

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY GROUP

Dimension	Initial Stage	Working Stage	Final Stage
Key developmental tasks and goals	Key task is to teach members the A-B-C theory of how they create and can "uncreate" their own disturbances, how they can detect their irrational beliefs, and how they can attack these faulty beliefs. Members need to learn that situations themselves do not cause emotional problems; rather, their beliefs about these situations cause the problems. Thus, changing beliefs (not situations) is the road to improvement.	Group focuses on identifying and attacking members' "musts," "shoulds," and "oughts." Members learn that if life is not the way they want it to be, this may be unfortunate but not catastrophic. In place of self-defeating assumptions, members incorporate beliefs that are grounded in reality. Members learn a variety of ways to continue challenging their <i>musturbatory</i> philosophy.	Ultimate aim is that participants internalize a rational philosophy of life, just as they internalized a set of irrational beliefs. This phase is one of reinforcement of new learning to replace old patterns. Emphasis is on teaching people better methods of self-management. It is important for members to commit themselves to continue to work and practice new behavior in real life.
Role and tasks of group leader	Group leader shows members <i>how</i> they have caused their own misery by teaching them the connection between their emotional and behavioral disturbances and their beliefs. Leader teaches members how to dispute irrational beliefs and ways to substitute rational beliefs.	Leader confronts members with the propaganda they originally accepted without question and with which they continue to indoctrinate themselves. Leader strives to modify members' thinking by challenging their underlying basic assumptions about reality.	Therapist continues to act as teacher by showing members methods of self-control, giving them homework assignments that involve active practice in real life, and correcting any lasting faulty patterns. Leader encourages use of self-help methods for continuing change.
Role of group members	Members need to be willing to discipline themselves and work hard, both during the sessions and between sessions. They are active, both in and out of the group, for they learn by practicing and doing. Members gain awareness of specific ways in which they perpetuate the dysfunctional thinking that creates their problems. They learn how they disturb themselves and how to become undisturbed.	Members learn how to analyze, dispute, and debate by using scientific methods to question their belief systems. Members ask, "What evidence supports my views?" Members learn a new, rational set of beliefs. They learn how to dispute dysfunctional and self-defeating self-talk. Members carry out activity-oriented homework assignments as a way of challenging their beliefs.	Group members integrate what they have learned and continue to make plans for how they can practice overcoming self-defeating thinking and emoting outside of the group. They continue giving themselves cognitive, emotive, and behavioral assignments in daily life. They acquire a more rational and effective philosophy of life that allows them to face new challenges with confidence.

- originally incorporated from external sources, people internalize and maintain them by self-indoctrination.
2. The leader plays the role of a teacher and not that of an intensely relating partner. REBT stresses the importance of the therapist giving and showing unconditional acceptance of members, even when they act badly in and out of the group. It emphasizes the group therapist's skill in challenging, confronting, and convincing the members to practice activities that will lead to positive change. REBT employs a wide variety of cognitive, behavioral, and emotive techniques, and it is therefore a truly eclectic approach to group counseling.
 3. To overcome the indoctrination process that results in irrational thinking, group therapists use active cognitive methods such as disputing, teaching, and persuading to get group members to substitute a rational belief system.
 4. Emotive methods in REBT groups are aimed at alleviating emotional disturbances. It is assumed that the best way to change feelings is by changing self-defeating thoughts. Some emotive techniques include role playing, unconditional acceptance, rational emotive imagery, and shame-attacking exercises.
 5. Behavioral methods in groups are designed to motivate members to take actions that will result in thinking and feeling differently. REBT stresses that meaningful cognitive change is unlikely unless clients are willing to behave differently. Some of the techniques include behavioral homework assignments, use of reinforcements and penalties, skill training, and feedback.

Glossary of Key Terms for Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

A-B-C model The theory that people's problems do not stem from activating events but rather from their beliefs about such events. Thus, the best route to changing emotions is to change one's beliefs about situations.

Cognitive therapy An approach and set of procedures that attempts to change feelings and behavior by modifying faulty thinking and believing.

Distortion of reality Erroneous thinking that disrupts one's life; can be contradicted by the client's objective appraisal of the situation.

Internal dialogue People's self-talk, or inner speech; the debate that often goes on "inside their head."

Irrational belief An unreasonable conviction that leads to emotional and behavioral problems.

Musturbation A term coined by Albert Ellis to refer to behavior that is absolutist and rigid; self-constructed, self-repeated, and self-learned "musts," "oughts," and "shoulds."

Psychoeducational methods The use of audiotapes, videotapes, and books as adjuncts to group counseling.

Rationality The quality of thinking, feeling, and acting in ways that will help us attain our goals. Irrationality consists of thinking, feeling, and acting in ways that are self-defeating and that thwart our goals.

Rational emotive imagery A form of intense mental practice for learning new emotional and physical habits. Clients imagine some of the worst things they can think of and then train themselves to develop appropriate emotions in place of disruptive ones.

(Glossary continues on page 160)

Techniques	Educational methods: use of tapes, books, and lectures; suggestions; information giving; interpretation; group feedback and support; other directive, confrontational, didactic, philosophic, and action-oriented methods. Therapist employs a wide range of cognitive, emotive, and behavioral techniques to fit the needs of the client.	Rapid-fire and forceful techniques that emphasize cognitive factors are used. These include persuasion, homework assignments, desensitization, role playing, modeling and imitation, behavior rehearsal, operant control of thinking and emoting, group feedback and support, cognitive restructuring, and assertiveness training.	There is continued use of emotive/evocative and cognitive behavioral techniques that people can use on their own after therapy terminates. Members can continue working with and practicing new ways of thinking and behaving as they encounter new problems.
Questions to consider	<p>What would you want to teach members about the ways they create their own disturbances?</p> <p>What are some common irrational beliefs that you might expect members to bring to a group?</p> <p>In what ways do you think a member's belief system is connected to how the person behaves and feels?</p> <p>How can you confront members and help them recognize their irrational thinking without adding to their defensiveness?</p> <p>What kind of relationship would you want to create with the members before you attempted to use forceful and directive procedures?</p> <p>What behavioral techniques would you employ in an REBT group at the early stage?</p> <p>How can you best prepare culturally diverse clients for an REBT group?</p>	<p>To what degree have you recognized and challenged your own "musts," "shoulds," and "oughts"? To what extent have you looked at your self-defeating assumptions and behavior?</p> <p>Do you agree that the role of leader is to act as a counterpropagandist who confronts members with beliefs they have accepted without thinking and questioning?</p> <p>What are some specific methods you might teach the members for analyzing, disputing, and debating unexamined assumptions?</p> <p>What are some examples of REBT homework that you are likely to use during the working stage?</p> <p>Can you keep from imposing your values on members? Do you challenge them to think for themselves?</p>	<p>If you employ directive strategies and encourage members to take a specific course of action, are you clear about your own motives? Are you willing to state your motivations to your clients? Do you share with them your values that pertain to choices they might make?</p> <p>How can you teach members ways to maintain constructive thinking once they leave a group? How can you help members maintain gains they have made in challenging self-defeating attitudes?</p> <p>Might you want to integrate any other therapeutic techniques from other approaches during the final stages? If so, what?</p> <p>What are some ways you could evaluate the effectiveness of your group as it moves toward termination?</p>

Reactions: Summarize your reactions to the rational emotive behavior approach to group developmental stages. What do you like *most*? *least*? What aspects of this approach would you incorporate in your style of leadership?

Self-instructional therapy An approach to therapy based on the assumption that what people say to themselves directly influences the things they do. Training consists of learning new self-talk aimed at coping with problems.

Shame-attacking exercises A strategy encouraging people to act in ways that make them feel uncomfortable due to their fear of looking foolish and feeling embarrassed. The aim of the exercise is to teach people that they can function effectively even if they might be perceived as doing foolish acts.

Exercises and Activities for the REBT Approach to Groups

Rationale

The rationale underlying most of these exercises and REBT techniques is that most of us make irrational assumptions about ourselves and the world that lead to emotional and behavioral disturbances. The essence of REBT is that rational thinking can lead to more effective living. To combat stubborn and persistent irrational beliefs, it is necessary to work and practice diligently and to replace faulty thinking with logical thinking.

The following activities and exercises are designed to help you experience the process of challenging your own thinking and to become aware of the consequent feelings of your belief system. As you work through these exercises on your own, with another person, and with a small group, think about ways in which you, as a group leader, could incorporate them in group practice.

Exercises

1. *Learning to recognize and challenge your internal dialogue as a group counselor.* Leaders often incorporate a wide range of dysfunctional beliefs that impair their capacity to function as effectively as they might in their groups. In a number of his writings (cited in Chapter 14 of the textbook), Ellis has identified several irrational ideas that we often internalize and that inevitably lead to self-defeat. Here are a few typical irrational beliefs that can be applied to group counselors:
 - a. "I *must* have love and approval from *all* of the members in my group. My worth as a counselor and as a person is dependent on the affirmation of each client."
 - b. "As a group facilitator, I *must* always perform competently and perfectly. There is *absolutely* no room for any mistakes, for this implies failure, and any failure is catastrophic."
 - c. "Because I strongly desire that group members treat me considerately and fairly, they *absolutely must* do so! If they don't, I will certainly feel miserable and be unable to function effectively."
 - d. "If I don't get what I want from each member, it's terrible, and I *can't stand it*. The group *must* act exactly the way I want when I want it."
 - e. "It's easier to avoid facing life's difficulties and responsibilities than to undertake more rewarding forms of self-discipline. I should be able to run my group without too much effort and *must not* have to change my way or style to get the group to work better."

Dysfunctional self-statements. Many group counselors have a strong tendency to make and keep themselves emotionally disturbed by internalizing self-defeating beliefs such as the ones listed above. I asked the students in one of my group counseling classes to write a list