

The A-B-C-D-E Mnemonic

Ellis used an "ABCDE" mnemonic or memory system to teach the basics of rational-emotive behaviour therapy. Here are the five steps:

A = Activating event

B = Belief system

C = Emotional Consequences of A and B

D = Disputing irrational thoughts and beliefs.

E = Cognitive and Emotional effects of revised beliefs

What are the elements of the ABCDE mnemonic?

- A.** Is the activating event— A trigger that starts the stressful or worrying thought for example *'I saw my friend Mo in the street today, he ignored me,*
- B.** Stands for "belief system"— Is the belief system that is triggered by the activating event , for example *'My friend Mo, ignored me, I must have said something to upset him ,I must be at fault “*
- C.** Stands for *consequences* of irrational beliefs. Irrational thoughts produce bad consequences. They can be *self-fulfilling prophecies*. For example, if you expect to feel nervous and do poorly, you are setting yourself up to feel nervous and do poorly.

Some people repeat negative thoughts again and again. This repetitious thinking is called *rumination* and it is a bit like self-programming. A person who is constantly thinking, "This is horrible!" (or some other irrational idea) may stay in a bad mood

- D.** Stands for *disputing* irrational beliefs. Ellis's *treatment* consists of challenging (disputing) a client's irrational beliefs as directly as possible. Transcripts of REBT sessions show Ellis in his prime was willing to be very rude to clients.

He would interrupt, swear and shout as a way of drawing attention to the clients irrational thinking. However modern REBT practitioners would consider that the important thing is to replace negative, unrealistic thinking with a more realistic and adaptive appraisal of problem situations.

- E.** Stands for the effect, this can be demonstrated by how the client loses the symptoms of anxiety and distress.
For REBT to be effective then the client should be able to identify the irrational thought and take action to solve the problem. Psychologists refer to this as cognitive restructuring