the child to like oneself, to not take things too seriously, to realize that there is joy in participation, to realize that achievement requires effort, or to realize that one does not have to be perfect.

### **Counselling Process**

The aim of REBT is to help clients an intensive, profoundly philosophical and emotional change. Therefore, it helps clients to see and change their irrational beliefs and set new beliefs which are rational. REBT sees thinking, feeling and behaving as an integrated process. Therefore, a large number of cognitive, emotive and behavioural methods are used in this therapeutic approach. Ellis emphasized the importance of his therapeutic approach and that “REBT seems to be more comprehensive than most other behaviour therapies in that it strives for its clients getting better and not merely feeling better”.

### **REBT Techniques**

REBT counsellors would often use cognitive, emotive, and behavioural techniques with their clients. These various techniques would maximally help clients overcome their anxieties. According to Ellis, some cognitive, emotive, and behavioural techniques that REBT counsellors might use in counselling are as follows:

#### **Cognitive Techniques**

Cognitive techniques deal with client's cognitions. Counsellors by using these techniques help clients to change their beliefs. Some of them are as follows:

- (1) **Disputing irrational believing-emoting-behaving:** At first, counsellors might show clients their irrational beliefs by asking questions such as: Where is the evidence for your beliefs? Why is this so terrible? These kinds of questions raise the consciousness in clients and help them to begin thinking on a more rational level. Clients can be asked for example, where is the evidence that I should not have any problem in my life? Typical answer would be: There is no evidence that I should not have any problem in my life. Gradually, clients are able to see that things are not as bad as they make them out to be. Clients would be taught to do logical disputing of their irrational beliefs.
- (2) **Rational coping self-statement:** Clients repeat rational coping self-statements such as "I am never a failure or a loser but just a imperfect human who fails some of the time".
- (3) **Positive Visualization:** By this technique, counsellors help clients in reaching their achievement-confidence or self-efficacy.
- (4) **Modeling:** By this technique, counsellors help clients to see that other people have similar problems. Moreover, Clients can model themselves after those people.
- (5) **Psycho - Educational Methods:** Clients can be encouraged to read REBT self-help materials.
- (6) **Cognitive distraction:** By using cognitive distraction such as reading, watching TV, meditation and yoga, clients temporarily block out some of their anxiety.
- (7) **Practical Problem- Solving Techniques:** Counsellors can help their clients to use more practical methods of tackling their problems such as assertiveness training, social skills training and decision making.

### **Emotional Techniques**

Emotive techniques help clients to imagine themselves in different situations. According to Ellis, some of these techniques are as follows:

- (1) **Unconditional self-acceptance:** Counsellor make client familiar with the ways in which he/she could accept himself/herself unconditionally as a person.
- (2) **Unconditional Other-Acceptance:** At first, counsellors would give their clients other-acceptance, and that they are accepted. Then, they will help them to see how others can be accepted as worthwhile human beings.
- (3) **Shame attacking exercises:** In order to achieve unconditional self-acceptance, counsellors help clients to remove their guilt and self-damming.
- (4) **Rational Emotive Imagery:** By these technique clients could be shown how to imagine some terrible things happening. This technique helps clients to train themselves to feel healthy disappointment instead of unhealthy anxiety.
- (5) **Strong Rational Coping Statements:** These kinds of statements help clients undo their anxious reactions. For example: I am not a miracle-maker and can only do my best;
- (6) **Humor:** Since anxious clients take things too seriously, therapists might encourage clients use their sense of humor.

## Behavioural Techniques

By using behavioural techniques clients are encouraged to do some activities that help them to overcome their anxieties. According to Ellis, some of the behavioural techniques are as follows:

- (1) **Reinforcement:** Clients might be encouraged to reward themselves with some pleasurable activities only after they did some risks they commonly avoided.
- (2) **Penalization:** If clients refused to change their thinking, feeling, and behaving, then they might be encouraged to take some real penalties to discourage their resistance. For example, doing some very unpleasant tasks.
- (3) **Skill Training:** Counsellors might work with their clients' assertiveness. They also might encourage them to use assertiveness training workshops.

## Summary

Rational-Emotive-Behavior Therapy has emerged from what Albert Ellis considered a limited rational-persuasive therapy into a therapy that consciously uses cognitive, emotive, and behavioral techniques to help clients. Ellis considers himself a philosophical or educational therapist who uses a didactic, cognition-oriented, explicative approach to change.

Founded on the idea that what distresses people is not the event but their judgment of the event, REBT theorists stress that human beings have choices about their thoughts. The control of ideas, attitudes, feelings, and actions is specific to the person who arranges a life according to personal dictates. Having little control over what happens or what actually exists, people do have both choices and controls over how they view the world and react to difficulties.

Ellis viewed humans as naturally irrational, self-defeating individuals who need to be taught to change crooked thinking from self-defeating musts, shoulds, oughts, and demands. People can be helpful and loving as long as they do not think irrationally. The three areas in which people hold irrational beliefs are in thinking that they must be perfect, that others must be perfect, and that the world must be a perfect place in which to live. The goal of the therapy is to teach people to think and behave in a more personally satisfying way by making them realize

they have a choice between self-defeating, negative behavior and thought and a more efficient, enhancing, positive behavior. This is accomplished by teaching people to take responsibility for their own logical thinking and the consequences or behaviors that follow it.

Ellis theorized that a belief system - what people tell themselves about an event - determines responses or feelings toward that event. People naturally and easily think crookedly, express emotions inappropriately and behave in a self-defeating manner. REBT teaches how to do otherwise. Irrational beliefs cause trouble. Lists of common irrational beliefs that lead to negative emotions and stress in children, adolescents, and parents are included in the chapter. Irrational beliefs can form a chain of further irrational beliefs. The categories of those thoughts are self-defeating beliefs, highly rigid and dogmatic beliefs, antisocial beliefs, unrealistic beliefs and contradictory beliefs.

The goal of REBT is to teach people to think and behave in a more personally satisfying way by making them realize that they have a choice between self-defeating, negative behavior and efficient, enhancing, positive behavior. The first objective of therapy is to show a person how irrational beliefs or attitudes create dysfunctional consequences such as anger, depression, or anxiety. The second objective is to teach the client how to dispute or crumble the irrational beliefs and replace them with rational thoughts. This will allow the client to escape the cycle of negative feelings and be free to choose behaviors that eliminate the problem or the disappointing impact of the problem.

"A, B, C, D, and E" refer to these ideas. A is the activating event. B is the person's reaction to the event. C represents the consequences or feelings resulting from the person's evaluation of the activating event. D represents the disputing arguments that can be used to attack the irrational self-message included in the evaluation of the activating event. E is the answer given to the questions raised in D. REBT is direct, didactic, confrontational and verbally active counseling. Several factors help counselors detect irrational thinking. They can look for



overgeneralizations, distortions, deletions, absolutes, condemning and fortune-telling. Once the irrational beliefs are recognized, the counselor disputes and challenges them. Ultimately the goal is for young people to recognize their irrational beliefs, think them through and relinquish them.

REBT counselors use exploration, ventilation, interpretation, confrontation, indoctrination and re-education. Counselors are didactic and frequently assign homework. With children counselors may find working on internal verbalization and role reversal techniques helpful. Rational-emotive-behavioral education is an offspring of REBT that focuses on how feelings develop, how to discriminate between valid and invalid assumption, and how to think rationally.

### **Evaluation**

Rational Emotive Therapy, like most cognitive behavior therapies, has met with a great deal of criticism over the years. For example, many claim that the discipline as a whole is too rational, and that it "overlooks the emotions". For founder Albert Ellis, this is an absurd proposition. Ellis holds forth that emotion and thought are inter related to one another, and that one can't divorce one from the other. In other words, by increasing one's rationality, one controls one's emotional problems.

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