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The psychological analysis of cognitive, emotive and behavioral interventions of REBT

Rational emotive behavioral therapy (REBT) says that emotions do not arise as a result of repressed desires and needs, as Freud insisted, but directly from our thoughts, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. It is not the mysterious unconscious that matters most to our psychological health, but the humdrum statements we say to ourselves on a daily basis. Added up, these represent our philosophy of life, one that can quite easily be altered if we are willing to change what we habitually say to ourselves.

Reasoning your way out of emotional tangles seems doubtful, but Ellis's pioneering ideas, and four decades of cognitive psychology, have shown that the theory does indeed work.

Human beings, Ellis and Harper note, are language-creating animals. We tend to formulate our emotions and our ideas in terms of words and sentences. These effectively become our thoughts and emotions. Therefore, if we are basically the things we tell ourselves, any type of personal change requires us to look first at our internal conversations. Do they serve us or undermine us?

Talk therapy aims to reveal the "errors in logic" (irrational beliefs) that people believe to be true. If, for instance, we are having terrible feelings of anxiety or fear, we are asked to track back to the original thought in the sequence of thoughts that led to our current anxiety. We invariably find that we are saying things to ourselves such as "Wouldn't it be terrible if..." or "Isn't it horrible that I am..." It is at this point that we have to intervene and ask ourselves *why* exactly it would be so terrible if such and such happened, or whether our current situation is *really* as bad as we say. And even if it is, will it last forever?

Clients who engage in REBT are encouraged to actively dispute their irrational beliefs and to assimilate more efficient, adaptive and rational beliefs, with a positive impact on their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses (Ellis, 1962; 1994; Walen et al., (1992). Thus, REBT is a psychological theory and a treatment

consisting of a combination of three different types of techniques (cognitive, behavioral, and emotive) you can use to help yourself feel better physically and emotionally, and to engage in healthier behaviors.

(1). Cognitive techniques are specific strategies to change or modify unhelpful or unhealthy thoughts concerning a particular event.

(2). Behavior techniques involve learning practical techniques that help you to cope in demanding or stressful situations, such as depression and/or loss. Examples of behavioral strategies include learning how to plan and manage your daily schedule, and learning how to distract yourself from negative thoughts.

(3). Emotive techniques are designed to help you change your negative thoughts by emotional means. Humorous methods, poems, songs etc. generate feelings that help challenge and change negative thoughts.

Let's consider the cognitive interventions more precisely. So, cognitive techniques are the power of our thoughts:

- Although we may not always be aware of our thoughts, they nevertheless can have a strong effect on how we feel and behave in response to a particular situation or event.

Re-learning our A-B-Cs:

- According to the cognitive theory, the effect that our thoughts can have on our physical, behavioral and emotional responses to a particular situation can be illustrated using the following formula:

A = Activating event or situation that we experience

B= Beliefs or thoughts regarding the situation

C = Consequence: How we feel or act based on these beliefs

The Keys to Change - B's (Negative or Unhelpful Beliefs)

Even though it may seem like an upsetting event (A) leads you to feel upset (C), this is not 100% true. In reality, it is not the event itself that upsets you, it is your negative or unhelpful beliefs (B's) about the event that upset you.

According to the REBT principles, negative or unhelpful beliefs fall into any of the following categories:

1. Demands express thoughts containing the words “must,” “should,” or “ought”. For example, you might think, “I must be able to do all of my errands today!”

or, you might think “Life should be fair.”

2. Awfulizing/Catastrophizing indicate thoughts involving words like “awful,” “horrible,” or “terrible.” For example, you might think, “I had to take two naps today, and that’s AWFUL! I’m usually active all day long.”

3. Frustration Intolerance specify thoughts including “I can’t stand this!” or the word “unbearable.” For example, you might think, “I can’t stand being depressed like this!”

4. Self-Downing express being too critical of yourself, or beating up on yourself. Also, check to see if you’re basing your self-worth on one or two minor things. For example, you might think, “I was too depressed to make dinner for my kids today. I’m an insensitive mother and a terrible person.”

5. Other-Downing indicate being too critical of or beating up on others, or basing your entire judgment of them on one or two minor things. For example, you might think, “My husband isn’t very good at talking with me about my depression. He’s totally insensitive and useless.”

6. Life-Downing express judging all of your life as bad, just because it’s not perfect. For example, you might think “Life is worthless because I feel so worn out.”

When the person identifies, his or her irrational thoughts, he or she is recommended to debate or challenge negative beliefs and transform them in effective and helpful beliefs may sound like one of the following:

1. Preferences – These are a healthier, more rational alternative to demands.

Preferences are when you more effective or more helpful beliefs and express wish for something, or want it very badly, but do not demand that it must be so.

2. Anti-Awfulizing – This is a healthier, more rational alternative to awfulizing. This is

when you can recognize that a situation is very bad, without thinking it is 100%

AWFUL.

3. High Frustration Tolerance – This is a healthier, more rational alternative to frustration intolerance. This is when you realize that even though you may find a situation very difficult, you can stand it.

4. Anti-Self-Downing – This is a healthier, more rational alternative to self-downing. This is when you are able to accept yourself and approve of yourself, even when you're not perfect.

5. Anti-Other-Downing – This is a healthier, more rational alternative to other-downing. This is when you're able to accept others, regardless of mistakes they might have made, or things they might have done to upset you.

6. Anti-Life-Downing – This is a healthier, more rational alternative to life-downing. This is when you're able to be accepting of how your life is, even when it is not exactly as you would like it to be.

REBT states although individuals cannot always change a particular situation or event ("A") (e.g., losing a close relative), they can manage and take control of their own thoughts. As a result, they can feel better or less distressed about situations they may have to confront. The mentioned therapy emphasizes that learning this skill can be challenging, and it takes practice. The more people practice, the easier it will become to change their thoughts and feelings, and the better they will feel.

The next focus of our article is **Behavioral Techniques**.

Sometimes when people have to deal with a stressful or challenging life situation, or when they are having a particularly hectic day. So, individuals may not have enough time or energy to focus on using the cognitive techniques we have just mentioned in order to manage their negative thoughts.

In these situations, the simple and brief strategies outlined below are alternative techniques which people can use to help themselves to manage any feelings of distress, negative thinking, fatigue, or other symptoms.

Imagining a Pleasant Image/Scene

A type of distraction technique people can use to take your mind off of their negative thoughts and feelings (including fatigue) is to imagine a pleasant scene. Some

examples include:

- Planning a “dream” holiday. People try to visualize where they would like to go, who they would like to go with, how they would like to get there, what they would like to do there, and how much time they would like to spend in their ‘dream’ place.
- Remembering an enjoyable vacation individuals have had. Imagine the fond memories they have of this vacation. They try to recall the details of the place, where they stayed, the fun activities you pursued.
- Visualizing a relaxing scene. People try to imagine a peaceful, serene place (e.g., lying on a beach somewhere, or meditating in a tranquil garden setting).
- Listening to relaxing or enjoyable music tapes, CDs, videos
People may want to listen to some of your favorite music or watch one of their favorite movies to relax them, distract them, or lift their mood.
- Taking a stroll. Another strategy people could use to distract themselves from unpleasant thoughts and feelings they may have is to take a stroll. If they are at work, they can take a brief walk around your workplace, focusing on the sights and sounds around you (e.g., pictures, music, etc.). If they are at home, they take a stroll around your neighborhood, or garden. Individuals should pay close attention to the characteristics of things in their neighborhood (such as the color, shape and size of neighboring buildings; what’s on display in shop windows, etc).
- Visualizing a “STOP” Sign let people try to imagine a traffic stop sign or even a ‘red light’ signal in their mind when they are feeling overwhelmed or upset by their negative thoughts and feelings, including fatigue. They should Follow the instructions of the stop signal by saying to themselves “stop thinking these negative unhelpful thoughts” or “stop dwelling on the negative”.

At last **Emotive techniques** will help individuals to challenge and change their negative thoughts.

1. Humorous Methods:

Humorous methods encourage people to challenge and not taking their negative

thoughts too seriously.

2. Shame-Attacking Exercises are designed to make people deliberately seek to act “shamefully” in public in order to learn to accept themselves and to tolerate the ensuing discomfort. In order to avoid harming themselves, only minor infractions of social rules are permitted. We recommend that people record the main emotive techniques [e.g., humorous methods (e.g., songs and poems) and shame-attacking exercises)] they used.

In conclusion, we should stress that REBT techniques that have been covered in this article will help people to manage stressful and frustrating situations. Moreover, these techniques can be applied to any situation in the future when individuals may feel overwhelmed and/or distressed.

In our opinion, it will be reasonable to use cognitive, behavioral and emotive interventions in combination to reduce harmful effects of stress and strengthen frustration tolerance abilities.

Literature:

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