

While it is common to hear people say that they “didn’t even think about it, I just reacted;” this is factually incorrect because it is impossible to act without thinking (processing) information, formulating a response and then to respond. The ABC’s of REBT help people to better understand this process by mapping out the natural thought process and assisting them to learn how to identify if their responses are rational (helpful- RB) or irrational (hurtful- IB).

The ABC’s of REBT:

Activating Event: Incident- What just happened?

Beliefs: What did you tell yourself about what just happened?

Consequence: What did you do? If you were rational then the process ends here, if not continue to D and E.

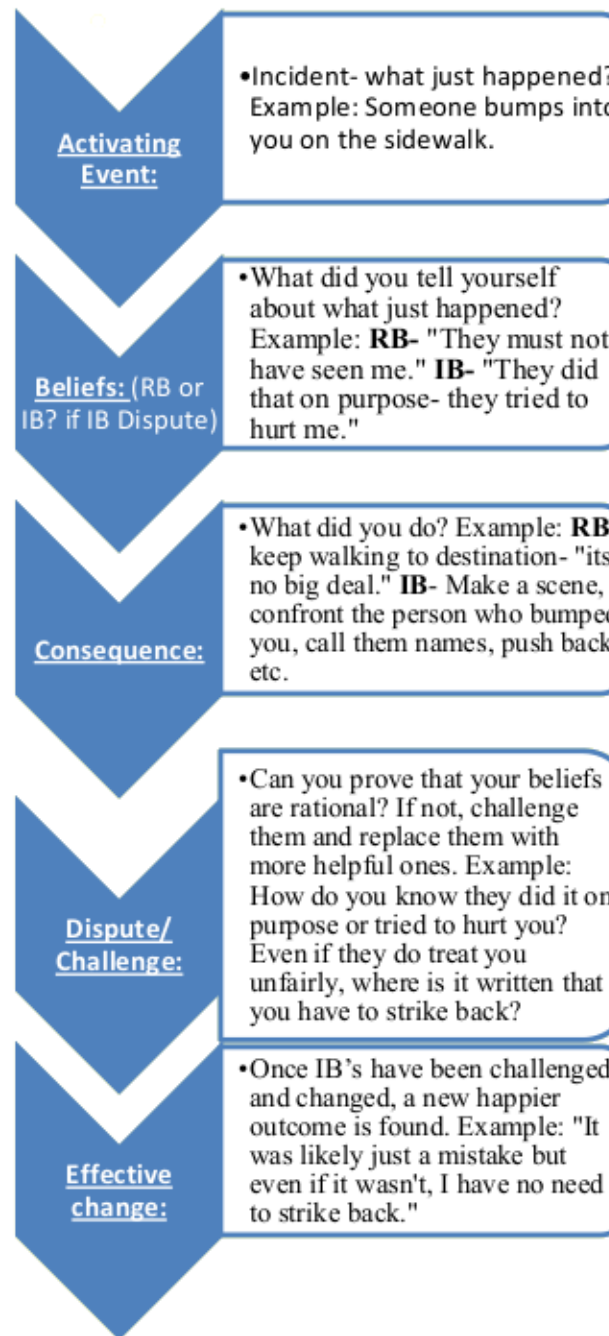
Dispute/ Challenge: If your beliefs were irrational, you dispute or change them at this stage.

Effective change: Once IB’s have been challenged and changed, a new happier outcome is found.

Dr. Warren Corson III
 Phone: (860) 582-7904
 Email: docwarren@docwarren.org

On the web:
www.ccofcentralct.org
www.docwarren.org

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Irrational Beliefs (IB’s)

- Everyone HAS to like me; if someone doesn’t then life is terrible.
- I MUST be good; if I do anything wrong then I am a terrible person.
- I ABSOLUTELY have to be treated fairly or I CANNOT cope.
- I HAVE TO get my way or the day and possibly my life is garbage.
- If anything goes wrong then everything is TERRIBLE.

Rational Beliefs (RB’s)

- I prefer to be liked, but can accept that not everyone will approve of me.
- Some things that I do are bad, but that does not mean I am a bad person or beyond help.
- I prefer to be treated fairly but I know that I will sometimes be treated unfairly and can accept it.
- I prefer to get my way when possible but know that that is not always possible; when someone else gets their way instead, it is not a big deal.
- Life is not perfect- stuff happens.

Words to help identify IB’s

When trying to identify whether your belief is an IB or RB look for absolutist (black and white) thinking. Things are rarely black and white or right and wrong; the world is full of gray. Word such as MUST, HAVE TO, ABSOLUTELY, CANNOT, TERRIBLE etc are referred to as MUSTurbation in REBT and are often signs of problems.

What is REBT?

Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) was developed by Dr. Albert Ellis (9/27/1913 – 7/24/2007). Dr. Ellis believed that many of the problems faced by individuals could be linked not to outside forces beyond one's control but by the way they viewed the situation. This system of thought is not new, in fact roots of this theory can be found as far back as ancient Rome where Epictetus postulated that "Man[kind] is disturbed not by things, but by the views they take of them."

REBT applies scientific principles to life's issues in the attempt to help the client learn ways to identify beliefs that are either rational or irrational. Rational beliefs can be supported with fact and are healthy choices; irrational beliefs are often rigid, negative and unable to be proven. Through applying the ABC's of REBT clients are able to identify what thought processes are getting in the way of happiness, how to challenge them and replace them with more effective belief systems. These tools are designed to be used by the client not just in therapy but in life, which will allow for rapid results, short term treatment with lasting positive change.

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Community Counseling of Central CT, Inc.
53 Muir Ave
Bristol, CT. 06010
www.docwarren.org
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Introduction to the ABC's of REBT



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