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The Development of a Self-Help Psychoeducational Booklet of Rational-Emotive Problem Solving

Alan D. Baldon

Western Michigan University

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SELF-HELP PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL BOOKLET OF RATIONAL-EMOTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

by

Alan D. Baldon

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts Department of Psychology

Western Michigan University Kalamazoo, Michigan December 1990

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This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Rational-Emotive Problem Solving workbook (REPS), developed by the researcher, which employs programmed learning principles to teach Rational-Emotive problem-solving techniques.

Fifteen undergraduate psychology students participated. Subjects were provided with the 69-page booklet. The subjects were guided through the Education, Self-Test, and Application components of the workbook.

Two hypotheses were tested. It was predicted that subjects would demonstrate mastery by achieving a score of 80% or better on the Self-Test section. It was further predicted that subjects would demonstrate generalization of the Rational-Emotive principles to a personal problem, achieving a score of 80 or higher on the Application section. Both hypotheses were confirmed within the recognition of certain design limitations.

The study adds to the existing body of research on programmed technology and adds to the promise that such self-help instruments can be effectively incorporated as an adjunct to ongoing therapeutic programs.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to my family, and especially my wife Valerie for her continuing emotional support and editorial assistance. Appreciation is extended to my graduate committee, Dr. Fuqua, Dr. Robertson, and Dr. Koronakos. A special tribute is due to Dr. Koronakos for his infinite encouragement, constant support, and friendship. Acknowledgement and appreciation are extended to Dr. Albert Ellis and the Institute of Rational-Emotive Therapy, New York, New York.

Alan D. Baldon
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The development of a self-help psychoeducational booklet of rational-emotive problem solving

Baldon, Alan D., M.A.
Western Michigan University, 1990

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many psychoeducational programmed texts and self-help books have been published during the last 20 years demonstrating the enduring demand for such materials and exhibiting the interest that many people have in self-improvement. Numerous books spanning a wide spectrum of topics provide examples of psychoeducational self-help material: Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy (Burns, 1981), A New Guide to Rational Living (Ellis & Harper, 1961), How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything, Yes Anything (Ellis, 1988), Control Your Depression (Lewinshon, Munox, Youngren, & Ziess, 1986), and Talk Sense to Yourself (McMullin & Casey, 1975).

Martin (1985) describes these types of self-help materials as giving counseling away. This judgment reflects an assertion that psychotherapy is a learning process. The self-instructional approach rests on an assumption that psychoeducational materials can guide individuals to learn more adaptive patterns of behavior. This assumption brings into focus two converging
disciplines: The technology of self-instruction providing educational guidelines and procedures, and the science of psychotherapy defining adaptive behavior and methods of behavior changes.

Sidney Pressey is associated with the development of self-instructional techniques as the result of his work in the mid-1920s (Garner, 1966). His commitment to self-instruction as a viable educational technique culminated in the development of the "teaching machine" which could teach specific content as well as test for performance. Pressey's model of self-instruction provided the groundwork upon which others built more sophisticated educational technology of programmed instructional systems.

Ornstein (1970), in his review of the development of programmed instruction, cites Skinner as a major influence. Skinner's system of behavioral psychology and operant conditioning provided the framework on which the modern technology of programmed learning is constructed (Skinner, 1968).

The principles of programmed instruction and the guidelines for developing programmed instruments are well established and widely accepted (Boyd, 1987; Ellington, 1984, 1987; Garner, 1966; Lysaught & Williams, 1963; Martin, 1985; Morgan & Reigeluth, 1987; and Skinner, 1968).
The procedures for developing programmed materials begin with selection of a subject or topic that constitutes the content of the text. Specific objectives or educational goals are identified. Programmed materials shape understanding through a chain of successive approximations. In a building block format, teaching and testing frames are carefully sequenced in incremental steps that lead to the accomplishment of specific educational objectives. The reader is prompted to actively participate by making responses to prompts placed strategically in the test. As the reader actively participates, the text provides guidance through feedback loops.

Feedback loops are designed to shape the reader's mastery of the material by providing reinforcement for correct responses or remedial education for incorrect responses. The text is typically designed to introduce novel situations that test for generalization. Although the text is carefully sequenced and structured, it allows the subject to work at his or her own tempo. The material should speak to the reader in the first person, using language and concepts appropriate to the target audience. By following these guidelines, educational materials addressing a number of topics can be developed.

Rational-Emotive Therapy (RET) provides a model of a psychology that stresses learning, historically utilizes
self-help material extensively, and lends itself to a technology of programmed learning (Ellis, 1987a).

RET was selected as a viable subject for programmed materials because it employs straight-forward, step-by-step therapeutic algorithms designed to lead clients to more rational thinking and more adaptive behavior.

This research rests on the assertion that RET is an established form of psychotherapy and is readily programmable. A review of RET theory will outline the logic of the model and describe the procedures used in its application.

The model of RET theory is typically described by utilizing an ABC formula. Each letter describes a critical component of the model (Ellis, 1988). The components are described as:

Point (A), which stands for activating event, usually a negative life experience that blocks one's goal.

Point (B), which stands for belief system: What one believes, thinks, and says to oneself about point (A).

Point (C), which stands for consequences: feelings and behaviors that result from the way one thinks.

The model of RET hypothesizes that each of the components has a specific relationship to each other. The basic premise of RET is that activating events alone do not cause people to feel and act in specific ways, rather
it is the perception of and beliefs about activating events that cause affective and behavioral disturbance.

The rational beliefs are associated with appropriate affect and behavior and are distinguished from irrational beliefs that are associated with inappropriate affect and behavior. The literature of RET is extensive in offering definitions to help discriminate between rational self-helping beliefs and irrational self-defeating beliefs. The criterion for discriminating between rational and irrational beliefs has to be considered within the specific context in which a problem is occurring, but general guidelines have been assembled and are widely accepted. First, a general definition makes a distinction between the two main categories of self-talk or beliefs: Rational and Irrational. Rational beliefs are thought to lead to appropriate feelings and effective behavior while irrational beliefs are thought to lead to inappropriate feelings and self-defeating behavior. Three main irrational beliefs are identified and are typically described as the three major MUSTS:

1. I MUST perform well and/or win the approval of important people or else I am an inadequate person.
2. You MUST treat me fairly and considerately and not unduly frustrate me or else you are a rotten individual!
3. My life conditions MUST give me the things I want and have to have to keep me from harm or else life is unbearable and I can't be happy at all.

These MUST statements are considered irrational and fall into a category of Imperative-Demanding statements thought to establish dysfunctional consequences. The psychoeducational process is directed at teaching individuals to identify such statements, and to eliminate or replace these MUST statements.

After learning to recognize irrational statements, individuals learn to dispute their irrational beliefs. Disputation or self-argument is a primary intervention used by RET therapists. Disputation involves teaching individuals to eliminate or replace their irrational self-defeating beliefs with more realistic and self-helping statements. The ABC model and the process of Disputation constitute the basic RET theory and the model is sometimes referred to as the ABCD model, where D represents Disputation.

The ABCD model is brought into practice through the presentation of basic themes or therapeutic algorithms. Therapeutic algorithms, or step-by-step procedures, closely associated with RET address four major themes: (1) AWFULIZING, (2) Rating of Human Worth, (3) Low Frust-tration Tolerance, and (4) Use of Demanding-Imperative
Self Statements. Addressing each of these themes is an important objective in the RET psychoeducational process.

AWFULIZING describes a process of subjectively appraising an activating event as AWFUL. AWFUL is defined as absolutely and entirely bad. The process of AWFULIZING is thought to generate dysfunctional feelings and behaviors. A therapeutic algorithm, ANTI-AWFULIZING, describes a technique used to bring the appraisal of an event into a more functional perspective. This technique involves educating the individual about the process of AWFULIZING and the definition of AWFUL, and guiding the individual to a more appropriate appraisal of the event.

Low Frustration Tolerance describes giving up on hard to reach goals by rating the frustration experienced as being "too much" or "more than I can stand." The therapeutic procedures designed to help people overcome their Low Frustration Tolerance are described as follows: Individuals are taught to identify the conditions under which they begin saying, "I'll give up because it is more than I can stand" and are guided to reappraise their own ability to perform under the given circumstances. Individuals are encouraged to make self-statements such as "It is hard and inconvenient, but even though I strongly don't like it--I can stand it because I desire to reach my goal."
The theme of Rating of Human Worth is described as a dysfunctional process of over generalization. This process is often referred to as DOWNING, GLOBAL SELF-RATING, or NEGATIVE LABELING. The RET algorithm to dispute the process of rating human worth involves educating the individual about the process, and teaching the individual to replace overgeneralized statements with specific statements that rate behavior, but not people FOR their behavior.

A tendency to make irrational Demanding-Imperative statements (MUST, OUGHT, SHOULD) is widely acknowledged by RET therapists. The Demanding-Imperative statement is defined as a command that conditions conform to one's expectations, preferences, and desires that is made without sufficient cause or basis.

Therapeutic algorithms and techniques are used in clinical settings to disrupt this tendency and teach individuals to recognize when they are making unfounded demands on themselves and others. Individuals are guided to replace Demanding-Imperative statements with statements reflecting a preference rather than a demand.

The basic ABC model of RET and the four therapeutic algorithms comprise the essentials of RET. The educational objectives of any self-instructional materials reflecting a Rational-Emotive content would include the
ABCD model and one or more of the therapeutic algorithms. The Rational-Emotive Problem Solving (REPS) workbook, the subject of this research, was created as a programmed self-instructional booklet utilizing the methodology of programmed learning and reflecting a Rational-Emotive content. This problem centered instrument systematically incorporates psychoeducational principles, therapeutic algorithms, and techniques derived from Rational-Emotive principles (see Appendix A).

Within a programmed structure, the REPS booklet directs the subject to identify a problem using Rational-Emotive Therapy's ABCD model. Key therapeutic algorithms reflected in the programmed material address the themes of AWFULIZING, Low Frustration Tolerance, Negative Labeling or Evaluation of Human worth, and Demanding-Imperative statements. The subjects are prompted to explore alternative behaviors and self-statements and are guided to cope more effectively with the identified problem.

The REPS workbook utilizes programmed learning principles. Concisely defined and achievable educational and therapeutic objectives are established for the reader. Concepts are presented in incremental steps. Examples and stories are used to illustrate how Rational-Emotive principles are applied in specific situations. Materials are presented in a logical sequence. Subjects work at
their own pace and are led to participate interactively through sentence completion, checklists, and a behavioral contracting.

It was acknowledged that certain design limitations exist which would require further empirical analysis of those variables considered critical to a more complete evaluation of the workbook. It would be necessary to incorporate conventional experimental procedures, such as the use of pretest and post test data of the subjects' prior knowledge of Rational-Emotive principles, use of control group comparison for determining which workbook components are critical for successful performance on the application of Rational-Emotive principles, and implementation of procedures which would insure the veracity of the subject's performance.

This research rests on the assumption that the REPS is a problem-centered instrument incorporating self-instructional programmed technology to effectively guide the subject in the mastery and application of Rational-Emotive principles. Derived from this assumption, two specific and empirically testable hypotheses were formulated to test this assumption.

A performance measure was selected by which both hypotheses and ancillary data were evaluated. This criterion was thought to be stringent enough to empirically
demonstrate that the REPS workbook had accomplished its two main tasks of education and generalization through the programmed technology.

**Hypothesis 1:** It was predicted that subjects would demonstrate mastery of Rational-Emotive principles by achieving a score of 80% or better on the Self-Test section of the REPS workbook.

**Hypothesis 2:** It was further predicted that subjects would demonstrate generalization of Rational-Emotive principles to a personal problem, achieving a score of 80% or higher on the Application section of the REPS workbook.

An item analysis of both the Self-Test and Application sections was conducted, providing two additional measures of ancillary data used in the evaluation of the REPS booklet. The item analysis was thought to provide a direct analysis of the programmed-technology, detecting the strengths and weaknesses of the booklet that would not be identified by individual subject or group scores.

The item analysis of the Self-Test questions was used to further evaluate the first hypothesis which tests for mastery. It was thought that items eliciting 80% or more correct responses across subjects would provide support for the first hypothesis which measures mastery of the educational materials.
The item analysis of the Application section was used to further evaluate the second hypothesis which tests for generalization of the educational materials by guiding the subject in applying Rational-Emotive principles to solve a personal problem. It was expected that items which elicited 80% or more correct responses across subjects would provide support for the second hypothesis which measured the subject's ability to apply the Rational-Emotive principles to a specific problem that was selected by the subject.

It was not the intent of the research to test the REPS with a defined clinical population. However, it is believed that the REPS has the potential for use as an adjunctive technology to formal psychotherapeutic practice. It derives clarity out of an existing model of psychotherapy and is based on widely accepted principles of programmed learning. It appears reasonable that this self-help, problem-centered instrument could be incorporated as a critical component of a therapeutic program.
CHAPTER II

METHODS

Subjects and Procedures

This research was conducted to evaluate the Rational-Emotive Problem Solving workbook (REPS, Appendix A) which employs programmed learning principles to teach Rational-Emotive problem-solving techniques.

Twenty undergraduate psychology students at a midwestern university volunteered to participate in the research. Letters describing the study and relevant consent forms are described in Appendix B. Of the 20 subjects, five subjects did not complete relevant portions of the booklet and were removed from the study.

The purpose of the study was described to the potential subjects, and those students choosing to participate were provided with a REPS booklet. The subjects were asked to take the booklet home and follow the instructions contained within. This approach closely approximates the actual conditions under which self-help materials are typically used. The REPS booklet was designed for use by a lay population and was considered to be a
problem-centered rather than a clinical instrument; therefore, no effort was made to screen or select subjects on the basis of a clinical diagnosis. The subjects were not constrained in selecting the type of problem they chose to work on.

The Rational-Emotive Problem Solving Booklet (REPS)

The REPS booklet is a 69-page document divided into three sections: (1) Education, (2) Self-Test, and (3) Application.

The Education section describes the principles of Rational-Emotive Therapy. This section is 16 pages in length and includes stories and examples to illustrate the principle.

The Self-Test consists of 16 multiple choice questions, each with three possible choices. The booklet instructs the subject to read each question and select the best answer. Each of the 16 questions is located on the lower half of one page; the correct answer is placed at the top of the following page. After answering the question, the subject is instructed to advance to the next page and compare the choice with the correct answer. If the correct answer is selected, the subject is instructed to add one point to the score box and advance to the next question. If the response does not match the
correct answer, the subject is directed to leave the score box blank, review the correct choice, and then proceed to the next question.

The Application section provides prompts to guide the subject in the application of Rational-Emotive techniques to a personal problem. Twenty-five prompts are presented in the text. The prompts are separated by a therapeutic narrative which is designed to guide the subject through the problem-solving process in a step-by-step manner, providing continuity by integrating the materials previously presented in the Educational section.

Evaluations of the REPS booklet rest on two categories of data drawn from the responses made by the subjects in the Self-Test and Application sections of the booklet, respectively.

It was predicted that subjects will demonstrate mastery of Rational-Emotive principles. Individual subjects' responses to the Self-Test were checked by the researcher against an answer key. Scores stating the percentage of correct responses were derived for each subject by dividing the possible number of correct responses into the actual number of correct responses, summed across subjects. These measures functioned to evaluate the first hypothesis.

It was further predicted that subjects would
demonstrate application of Rational-Emotive principles. A criterion checklist was developed which displayed each of the prompts used in the Application section. For each prompt, the criterion for a correct response was clearly defined by stating what the content must include. The researcher alone checked each match between the subject's response and the criterion; for the purpose of this research it was not deemed necessary to utilize additional observers. The subject's response received a score of one if it met the criterion, and zero if it did not meet the criterion (see Appendix C for the criterion listing).

Scores for the Application section stating the percentage of responses meeting the criterion were derived for each subject by dividing the possible number of responses into the actual number of responses meeting the criterion. This information was summed across subjects and yielded the data relevant to the test of the second hypothesis.

Ancillary data were collected on both the Self-Test and Application sections of the REPS workbook. For both sections an item analysis provided data on the percentage of subjects who successfully responded to each item. An item is defined as a question in the Self-Test section and a prompt in the Application section respectively. The item analysis functioned to identify any item to
which less than 80% of the subjects responded correctly.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The research was designed to examine the effectiveness of the Rational-Emotive Problem Solving workbook (REPS, Appendix A) as a self-help, problem-centered programmed instrument. Two hypotheses were designed to test the effectiveness of the booklet. The first hypothesis predicted that subjects using the REPS workbook would make at least 80% correct responses on the Self-Test section, which tests for mastery of Rational-Emotive principles. Of the 20 subjects volunteering to participate, 15 subjects completed the self-test and 5 were dropped from the study.

Table 1 describes each subject's total score on the 16-item self-test. Scores stating the percentage of correct responses were derived for each subject by dividing the possible number of correct responses into the actual number of correct responses, summed across subjects. The dash marks identify the 5 subjects who did not take the self-test.

All subjects performed at or better than the criterion. The overall group average was 96% correct responses,
thereby providing clear support for the first hypothesis showing that subjects did master the Rational-Emotive principles. It is recognized by this researcher that these results must be considered in light of the present design not having included a monitoring procedure for determining the veracity of the subject's performance on the Self-Test.

The second hypothesis measures the effectiveness of the workbook as a programmed self-instructional instrument. It was predicted that subjects would demonstrate generalization by employing Rational-Emotive principles to a personal problem, achieving a score of 80% or higher on the Application section of the REPS workbook.

Of the 20 subjects who volunteered to participate, 12 subjects completed the Application section of the REPS workbook. The Application section presented each of the subjects with 25 prompts. The prompts functioned to guide subjects through the problem-solving process in a step-by-step manner, providing continuity by integrating the materials previously presented in the Education section.

Table 2 describes each subject's score on the 25 prompts presented in the Application section. All 12 subjects performed at or above the 80% criterion. The group average was 91% correct, thereby providing
Table 1

Total Average Scores for Each Subject on the 16-Item Self-Test Demonstrating Mastery of Rational-Emotive Principles (n=15)

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<th>Subject Number</th>
<th>Percent Score</th>
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Support for the second hypothesis, showing that the subjects were able to generalize the material. Further research would be required to determine more clearly the variables controlling the subject's performance on the Application section.

Ancillary data were collected to further evaluate whether the programmed material was correctly structured and organized to facilitate learning and generalization.
Table 2
Total Score for Each Subject on the 25 Prompts, Demonstrating Generalization of the Rational-Emotive Principles to a Problem Solution (n=12)

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<th>Subject Number</th>
<th>Percent Score</th>
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of the Rational-Emotive principles. An item analysis was made of the Self-Test and the Application sections of the REPS workbook. The item analysis was conducted by examining each section in terms of the percentage of subjects responding appropriately to the items contained therein.

Table 3 shows the percentage and actual number of subjects responding correctly to each of the 16 items in the Self-Test.
Table 3

Percent of Subjects Responding Correctly to Each of the 16 Items in the Self-Test (n=15)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Percent Correct</th>
<th>Actual Number</th>
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<td>16</td>
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Each item in the Self-Test elicited 80% or more correct responses from the subjects taking the Self-Test. These data lend support to the first hypothesis that the REPS workbook effectively teaches Rational-Emotive principles through a programmed technology, and further demonstrate that there are no particular items within the sequence that elicit a high percentage of incorrect responses across subjects.

Table 4 shows the percentage and actual number of subjects responding appropriately to the 25 prompts...
contained within the application section of the REPS workbook. The data show that the items within the Application section elicited more than 80% correct responses across subjects, with the exception of three items (#12, 13, and 25).

These data provide additional support for the second hypothesis which tests the workbook's efficacy in guiding the subject to generalize Rational-Emotive principles to a personal problem.
Table 4
Percent of Subjects Performing Accurately to Each of the 25 Prompts in the Application Section (n=12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt Number</th>
<th>Percent Score</th>
<th>Actual Number</th>
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<tr>
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CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The technology of programmed learning has been applied to the principles of Rational-Emotive Therapy to create the Rational-Emotive Problem Solving workbook (REPS, Appendix A). This workbook incorporates many of the established principles of Rational-Emotive Therapy and utilizes the widely accepted techniques of programmed learning to create a problem-centered instrument.

The conclusions drawn from the study and the judgment made regarding the evaluation of the REPS workbook were made with full acknowledgement of the limitations inherent in the research design. The primary intent of the research was to develop the workbook as a self-help instrument.

The evaluation of the REPS workbook was accomplished by testing two hypotheses. The research provided evidence that the REPS workbook effectively guided the subjects in the mastery and application of Rational-Emotive principles. The data convincingly demonstrated that the REPS workbook had accomplished its two main tasks of education and generalization through the application of
programmed technology: Subjects learned the Rational-Emotive principles and were able to apply these principles effectively to the examination of a personal problem. The research further showed that the programmed text provided a structure which functioned to encourage and guide subjects through a psychological problem-solving process by means of the programmed methodology. The subjects were led to define a personal problem in terms of the RET's ABCD model, and were escorted through incremental steps and carefully sequenced examination of a personal problem with respect to the fundamental RET constructs of Low-Frustration-Tolerance, AWFULIZING, Negative Labeling, and Demanding-Imperative self statements.

This research extends the work of Pressey (Garner, 1966) and Skinner (Ornstein, 1970) by developing an application of programmed technology that is not only educational, but psychoeducational: As Pressey called his instrument a teaching machine, the REPS workbook can be called a therapeutic teaching machine. Subjects not only participated in a psychoeducational process, but also of significance was the opportunity to engage in a simulation of counseling.

The development of the REPS workbook was based on the assumption that programmed self-help materials can help
people identify personal problems and aid in their resolution, leading to the attainment of important goals. First, the individual learns to focus on defining the problem. Secondly, the individual will learn effective strategies in coping with the problem. Finally, the individual will learn to apply those coping strategies in the resolution of the problem. The results drawn from this research show strong support for this assumption. All subjects demonstrated successful performance on each of the goals of the REPS workbook.

This researcher believes that the development of programmed self-help workbooks reflecting psychotherapeutic orientations is very desirable. Instruments such as the REPS workbook have the potential to reach a wide audience inexpensively, and effectively guide individuals in learning and applying healthy coping and problem-solving skills.

The REPS workbook is another example of the popularization of psychology and an extension of a larger body of self-help books. Although the instrument may be seen as but one more self-help device within a larger body of such materials, it is solidly based on proven programmed technology and widely accepted clinical theory. To use Martin's (1985) phrase, "it is an effort to give counseling away" (p. 128).
The research was not designed to test the effectiveness of the REPS workbook on a clinical population; however, underscoring the research effort was a belief that such a booklet would have direct clinical application as an adjunctive component to ongoing formal therapy.

Individuals seen in clinical settings require professional help to obtain relief from their symptoms and to learn more adaptive behavior patterns. This study does not argue for replacing the therapist with programmed material. The use of programmed self-help instruments, such as REPS, can be of value to both the client and the clinician. Such materials can plausibly benefit the client by providing a structured opportunity to continue work outside the session, maximizing the benefits of the time invested in the session. The materials can function to make explicit concepts and strategies presented in therapy. Successful use of such materials can provide clients with a sense of being empowered to help themselves.

The therapist may also benefit by incorporating such an instrument in the overall planning and implementation of the treatment program. As completed assignments are returned to the therapist, the client's responses may provide important and relevant information useful for the
ongoing process of assessment and evaluation. New issues may be brought to the therapist's attention when reviewing the client's work, or misunderstandings about important concepts relevant to the therapeutic process may be detected and corrected.

It is this researcher's judgment that the principles of programmed technology can be readily integrated with any number of psychotherapeutic modalities. There are no grounds to believe that any other established therapeutic modality is a priori precluded from being incorporated as part of a self-help workbook format. The generalization of the technology to other therapeutic models remains open to further research.

This research adds to the promise that self-help problem-centered instruments can be effectively incorporated as a critical component in an ongoing therapeutic program.

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Appendix A

The Rational-Emotive Problem Solving Workbook (REPS)
Workbook for REPS (RATIONAL-EMOTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING)

By Alan Baldon

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LEARNING ABOUT REPS (RATIONAL-EMOTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING).

RET, Rational-Emotive Therapy was created by Dr. Albert Ellis. REPS, Rational-Emotive Problem Solving, is based on RET philosophy and theory. You will learn about both.

REPS PHILOSOPHY

The basics of REPS philosophy are illustrated by the acronym LEARN. Each letter of the word LEARN stands for an REPS idea. These ideas together make-up the general REPS philosophy:

L = Living involves balancing long term and short term goals.
E = Every human is error prone - including you!
A = Against judging, condemning, or rating human worth.
R = Responsibility for your feelings belongs to you!
N = Nothing is totally 100% bad or awful!
EXPANDING ON L OF LEARN

L= Living involves balancing long term and short term goals.

The values of pleasure and survival are very important in REPS. Short term goals often involve immediate pleasure but have painful or disadvantageous long term consequences. Long term goals often involve immediate discomfort and long term pleasure or advantages.

Experiencing personal happiness involves balancing long term and short term goals, maximizing pleasure without doing yourself in.

If you focus only on short term goals you may find yourself getting nowhere, and you may even do yourself in by overindulging in some addictive behavior.

If you focus only on long term goals, your life may be "safe" dull. Death, illness, war, economic instability are realities. Do not save too much happiness for tomorrow.

REPS suggests that you find a balance that allows you to be happy today, yet prepare for the probable future. Compare the pleasures of the moment with the pleasure of the future and reach a compromise solution. Is the pleasure you seek today going to backfire on you tomorrow, next week, or even years from now?

One way to balance your short term and long term goals is to think of long term goals as being made up of several short term goals. For each short term goal you can provide yourself with some immediate reward. Even the biggest job can be broken down into smaller jobs.

Imagine that your goal is to walk 1000 miles. Thinking about taking a 1000 mile walk might seem impossible and create feelings of hopelessness. It might seem impossible! On the other hand, thinking of several 1 mile walks seems possible and does not generate self-defeating emotions. Eventually, those 1 mile walks can add up to a 1000 miles.

REPS will help you to develop realistic goals and to find the personal energy to meet them. Moreover, REPS will help you to accept yourself even if you fail short of your goals.
EXPANDING ON THE E OF LEARN

E= Every human is error prone - including you!

REPS asks you to face up to the fact that you are a fallible, error-prone human being. If you say to yourself "I must be perfect" you are in for a let down.

Everyone is going to fail in several ways that they rate as important. Strive for success, but no matter how many times you succeed you can never prove that you are "successful". Similarly, no matter how many times or ways that you fail, you can never prove that you are a "failure." You are a human who does some things well and some things poorly. In addition you will make ethical and moral errors, probably repeatedly.

REPS asks you to admit your errors, at least to yourself. Accept yourself with your fallibility. You don't have to like your self-defeating behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, but admit that they exist. Most importantly, do not condemn, rate, or down yourself because this will probably not help you to do better.

Perfectionism is more than doing something perfectly for the obvious advantages. Perfectionism is saying that "I must do something perfectly, and if I don't I can't accept myself, I'll have to be upset, and I'll have to keep on doing it over and over until I get it perfect." Perfectionism often leads people to procrastinate or put off doing or trying things. With a philosophy of perfectionism, doing poorly is AWFUL, and it is safer to not try. When perfectionism interferes with task completion it become obviously self-defeating.

Admit that you are error-prone. Think of yourself as a human being who succeeds and fails but not as a "success" or "failure". Admit your errors and never condemn yourself. Strive for "doing well" and avoid perfectionism, because it often is self-defeating.
EXPANDING ON THE A OF LEARN

Against judging, condemning, or rating human worth.

Judging, condemning, or rating human worth are considered undesirable in REPS. REPS teaches that it is not healthy to evaluate human worth, but rather to rate specific behaviors, feelings, or thoughts as appropriate or inappropriate.

It is not your obligation to prove your human worth - and it is impossible to either prove or disprove human worth. All people are error prone and do make mistakes, accidentally and willfully. Human beings are fallible. Therefore, no matter what you do, you cannot judge yourself to be a worthless person.

These statements reflect the REPS philosophy:

I am not my behavior, but I am responsible for my behavior.

I am not my feelings, but I experience my feelings.

I am not my thoughts, but I think them.

My feelings, thoughts, and behaviors may change over time, but I will still be ME.

If my performance, in terms of thoughts, behaviors and feelings, is bad, it does not follow that I am BAD.

If my performance is good, it does not follow that I am GOOD.

Because I am not my feelings, thoughts and behavior I can admit that some of my behavior, thoughts and feelings are "bad" because they are disadvantageous. I am not BAD for having or doing them; yet, I will profit from changing them. I do not have to condemn or put myself down for having them. I can admit that I am responsible and feel regretful without blaming myself and feeling guilty about things that I have said, done, or thought. I never HAVE to feel guilty because I always have a choice about condemning or rating myself.
I will benefit if I change my DISADVANTAGEOUS thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. I desire to start changing right now, not because I HAVE TO or SHOULD, but because I will benefit from doing so.

It is important to change for the right reasons. The right reasons for change are the advantages for you and others in making a change. The benefits.

The wrong reasons to change are to prove that you are a worthwhile human being on the one hand, or NOT a so-and-so on the other.

Rate specific thoughts, feelings, and behavior and not people. You cannot prove or disprove your human worth. Admit your errors without condemning yourself. Change for the right reasons: the advantages. Don't change for the wrong reasons: to prove you are an acceptable human being.
EXPANDING ON THE R OF LEARN

R = Responsibility for your feelings belongs to you!

"You made me mad" is an everyday expression. REPS holds that to a large extent people make themselves mad, sad, scared, miserable, happy, and excited. People do this by the way they think about their experience. You will learn more about this when you learn the ABCs of REPS theory. Responsibility for your feelings belongs to you. So "knock off" blaming other people or the past for your emotional upset. Accept responsibility for your feelings and get on with making your life better.

There is nothing bad or wrong with being "emotional" and feeling a variety of feelings. REPS helps people to take responsibility for their feelings and learn to control them. Sometimes negative feelings like sadness or anger are too strong, last too long, or occur to often or at the wrong time. REPS will help you learn to feel more appropriate feelings, and ultimately more happiness.

Everyone experiences feelings. Are your feelings appropriate or inappropriate? REPS will ask you to change the inappropriate feelings to appropriate ones.

Appropriate feelings ....

...are often related to a real loss or disappointment.
...do not lead us to hurt people or destroy things.
...do not make us feel helpless.
...lead us to act better in the future.

Inappropriate feelings ....

...seem out of proportion or exaggerated.
...lead us to hurt people or destroy things.
...make us feel helpless
...lead us to "give up"

You are responsible for your own feelings. Don't blame others or the past for your feelings. No feelings are BAD or WRONG, but some are more appropriate than others.
EXPANDING ON THE N OF LEARN

N= Nothing is totally 100% bad or awful!

Life is spelled HASSLE according to psychologist Albert Ellis, the founder of RET (Rational-Emotive Therapy). Unfair, and very undesirable things happen each day. Bad things happen, but nothing is 100% bad, or more than bad, or AWFUL!

Nothing is totally bad or awful because things could always be worse. It is always possible to think of one more thing that would make matters even worse. This is not to suggest that your bad experience or problem is smaller than it is. Just don't make your problem bigger than it is. Keep it in perspective.

Usually, if people really think about something that seems AWFUL, they can find something "good" that came out of it.

When you tell yourself that something is AWFUL and HORRIBLE, you will make yourself more upset and less able to deal effectively with your concerns.

You may be surprised at what you can stand. If you really couldn't stand something it would kill you. Right? People say, "I can't stand it!", but keep on living. The truth is that they can stand it. Have a little talk with yourself. Tell yourself the truth - You can stand it, but it's not easy.

No matter how bad your problem seems now, when you get over it or solve it, then it won't seem so bad. So, thinking that the problem is not so bad is closely related to finding a solution or getting over the problem.

Nothing is all bad because it could be worse. Besides, something "good" might come out of it. Labeling events and experiences as awful usually makes people more upset. Don't underestimate your own personal strength to tolerate "bad" things happening, and to still find happiness in spite of these "bad" things.
REPS THEORY: THE ABCs of REPS.

REPS gives you a way to think about and organize your experience. Your experience includes feeling, thinking, and behaving in relationship to the world around you. REPS helps you organize your experience so that you do better, feel better, and get more of what you want out of life. The basic REPS theory is as simple as ABC.

Point (A) stands for activating event: usually negative life experience that blocks your goal.

Point (B) stands for belief system: what we think and say to ourselves about point (A).

Point (C) stands for consequences: feelings and behaviors that result from the way we think about point (A).

Point (G) stands for goals that are being blocked at point (A), especially success and approval. When your thoughts, feelings or behaviors prevent you from reaching your goals, this is self-defeating.

Read this story.

When John returned a shirt because he didn't like the color, the sales person said to John "Are you sure this is new, it looks like some one slept in it." John didn't say anything, but he was burning up with anger. The shirt was obviously brand new. "This sales person is really an ass, somebody SHOULD teach some manners to this person." John thought. The rest of the day and most of the night John was grouchy because he kept thinking about how the sales person "made him mad." John thought "A salesperson MUST not be rude to a customer, what an idiot!" John also thought, "I should have said what was on my mind, and I'm a coward because I didn't."

REPS analysis

The sales person was rude (point A), but this didn't cause John to feel angry. Point (A) did not cause John to be grouchy all night, either. He did it to himself after, and kept doing it after the sales person went home. John's anger at point (C) was caused by his thinking (point B): He thought "No sales person SHOULD treat me rudely, and they are "idiots" if they do", and, "I should have told that sales person a thing or two! I'm a coward because I didn't." John met his goal of returning the shirt, but he still held on to some beliefs about his personal value depending on his ability to persuade or be assertive with other people.
EXPANDING THE ABC-GS TO INCLUDE D AND E.

Point (D) stands for disputation: finding a new more self-helping way to think or talk to yourself, helping you to feel and act in ways that help you to reach your goals.

At point (D), John might begin to say to himself "That salesperson didn't make me mad - I made myself mad. I didn't have to get mad. Not everyone would have reacted the same way I did. Some people would not have let it bother them. I take responsibility that I let it bother me. The salesperson did act out of line and was rude to me. But I can handle it or do something about it like complain to the supervisor. Still, I'm disappointed that I didn't assert myself. I want to learn to say what is on my mind in situations like this. I will learn to act differently, but for now I can accept myself even though I'm not perfect.

Point (E) stand for an effective new philosophy that results from effective disputation.

John's outlook gives him the advantage of avoiding being grouchy. He does not maintain his anger inappropriately with his self-talk. He is still stating clearly that he doesn't like to be treated rudely and PREFERENCES to be treated with dignity, but he stopped demanding.

John's old philosophy caused him to be grouchy all night. His new philosophy does not make him feel inappropriately upset. Yet, he loses nothing except his inappropriate feelings. He is accepting the way things are, stating preferences, and not demanding that he and the world become as he wishes it to be. His new philosophy is more effective.

That is the ABCDE-G model at work.

In general, people think (point B) about the activating event (point A), creating their feelings and behaviors (point C). We feel what we think. By changing self-talk (point B), people can change their feelings and behaviors and get more of what they want.

REPS concentrates on changing self-talk and beliefs. Of course, this is not the only road to change, but is the main one we will focus on.

Now you are ready to learn a little bit more about the details of the ABCDE-G model of REPS.
As you learned, (A) stands for activating event: usually a negative life experience.

There are 2 basic kinds of activating events.

Primary activating events and perpetual activating events.

Primary activating events are more easily identifiable events that have a significance or importance to us. Primary activating events usually mark the beginning of a problem. For example, divorce, losing a job, getting a disease, or moving. These primary activating events can be seen as something that happened in a certain place and time, and under certain conditions. These events may mark the beginning of the problem.

Perpetual activating events can be identified as ongoing problem situations that have no clear beginning. Getting at the activating event requires "taking a sample". Taking a sample means identifying one particular time the problem occurred and seeing what event or conditions "set off" the problem. For example, where continuous fighting is occurring between people, one example of the fight can be used as an activating event. Another example is when a feeling of depression is not associated with a particular event and is reoccurring: A single situation or experience that becomes the focus of the depression provides a sample activating event.

Technically, an activating event can be a feeling. Remember the story of John and the sales person. John’s feeling of anger is point (A). John thinks "I MUST not feel angry" at point (B). At point (C) he is likely to feel guilty. In REPS it is called SYMPTOM STRESS when you have a feeling about a feeling, like feeling guilty about being angry, or mad about feeling guilty.

Identify an activating event objectively. This story can help show what it means to define point (A) objectively.

Sue was waiting for John to call, but John did not call. Later, Sue felt very upset and started crying. She then decided to use REPS on herself.

When she started to identify the activating event she thought the activating event might be that "John doesn’t care about me." Then she realized that this was a belief (point B) and not an activating event. The activating event, she decided, was that "John did not call." This is the simple fact that objectively describes the activating event.
She identified what she was thinking "John didn't call, therefore he does not care about me - as he SHOULD - if I was OK!" (point B), which helped create a feeling of sadness followed by tears (point C).

She could use REPS and dispute or challenge her thinking by telling herself "My feelings don't have to depend on John's behavior. I want him to call, but that doesn't mean that he MUST call. I can start a project that I have been wanting to do."

LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE BELIEF SYSTEM AT POINT (B).

Self-talk refers to what you say to yourself about your experience. It doesn't mean talking out loud to yourself. Self-talk means thinking and imagining. Self-talk includes everything defined below as beliefs.

The B's of REPS are beliefs. You can also call them cognitions, thoughts, views, opinions, values, meaning, attitudes, ideas, expectations, and philosophies.

There are two main types of self-talk or beliefs: Rational and Irrational.

Rational beliefs are thoughts that lead to appropriate feelings and behavior effectively and help you to get more of what you want and less of what you don't want.

Irrational Beliefs are thoughts that lead to inappropriate feelings and behavior and interfere with your getting more of what you want and less of what you don't want.

Three main irrational beliefs stand out. These are known as the 3 major MUSTS:

1. I MUST perform well and/or win the approval of important people or else I am an inadequate person.

2. You MUST treat me fairly and considerately and not unduly frustrate me or else you are a rotten individual!

3. My life conditions MUST give me the things I want and have to have to keep me from harm or else life is unbearable and I can't be happy at all.
Take a moment to review the story you read about John and the salesperson.

When John returned a shirt because he didn’t like the color, the salesperson said to John “Are you sure this is new, it looks like some one slept in it.” John didn’t say anything, but he was burning up with anger. The shirt was obviously brand new. “This salesperson is really an ass, somebody should teach some manners to this person.” John thought. The rest of the day and most of the night John was grouchy because he kept thinking about how the sales person “made him mad.” John thought “A salesperson MUST not be rude to a customer, what an idiot!” John also thought, “I should have said what was on my mind, and I’m a coward because I didn’t.”

Can you identify any of the 3 major MUSTS at work?

MUST number 2 is at work: “You MUST treat me fairly and considerately and not unduly frustrate me or else you are a rotten individual!” The salesperson was unfairly rude to him, and he negatively evaluated the sales person’s human worth, using the negative label idiot. If John had said to himself that he just wanted, desired or preferred to be treated fairly, then he would feel appropriately irritated.

MUST number 1 is at work also: “I MUST perform well and/or win the approval of important people or else I am an inadequate person.”

John began to negatively rate himself as a coward for not standing up for his rights. John was saying negative things about himself to himself. Even if he acted cowardly, he is not a coward for doing so. If John would say to himself that he WANTS to learn to speak up assertively, then he might be appropriately disappointed in his behavior, but would likely not be grouchy all evening.

It is self-defeating when we tell ourselves authoritative MUSTS, SHOULDs, and OUGHTs. At point (D), disputation, you learn to replace DEMAND statements (Must, should, ought, need, have to, etc.) with PREFERENCE statements (Want, like, prefer, wish, etc.).
Look at the first major MUST, "I MUST perform well and/or win the approval of important people or else I am an inadequate person." This belief is very much a DEMAND, and may lead persons to feel more sad, mad, or scared than they have to be.

It would be better to say to yourself, "I would like to perform well and win the approval of important people. Who wouldn't! But I don't need to do that and I accept myself even if other people don't accept me." This self-talk reflects a preference, not a demand, and leads a person to feel appropriately disappointed or let down when rejected, and not dejected rejected and demoralized.

RET identifies other common irrational beliefs. All of these beliefs reflect the 3 major MUSTS.

1. I MUST be loved and approved of by every significant person in my life, and if I'm not, it's awful.

2. When other people behave badly or unfairly, they should be blamed, reprimanded and punished; they are bad or rotten individuals.

3. It's awful when things are not the way I'd like them to be.

4. I should be very anxious about events that are uncertain or potentially dangerous.

5. I am not worthwhile unless I am thoroughly competent, adequate and achieving at all times, or at least most of the time in at least one major area.

6. There HAS GOT TO BE a perfect solution to this problem; I MUST be certain and have perfect control over things.

7. The world SHOULD be fair and just.

8. I SHOULD be comfortable and without pain at all times.

9. I may be going crazy, and that would be UNBEARABLE.

10. It's easier to avoid than to face life's difficulties.

11. I need someone stronger than myself on whom to depend or rely.

12. Emotional misery comes from external pressure, and I have little ability to control or change my feelings.

13. My past is the cause of my present problems; because these events were strong influences on me, they will continue to be so.
These beliefs or self-statements are called irrational in REPS because they cannot be proven true. Telling yourself these things may lead to creating and maintaining needless emotional misery.

Another aspect of your belief system involves negative labeling of yourself, others, or situations. A negative label is usually an illogical conclusion that involves overgeneralization. For example, "I have failed at a task, therefore I conclude that I am a FAILURE." With this kind of illogical thinking, people usually conclude that being a failure causes them to fail. It seems to explain any particular failure. But it is not a very good explanation.

People fail at particular tasks for specific reasons, not because they are FAILURES.

Even the person who has failed at almost every task has at least done average at something - and probably succeeded at least one thing! Even when succeeding at a task, will this person call himself or herself a SUCCESS? The truth is that we are neither saints nor sinners, successes or failures. We are error-prone human beings.

To label someone as a FAILURE is much more than a description of someone, maybe yourself, doing poorly at something or letting others or yourself down. Being a "FAILURE" goes beyond "I have failed at some particular and important task or relationship" and says "I am not OK, or bad, or worthless, and no good for failing." This is just the type of judgmental and global downing that REPS wishes you not do.

Examples of negative labeling are:

I failed, therefore I am a FAILURE.
I am rejected, therefore I am an unlovable REJECT.
I acted foolishly, therefore I am a FOOL.
I didn't know, therefore I am a DUMMY or an IDIOT.
I gave in, therefore I am WEAK and NEVER strong.
I acted insensitively, therefore I am a JERK, ASS, or ROTTEN.
I did badly, therefore I am NO GOOD.
I don't like my choices, therefore I am TRAPPED.
I can't see the solution now, therefore I am HOPELESS.
I didn't try, therefore I am LAZY and WORTHLESS.
I lost, therefore I am a LOSER.

REPS encourages you to replace these overgeneralized labels or self-statements with more specific and rational self-talk.
When people get ideas in their head about themselves, others, or the world, they tend to find evidence to support their beliefs. If you started out saying "I am rejected by people", then you may find evidence to support this belief, but no evidence that you are an UNLOVABLE REJECT. And no evidence that you are not capable of loving.

Beyond whether we believe that we are loveable or not lingers another important question about love. "Do we need to be loved or do we just very much want to be loved?" REPS holds that to a large degree we just want it. When we say to ourselves that we need love and approval, we create a dire need for love. This dire need often involves self-talk and beliefs that lead us to feel and act in ways that undermines our relationships.

THE WORST THING THAT COULD POSSIBLY HAPPEN

REPS points out that all people will often experience being rejected by important people, and no one is completely accepted by all of the people they consider important. So, REPS teaches people to assume the worst and then teaches them to make the best of it, philosophically. REPS suggests that we say to ourselves, "Well, maybe no one does love me and I have been rejected by almost everyone important to me. That hurts, but I can refuse to be totally miserable about it and I can still experience some happiness even though I don't have the type of relationships I want right now."

Looking at "the worst thing that could possibly happen" often helps people to get in touch with what they are really bothered about. People often spend a lot of time worrying and feeling scarred, mad, or sad about things that might happen. This not only doesn't help them to make the future the best it can be, but it also destroys the present. As Henry David Thoreau said in about 1843, "We cannot kill time without wounding eternity."

REPS asks you to ask yourself, "What is the worst thing that could happen." After you answer that, you ask again, "Then, what is the worst thing that could happen next" and so on until you get to the very worst thing. Often times this line of questioning helps you to identify an important psychological issue, like death, separation, desertion, or dire needs for approval, success, and comfort.

Often times this "very worst thing that could happen" is really not AWFUL or more than 100% bad. Consider some of the common worst things that commonly happen to people. Death is certain, it happens to everyone sooner or later because all men share the same fate. Many people experience divorce and manage to go on and live full and productive lives. People can get over things, but
sometimes they choose not to. People who are deserted sometimes find strength within themselves that they did not know they had; they learn new skills and survive. REPS does not wish unfortunate or bad things on people, but admits that many undesirable things do happen to humans. So, learn to deal with them. They are not AWFUL, and realizing this can help you to get through them.

LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE

An important part of your self-talk involves Low Frustration Tolerance (LFT). Learning about LFT may help you to deal with some of the problems you face in your life.

LFT describes your tolerance for frustration. In other words, how much is "too much" or "more than you can stand?" Some people seem to be able to tolerate a great deal of frustration, while others can be pushed over the edge by what they tell themselves about everyday events.

If your frustration tolerance is low, you let frustration block you from reaching some of your goals. Usually when people try to reach a goal they experience some real frustration.

LFT describes your tendency to give up in the face of frustration.

LFT really gets in the way of LONG TERM GOALS because the immediate frustration is evaluated by you as being "too much".

Low frustration tolerance describes when you feel overly frustrated and begin saying things like: I can't stand it; It's more than I can bear; This is too much; and I'm at my breaking point.

LFT could be a part of your problem. At least it is possible since you are a fallible human being. If LFT is a problem for you, then you can increase your LFT and become more capable of getting what you want out of life.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT LFT.

Begin replacing your "I can't stand it" statements with more self-helping statements. You could say, "I strongly don't like it, it's hard, or it's uncomfortable" instead of saying "I can't stand it." The truth is that you can stand it, unless of course it kills you. If it killed you, then you couldn't be happy at all!
You can increase your frustration tolerance in 2 basic ways.

First, you can reduce your feeling of frustration by relaxation techniques, exercise, or some other method. These methods may be helpful, but are considered inelegant or temporary in REPS because it is both possible and better to not get uptight in the first place. But since you probably will let frustration get to you, you will benefit from dealing with your uncomfortable physical tension. Uncomfortable neck and shoulder pain, headaches, and stomach trouble often are the result of stress or physical tension. When you feel these things your body is talking to you.

Listen to your body. The physical tension related to frustration can lead to serious health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, and muscle strain.

It is important for you to be aware of your tension level and know what activities help YOU to reduce your tension. Exercise, sports, walking, aerobics, hiking, progressive relaxation, meditation, or a hobby like music or art can help reduce the muscle tension associated with frustration. While these are considered diversions because they are temporary and treat the symptoms and not the cause or source of your stress and frustration, which is your thinking and self-talk, they are healthy diversions. Healthy diversion are more advantageous than unhealthy diversions, such as excessive drinking or use of street or prescription drugs, smoking, over sleeping, and other similar diversions.

The second and most important way you can increase your frustration tolerance is to change your self-talk and beliefs. For example, tell yourself, "If I want to reach my goal, doing this hard thing is part of the price I am willing to pay." Nothing is worth getting uptight and upset about - because these feelings don't help. The world is not making you uptight. You are doing it to yourself. You have a choice, and you can choose not to feel excessively frustrated. The techniques of REPS will help you. No law of God or man states that you MUST be inappropriately uptight, frustrated, and worried.

LFT, downing, awfulizing, negative labeling, the 3 major MUSTS, and self-talk are all part of your belief system. When you work on point (B), these are the things you will work on. REPS holds that it is your thinking at point (B) that creates many of your inappropriate feelings and related actions.

As you learned, point (C) stands for feelings and behaviors that result from the way we think about point (A).
You emotionally react to your experiences, real and imagined. People often don't know what they are feeling and have a hard time giving their feelings a name. No feeling is wrong to have, but some are more appropriate. Here are some common feeling-words. Read these words so that you can improve your feeling vocabulary.

mad
afraid
disgusted
lonely
furious
jealous
lost
infuriated
hateful
depressed
satisfaction
appreciation
calm
cheer

irate
uncomfortable
resentful
ashamed
shocked
like hitting
malice
forsaken
down
happiness
love
unity
pleasure

sad
timid
guilty
worried
scared
insecure
humiliated
frightened
hurt
peace
acceptance
serenity
wholeness

excited
shaky
anxious
dismal
dejected
repulsed
resentful
empty
ambition
enjoyment

gladness
completeness

You can experience a variety of emotions as a human, and you can learn to accept and control your emotional experience so that you eliminate most unnecessary suffering in your life.

Behavior describes what you are doing or how you are acting. Just as feeling is one way you respond to your situation, behavior is another way.

Look at the following words that describe behavior. This list may help you to find some words that describe your actions and help you to increase your behavior-vocabulary.

Avoiding
Arguing
Crying
Eating

Withdrawing
Yelling
Sulking
Drinking

Hitting
Screaming
Talking
Driving

REPS holds strongly that you can learn to change your self-defeating, addictive, or otherwise undesirable behavior by changing the way you talk to yourself. You can learn new behavior. But REPS also holds strongly that you can ALWAYS ACCEPT YOURSELF no matter what behavior problems you experience. You always have the philosophical choice of accepting your self or not.

Now that you have learned the basics of REPS, you will be putting what you have learned into practice using the REPS workbook.


References and notes:


TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF REPS.

You have completed reading the educational material on REPS. Now, you will be asked to answer some questions about REPS using the programmed workbook.

Instructions: You will be asked a question on each page. Check the best answer, then turn the page. Compare your answer to the correct answer. If your answer to the previous question is correct, add one point to your score and go to the next question. If you have not chosen the correct answer, read the explanation of why the correct answer is best. When you have finished reading, then go to the next question.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

(1) REPS believes that...... (check one)......

[ ] 1. You can be perfect if you try hard enough!
[ ] 2. Every human is error prone - including you!
[ ] 3. Nobody is perfect, so why bother trying!
The correct answer to the previous question is 2.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
   add 1 point in the scorebox........................................[ ]
   go directly to the next question

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
   leave the scorebox blank and
   read the following explanation
   and then go to the next question.

Why this choice is the correct one.
Every human is error prone - including you! This is the best choice
because it reflects the basic REPS philosophy. You may be able to
do many things very well, perhaps perfectly, but you will never be
perfect and you will feel better if you accept your fallibility.
However, REPS holds that it is worthwhile to try to do things well
and hopes that you will often succeed, but hopes that you can
always accept yourself even when you do not.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

(2)  REPS believes that...... (check one).....

[ ] 1. If you do well, you can prove that you are OK or acceptable
    as a person.

[ ] 2. It is impossible to prove or disprove that you are OK or
    acceptable as a person.

[ ] 3. You are your thoughts feelings and behaviors.
The correct answer to the previous question is 2.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox.................................
go directly to the next question

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

Why this choice is the correct one.
It is impossible to prove or disprove that you are OK or acceptable
as a person.

This is the best choice because REPS holds that you always have
the choice of accepting yourself. It is impossible to prove or
disprove your human value, or lack of it.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

(3) REPS believes that....... (check one).....

[] 1. Long term goals usually bring immediate satisfaction.

[] 2. Eat, drink, and be merry regardless of the consequences.

[] 3. Experiencing personal happiness involves balancing long-term
and short term goals, maximizing pleasure without "doing yourself
in."
The correct answer to the previous question is 3.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox..................................
and then go directly to the next question.

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: Experiencing personal happiness involves balancing long-term and short term goals, maximizing pleasure without “doing yourself in.”

This is the best choice because this reflects rational moderation. Also, long term goals usually do not bring immediate gratification. REPS does not advise you to do anything “regardless of the consequences.”

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

(4) REPS believes that....... (check one)....

[ ] 1. Other people and difficult life situations cause me to feel unhappy.

[ ] 2. I can not be happy because my parents treated me badly.

[ ] 3. I can take responsibility for my feelings without blaming myself.
The correct answer to the previous question is 3.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox..................................
and then go directly to the next question.

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: I can take responsibility for my feelings without blaming myself.

This is the best choice because REPS advises you to take responsibility for your feelings, but to still accept yourself and not blame yourself for doing poorly. REPS holds that even though our parents may have treated us badly, we still have the power to experience happiness. As long as we blame other people and situations for our feelings, we are going to be emotionally unable to help ourselves.

(5) Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

REPS believes that...... (check one)......

[ ] 1. Very unfortunate things can happen to you, but it is not AWFUL.
[ ] 2. Labeling a situation as AWFUL helps you to feel better.
[ ] 3. My life should be easy, and I should not be uncomfortable.
The correct answer to the previous question is 1.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox........................................( )
go directly to the next question

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: Very unfortunate things can happen
to you, but it is not AWFUL.

This is the best choice because nothing is awful in the sense that it
is 100% bad. Labeling a situation as AWFUL usually makes people
feel more upset and think of themselves as a helpless victim. Life
is not easy and every human experiences some discomfort.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

(6) Which statement is most accurate...... (check one).....

[] 1. A=activating event; B=behavior; C=consequences: results.
[] 2. A=activating event; B=belief system; C=consequences: feeling &
   behavior.
[] 3. A=acceptance; B=belonging; C=criticism
The correct answer to the previous question is 2.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox..........................
  go directly to the next question

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: A=activating event; B=belief system;
C=consequences: feeling & behavior.

This is the best choice because it reflects the ABCs of REPS.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

Read the following story, then answer some questions about the
story. This will give you a chance to work with the REPS theory
by using REPS to understand the story.

Sue was driving to work and had a flat tire. She said to herself, "I
can’t stand this. Why does this ALWAYS happen to me! One thing
after another and NOTHING goes right for me. Life SHOULDN’T be
this way – it SHOULDN’T be this hard. Is it something about me that
causes these things to happen? When they do happen, why can’t I
handle them? What is wrong with this world – what is wrong with
me!" She thought the situation was hopeless and felt helpless. She
sat in her car and cried.

(7) What is point (A) or the activating event? (check one)
[I] 1. She sat in her car and cried.
[I] 2. She thought the situation was hopeless and felt helpless.
[I] 3. Sue was driving to work and had a flat tire.
The correct answer to the previous question is 3.

If your answer matches the correct answer then

add 1 point in the scorebox..........................................

go directly to the next question

If your answer does not match the correct answer then

leave the scorebox blank and

read the following explanation

and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: Sue was driving to work and had a flat tire.

This is the best choice because this is the event that happened to Sue. Thinking the situation is hopeless is a thought, and feeling helpless is a feeling. Sitting in the car crying is a behavior.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

This is the same story. You may want to refer to it when answering the next question.

Sue was driving to work and had a flat tire. She said to herself, “I can’t stand this. Why does this always happen to me! One thing after another and nothing goes right for me. Life shouldn’t be this way - it wouldn’t be this hard. It is something about me that causes these things to happen? When they do happen, why can’t I handle them? What is wrong with this world - what is wrong with me?” She thought the situation has hopeless and felt helpless. She sat in her car and cried.

(8) What is Sue’s overall goal, or point (G) in the story.

[] 1. To feel good about herself

[] 2. To avoid getting a traffic ticket.

[] 3. Getting to work.
The correct answer to the previous question is 3.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox..................................

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: Getting to work.

This is the best choice because getting to work is her main goal. She may have other goals such as "being comfortable" or "being able to handle situations", but these are subgoals.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

This is the same story. You may want to refer to it when answering the next question.

Sue was driving to work and had a flat tire. She said to herself, "I can't stand this. Why does this always happen to me? One thing after another and nothing goes right for me. Life shouldn't be this way - it wouldn't be this hard. It is something about me that causes these things to happen? When they do happen, why can't I handle them? What is wrong with this world - what is wrong with me?"

She thought the situation has hopeless and felt helpless. She sat in her car and cried.

(9) At point (C), what were Sue's feelings and behaviors?

[3] 1. Sue is feeling depressed; and she is crying.

[3] 2. Sue is feeling, "I don't want to do it"; and her behavior is wanting to go to work.

[3] 3. Sue is feeling like getting to work; and her behavior is thinking that something is wrong with her.
The correct answer to the previous question is 1.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox.............................

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: Sue is feeling depressed; and she is
crying.

This is the best choice because this is the only choice that
identifies a feeling and behavior. "I don't want to do it" is a
thought, not a feeling, and getting to work is a goal.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

This is the same story. You may want to refer to it when
answering the next question.

Sue was driving to work and had a flat tire. She said to herself, "I
can't stand this. Why does this always happen to me? One thing
after another and nothing goes right for me. Life shouldn't be this
way - it wouldn't be this hard. It is something about me that causes
these things to happen? When they do happen, why can't I handle
them? What is wrong with this world - what is wrong with me?"
She thought the situation has hopeless and felt helpless. She sat in
her car and cried.

Now that you have identified the activating event, goal, feelings and
behavior, begin to focus on what Sue might be telling herself that
would cause her to feel and act this way.

(9) When Sue is feeling depressed, she was probably labeling her
situation and her reaction as... (check one)

[ ] 1. A merely unfortunate hassle

[ ] 2. A challenge

[ ] 3. Awful
The correct answer to the previous question is 3 (both 1 & 2).

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox...........................................
and go directly to the next question

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: Both 1 and 2.
I must perform well or else I am an inadequate person.
Things MUST be the way I want them to be and it's AWFUL when they are not.

This is the best choice because: She makes herself upset with her "inability" to handle the situation AND upset because the situation existed or happened.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

(11) "I must perform well or else I am an inadequate person."
Which statement would dispute or challenge this belief?

[ ] 1. I want to perform well and handle things, but I am NEVER an inadequate person, even when I do poorly.

[ ] 2. If I stop trying to do things, then I won't risk doing them poorly.

[ ] 3. If I could do better, then I could accept myself.
The correct answer to the previous question is 1.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox..........................[ ]
go directly to the next question

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: I want to perform well and handle things, but I am NEVER an inadequate person, even when I do poorly.

This is the best choice because: It is reasonable to want to do well. But there is no reason why we MUST to well. It is one thing to do inadequately in some area, but that will NEVER make you an inadequate person.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

(12) "Things MUST be the way I want them to be and it's AWFUL when they are not." Which statement could dispute or challenge this belief?

[] 1. I am really happy that I had a flat tire.

[] 2. Bad things are going to have to stop happening to me or I'll go crazy.

[] 3. Having this flat tire is a hassle, but not the end of the world and definitely not AWFUL.
The correct answer to the previous question is 3.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
  add 1 point in the scorebox..................................[ ]
go directly to the next question

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
  leave the scorebox blank and
  read the following explanation
  and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: Having this flat tire is a hassle, but
not the end of the world and definitely not AWFUL.

This is the best choice because: It would be unreasonable to be
happy about having a flat tire on the way to work and bad things
or uncomfortable things are going to keep happening; Therefore,
realize it is not AWFUL and deal with these difficult things.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

This is the same story. You may want to refer to it when
answering the next question.

Sue was driving to work and had a flat tire. She said to herself, "I
can't stand this. Why does this always happen to me? One thing
after another and nothing goes right for me. Life shouldn't be this
way - it wouldn't be this hard. It is something about me that causes
these things to happen? When they do happen, why can't I handle
them? What is wrong with this world - what is wrong with me?"
She thought the situation has hopeless and felt helpless. She sat in
her car and cried.

(13) When Sue is saying "I can't stand this", this is linked to what
REPS calls...(check one)....

[ ] 1. LFT (Low Frustration Tolerance)
[ ] 2. TLC (Tender Loving Care)
[ ] 3. LSE (Low Self-Esteem)
The correct answer to the previous question is 1.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox........................................[ ]
go directly to the next question

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: LFT (Low Frustration Tolerance)

This is the best choice because: LFT describes our thinking "I can't stand it" and concluding that we should "give up" because something is hard.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

(15) When Sue is experiencing LFT (Low Frustration Tolerance) and telling herself that "she can't stand it", how could she dispute or challenge her LFT.

[ ] 1. By telling herself that she is stupid for overreacting.
[ ] 2. By reminding herself to think positively.
[ ] 3. By reminding herself that while this is a hassle, it will not kill her and she can handle it although it is uncomfortable.
The correct answer to the previous question is 3.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox........................................
and then go directly to the next question.

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one! By reminding herself that while this
is a hassle, it will not kill her and she can handle it although it is
uncomfortable.

This is the best choice because: She really can stand it. But
positive thinking can lead people away from the important point that
they don't like something. She doesn't like to have a flat tire, but
she can stand it and she can deal with it.

Reviewing your understanding of REPS.

Assume that Sue disputed or challenged her thinking and recognized
and dealt with her LFT. She would then have an effective new
philosophy (point E).

(16) At point (E), how does her new philosophy help her?
[ ] 1. She can now feel good about having a flat tire.
[ ] 2. She deals the flat tire, feels less upset, takes action and gets
to work.
[ ] 3. She can now rate herself as a superhuman.
The correct answer to the previous question is 2.

If your answer matches the correct answer then
add 1 point in the scorebox................................................[  ]
go directly to the next question

If your answer does not match the correct answer then
leave the scorebox blank and
read the following explanation
and then go to the next question.

This choice is the correct one: She deals the flat tire, feels less upset, takes action and gets to work.

This is the best choice because: Sue is clearly more effective now. REPS does not want her to just feel good about the flat tire, but to do something about it. At the same time, she is not a superwoman, she is just human.

This is the end of the test. Count up your total score and enter your total score in this box..........................C  3.
USING THE PRINCIPLES OF REPS (RATIONAL-EMOTIVE THERAPY)

The first part had you learn the basics of REPS. If for any reason you have not done the educational part of the booklet, we suggest you do so now. You will benefit much more from this session after the education.

You will work on putting your experience into an REPS format. Think of a problem that you want to work on. You will be asked to describe your problem in general terms.

You may feel uncomfortable about working on your problem. Many people feel uptight and embarrassed about having difficulties, but these same people are able to find solutions to their difficulties.

Briefly answer the question in the box below.

The problem I want to work on is ......

Now you will be working your problem into the REPS ABC format. Remember that the Activating Event is an experience or situation and only one part of the problem. Often times people erroneously consider it to be the cause of the problem.

The Activating Event may be a one time problem (primary) or it may be something that happens repeatedly (perpetual).

Focus on the facts of what you identify to be the Activating Event rather than feelings or beliefs about it. Include this information.

What happens (What is said or done):
Where you are at when it happens.
Who you are with.
How often this happens.

What happens is that ...(describe the Activating Event.).....

......
Check each item to be sure it is included in your description of the Activating Event. If you left out any of this information, be sure to add the missing information to your description now.

[] What happens (What is said or done);
[] Where you are at when it happens;
[] Who you are with;
[] How often this happens.

We are going to move along step by step.

You are going to be focusing on you and YOUR experience. Even if you are disturbed or upset with someone else, it is still YOUR feelings, YOUR behaviors, and YOUR thoughts that you will be focusing on. These are things that YOU can begin to control.

You are here now working on this problem because there is something in your life that you want to be different. Something that you want to change. Something that you are not satisfied with or are disappointed in; Something that you believe that you need, but are not getting; Or some change that you desire so strongly that you feel upset when you think about your situation.

What you want to be different is a goal you are blocked from reaching. People often think of their goals in these terms:

Wanting more of something.
Wanting less of something.
Wanting to complete or finish something.

Remember how you describe your problem and the Activating Event. Identify what your goal is by completing one or more of the following sentences.

I want more of.....
I want less of.....
I want to complete or finish....

Most people assume that the Activating Event causes our Feelings. Actually, it is often our thoughts, self-talk, and beliefs that create our feelings. Knowing this gives you some responsibility and control over your FEELINGS. We are responsible - but not to be blamed - for our feelings. Blaming involves downing or negative self-evaluation; responsibility does not. Responsibility involves admitting self-defeating behaviors, thoughts, or feelings, without putting yourself down for having them.
Try to apply this rule to your daily life: Activating Event do not cause my feelings, my beliefs do. Remind yourself that you have a choice about how you feel because you have a choice about the way you think or your attitude.

It may appear that the Activating Event (describe by you earlier) blocks you from your goal, CAUSING you to be upset. This is just not so. One proof of this is that others in similar situations feel, think and act differently.

It is your Belief System or the way you look at things that causes you to feel upset. REPS will continually ask you to always look for the connection between your feelings and your beliefs. You can learn to think clearer and feel better, and accomplish your reasonable goals.

You are emotionally reacting to the situation you are experiencing. Focus on your feelings. One way to focus on your feelings is to give them a feeling-name. Giving your feelings a name is not a simple job, especially if you don’t know what you feel.

"Identifying how you feel in your situation?" is NOT an easy or simple job. There is no wrong answer. There is no feeling that is WRONG to have. But there are feelings that interfere with reaching our goals.

Do your best to name the FEELINGS you experience when thinking about your problem situation. Some of the feeling words listed below describe how people often feel. This list may reflect one or more of the feelings which you have experienced in connection to the Activating Event.

anger               fear               excitement               sadness
happiness           anxiety            guilt                   loneliness
resentment          insecurity         depression               jealously
shame               embarrassment      depression               hate
love                joy                acceptance              satisfaction
pleasure            complete           peace                   tranquility
valued              important

Using the words above, complete these sentences.

When I experience the Activating Event I Feel.....

I would like to feel.....
How appropriate are your negative feelings to the situation? Check one.

[ ] Very appropriate
[ ] Somewhat appropriate
[ ] Somewhat inappropriate
[ ] Very inappropriate

If your feelings are either somewhat or very inappropriate, you can use REPS to change your feelings. But, changing your feelings may take some hard work and risks on your part. For now, just admit what your feelings are and seriously that they may interfere with achieving your goals.

If you changed your strong negative feelings to milder negative feelings, that would be one type of progress you could make. Other ways to make progress include feeling those negative feelings less often, and having the feelings not last so long when you do experience them. Another strategy is to replace negative feelings with positive feelings.

So far your focused on your feelings, but you haven’t focused on your behavior yet. Behavior describes what your doing or how your acting. Just as feeling is one way you respond to your situation, behavior is another way. Just as you focused on your feelings, you can focus on your behavior.

Look at the following words that describe behavior. This list may help you to find some words that describe your actions.

Avoidance   Escape   Aggressive   Passive
Helpful     Drinking  Griping  Using drugs
Sleeping    Sulking   Leaving   Eating

Using the words listed above or your own words, complete the following sentence.

In this situation my behavior is best described as.....
How appropriate is your behavior to the situation? Check one.

[ ] Very appropriate  
[ ] Somewhat appropriate  
[ ] Somewhat inappropriate  
[ ] Very inappropriate

If your behavior is either somewhat or very inappropriate, you can use REPS to change your behavior. This first step is admitting or "owning up to it" if your behavior is inappropriate. The second step is identifying the advantages of changing that behavior and deciding what behavior would be more appropriate.

This advantages of changing this behavior include.....

A more appropriate behavior would be......

Replacing your less desirable behavior with this more desirable behavior might be part of the solution to your concerns.

You have identified an activating event and explored your feelings and behaviors. Now you will begin to explore your thinking or self-talk. As you learned earlier, what you say to yourself, think or believe about your situation is very important. REPS holds that your feelings, to a large extent, are influenced by your thinking. Another way to say this is to say that you feel what you think. Your thinking does contribute to your feelings.
Remember how you described the activating event.

What do you say about the activating event that makes you feel this way?

I tell myself....(keep in mind the 3 major musts).....

You are in the process of learning how to help yourself.

As you practice you will learn more and more about how to control your feelings and behavior by understanding the relationship between your self-talk, feelings, and actions. Again, the main idea is that your self-talk influences your feelings and determines your behavior to a large extent.

For now, focus on the meaning that your experience has for you. REPS holds that your experience has a unique or special meaning for you. While you are a human being and have lots of things in common with other people, you are still an individual. Other people have experienced difficulties like your own; still, your particular experience is unique to you.

Think carefully. What does having the problem or experience suggest, mean, imply, or hint about you?

Having this problem or experience suggests, hints, or means that I am a ........

People often believe or suspect that their experience means something "bad" about them. Many people identify poor performance and then rate or down themselves or others. It is as if their experience somehow proves that they are "bad" or "inadequate" in some way.

By taking the time and effort to face the meaning that you give to your experience, you learn something about yourself. Learning to change your thinking, control your emotions and learn new behaviors that may help you to make the changes you desire.
Think about what it would mean to you if you could solve your problem. Imagine that you just wave a magic wand and both you and your situation would change in any way that you desire. Take a moment and complete the following sentence.

Solving this problem would suggest, hint, or mean about me that I am a ........

If you could solve your problem it might give you several advantages in your life. But it certainly will not prove anything about you as a person. REPS holds strongly that you do not have anything to prove about your worth; Moreover, you cannot prove or disprove your human value or that you are an "OK" person.

It is "good" to rate your performance because it helps you to judge where you are in relationship to your goals, provides corrective feedback, and aids you in assuming reasonable responsibility for your actions.

It is "bad" to rate or down yourself or others FOR doing poorly, making mistakes, and being error prone. First, everyone is error prone and all people make mistakes and do some things badly - even on purpose many times. Secondly, downing or devaluing yourself or others may create inappropriate feelings.

You have looked at what you might be telling yourself that helps create your feelings; What it means for you to have this experience; And what it would mean for you to solve your problem. Next, you are going to focus more specifically on how you might be labeling yourself.

Negative labeling is one process of DOWNING or devaluing people or rating their human worth. It is natural and easy to DOWN ourselves and others, but this does not make it necessary or healthy. You are a fallible and error-prone human being. You can admit your errors and still accept yourself.

It is possible to dislike and disapprove of your own or others' behavior, thoughts and feelings without DOWNING or judging human worth. Rate specific thoughts, feelings, and actions, not the whole person.
If you haven’t done so well, it may be a challenge for you to look at your own performance and behavior and not down yourself. Tell yourself what you think of your performance.

Tell others what you think of their performance. You can express constructive criticism without downing. Don’t go the extra step and believe that someone is bad for doing “badly”.

Review these examples of negative labeling. Check any of the sentences that reflect your tendency to engage in self-rating.

[ ] I failed, therefore I am a FAILURE.
[ ] I am rejected, therefore I am an unlovable REJECT.
[ ] I acted foolishly, therefore I am a FOOL.
[ ] I didn’t know, therefore I am a DUMMY or an IDIOT.
[ ] I gave in, therefore I am WEAK and NEVER strong.
[ ] I acted insensitively, therefore I am a JERK, ASS, or ROTTEN PERSON.
[ ] I did badly, therefore I am NO GOOD.
[ ] I don’t like my choices, therefore I am TRAPPED.
[ ] I can’t see the solution now, therefore I am HOPELESS.
[ ] I didn’t try, therefore I am LAZY and WORTHLESS.
[ ] I lost, therefore I am a LOSER.

You may have checked one of more of the sentences above that reflect your self-talk. In the box below, write out the main one. Try to identify exactly what you are saying to yourself.

I ____________________________
Therefore I am a ____________________________

Consider the disadvantages of judging yourself this way.

The disadvantages of judging myself this way are ..... 

It is OK to feel sorry or disappointed about failing at an important task, or separating from someone, or not getting what you want, or getting what you don’t want. Bad things happen to people, and it is OK for them to feel appropriately distressed. It is OK for you, also. But you do not have to make yourself miserable.
You may benefit from saying to yourself, "It's OK to feel bad, but knock off that other stuff."

No law of the universe requires you to put yourself or others down for poor performance -- or any other reason. No matter what you do -- you do not HAVE to devaluate yourself or others. You have a choice, and can ALWAYS accept yourself. Of course, you may still feel bad. Just not inappropriately bad. Reducing the INTENSITY, DURATION, or FREQUENCY of your negative feelings are types of progress you can make.

Negative labeling does not help you to do or feel better. Eventually, you can learn to replace negative labeling with clear statements about specific thoughts, feelings, behaviors and outcomes without beating yourself into the ground. It is one thing to say "I don't like my behavior" and another to say "I don't like myself." REPS teaches you that you don't always have to like your behavior, but you can always accept yourself.

To be able to say what you like and don't like about your situation, feelings, thoughts or behavior without downing is part of being psychologically healthy.

Rational, specific statements can replace this labeling. This often involves putting things in perspective and setting limits on problems.

Start disputing your irrational or self-defeating self-talk. What could you begin to say to yourself about your specific situation, thoughts, feelings, and behavior rather than using negative labels?

Think about the label(s) you identified in the previous step. Consider what you could begin to say to yourself instead of using the label you identified earlier.

I could begin to tell myself ........

Remember that a lot of our self-talk is automatic. We learn it from our parents and significant people. We also create a great deal of it on our own, without any help from anyone!

Eventually our disturbed thinking becomes a habit. Fortunately, you can change and learn better thinking habits and more adaptive attitudes.
You can learn to control your self-talk, even though it is automatic. But first you need to become aware of what you are telling yourself. You may have to "listen" very carefully to your thinking in order to become aware of your self-talk.

Day by day, try to listen to your automatic self-talk and the labels that you may put on yourself or others. Try to replace those labels with specific statements about what you like or don't like, and about what you want and don't want. Try not to go the extra step and GLOBALLY RATE, DOWN, or DEvaluate yourself or others.

Downing and labeling are part of our self-talk. There is another part of your self-talk to explore: Demanding statements that usually include a SHOULD, NEED, MUST, or OUGHT. REPS teaches people to replace these DEMAND statements with preference statements that express a WISH, DESIRE, WANT, or PREFERENCE.

People often benefit from stating their wishes, desires, wants and preferences. It is reasonable to say what you like and don't like. REPS holds that it is healthy for you to have DESIRES and PREFERENCES, but unhealthy to have DEMANDS, SHOULDs, and MUSTs.

If you begin to say that things MUST, SHOULD, and OUGHT to be the way you NEED them to be, then you may make yourself inappropriately upset. Unfortunately, saying that something "MUST be" does not make it so. Saying how things SHOULD be, and DEMANDING that they be different does not usually change them. In fact, REPS holds that events SHOULD be the way they are because nothing happened to make them different.

The reasoning behind DEMANDING statements is usually very weak: It MUST because it MUST; Because that's the way it SHOULD be; because that's the way it's done. I SHOULD because I SHOULD is not much of a logical argument.

Often we learn these imperative statements from our parents or make them up on our own, and we repeat them to ourselves like some broken record -- when no law says that we HAVE to keep doing it to ourselves.

Consider your situation and the DEMAND statement(s) that you might be making.

I MUST.............
If you began to replace MUSTs, SHOULDs, and OUGHTs with PREFERENCE statements, using I WISH, WANT, DESIRE, or PREFER, then you might begin to make yourself feel better.

Of course, the difference between DEMAND statements and PREFERENCE statements goes beyond uttering one word instead of the other. In your heart of hearts you will benefit from convincing yourself that your desires are not demands that the universe must carry out; Your SHOULDs alone will not cause things to be different; You probably will not die if you don't get some of the things you believe you NEED.

Practice changing DEMAND statements to preference statements. Look at the DEMAND statements you identified. Change that to a PREFERENCE statement, beginning with "I want, prefer, desire, wish, etc."

Instead of DEMAND, I WISH or PREFER......

Compare your preference and demand statements. Do you see that the preference statements illustrate the kind of thinking that is likely to make you less upset about your problem? The second statement may be more clear and convincing because you reflect a PREFERENCE.

Day by day, practice identifying your self-demanding MUSTs, SHOULDs, and OUGHTs and replace them with more rational self-talk.
You so far explored your self-talk in different ways. You identified what your experience means to you; what downing labels you might use; and what DEMAND statements you might be making about your experience. You practiced thinking or "talking" to yourself in a more self-helping way.

AWFULIZING

Now the focus is on what is called AWFULIZING in REPS. AWFULIZING describes when you label your experience as completely 100% BAD, which leads you to feel increasingly upset. Awfulizing is saying that an experience is MORE than bad. The experience that you label as AWFUL, HORRIBLE, MONSTROUS, or TERRIBLE can usually be relabeled as VERY BAD, ADVERSE, DISAGREEABLE, or UNPLEASANT. Such relabeling may reduce your emotional upset.

To you, your problem is real and you probably see it as "bad", but how bad or AWFUL is it really? Possibly other people have similar problems and deal with them differently or even better than you do. If so, then maybe one way you can help yourself is to look at your problem in a different way: As less awful.

When you experience your problem, do you AWFULIZE it? Remember that awful means more than 100% bad and 0% good. Do not minimize your problem. On the other hand, DO NOT maximize it! Try to look at it realistically.

If you AWFULIZE and see your problem as HORRIBLE, you are starting a process of overly upsetting yourself. Chances are that being overly upset is not going to help you to take corrective action.

In fact, AWFULIZING increases the chances that you will be emotionally blocking yourself from doing better.

No matter how bad your problem seems, you can still find happiness in your life even if you NEVER solve this particular problem. Of course, you might be less happy. In your case, you probably can solve your problem, or at least improve on it.
You will be able to change disruptive actions, feelings and behavior if you begin ANTI-AWFULIZING.

Identify your AWFULIZING self-talk.

I AWFULIZE about my problem when I say.....

Change your AWFULIZING self-talk.

I could make this problem less AWFUL by telling myself.....

Work on getting your problem into a different perspective. Note what you say to yourself to make your experience seem AWFUL. Then practice replacing these AWFULIZING statements with less disruptive statements about your problem. By doing this you begin to get your situation into a better perspective.

LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE (LFT).

One part of your experience with your problem probably involves an element of being very frustrated.

An important part of self-talk involves Low Frustration Tolerance (LFT). LFT describes our tolerance for frustration. In other words, how much is too much. Some people seem to be able to tolerate a great deal of frustration, while others can be pushed over the edge by what they tell themselves about everyday events.

If your frustration tolerance is low, frustration may block you from reaching some of your goals. Usually when people try to reach a goal they experience some real frustration.
LFT describes your tendency to give up in the face of frustration. LFT really gets in the way of LONG TERM GOALS because the immediate frustration is evaluated as being "too much".

LFT involves saying: "I can’t stand it!"
"It’s more than I can bear!"
"I’m at the end of my rope!"

LFT could be a part of your problem. If LFT is a problem for you, then you can increase your LFT.

Refresh your memory about how you described problem. Complete the following sentence.

What I can’t stand about my problem is ......

Begin replacing the "I can’t stand it" statements with more self-helping statements. Often times, people could say they strongly don’t like it, it’s hard, or it’s uncomfortable instead of saying "I can’t stand it." The truth is that you can stand it, unless of course it kills you. If it kills you, then you couldn’t be happy at all!

One way to increase your frustration tolerance is to talk or think differently about your situation and how you react to it. You could tell yourself something like this: I very strongly don’t like this because I feel frustrated and want things to be different. But even though I don’t like it and feel very frustrated, I can stand it. I don’t like to be uncomfortable, but it won’t kill me. Being uncomfortable is something that I might have to experience in order to make the changes I desire.

Think about your situation and your goals. In order to reach your goals you will probably have to do some difficult things. What are the difficult things that you will need to do in order to reach your goal?

In order to reach my goal, I will do some hard, difficult, and uncomfortable things, including......
You identified some of the difficult, frustrating or uncomfortable things that you are willing to do in order to reach your goal. Now, identify the ways that your life will be better if you reach your goal.

When I reach my goal, then my life will be better because....

You can increase your frustration tolerance in 2 basic ways.

Diversions are one way that people deal with feelings of frustration. There are healthy diversions and unhealthy diversions. Look at this list of healthy diversions. Circle the healthy diversions you do now or would like to begin doing.

Healthy diversions (if not done to excess).

Exercise
Walking
Other sports
Tennis
Meditation
Journal writing
Positive visualization
Watching T.V.
Talking
Sex
Any hobby
falling in love

Aerobics
Swimming
Hiking
Racketball
Progressive muscle relaxation
Letter writing
Drawing or painting
Going to a movie
Socializing
Sleeping
Reading
daydreaming
Strongly consider making a commitment to do one or more of these activities if you are experiencing high frustration and physical tension. Decide what you want to do, how often, and where. You can even offer yourself a special reward if you follow through on your commitment. The following self-contract may be helpful.

Make a contract with yourself.

I ___________________ agree to ___________________
   (your name)  (do what)
   at ___________________ every ___________________
   (where)  (when or how often)

If I successfully do this for ____ weeks, then I will
reward myself by ____________________________________

The second way you can increase your frustration tolerance is to begin to think and believe differently. If you are saying to yourself "I can't stand it" you can replace it with "I don't like it at all, but I can stand it." Or say to yourself "If I want to reach my goal, doing this hard thing is part of the price I am willing to pay."

You have explored LFT in relation to your problem. You have looked at LFT as a part of the problem you are experiencing and as something that blocks you from reaching your goal(s). You have indicated what you say to yourself when you experience frustration and discomfort. Finally, you have begun to identify more self-helping statements that you can use to increase your frustration tolerance.
Summary

Take a moment to review all the work you have done and the process that you have followed using REPS. You may use this process again and again to solve problems as they occur.

1. You identified a problem to focus on.

2. You identified the activating event, your goal, your feelings, and your behavior.

3. You identified how you would like to feel and act differently, and how you might benefit by changing.

4. You explored your self-talk about the activating event.

5. You learned how to accept yourself and others and replace negative labels with realistic statements about the behaviors you like and don’t like.

6. You reviewed the difference between DEMAND statements and PREFERENCE statements. You identified the DEMAND statements that you tend to use in this situation and practiced replacing them with reasonable PREFERENCE statements.

7. You explored ways that you might be AWFULIZING about your problem, and practiced thinking more realistically about your concerns.

8. You explored your frustration tolerance and to increase your Low Frustration Tolerance (LFT) by changing your self-talk, and reducing your physical tension by exercising, meditating, or some other healthy diversion.

The authors hope that you have benefited from using this workbook and that you can continue to benefit from using REPS in your daily life. Several hundred books are available on REPS and several counselors, psychologists, and social workers specialize in REPS work in every area of the country. If REPS help you, then continue to use it and help yourself. If you feel you would like help with your problems and concerns, then contact a professional who can help you using REPS or some other method.
Appendix B

Letters Describing the Study and Relevant Consent Forms
Date: March 30, 1990
To: Alan O. Baldon
From: Mary Anne Bunai, Chair

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research protocol, "The Development of a Self-Help Psychoeducational Booklet of Rational-Emotive Problem Solving", has been approved as expedited by the HSIRB. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the approval application.

You must seek reapproval for any change in this design. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

cc: C. Koronexos, Psychology

HSIRB Project Number 90-03-03
Approval Termination March 30, 1991
Research Procedure:

Advertisement to be given to class member and read aloud by researcher. Those students choosing to participate will be instructed to meet with the researcher in a room specified at that time. Each subject will read the informed consent form and the researchers will answer any questions about the project. The student will sign the informed consent and be given the booklet and an envelope addressed to Dr. Koronakos. Students are instructed to return the booklet (even if it is not completed) in the envelope provided within 7 days to Dr. Koronakos' mail box in Wood Hall. The booklet will not be coded and the subjects responses will remain anonymous.
Informed Consent:

My name is Alan Baldon and I am a graduate student in the clinical psychology program. I am currently doing research for a thesis under the direction of Dr. Koronakos. I am evaluating the usefulness of a psychoeducational booklet I have developed. The booklet is designed to teach Rational-Emotive principles that may be useful in dealing with everyday events.

As a participant, you will be asked to use the booklet. First, you will learn the basic rational-emotive principles. Then you will quiz yourself and check your understanding of the material. Finally, the booklet guides you to measured understanding of how you can solve problems effectively.

In each chapter of the booklet you will be given an opportunity to comment on the booklet and its usefulness. This research involves minimal risk for you. If as a result of participation in this project you become aware of a problem that you need to see someone about, contact Dr. Koronakos who will then refer you to appropriate services.

All information obtained in this survey will remain confidential. The responses will be evaluated and summarized as a group. The names of the participants will be kept confidential.

Participation in this experiment is completely voluntary. Participation or non-participation will have no effect on the grades. If you should decide to drop out for any reason, you will not in any way prejudice yourself with Western Michigan University.

Questions regarding the research or information regarding the experimental results may be directed to Alan Baldon (616) 343-7531 or Dr. Chris Koronakos (616) 387-4479.

Investigator Signature
date

Alan D. Baldon

I, ___________________ have read and understand the above statements and chose to participate in the research.

date
Advertisement read to class and handed out to class members:

My name is Alan Baldon and I am a graduate student in the clinical psychology program. I am currently doing research for a thesis under the direction of Dr. Koronakos. I am evaluating the usefulness of a psychoeducational booklet I have developed. The booklet is designed to teach Rational-Emotive principles that may be useful in dealing with everyday events.

As a participant, you will be asked to use the booklet. First, you will learn the basic rational-emotive principles. Then you will quiz yourself and check your understanding of the material. Finally, the booklet guides you to measured understanding of how you can solve problems effectively.

This research involves minimal risk for you. If as a result of participation in this project you become aware of a problem that you need to see someone about, phone Dr. Koronakos at the number listed below, and he will then refer you to appropriate services.

All information obtained in this survey will remain confidential. The responses will be evaluated and summarized as a group. The names of the participants will be known by the researchers, but the booklets will not be coded and your responses will not be identified with you as an individual. In other words, we will not know which booklet was turned in by any particular student.

Participation or non-participation in this experiment is completely voluntary and your grade cannot be affected. If you should decide to drop out for any reason, you will not in any way prejudice yourself with Western Michigan University.

If you choose to participate, then meet with Dr. Koronakos or Alan Baldon immediately after class (at a room location specified at that time) to pick up a booklet. When you pick up the booklet you will be asked to review the informed consent form that insures you clearly understand the nature or the research and your role as a participant. If you choose to participate, then you will be asked to sign the informed consent agreement.

Return the booklet after 7 days even if you have not completed it. Place the booklet in the brown envelope (provided to you with the booklet) and return to Dr. Koronakos' mailbox located in the mail room across from the psychology office on the second floor of Wood Hall. Placing the booklet in the envelope will further insure your privacy.

Questions regarding the research or information regarding the experimental results may be directed to Alan Baldon (616) 343-7531 or Dr. Chris Koronakos (616) 387-4479.
Appendix C

Criterion for the Evaluation of the Subject's Responses to Prompts in the Application Section
Criterion for evaluation of subjects’ responses to prompts in the application section. Page numbers refer to page numbers in the Rational-Emotive Problem Solving workbook (REPS).

1. (page, 58) The problem I want to work on is .....  
   1: The subject identified a problem.

2. (page,58) What happens is that ...(describe the Activating Event.).....  
   1: Meets two or more of the following criterion.
   [ ] What happens (What is said or done):
   [ ] Where the subject is at when it happens.
   [ ] Who the subject is with.
   [ ] How often this happens.

3. (page,59) I want more of.... I want less of....  
   I want to complete or finish....
   1: The subject complete one or more of the above sentences.

4. (page,60) When I experience the Activating Event I Feel.....  
   1: The subject writes a feeling word.

5. (page,60) I would like to feel.....  
   1: The subject writes a feeling word.

6. (page,61) Check one or more of the following regarding feelings.
   [ ] Very appropriate; [ ] Somewhat appropriate;
   [ ] Somewhat inappropriate; [ ] Very inappropriate
   1: The subject checked one or more of the above.

7. (page,61) In this situation my behavior is best described as....
   1: The subject writes a word that describes behavior.

8. (page,62) Check one or more of the following regarding behavior.
   [ ] Very appropriate; [ ] Somewhat appropriate;
   [ ] Somewhat inappropriate; [ ] Very inappropriate
   1: The subject checks one or more of the above.
9. (page,62) This advantages of changing this behavior include....
   I: The subject writes an advantage of changing the behavior identified in 7.

10. (page,62) A more appropriate behavior would be....... 
    I: The subject describes behavior that the subject identifies as more appropriate. You do not have to agree that it is more appropriate.

11. (page,63) I tell myself....(keep in mind the 3 major musts).....
    I: The subject identifies self-talk, thoughts, beliefs, musts, etc.

12. (page,63) Having this problem or experience suggests, hints, or means that I am a .......... 
    I: The subject completes the sentence in any reasonable fashion.

13. (page,64) Solving this problem would suggest, hint, or mean about me that I am a ........... 
    I: The subject identified a label or negative self-perception.

14. (page 65)
    I: The subject checked one or more of the boxes.

15. (page,65) I _ _ _ Therefore I am a _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ 
    I: The subject completed the sentence in any reasonable way.

16. (page,65) The disadvantages of judging myself this way are .......
    I: The subject list one or more reasonable disadvantage of thinking the way described in 14 & 15.

17. (page,66) I could begin to tell myself .......... 
    I: The subject identifies an alternative self-statement for the response made in 15.
18. (page,67) I MUST.........
   I: The subject writes a must statement that is relevant to the problem of interest.

19. (page,68) Instead of DEMAND, I WISH or PREFER..........
   I: The subject restructured or the must statement in 18.

20. (page,70) I AWFULIZE about my problem when I say........
   I: The subject identified some awfulizing self-talk.

21. (page,70) I could make this problem less AWFUL by telling myself......
   I: The subject modified or changes statements to reflect a more realistic view.

22. (page,71) What I can't stand about my problem is .......
   I: The subject identifies the aspect of the problem that really "get to them."

23. (page,71) In order to reach my goal, I will do some hard, difficult, and uncomfortable things, including......
   I: The subject identifies some of the behaviors that they will need to engage in or obstacles they must overcome in order to reach the goals defined in 3.

24. (page,72) When I reach my goal, then my life will be better because....
   I: The subject identifies how they will benefit if they reach their goal.

25. (page,73) Contract. I: The subject completed each part of the contract form.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


