

Treating Depression: A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach



*Based on Rational Living Therapy a
Systematic Approach to Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*

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Treating Depression: A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach

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*From a Declaration of Principles jointly adopted by a
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How Are We Going to Help Our Clients to Get Better,
Rather Than Just Feel Better?

1. Rational Self-Counseling Skills

2. Identify and Correct Mistaken Underlying Assumptions

Not All “Down” Feelings are Depression

A very common mistake made by both clients and mental health professionals is labeling any “down” feeling “depression.”

The Rational Living Therapy approach to CBT refuses to make that mistake. We differentiate between “depressive symptoms” and depression.

Learned vs. Not-Learned Behavioral Problems

As described in Rational Behavior Therapy by
Maxie Maultsby, Jr., M.D.

Signs of Not-Learned Behavior

1. Disorientation (time, place, or person)
2. History of sudden onset, or a sudden exacerbation, of undesirable behavior without plausible external precipitating events
3. No evidence of voluntary mental control over the onset, intensity, or degree of incapacity caused by their undesirable behavior
4. Paralysis or persistent muscular weakness, and frequent or intractable headaches with and without a history or evidence of head trauma
5. Recent history of convulsions, amnesia, loss of consciousness, blurred vision, or recurrent or persistent vertigo
6. Poor recent memory and inappropriately distractable
7. Delusions, hallucinations, or other thought disorders
8. Inappropriate or otherwise pathologic affect

Signs of Learned Behavior

1. Statistically credible history for the client's culture or sub-culture. Additionally, mild forms of their problem will be common in the every-day lives of most "normal" people.
2. Display evidence of voluntary control over their behaviors and the degree of incapacity they cause.
3. Main presenting complaint usually is some form of self-defeating negative emotions.
4. Usually no history of hallucinations or delusions.

**Two “Symptoms” that I recommend You Refuse to Fall For
as an Indication of a “Biological” Depression**

Intensity of the depressive feelings / behaviors

Duration of the depressive feelings / behaviors

**Some Problems with Barking Up Biological Tree
When the Etiology is Not Biological**

1. Unnecessary New Illnesses (Side Effects)
2. Hopelessness
3. Sometimes permanent serious disability (ECT)
4. Delays identifying and correcting actual cause
5. Wasted time, money, and effort

Partial List of Causes of Depressive “Symptoms”

Anemia
Hypothyroidism
Hyperthyroidism
Pituitary Problems
Adrenal Fatigue / Dysfunction
Poor Diet
Poor Digestion
Sleeping Problems
Hormonal Imbalances (Estrogen, Testosterone)
Food Allergies
Allergies
Hypoglycemia
Heart Disease
Lung Disease
Liver Problems
Multiple Sclerosis
Lack of Movement / Exercise

Drugs That Can Cause Depressive Symptoms

Antidepressants

Reduce the production of thyroxin.

1. *"Thyroid hormone levels decreased with treatment, but these decreases did not correlate with clinical improvement."*

Peripheral thyroid hormones and response to selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors

Michael Gitlin et al (2004) J Psychiatry Neurosci. 2004 September; 29(5): 383–386.

2. *"Three open trials to date have investigated using thyroid hormones to augment SSRIs in treatment-resistant MDD. In a prospective study by Agid and Lerer, 10 of 25 (40%) patients who did not respond to SSRI treatment did so after T3 was added."*

Why hormones help, and new data on SSRI augmentation.

Iosifescu, D. (2006). Journal of Family Medicine.

Tranquilizers and sedatives

Antipsychotic drugs

Amphetamines (withdrawal from)

Antihistamines

Beta-blockers

High blood pressure medications

Birth control pills

Anti-inflammatory agents

Corticosteroids (adrenal hormone agents)

Some Antibiotics

What is Depression?

From a Rational Living Therapy / Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Perspective

The first requirement for depression is at least one goal.

Awareness of something (situation, life circumstance, loss)

It can be absolutely anything. Awareness that a goal was not achieved or will not be achieved.

Belief / Thought about “A” (A depressing thought about it)

This is a terrible, horrible thing. My life is over. There is no way I’ll ever be happy again. I needed to achieve this goal, and I never will.

Consequence (Emotional) – Depressive Feelings that are the result “B”

Depressed (crying, lethargy, decreased / increased appetite)

If a person does not have all three components, what they are experiencing is not depression.

The Difference Between Depression and Sadness

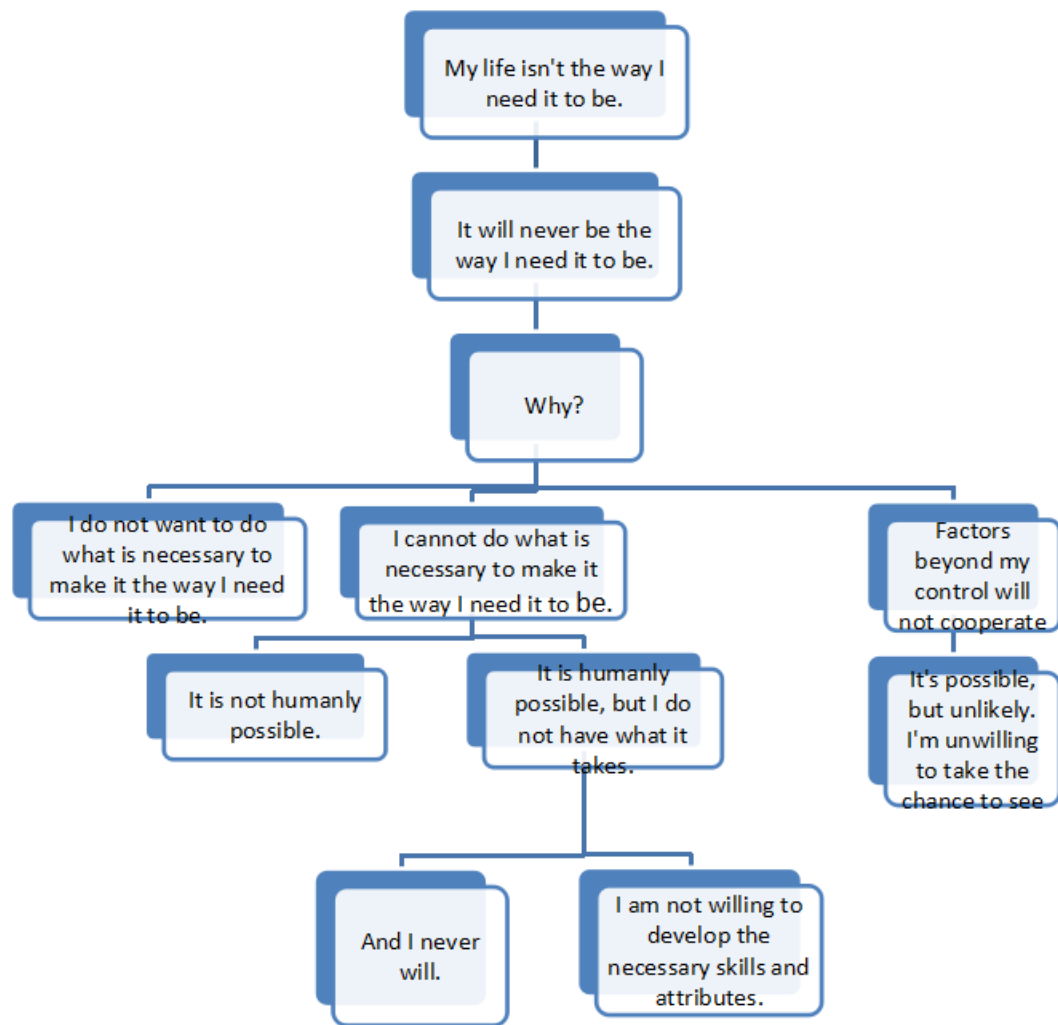
Hopeless Thinking

Need

Want

Rational Living Therapy Theory of Depression

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Eliminating the “Depression Identity”

But depression runs in my family.

But it's just the way I am. I am a depressed person.

The Rational Living Therapy Sequence

1. **Assessment** (Usually One Session)

What's the main reason for coming to see me today?

Make assessment of learned vs. not-learned behavioral problem.

Listen for distressing hopeless thoughts and the confusion of needs and wants.

Because my wife left me, I'm going to be lonely and miserable forever.

The doctor told me that I will never have children.

I'll never get the job that I want.

I'll never amount to anything.

My children do not want to have anything to do with me.

Remember! You cannot have a problem without having a goal.

Emphasize the importance of self-counseling.

Teach the client about cognitive-emotive dissonance.

Provide Hope! While people who are depressing themselves are thinking hopelessly about their circumstances, they often think hopelessly about getting better as well. This is especially true if they have attempted therapy in the past and were not successful.

Homework: Introduction and Chapters 1 & 2 of "The Client's Guide to
Cognitive- Behavioral Therapy"
Goals (Therapy, Life-Goals, Do and Avoid)
Feelings & Behavior Pattern Form
Progressive Relaxation

2. Review Homework, ABC's of Emotions (One Session or Rational Hypnotherapy (Two Sessions)

Homework: Chapter 3 (ABC Chapter) & Chapter 4 (Thoughts & Underlying Assumptions) & Chapter 5 (About Problems) ABC Situations.

Break down unwanted reactions into the ABCs

3. Review Homework, Rational Questions (Several Sessions)

Homework for First Session of this Phase

Homework: Chapter 6 (Rational Questions)

ABC Situations

Apply Rational Questions to Thoughts

Thoughts I Hope are Incorrect

Practice New Rational Replacement Thoughts

Homework for Second Session of this Phase

Homework: Chapter 7 (Mental Mistakes)

Apply Rational Questions / Mental Mistakes to Thoughts

Practice New Rational Replacement Thoughts

As we help the client apply the Rational Questions during this phase, we also are teaching them about any cognitive distortions they are making, and having them learn about the rest of them on their own by reading Chapter 7

4. Review Homework, Rational Action Planner (One Session)

Homework: Chapter 8 (Rational Action Planner)

Do at least one RAP

5. Review Homework, Importance of Practice, Practicing Techniques, Thought Growth (One Session)

Homework: Chapter 9 (Practice)

6. Remainder of sessions spent reviewing RAP's (Possibly Several Sessions)

Homework: Behavioral Assignments

Chapters 11 (More Rational Techniques) & 12 (Conclusion)

My Goals for Therapy

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1. Do this more

Do this less (or not at all)

2. Emotionally Feel this more

(Remember, feelings are one-word adjectives, like happy, sad, excited, anxious, etc...)

Emotionally Feel this less (or not at all)

3. Physically Feel This More

Physically Feel This Less (or not at all)

4. **Think this more**

Think this less (or not at all)

5. **Know this more**

Know this less (or not at all)

Life Goals

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On this page, write down what you want out of life – your long-term goals. Spend some time with this and give it some thought as you can use this as a guide for living a happy life. Important: refuse to only write down what you think is possible. Go for it, and write what you want! You might consider issues like, “Where do I want to live?” “With whom do I want to share my life?” “What do I want to do?”

What I want from life

Example: To retire when I'm 50 y.o.

Importance to Me

Slightly / Moderately / Very Important

Moderately Important

What I Want to Experience and Avoid

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On this page, write down what you want to experience as much as possible and avoid as much as possible. Spend some time with this and give it some thought as you can use this as a guide for having happy days.

What I want to experience as much as possible

Example: Time with my family, fishing trips, eating pasta

What I want to avoid as much as possible

Example: Work days longer than 8 hours, sinus headaches, late fees

Feelings and Behavior Pattern Form

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Instructions: If you feel or behave in a way that either you do not want or believe might be a problem for you, first, write down in the first column what was going on at the time, what happened, what you were doing, or what you were thinking about. Second, write down in the second column what was going through your mind about what was going on, and third, write down how you felt and what you did.

**What happened / What was going on /
What I was doing /
What I was thinking About**

Example: My boss told me that I'm fired.

What went through my mind about it

"How could he do that to me. I've worked here for twenty years! He shouldn't do this!
I'll never be able to support my family."

How I Felt / What I Did

Angry & Depressed
Went home and went to bed.

ABC's of Emotions

POSITIVE



A. Awareness



B. Thought or Belief



C. Emotional Consequence

NEUTRAL



A. Awareness



B. Thought or Belief



C. Emotional Consequence

NEGATIVE



A. Awareness

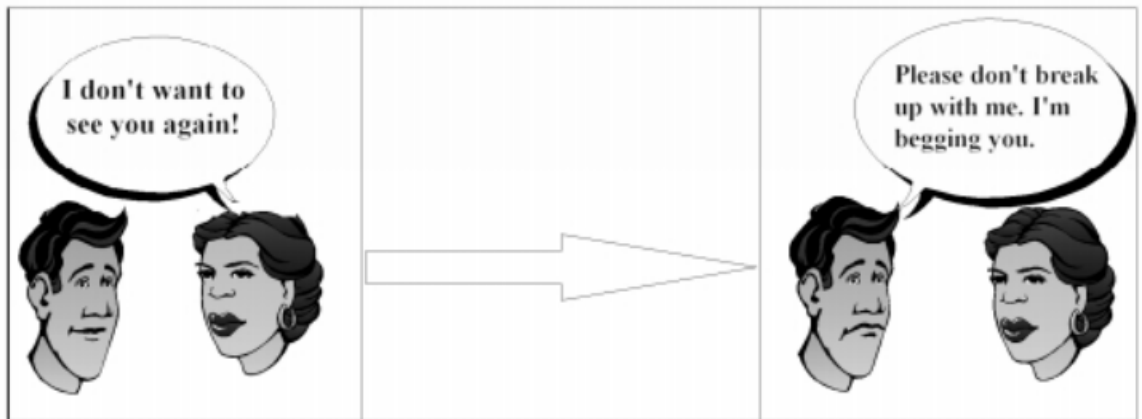


B. Thought or Belief



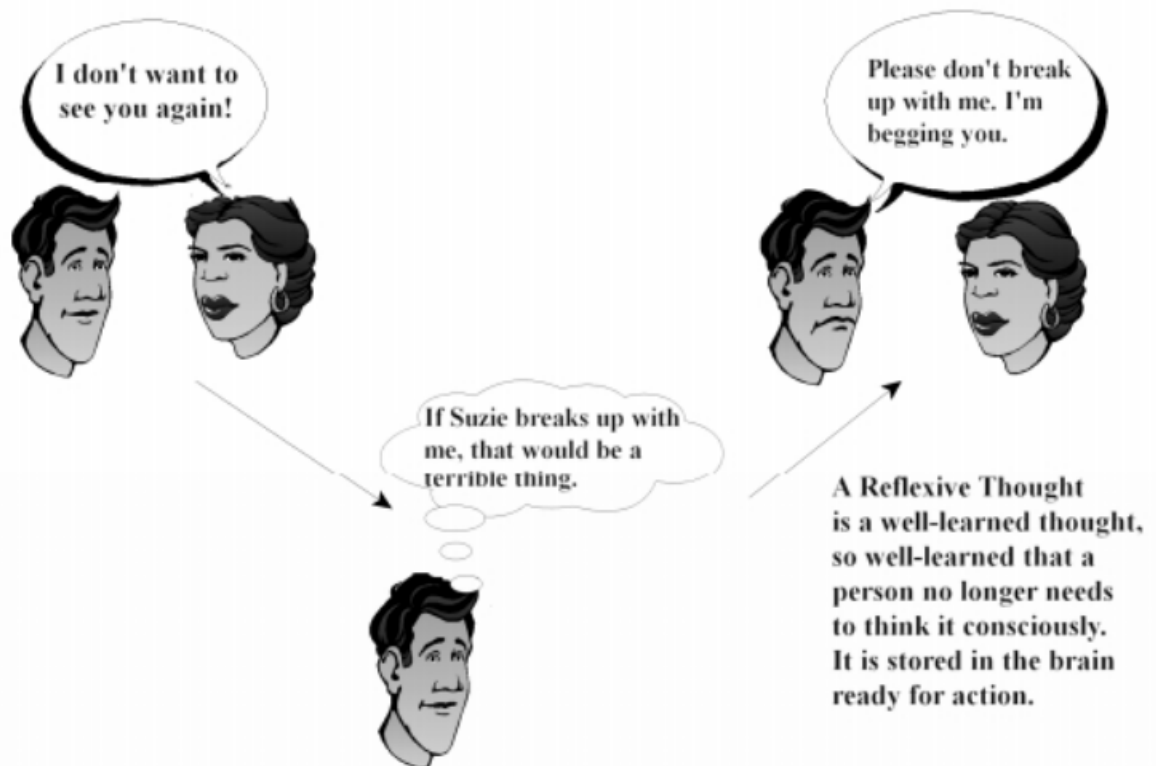
C. Emotional Consequence

Reflexive Thoughts



A. Awareness

C. Emotional Consequence



ABC Situations

A

(What I'm Aware Of)

B

(What I think about A)

C

(How I Felt / What I did)

Seminar Practice of ABC Situations

A

(What I'm Aware Of)

B

(What I think about A)

C

(How I Felt / What I did)

ABC's Considerations

- Downward Arrow Technique



A
Aware

B
Think / Believe

C
Emotional
Consequence
Emotions & Behavior

My wife left
me and I'm
alone.

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A
Aware

B
Think / Believe

C
Emotional
Consequence
Emotions & Behavior


My wife left
me and I'm
alone.

She shouldn't have left me
(and it's terrible that she did)



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<u>A</u> Aware	<u>B</u> Think / Believe	<u>C</u> Emotional Consequence <small>Emotions & Behavior</small>
My wife left me and I'm alone.	She shouldn't have left me (and it's terrible that she did)	Angry / Depressed. Cried.

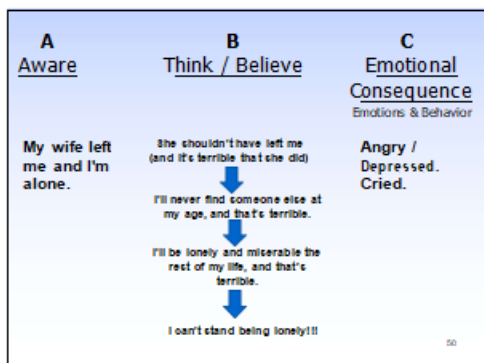
47

<u>A</u> Aware	<u>B</u> Think / Believe	<u>C</u> Emotional Consequence <small>Emotions & Behavior</small>
My wife left me and I'm alone.	She shouldn't have left me (and it's terrible that she did)  I'll never find someone else at my age, and that's terrible.	Angry / Depressed. Cried.

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<u>A</u> Aware	<u>B</u> Think / Believe	<u>C</u> Emotional Consequence <small>Emotions & Behavior</small>
My wife left me and I'm alone.	She shouldn't have left me (and it's terrible that she did)  I'll never find someone else at my age, and that's terrible.  I'll be lonely and miserable the rest of my life, and that's terrible.	Angry / Depressed. Cried.

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Symptom Stress

- Term that was coined by Albert Ellis
- Refers to being upset about being upset.
- Sometimes referred to as "secondary disturbance."
 - Depressed about feeling depressed
 - Anxious about feeling anxious
 - Angry about feeling angry



Symptom Stress

I can't stand feeling _____.



Symptom Stress

• I can't standing feeling__ depressed_____.



Symptom Stress

do not like
I can't standing feeling__ depressed_____.



The Three Rational Questions

A modification of Maultsby's Five Rational Questions.

- 1. Is my thinking based on fact?**
- 2. Does my thinking help me to achieve my goals?**
- 3. Does my thinking help me feel the way I want to feel?**

Three "Yes" Answers means that your thought is rational for you, and, therefore, it is in your best interest to keep it. One or more "No" answers means that your thought is irrational, and, therefore, it is in your best interest to replace it with a thought that is rational.

Rational Action Planner™

Old ABC's

A

(What you are aware of)

My girlfriend told me that she wants to break up with me, and I fell all to pieces.

B

(Thoughts or Beliefs about it)

- 1. I need her because I'm nothing without her! (Irrational)*
- 2. It's terrible that she wants to break up with me. (Irrational)*
- 3. I'll never be happy again, and that's terrible! (Irrational)*

C

(Emotional & Physical Reaction)

Very nervous

Begged her to not break up with me

Told her that I'd kill myself if she broke up with me

What were (are) your goals in this situation (Conscious or Implied)?

- 1. Remain calm*
- 2. Tell her what I really meant*
- 3. Do things to encourage her to stay*
- 4.*

Achieved?

No
No
No

Camera Check of "A" Section (What Would a Camera Show)

It would show her telling me that she wanted to break up with me, but it would not show me falling to pieces, like a pile of body parts!

Rational Questions

Apply the Rational Questions To Each of the Thoughts in the "B" Column and Write Down Whether or Not They Passed Them.

- 1. Is my thinking based on Fact?*
- 2. Does my thinking help me achieve my goals?*
- 3. Does my thinking help me feel the way I want to feel?*

Keep any thoughts that pass the Rational Questions and replace any that do not.

New ABC's

A

(Camera Checked)

*Whenever I'm in this
Situation:*

*I'm around her, think
of her, or see her*

B

(New Thoughts to Practice)

I'll think this:

*Anything that is physically present is
"something." Therefore, it is
impossible for me to be a "nothing."
As a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ,
I am a child of God. No one or
nothing can ever change that fact
because God promised to never leave
me nor forsake me.*

*I didn't need my ex-girlfriend — I only
wanted her. Therefore, I'll feel
appropriately sad as I think of losing
her as a disappointment, not something
that is terrible or that I can't stand.
Certainly I can stand her breaking up
with me, because I am! The Lord is
my strength.*

*The sooner I calmly accept the fact that
we ended this relationship, the sooner I
will find happiness in another
relationship or with something else, if
the Lord so wills it.*

C

*As a result of my new
thinking, I'll feel and
do this:*

Feel calm

Treat her kindly

Do these new thoughts pass the Rational Questions?

Practice imagining yourself in the "A" Section, Thinking the "B" Section, and Reacting like the "C" Section. Act "As If" you believe the new thoughts until they feel comfortable to you.

Rational Action Planner™

Old ABC's

A

(What you are aware of)

B

(Thoughts or Beliefs about it)

C

(Emotional & Physical
Reaction)

What were (are) your goals in this situation (Conscious or Implied)?

Achieved?

Camera Check of "A" Section

(What Would a Camera Show)

Rational Questions

Apply the Rational Questions To Each of the Thoughts in the "B" Column and Write Down Whether or Not They Passed Them.

1. Is my thinking based on Fact?
2. Does my thinking help me achieve my goals?
3. Does my thinking help me feel the way I want to feel?

Keep any thoughts that pass the Rational Questions
and replace any that do not.

New ABC's

A

(Camera Checked)

*Whenever I'm in this
Situation:*

B

(New Thoughts to Practice)

I'll think this:

C

*As a result of my new
thinking, I'll feel and
do this:*

Do these new thoughts pass the Rational Questions?

Practice imagining yourself in the "A" Section, Thinking the "B" Section, and Reacting like the "C" Section. Act "As If" you believe the new thoughts until they feel comfortable to you.

Stages of Emotional / Behavioral Re-Education

1. Intellectual Insight
2. Practice
Cognitive-Emotive Dissonance
3. Emotional Insight
4. Personality / Trait Formation (Habit)

Thought to Practice

Goal: To enjoy life regardless of whether or not I am in a romantic relationship.

Thought: I am very disappointed that my ex-wife left me for another man. I expected to spend the rest of my life with her.

The good news is that I only want my her, I in no way need her as if my life depended on having her in my life. There might even be a day when I no longer want her at all. There is no point in wanting someone that does not want you.

I am so thankful that my brain does not REQUIRE me to have a woman in my life for me to be happy. I certainly would be happy to have a nice girl who wants me as much as I want her. But I certainly can be happy with other things in life. And that's what I will do.

Desirability: Thinking this way will help me to be happy regardless of whether I'm in a relationship.

Evidence:

Repetition: I shall repeat this thought to myself at least five times per day for the next month. I shall practice this thought at the following times:

Emotional Insight: Practicing my thought will make it "feel right" to me eventually. Therefore, I shall practice it every day.

Forty Ways to Make Yourself Miserable

Adapted from Dr. Aldo Pucci's Book,
Feel the Way You Want to Feel...No Matter What!
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Dr. Albert Ellis (2006) categorized the major misery-producing thoughts into three categories. I have expanded his list, as well as added a fourth "miscellaneous" category.

I. "I must do well and win the approval of others or else I am no good."

Sub-beliefs

1. I must have love and approval from everybody.
2. I must be competent and successful.
3. I must successfully avoid unpleasant or undesirable situations.
4. I must think, feel, and act the same as I always have.
5. I must find order, certainty, and predictability in life.

6. I must depend on other people because I can't depend on myself.

7. I must understand the secrets of the universe.

8. I must rate myself as either "good" and "worthy" or "bad" and "worthless."

9. I must never feel depressed, anxious, or enraged.

10. I must achieve perfection with everything I do.

11. If a loved one dies, I should not ever feel happy again.

II. Other people must do "the right thing" or else they are no good and deserve to be punished.

Sub-beliefs

1. Everybody should treat everyone else (especially me) in a fair and considerate manner.

2. Other people must not act incompetently or unwisely.

3. Talented people must use their talent.

4. Other people must not criticize me.

5. You cannot trust someone again after they have violated your trust.

6. If I do something good, I should be rewarded.

7. If I do something wrong, I should punish myself for it.

8. People should love you no matter how you act.

III. "Life must be easy, without discomfort or inconvenience."

Sub-beliefs

1. Things must go the way I want them to go.

2. I must constantly worry about life's predicaments.

3. I must avoid, rather than face and deal with, life's difficulties and responsibilities.

4. Justice, fairness, equality, democracy and other "right" values must prevail. I can't stand it when my values are trodden on.

5. I must not die prematurely.

6. My life must have meaning and purpose.

7. If I do not see a solution to my problems, one doesn't exist.

8. If I have tried to achieve a goal and failed, that means that I do not have the potential to achieve it.

9. Life should be fair.

10. Loneliness is a terrible thing and must be avoided at all costs.

11. Boredom is a terrible thing and must be avoided at all costs.

12. Everyone has to die at some point, so there is no point in taking care of your body.

13. I should never be denied pleasure.

14. If something does not come easily, then forget it.

IV. Additional Misery-Producing Thoughts

1. If people cannot see something, then it does not exist.

2. You are a victim of your childhood and past. What happens to a person affects him or her forever.

3. The best way to discover what is real is to go with what most people say.

4. If I have a right to do something, then it makes sense to do it.

5. I am afraid to change or succeed, therefore I had better not.

6. It is easier said than done.

Additional Persuasive Techniques

(1) Create a “Mind Set”

(2) Change the Person’s Physiology (and Help Him / Her to Act “As If”)

(3) Reciprocal Persuasion

(4) Provide a Two-Sided Argument

(5) Get Person to Believe It’s His / Her Idea

(6) Change the Parameters of the Behavior

Overcoming The Most Resistant Thinking

Overcoming “Yes-Butting”

Overcome Hopelessness

Successive Approximations of Thought Acquisition (SATA)

Aldo R. Pucci, Psy.D.

This will never work for me.

This *might* work for some people, but not for me.

This *does* work for some people, but not for me.

This does work for some people, and it
might work for me, too.

This does work for some people, and it
probably will work for me, too.

This does work for some people,
and it does work for me, too.

Notes

Successive Approximations of Thought Acquisition

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Goal: _____

Strength of Thought (0% = I do not believe it at all / 100% = I believe it completely)

How Good Does It Make You Feel (0% = Not at all / 100% = Fantastic!)

Least Helpful Thought

Strength of Thought _____% How Good It Makes You Feel _____%

Strength of Thought _____% How Good It Makes You Feel _____%

Strength of Thought _____% How Good It Makes You Feel _____%

Strength of Thought _____% How Good It Makes You Feel _____%

Strength of Thought _____% How Good It Make You Feel _____%

Strength of Thought _____% How Good It Makes You Feel _____%

Overcoming Other Forms of Resistance

1. Symptom Stress

2. Self-Punishment Motivation

3. Secondary Gain

Suicide – Ultimate confusion.

Confusing a goal with a means by which to achieve a goal.

Referenting

Appendix A

Resources

Certification in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

If you would like to become certified in cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy, please contact the National Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists at:

NACBT
P.O. Box 2195 Weirton, WV 26062

Web Site: <http://www.nacbt.org>

Visit our online store:

<http://nacbt.americommerce.com>

Email:

nacbt@nacbt.org

The NACBT offers a host of certifications in cognitive-behavioral therapy, including the Certified Cognitive-Behavioral Therapist (CCBT) and the Diplomate in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (DCBT) credentials.