



Rational Emotive Therapy



Rational Emotive Therapy (R.E.T.)

Rational Emotive Therapy (R.E.T.) is a technique used by Cognitive psychologists to help individuals to overcome negative thought patterns. Dr David Burns is a pioneer in this field who wrote a famous self-help book called '*Feeling Good, The New Mood Therapy*'¹ In this book, Dr Burns describes a number of techniques to target anxiety and depression.

The Rational Emotive Therapy technique utilized by Dr Burns, has been described as a very successful method to help people to understand where their negative thoughts derive and how to control them. It works by focussing on rejecting negative/irrational thoughts and accepting rational/true beliefs about yourself.

The acquiring of these skills has been shown to produce the following:

- *Improvements in confidence*
- *Aid communication*
- *Help to maximize effort during particular tasks*
- *Reduce the effect of stressful events/circumstances*
- *Help individuals to get back on track after a set back (whether it be sporting, work related, or personal)*
- *Help to maintain an appropriate state of arousal in appropriate settings.*

Steps to reducing the effect of negative self-talk

Step 1: Recognize the effect of negative self-talk on performance/behavior.

Most people believe that an Event (E) causes a Consequence (C) to occur.

For example:

- *The exam (E) made me nervous (C)*
- *The Christmas Season (E) made me put on weight (C)*
- *Being cut off in traffic (E) made me angry (C)*

The fact is that (E) DOES NOT CAUSE (C). Your 'Thoughts and Beliefs' (B) about the event (A) result in the consequence (C), NOT the event (E) itself.

1. Your fearful thoughts and beliefs about an exam can make you nervous
2. Your tempting thoughts about Christmas food can make you eat the types of foods that may result in weight gain
3. Your thoughts about bad drivers and the shock of being cut off in traffic can make you angry.

Written October 2004



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Thoughts that lead to anxiety:

- *"I'm hopeless, I'll never be able to lose weight"*
- *"I have no will power, what's the point in trying"*
- *"I'm always late. What's wrong with me?"*
- *"Every time I go to the store I eat chocolate. I'm doomed to eating it every day"*
- *"My weight training is pathetic at the moment"*
- *"I'll never look like a model, therefore I must look repulsive"*

The types of thoughts above:

- (a) are generally false
- (b) lead to decreased confidence
- (c) lead to decreased concentration
- (d) result in disruptive emotions such as anger and depression

Step 2: Disputing Negative Messages

You need to ask yourself whether there is any evidence for the negative messages you are sending yourself. For instance:

- How do you know you will never lose weight?
- Have you ever been on time and if not, does it really mean there is something wrong with you because you're management of time is not perfect?
- Have you ever lost even an ounce of weight in your life?
- Just because you have not shown much restraint in the past, does that mean that you will never be able to have willpower?
- Have you ever been able to show willpower in another aspect of your life?

Step 3: Replacing negative self-talk with more positive alternatives

Replace thoughts such as:

"I haven't eaten well for days, I'll never be able to get on track now"

WITH

"I haven't eaten well lately, but I will try to eat well from now on" or "I haven't stayed on track with my healthy eating, but I'll just take each day at a time and try harder tomorrow"

It is important to recognize the truth. Don't lie to yourself. Recognize that you haven't eaten as well as you would have liked, or that you are late for work often, but **MAKE SURE** that you end these statements with positive true statements, as illustrated above. You can change a negative behaviour simply by concentrating on the underpinning thoughts holding you back. So take a positive step today and live your life to the fullest.

Reference:

Burns, D.D. (1999). *Feeling Good, The New Mood Therapy, Revised and Updated*. Avon Books, HarperCollins Publishers, New York

Written October 2004