

Chapter 68

The Power and Compassion of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)

Debbie Joffe Ellis

Columbia University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter demonstrates the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) for enabling people to enhance their lives and create greater happiness. It is the pioneering approach developed by Albert Ellis PhD, the late husband of the author, that heralded in the cognitive revolution in psychotherapy, and which influenced approaches that followed it such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Positive Psychology and more. It is a holistic approach that reminds us of the inseparable interplay of thoughts, emotions and behaviors, and in addition to being an evidence based therapy, it can also be a way of life for those who choose to apply it as such. By practicing its principles which encourage us to create healthy emotions in response to adverse situations, we are also guided to experience and express unconditional acceptance of ourselves, others, and life, and to practice daily gratitude. In so doing we can feel compassion and empathy for those who suffer, including ourselves, experience greater joy and minimize emotional suffering in our lives.

INTRODUCTION

Countless people are hungry, starving at times, to feel greater joy and happiness in their lives. There has been turbulence and challenge in societies of almost every culture and era as far as can be told, and many would suggest that contemporary society contends with confusion, crisis, violence, brutality and other such joy-zapping conditions.

Sadly, too few individuals seem to be aware that each one of us has the power to create our own emotional destinies – despite and including any challenges in home life, societal unrest and global disharmony. Many might want to suffer less emotional angst and pain, and intellectually know that happi-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3432-8.ch068

The Power and Compassion of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)

ness and other positive emotions are good for the mind, body and soul – but they lack a knowledge of the “how-to’s” for getting there: Such tools are required for creating and maintaining healthy emotional states. Additionally, it is not sufficient to simply know the tools, but to apply them in order to create and maintain beneficial change. Furthermore, many people may not realize that what can significantly contribute to a feeling of greater happiness more of the time, is not only the satisfaction of fulfilling their individual wants and needs, but also the expression and experience of feeling empathy and kindness towards others, and performing related actions which demonstrate such care.

The tenets and practices of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) are dedicated to helping people learn ways to create greater happiness. REBT encourages people to adopt attitudes and actions of self-care and self-acceptance and vigorously urges people to adopt attitudes of kindness and empathy for the sake of helping others. Doing so can become an additional means to an end of achieving the goal of greater happiness. In other words, though helping and caring for others is ideally done for the sake and well-being of those in need-- a lovely by-product can be greater happiness within the individuals carrying out those deeds.

I feel with deep conviction, based on my personal experience, my experience as a professor and as a therapist working with a variety of clients over the years of my professional life so far, and based on solid scientific evidence and research (Ellis & Whiteley, 1979) – that the approach of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) may be one of the most effective, evidence based approaches to enable the maximization of joy and happiness in life, and to minimize emotional misery. It provides a healthy and stabilizing philosophy of life along with tools for achieving a life of more happiness and minimal misery.

REBT is arguably the most holistic of psychotherapeutic approaches, reminding us of the inseparable interplay between our thinking, our emotions and our behavior. At the heart of its philosophical core is an emphasis on the importance of unconditional acceptance, gratitude, kindness, empathy, and the encouragement to perform and express caring actions and attitudes towards ourselves, towards others and towards the world in general.

Some main premises of REBT include, (i) that essentially most humans, in the absence of emotional disturbance and mental illness, act in life-enhancing ways; (ii) that the goal of most humans is to feel greater happiness throughout their lives; (iii) that acting with kindness and experiencing empathy contributes to greater happiness; (iv) that experiencing daily gratitude distracts one from focusing too much on negative thoughts, creates tranquility, and may be followed by uplifting experiences of awe and wonder. A significant and growing body of scientific research supports the positive and healthy impact of experiencing gratitude, wonder and awe (Wood & Chopra, 2015; Mills, Redwine, & Chopra, 2015; Doraiswamy & Oz, 2015).

This chapter presents a brief account of certain experiences of REBT’s founder, Albert Ellis that contributed to the development of his REBT theory. It expounds upon the basic elements of the scientific evidence-based, rational, no-nonsense - yet also humanistic, compassionate, humorous (at appropriate times!) and philosophical -approach of REBT, the basics of REBT Psychotherapy, and describes the contribution and benefit of the REBT aspect of Unconditional Acceptance and gratitude for increasing human happiness, kindness and empathy.

Albert Ellis PhD, my late and brilliant husband, was the genius who created REBT, and, in-so-doing, heralded in the cognitive revolution in psychotherapy. In the years following his ground-breaking work other cognitive approaches were developed that were influenced by REBT (Ellis, 2001b). They include Cognitive Therapy (CT), Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Acceptance and Commitment Theory (ACT) and Positive Psychology. Dr. Aaron Beck (CT founder) and

10 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-power-and-compassion-of-rational-emotive-behavior-therapy-rebt/261406

Related Content

Individual, Institutional, and Environmental Factors Promoting Patient Retention and Dropout

Precious Amanand Emmanuel Adugu (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy* (pp. 1590-1606).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/individual-institutional-and-environmental-factors-promoting-patient-retention-and-dropout/261419

Towards Cost-Oriented User-Friendly Robotic Systems for Post-Stroke Rehabilitation

Iuliu Adrian Nadas, Doina Pislă, Calin Vaida, Bogdan George Ghermanand Giuseppe Carbone (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy* (pp. 418-461).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/towards-cost-oriented-user-friendly-robotic-systems-for-post-stroke-rehabilitation/261359

Recent Trends and Issues in Vocational Rehabilitation of People with ID

Bijoy Kumar Dehuriand Bhavna Mukund (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy* (pp. 1202-1228).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/recent-trends-and-issues-in-vocational-rehabilitation-of-people-with-id/261397

AR Using NUI Based Physical Therapy Rehabilitation Framework with Mobile Decision Support System: A Global Solution for Remote Assistance

Syed Ali Fathima S. J.and Shankar S. (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy* (pp. 127-144).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/ar-using-nui-based-physical-therapy-rehabilitation-framework-with-mobile-decision-support-system/261344

Yogic Care for Neurodevelopmental Rehabilitation: Bringing Life Into Treatment, Management, and Prevention

Arun Pratap Singh (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy* (pp. 368-382).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/yogic-care-for-neurodevelopmental-rehabilitation/261355