How to Dispute Beliefs

W e may find, in our own self-talk language, thoughts or beliefs that we want to repeat less often. They seem difficult to modify because they have become like a habit or what feels like an automatic reflex. The first step in successful modification is making it a personal responsibility to take the time to examine your own self-talk. The second step is to be honest! The third step is to use techniques that have helped others. And remember, even Albert Ellis tells us that it is irrational to think rational all the time.

Box the Belief

Fill in the boxes below. After "boxing your belief" around and examining other choices, see if it still stands up in value.

Distressing Self-Talk I Think I Want To Give Up Example: "You make me so angry!"	Consequences	**Your Example**
What is the unrealistic statement or comparison?	External events or people cause bad feelings	
What is the consequence of repeating this belief to myself or what is the cost of continued use?	I give my control to someone or something else. I may do something I will regret later.	
What might be a more realistic restatement of my belief?	No one can make me angry without my consent. I choose not to care about your attitude.	
What is the benefit to me if I modify this self-talk?	I may feel sad or hurt because I think someone's attitude is inappropriate, but I choose to spend little of my time dwelling on it. I feel in charge of my emotions.	

Read Into the Reality Roots

Sometimes stretching a point to the limit can help us to think about a different point of view. Take a belief that you would like to change. Then ask yourself the questions listed below as they relate to this belief. You may find that some questions seem ridiculous. Try to find humor in the ridiculous and you may also find that the belief may not have deep roots in reality.

The belief I'd like to give up

_____

_____

• Does the belief make sense?

_____

• What evidence exists for it being false or true?

_____

• Is there a legal reason for the belief?

_____

• Is there any alternative to the belief?

_____

• Will it kill me to let go of the belief?

_____

• Do other people survive without this belief?

_____

• What is the worst possible thing that could happen if I give up the belief?

    10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0
    death   discomfort   nothing

• I am telling myself this belief is true what percent of the time?

    0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

• Would it be to my benefit to lessen this percentage?

_____

• Is there now enough doubt about this belief to consider new thinking?

_____

ABCDE Model

If an event produces stress, question the beliefs held about that event. Are the beliefs valid? Are they reasonable? Are they rational? This ABCDE Model identifies how beliefs influence

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stress. Once identified, beliefs that don't make sense can be disputed or changed.

Instructions: Remember a recent event that made you anxious, tense, or worried. Close your eyes and imagine it for 30 seconds. Using the ABCDE Model, learn to think differently to improve outcomes. See how you could have changed the emotional consequences.

How the ABCDE Model Works

Activating Event

What event made you anxious, tense, or worried?

Example:

Getting stuck in a traffic jam on the way to work.

Your example:_____

_____

_____

Beliefs

What thoughts did you have about the past event?

Examples:

1. "It is my fault for not leaving earlier."
2. "This is a waste of time."
3. "My boss will be angry about this."
4. "I'm stupid."

Your example:_____

_____

_____

Consequence

How did you feel because of your beliefs?

Examples:

Tense, feeling anxious, irritable, and having negative thoughts.

Your example:_____

_____

_____

Dispute

Challenge the negative thought you identified in "B." Start with a phrase like, "That's not right..." and add a positive statement.

Examples:

"That's not right, this happens to everyone at one time or another. I'll use this time for some planning of my day's activities. If I get anxious now, it may affect me when I do get to work."

Your example:_____

_____

_____

Effect

How do you feel now having challenged your negative thoughts?

Examples:

Relaxed, positive, in a good mood. Made good use of time spent in traffic jam.

Your example:_____

_____

_____