
Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)

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Outline

- REBT Explained
- Process of REBT
- Applying REBT to Student Athletes
- Relevance for Practitioners
- Homework Assignments
- Activity



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“It will be pretty tough for me for the next few days, but I will get over it, I will be fine...There are a lot worse things that can happen in your life. Shooting a bad score in the last round of a golf tournament is nothing in comparison to what other people go through.”

Rory McIlroy
after the 2011 U.S. Masters

**What's the harshest
criticism you received
this week?**

**Did it come from someone
else or was it self-talk?**



Psychotherapy

- Counseling or talk therapy
- Develop habits, coping skills, and tools to replace negative thoughts/actions
- To improve mental health, relationships, stress, etc.
- Make the unconscious conscious

CBT

- Triggers
- False core beliefs
- Effect on emotions, thoughts, actions
- New interpretations and actions

REBT

- Irrational beliefs
- Negative thoughts and behaviour
- Rational beliefs *replace* irrational ones
- Promote rational thinking, flourishing

Albert Ellis and Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy

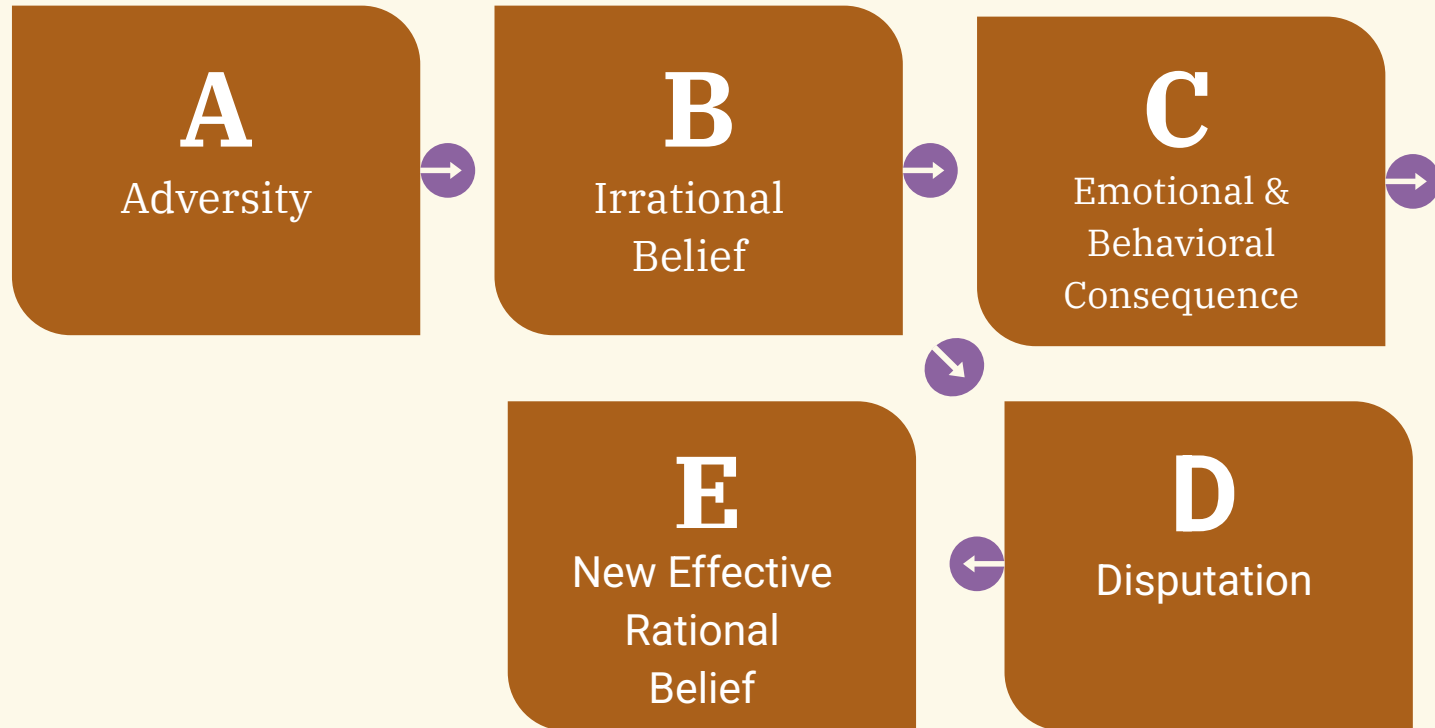


Albert Ellis (1913-2007)
Second most influential psychotherapist

“People are not disturbed by things, but by the view they take of them.”

-Epictetus

Illustration of the REBT Therapeutic Process



Applying REBT to College Student-Athletes



Irrational Beliefs

Rigid & extreme:

"I want to be successful and therefore I must."

Awfulizing:

"I must succeed, and if I don't it will be awful."

Low frustration tolerance:

"I must succeed, and it is unbearable to fail."

Self-downing:

"When I fail, it means that I am an idiot."

Rational Beliefs

Flexible & non-extreme preference:

"I want to be successful, but that does not mean I have to be."

Anti-awfulizing:

"I want to succeed, but if I don't it will not be awful."

High frustration tolerance:

"I want to succeed, but failure is not unbearable."

Self-acceptance:

"When I fail, it is bad, but does not mean that I am an idiot."

Relevance for Practitioners

Goal = Help athletes exercise better emotional control

- Practitioners aim should be promoting healthy negative emotions
- Address clinical connotation sport staff may have
- *Smarter Thinking*



Relevance for Practitioners

Implementation:

- Needs analysis of athlete
- Poor emotional control = 1v1 meeting
 - Person-centered approach
- Shortened General Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (SGABS)
- If irrational beliefs present, REBT may be useful
- Phases to implement:
 - Education → Disputation → Effective Rational Belief
- Assess effectiveness!
 - SGABS



Homework Assignments

- Homework vs Mental-Training Tasks
- Cognitive Assignments
 - Athlete takes themselves through the ABCDE process
- Behavioral Assignments
 - Athlete undertakes behaviors congruent with their new rational belief
- Review
- Reinforcement



Current Literature Regarding REBT in Sport

- Nejati et al. 2024
 - 24 U17 soccer players
 - Experimental group = blinded REBT, Control group = soccer technology videos
 - Significant decrease in irrational beliefs and social anxiety, with an increase in performance under pressure
- Chrysidis et al. 2020
 - 3 amateur German American football players
 - Five 1v1 REBT sessions with homework assignments given throughout
 - REBT enhanced participants self-efficacy and self-determined motivation
- Turner et al. 2013
 - 4 elite youth cricket players
 - Three week REBT training program with homework between sessions
 - REBT reduced participants irrational beliefs and cognitive-anxiety

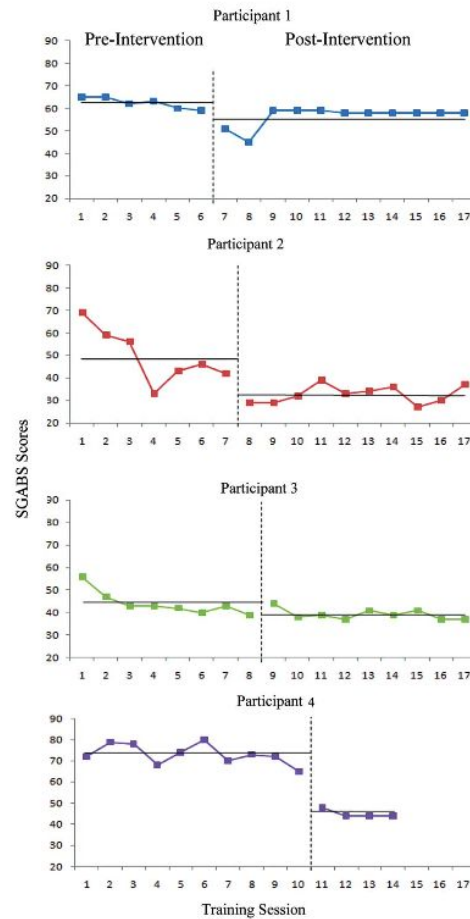


Figure 1. Pre- and Post-Intervention Shortened General Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (SGABS) Scores (color figure available online).

Role Play Scenario #1



Luis is a sophomore soccer player who has not played in the last two games. He feels that he has not been playing his best and tells you he is certain that if he doesn't get any game time in the next match, he won't play in any of the remaining 9 games left in the season and will be cut from the team. He tells you that he has lost confidence and he has been starting arguments with his two roommates, both of whom are junior starters on the team.

As the counselor, what would you ask Luis? . .

Role Play Scenario #1

What questions would you ask Luis?

- Why do you think you won't be able to play in any future games? (A)
- Are you angry at your roommates for getting more time on the field? (C)
- Replace: "If I go another game without playing, I won't be able to play again and I'll be cut from the team" with "**I want to play in every game, but, if I don't, I will still be a valuable member of the team.**" (B&E)
- Obtain client consent to begin disputation (D)
- Use a rational humorous song?
- Give homework: Stop and recognize the times when he gets upset with his roommates or begins to start an argument. Ask him to consider where he gets the notion that he must play in every game in order to be a good athlete?

Role Play Scenario #2



Brooke, a first-year basketball player comes in at the beginning of spring semester (her fall GPA was 3.7). She is feeling behind in her philosophy class and she thinks she is incapable of keeping up with her classmates who seem to discuss course topics with ease. She is the only student in the class who is an athlete and she is the only member of her basketball team who is majoring in the humanities. She tells the therapist that she isn't as smart as the other students in her class and she doesn't think she belongs at this school because it's clear that athletes don't make good philosophy majors. She loves philosophy, but she wants to switch to communications like many of her teammates.

As the counselor, what would you ask Brooke? . .

Role Play Scenario #2

What questions would you ask Brooke?

- Why do you think you are less smart than your classmates? (*A*)
- What was your fall GPA? Why do you want to change majors? (*C*)
- Replace: “I must be the best scholar-athlete on my team” with **“I want to be the best student that I can be, but it is okay if I am not the top performer on my team.”** (*B&E*)
- Obtain client consent to begin disputation (*D*)
- Use a rational humorous song?
- Give homework: Observe the moments in class when she feels behind. Challenge her to make at least one comment or observation in class every session (shame attack)

Challenges to Implementation



1.

Athletes might not see value if they don't think it will help them perform better



2.

Does not offer a quick fix – may not serve athlete's immediate needs (5-12 sessions)



3.

Hasn't been broadly researched in sport psychology

THANK YOU
Questions?

Works Cited

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