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Some Adaptations of "Rational-Emotive" Techniques to School Counseling

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SOME ADAPTATIONS OF "RATIONAL-EMOTIVE" TECHNIQUES TO SCHOOL COUNSELING

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LIFE OF THE AUTHOR

Edward F. Ramesh was born in Hammond, Indiana on April 12, 1935. He attended St. Meinrad College where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in classical languages in 1956 and pursued graduate work in the St. Meinrad School of Theology for four years.

In the Fall of 1960 Mr. Ramesh undertook further studies at the University of Thomas Aquinas in Rome, Italy and received a doctorate in Sacred Theology.

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Edward F. Ramesh

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is an old story of a man who was killed by a circular saw. In his obituary it was stated that the man "was a good citizen, an upright man, and an ardent patriot, but of limited information regarding circular saws."

Less humorous, but more realistically descriptive of situations experienced by school counselors would be: "A school counselor was rendered ineffective by a student counselee . . . he was a good interviewer, an upright placement officer, an ardent tester, but of limited information regarding counseling."

Theoretically, such situations should not occur. First, because counseling today has a definite place and a distinct role in the Guidance Program in the school's Personnel Services. In schools where guidance programs are in effect, counseling has its rightful place along with such services as Pupil Appraisal, Information, Placement, and Evaluation. The role of counseling has aptly been described by Williamson as a "form of personalized and individualized assistance to adolescents as they develop their full personalities in a societal and school context of

other personalities and social processes and institutions."[1] The only change one might make in Williamson's description would be to include pre-adolescents as well among those who benefit today from school counseling.

Secondly, the school counselor today has a formal program of classes and practicum to prepare him for his work. In Loyola's Graduate School, Department of Education, for example, the catalog listing the schedule of classes for the second semester, 1967-68 publishes the following courses for the future counselor: Fundamentals of Counseling, Practicum in Guidance and Counseling, Advanced Practicum in Guidance and Counseling.[2] Professional help is usually available to the student while in the classroom and often when on the job.

Yet, in both school counseling programs and the training of counselors, the foundation has only been laid; problems abound. One could speculate with and quote ad infinitum the experts concerning why well thought out counseling programs have failed in practise. One of the best answers, if not the best answer, lies within the concepts of communication and

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[1] E. G. Williamson, Counseling Adolescents (New York, 1950), p. vii.

[2] Cf. Northeastern Illinois State College Graduate School Catalog, 1968-69, where the following courses in Counseling are offered: Theories and Principles of Counseling, The Counselor and the Counseling Process, Practicum I in Guidance and Counseling, Practicum II in Guidance and Counseling.

cooperation. Willey and Andrew state that even though the school counselor is the leader in this area, unless there is a cooperative enterprise and communication with faculty in planning, preparation and performance regarding the counseling program, it will fail.[3]

This paper, however, is more concerned with counselor training, specifically in the area of counseling techniques.

Few counselors know about or are assigned to study a handbook such as Harper's Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy: 36 Systems,[4] make an in-depth study of thirty-six of the available systems, and leisurely set up a workable system of counseling for themselves. At best, the school counselor has an academic, passing knowledge of too few of the systems extant. He adopts the most interesting or promising and keeps one or two more within easy reach in case the first proves ineffective. Thus, scantily armed he proceeds to his newly assigned position.

The purpose of this paper is to provide the counselor in search of an effective system a technique specifically adapted for school counseling with which he may deal with students' problems of social or emotional adjustments. It provides the student with a greater understanding of himself, an increased

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[3]Roy Willey and Dean Andrew, Modern Methods and Techniques in Guidance (New York, 1955), p. 366.

[4]Robert Harper, Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy: 36 Systems (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1959).

confidence in his own problem-solving capacity, a more adequate method of handling future problems, reasonable self-expectancies, a recognition of his perceptual field with regard to himself and others, a shift from the concepts of self-derogation and self-disapproval to a great degree of self-acceptance and self-approval. The technique to be described in detail in the pages which follow is an adaptation of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy.[5]

Why use a psychotherapeutic method for regular school counseling situations?

If an authority is needed for justification of a technique, John Gustand's comments[6] might be considered here. He declares that clinical psychology and counseling are not different disciplines, except in certain essentially peripheral emphases, and that psychotherapy is one of the techniques available to well-trained personnel in either area. Also, Rogers by precept and example equates counseling and psychotherapy.[7]

Actually, counseling differs from psychotherapy only in

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[5]Albert Ellis, New Approaches to Psychotherapy Techniques (Brandon, Vermont, 1955); Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy (New York, 1962).

[6]John W. Gustand, "The Definition of Counseling," in R. E. Berdie, ed., Roles and Relationships in Counseling, Minnesota Studies in Student Personnel Work, no. 3 (Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1953), pp. 9-10.

[7]Carl R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, (Boston, 1942).

that it is more concerned with anxiety which is situational and reactive rather than deep-seated and rigidly neurotic in character; likewise it is concerned with fewer irrational elements in the personality of the individual in terms of the intensity of the problem, or with types of problems that are more amenable to conscious processes rather than those that are relatively more imbedded, non-conscious, and incapacitating.[8]

This paper will describe the Rational-emotive Psychotherapy technique in an adapted form, limiting the discussion to the scope of counseling; namely, dealing with "difficulties of adjustment" in a student which are situational and reactive.

The following list of symptom complexes which appear in students, primarily in adolescence, may help clarify the term "difficulties of adjustment," a key term in understanding the type of problems which students present to the counselor:

1. Excessive anxiety over sexual matters
2. Difficulties with education
3. Sibling rivalry
4. Associations with masculinity or feminity, involving identification problems, social relations with same or opposite sex
5. Feelings of guilt
6. Inhibition of curiosity
7. Inability to assimilate knowledge
8. Marked impulsive behavior
9. Social difficulties with his parents and other authority figures
10. Other social or personal problems, such as masturbation, homosexuality, problems of dating, search for self-idenity, and

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[8]Cf. Lewis Wolberg, The Technique of Psychotherapy (New York, 1954), pp. 3-4.

the attitude of society which continues to regard him as a child.[9]

Hence, the term "difficulties of adjustment" as it is used here does not refer to severe emotional disturbances which the school counselor may find or suspect in his students. Such severe disturbances may be generally catagorized as obsessional and compulsive neuroses, minimal brain damage, autistic behavior, or any of the other psychoses to which children are subject. Such cases upon discovery are to be referred to the proper agencies for confirmation of the diagnosis and treatment.

Thus, the material in this paper concerns those difficulties of adjustment, namely, problems and situations encountered by the student, which can usually be handled by the experienced counselor. The theory of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy holds that the cause for pre-adolescents and adolescents displaying the symptom complexes mentioned is irrational, illogical, slippery cognitive behavior; that is, thinking in a certain manner without a firm foundation on reality nor an understanding of human nature.

In Rational-emotive Psychotherapy the counselor has at his disposal, should he wish to learn and make use of it, an extremely efficient technique for counter-attacking these illogical attitudes and beliefs, thus eliminating the symptom complexes which they cause.

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[9]Spurgeon English and Gerald Pearson, Emotional Problems of Mental Living (New York, 1963), pp. 388-403.

Why the Rational-emotive technique instead of some other, perhaps better known one? What is the proven effectiveness of this particular technique?

There are two answers to the first question. First, because the theory behind the technique makes sense, i.e., it has face validity. Second, because of first-hand experience of this method's fruitfulness. The reasonableness comes through strongly in this statement from Ellis:

> Rational therapy, though usually a briefer procedure than psychoanalysis, is in some respects more depth-centered and intensive because it seeks to reveal and assail the basic ideas or philosophies or values which may underlie irrational behavior or neurosis. It is an application of the theory that much of what we call emotion is nothing more than a certain kind -- a biased, prejudiced kind -- of thought, and that human beings can be taught to control their feelings by controlling their thoughts -- or by changing the internalized sentences, or self-talk, with which they largely created these feelings in the first place.[10]

Ellis refreshingly challenges many of the assumptions with which many counselors, psychologists, and other professional people have been indoctrinated.[11] A person finds himself questioning what seemed to be absolute values and changeless axioms. He is now induced to rethink his own thoughts in the possibility of having cogitated irrationally for years without realizing it.

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[10]Albert Ellis, "Outcome of Employing Three Techniques of Psychotherapy," Journal of Clinical Psychology, XIII (October, 1957), 344.

[11]Albert Ellis, Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy (New York, 1962), p. 38.

This author, in spite of his Rogerian background, has tried the Rational-emotive methods in counseling students and found that these methods were highly successful. There were positive, obvious changes in the thinking and behavior of students who ranged from the mildly upset to the severely emotionally disturbed neurotic. In the majority of cases, after only a few sessions, there came the almost indescribable feeling of release and calm where once had been a sustained, nonsensical thinking which brought on and maintained aberrated feelings and behavior.

This personal account of the effectiveness of Rational-emotive techniques in use with students leads to the second question -- is there scientific proof of the success of this particular method of counseling?

Unfortunately, the answer is a qualified no. In his textbook on Rational-emotive Psychotherapy, Ellis states that "there as yet are no controlled therapeutic experiments to confirm this thesis that Rational-emotive therapy is more effective than most other kinds of therapy with most patients."[12] Referring to his own and his colleagues' experiential results with this particular method, he postulates the following:

> Whereas about 65 per cent of patients tend to improve significantly or considerably under most forms of psychotherapy, about 90 per cent of the patients treated for

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[12] Ibid.

> 10 or more sessions with RT tend to show distinct or considerable improvement (Ellis, 1957b). Similar high rates of improvement or "cure" have been reported by several other active-directive and rational-persuasive therapists.[13]

The 90 per cent effectiveness which Ellis refers to in the previous quotation is from a study he made and published in 1957. Because of the important results of the study and the scarcity of similar projects, a summary of the pertinent data will be presented here:

> Seventy-eight closed cases were taken from the therapist's files, consisting of individuals who had been treated for at least ten sessions with rational analysis. These were matched with seventy-eight cases of individuals who had been treated for at least ten sessions with psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy. As a result of matching procedures, each group included sixty-one neurotics and seventeen borderline psychotics.
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> In addition, sixteen cases were taken from the therapist's files, consisting of clients who had been treated with orthodox psychoanalysis. The patients included in these cases were twelve neurotics and four borderline psychotics.[14]

The median age of the three groups was 26.3 years. For those treated with orthodox psychoanalysis, it was 30.5 years; for the psychoanalytically oriented group the median age was 30.8 years; and for those in rational therapy it was 26.3 years. Both males and females were fairly evenly distributed; 82% of

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Albert Ellis, "Outcome of Employing Three Techniques of Psychotherapy," Journal of Clinical Psychology, XIII (October, 1957), 345.

the total population had had some amount of college training.

The results of the study are the following:

1. It was found that individuals treated with orthodox psychoanalysis showed little or no improvement in 50% of the cases, distinct improvement in 37%, and considerable improvement in 13%.

2. Those treated with psychoanalytically oriented therapy showed little or no improvement in 37% of the cases, distinct improvement in 45% and considerable improvement in 18% of the cases.

3. Those treated with rational psychotherapy showed little or no improvement in 10% of the cases, distinct improvement in 45% and considerable improvement in 44%.

4. Although the observed difference between the groups treated with orthodox psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically oriented therapy did not prove to be statistically significant, those between the groups treated with rational psychotherapy and the other two techniques did reach statistical significance ($p=.01$).

5. Data are also presented on the basic irrational ideas held by neurotic clients and their tendency to give way to more rational replacements with therapeutic improvement.[15]

The school counselor who utilizes an adaptation of the Rational-emotive technique is likely to discover similar encouraging results.

The following pages of this paper will include:

1. Some biological limitations of a human organism which make it difficult to think in an orderly manner and especially to think clearly and logically about his own behavior for any

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[15] Ibid., pp. 349-350.

consistent length of time. (C. 2)

2. A brief, practical outline of the origin and theory of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy. (C. 3)

3. Some adaptations of Rational-emotive techniques to school counseling. (C. 4)

4. An over-all view of what has been written with a discussion of the limitations Rational-emotive Psychotherapy has in its application to school counseling. (C. 5)

CHAPTER II

AN INTRODUCTION TO RATIONAL-EMOTIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY: SOME BIOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN BEINGS WHICH AFFECT PSYCHOLOGICAL BEHAVIOR

The theory of Rational-emotive counseling begins with human biology. Learning is done by the person, but only on top of what he <u>is</u>. The human is a biological organism and it is this organism which learns. There are many aspects of this organism which predispose him to learn badly, to become emotionally upset, to defeat his own ends.

The student, or any person for that matter, unfortunately, does not contain within his natural existence a built-in self-adjusting mechanism in the mind which would regulate his mental health similar to the homeostatic regulator of bodily equilibrium.

And yet, the school counselor is not satisfied with the answer — human fallibility — to the oft-asked question: Why do so many students, many of them very intelligent, well-educated and in good physical condition, who are potentially rational people, act in illogical, self-defeating ways? Ellis proposes this answer:

> The human animal is biologically predisposed to think crookedly on many occasions, to defeat his own ends,

> to be over-suggestible and over-generalizing, and to become both anxious and hostile with very little or no objective provocation and to continue to reinfect himself with anxiety and hostility no matter what kind of upbringing he has, nor what kind of society in which he has been reared . . . I did not start with this hypothesis . . . but the belief that men and women are first genetically predisposed to emotional disturbance, and that they then later are the victims of environmental traumata which help actualize these predispositions, and which induce them to become perhaps four or five times as disturbed as they might biologically tend to be, has been forced on me by clinical observation during the last twenty years that I have been practising intensive psychotherapy.[16]

The student is a biologically-rooted animal with many inborn tendencies. This is not to say that every student who comes through the counselor's door, according to the Ellisian theory, bears with him some specific inherent symptom of an adjustment problem, such as an aversion to learning or the tendency toward destructiveness. There is something more general, more nebulous, more elusive than any single symptom; yet it has an affinity to inheritance, apparently, and to the underlying cause of emotional ills, perfectionism.[17]

Perfectionism signifies the demand, the necessity, the need to meet a standard set up by the individual himself. When

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[16]Albert Ellis, "The Treatment of Psychotic and Borderline Psychotic Patients with Rational-Emotive Psychotherapy." Paper delivered at the Symposium on Therapeutic Methods with Schizophrenics, V. A. Hospital, Battle Creek, Michigan, May 16-17, 1963.

[17]Albert Ellis, How to Prevent Your Child From Becoming a Neurotic Adult (New York, 1966), p. 4.

this standard, whether realistic or not, is not reached by the subject, the emotional difficulties begin. It is a vicious circle comprised of feelings of failure, lack of self-confidence, depressive feelings of inadequacy, self-hate, self-defeatism — all potential offspring of the intrinsic tendency toward perfectionism — all of which stand in the way of achieving the standard, thus completing the circle.

Another basic tendency with which we are born is short-range hedonism.[18] This denotes the performance of that action which will give the quickest gratification despite its future consequences. The student who on impulse quits school "to make money" rather than complete his education and thereby gain prestige and greater earning potential in the job market is a typical example of short-range hedonism. It is easy to see that such basic human tendencies as perfectionism and short-range hedonism can cause a rash of problems such as truancy in the face of failure, an inferiority complex or destructive gang affiliation.

With an awareness of the possible operation of these inherent self-defeating tendencies within the student, the counselor may conceivably approach his task in a manner more respectful of the role that hereditary factors play in students' emotional problems.

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[18] Ibid.

> The old theories which hold that there are difinite stages of development for all children, whereby a child passes through a nasty phase of age four and then emerges into sunniness and tractability at age five, are being made obsolete by scientists who now find that a child's unique and largely inherited reaction pattern is the chief determinant of his behavior at each age level.[19]

It is highly possible that the student displaying some difficulty of adjustment was born with a tendency to act in a certain manner. It is, therefore, exceptionally difficult and sometimes impossible to induce him to behave in a manner that is radically different from his tendency.

The main biological determiners which set up self-defeating action on many occasions by virtually all men and women regardless of their intelligence or education in reference to problem-solving are:

1. Prolonged period of childhood
2. Difficulty of unlearning
3. Inertia principles
4. Short-sightedness
5. Prepotency of desire
6. Over-suggestibility
7. Over-viligance and over-caution
8. Grandiosity and over-rebellion
9. Extremism
10. Oscillation and erraticness
11. Automaticity and unthinkingness
12. Forgetfulness
13. Wishful thinking
14. Ineffective focusing and organizing
15. Unsustained effort
16. Over-emphasizing injustice
17. Over-emphasizing guilt
18. Excitement-seeking

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[19] Ibid., p. 5. See also p. 74; A. Ellis and R. Harper, A Guide to Rational Living (Hollywood, Calif., 1967), p. 59.

19. Stress proneness
20. Lack of self-perspective
21. Discrimination difficulties
22. Overgeneralization tendencies
23. Slow learning tendencies
24. Rashness and over-impulsivity
25. Perceptual time lag
26. Ease of survival with disturbance
27. Physical malaise
28. Difficulty of sustained discipline[20]

A brief description of each of these possible biological determiners follows.

1. Prolonged period of childhood. The child develops significant, specific behavior patterns in the growth period prior to adolescence. While this behavioral pattern may be appropriate for him as a child, it, at best, does a poor job of training and preparing him for the kind of thinking and behaving which is expected of him in order to live sensibly as an adult. A child's frequent "no" to a parent's suggestion to play, or eat, or rest may be a sign of genuine decision or immaturity on the part of the child, and be accepted as such. He may not yet understand that they are actually being helpful, or kind, or protective. But if that same person, now a seventh-grade student, returns again and again to this negativism as a form of withdrawal in a school setting, the childhood experiences have not helped prepare him for the kind of role he is called upon to play in his present situation. His former peculiar behavior is now

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[20]Albert Ellis, Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy (New York, 1963), pp. 381-419.

exceptionally misleading, dysfunctional, and unhelpful for his future existence.

2. Difficulty in learning. Generally it cannot be assumed that when something new is being learned, something old is being unlearned. "Difficulty in learning" refers to the problem of unlearning a now useless or self-defeating behavioral pattern while in the process of adopting a more advantageous one. Dependency, for example, must be unlearned and assertiveness learned in its place. Yet it can be like trying to move the proverbial mountain for a particular student to participate in classroom discussion when for several years he was called a "good child" for being still in the company of others.

3. Inertia principles. One of the fundamental characteristics of all matter is inertia, the property which causes bodies at rest to remain at rest, or if moving to continue doing so unless acted upon by some external force. This operation of the principle is readily seen in human behavior. The languorous student knows that he must study in order to raise his grades and receive some satisfying learning experiences. However, he may already have developed a pattern of rationalizing or making excuses for not studying. The extra amount of energy he must exert to accomplish self-improvement seems too much. He will balk or rebel against this initial energy outlay and will remain where he is -- which may well be right in the middle of his own self-defeatism.

4. Short-sightedness. The child with his short-range view of life usually wants the reward or pleasure of some sort right now instead of waiting patiently for what may easily be a more satisfying experience in the long run. This natural tendency of short-sightedness is one of the most difficult to overcome in later years. A freshman is given the option of taking (a) a general course and an easy berth on the basketball team, or (b) enrolling in a college prep course with a good chance of obtaining a position with a neighboring engineering firm upon graduation. His taking the option (a) because of its ease and its prospect of enticing popularity without seeing that he would benefit more from option (b) as a vocational choice is an example of the tendency toward short-sightedness.

5. Prepotency of desire. "The human organism seems to be so constructed that there is little relationship between what it desires and what it wisely should do or refrain from doing for its own benefit or survival,"[21] describes this biological limitation of human behavior. An example of this is the senior who boasts abbut his ability to handle a car at any speed and under any conditions. Though pride in such skill is natural enough, it tends to create an atmosphere of challenge wherein one must preserve one's reputation by constantly attempting new stunts at higher speeds. Favoring the desire to

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[21] Ibid., p. 384.

maintain his title as a daredevil may well endanger the student's social and scholastic standing as well as his life.

6. Oversuggestibility. The tendency to imitate and respond to suggestion in infants can be attested to by any observant parent. At such an early period and several years beyond, imitation is desirable. There is not in the human organism, alas, a disriminating instrument which regulates the tendency as the child matures. If there were, it would guide him toward independent thinking, originality and self-reliant behavior. That such a convenient mechanism does not exist is easily observed in conversations as the following: Leader of sub-group of students: "Jones is going to ask for our term papers today, right?" Group: "Right." Leader: "I don't have mine ready, so we'll stall him another week, understand?" Group: "Good idea, Bob. We'll stall him like you said."

7. Over-vigilance and over-caution. The extremes of vigilance and caution give rise to much idiotic thinking and worrying. A very talented and intelligent girl had formerly lived in an unsafe neighborhood. Almost from the time she could walk she was careful to be home before dark. Shortly before entering high school she moved to a relatively safe dwelling in the vicinity of her school; yet, when asked to participate in extra-curricular after-school activities, she declined on the basis of former fears of being attacked. What had been a basically

commendable practise now became a hindrance to new learning experiences.

8. Grandiosity and over-rebellion. Ellis makes this particular comment about this biological determinant:

> A child, to a certain degree, is healthfully grandiose, rebellious, and hostile. By egotistically thinking that the world should be the way he would like it to be, he often helps himself overcome the expectable difficulties of his childhood existence; and frequently, thereby, he becomes stronger and more self-confident.[22]

But it is also easy for this same child to continue to be rebellious and grandiose as he grows into adolescence and manhood. Then, it is no longer healthful. A sophomore girl, an only child, was vice-president of her student council. She was elected for her many outstanding qualities, especially intelligence and beauty. However, before the semester was over she was forced to resign by student pressure. She used the office as a sounding-board for her inner feelings of hostility toward authority and literally brow-beat several underlings to follow her egotistical plans to overthrow the more placid president. These uncontrolled urges for self-expression did incalcuable damage to her future academic plans.

9. Extremism. "Virtue lies in the middle" runs the old Latin proverb (virtus stat in medio). Humans, however, tend toward one end or the other of the fulcrum of life. As Ellis

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[22] Ibid., p. 387.

points out, one reason may be that:

> . . . some of the basic elements of the human nervous system, which frequently work on all-or-none rather than on middle-ground principles of excitation and response, prejudice the human person to respond in extreme rather than moderate manners in this thinking and acting.[23]

Peculiar, "way out" student dress, music and dance forms, slang, and inner-group vocabulary are some examples of extremes that students adopt, often at great expense and even scholastic detriment to themselves.

10. Oscillation and erraticness. Maintaining a state of stability and balance for an extended period of time is difficult to do. Instead, human beings vacillate between striving for equilibrium and change. Student life which centers around schedules, the routine, also lends itself to promoting gravitation toward change. The listless, bored student can justify a "marijuana kick" as the need for something exciting and pleasurable despite its possible adverse effects on school work, health, and home life.

11. Automaticity and unthinkingness. The tendency to do things with great facility automatically and without thinking once they have been learned early in life, like eating with a spoon, is a boon to human existence. But this tendency often leads to ruts, not allowing creativity nor new experiences. The

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[23] Ibid., p. 388.

student with poor study habits easily passes up the suggestion to a more efficient way of reading assigned literature than to relinquish the habit of starting at the beginning and "plowing through til the end."

12. Forgetfulness. There is substantial evidence from semester examination results to support the theory that memory traces of class material once known naturally fade and that the mere passage of time itself obtrudes upon the clear-cut recollection of some of the desirable aspects of learning. Time also helps erase remembrance of desirable aspects of behavior. Suspended students upon returning to school often meticulously observe the rules which they had neglected long enough to forget the distress of suspension and fall back into the old pattern. These students are practising the self-sabotaging mode of behavior of a biological tendency, honest forgetfulness.

13. Wishful thinking. Normal human beings have an inborn tendency to expect things to exist because they simply want them to.[24] The tendency is unchecked when wanting desires to be satisfied becomes expecting them to be satisfied and really problem-producing when demanding fruition. The plain-looking high school girl who lacks social graces, academic prowess, or other demanded achievements unattainable in reality for her, will tend to slip back into the world of fantasy she knew as a child.

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[24] Ibid., p. 393.

14. Ineffective focusing and organizing. To plan one's life successfully in a clear, defined manner and to sustain one's efforts to reach that goal requires the organized adult intellect. One reason for this being a difficult chore if not impossible for the youngster is that he lives in the realm of immediate goals, specializing in short-term planning. Thus, the tendency toward ineffective focusing and organizing is one which few students generally find easy to overcome. It is interesting to observe eighth grade students boarding the bus for the class trip. The more disorganized student will usually have one of his parents running after him with items left behind in the last minute packing and shouting last minute instructions. Organizing diverse elements of the situation, such as a trip, into an integrated whole is not inherent in one's nature.

15. Unsustained effort. To give up easily in spite of good beginnings is an experience few people escape. This is not to say that the individual, a physically-handicapped student for instance, cannot continue physical therapy that is difficult and long-ranged for a considerable length of time. Rather, he finds it hard to do so and has to be unusually well motivated to sustain his efforts against inborn tendencies.

> Most young children, for example, are easily distractible, have poor attention span, and will not continue to do a difficult task for any length of time. This is not because they are emotionally disturbed, but because they are

normal children.[25]

16. Over-emphasizing injustice. Human feelings of envy, jealousy, and hatred are biologically as well as environmentally fostered. Thus, it is very easy for a pupil to harbor deep-seated feelings of unfairness and to hate those who he feels are taking advantage of him. The kind of behavior which derives from these attitudes is quite often found in the classroom. The student who is much lower in ability than others may feel unjustly deprived when he cannot perform as adequately as his fellow classmates. This attitude easily leads him to blame them for being significantly different from himself and to feel that fate, God, or the world is unkind to him for not giving him the intellectual ability to excel.

17. Over-emphasizing guilt. Man so easily blames himself and becomes guilt-ridden when actually it was his performance that was faulty. Since the evaluation of the person's self-worth is so closely related to his performance, this gross distinction is often beyond reach of many people. In failing to make this important clarification, the individual tends to blame himself (rather than objectively give a low rating to his performance) when he fails in any way or is proven to be "wrong" instead of "right." A star quarterback who blames himself for losing an important game is an example of a student

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[25] Ibid., p. 395.

falsely making the inductive leap from a deficient performance to convincing himself of being worthless and guilty for what occurred on the gridiron.

18. Excitement-seeking. At first glance this natural tendency seems opposed to a similar biological trend, that of stability. In effect, excitement-seeking occurs because of the boredom and monotony which comes with security. Excitement-seeking is a natural longing to break out of the safe shell and do something adventurous, but oftentimes rash. A partially handicapped boy and slow learner came to this counselor's office some weeks ago -- the reason being to discover how to get out of a vicious gang without their taking revenge on him for quitting. He admitted becoming affiliated with the youthful pack for the sake of daring and adventure which now was becoming self-destructive, a fact which was obvious even to himself.

19. Stress-proneness. With the stress and strain of daily living present to such a high degree today, the average individual tends to become physically and mentally exhausted. This type of living lends itself easily to a disturbing cycle of activities. In attempting to rid himself of the emotional difficulties which often come along with exhaustion, the person meets resistance from the already physically tired body. This in turn sets up a feeling of helplessness or depression which then interferes with normal eating and sleeping and other activities. The student who shows stress-proneness is becoming a common sight

in the school. Many come from culturally deprived ghetto homes where a good night's sleep is rare; fighting, shouting, etc. is the usual evening fare in the home or in the next apartment, and a balanced diet is uncommon. These students sleep through class, are irritable most of the time and are generally behind in their class work. Their tendency toward the stress reaction, rather than annoying them or making them uncomfortable, has overwhelmed them.

20. Lack of self-perspective. Observing and imitating his parents comes easily for the normal child. He may smile, speak or walk in a manner similar to his sire; yet, in his growing ability to perceive others the child is generally unable to assess his own performance objectively. Often in an honest attempt to observe one's own conduct without prejudice, the person ends up becoming severely self-critical or self-deceiving. The student to consider here is the isolate. The youngster who watches playground activities from the sidelines, who seldom suggests new games, or who always volunteers to go to the end of the line shows little awareness of self-potential. He sees others as having and doing things but he is so worried about the outcome in his own case, is so entangled in the "how" of doing it rather than in what his own potential is, that he self-defeatingly fails to act or react at all.

21. Discrimination difficulties. Discrimination refers to

the ability to discern, to distinguish, or to differentiate between one situation and another, and how to react to each. Thus, the ability to discriminate is related to one's ability to make appropriate decisions in such varied circumstances as business ethics, personal and family matters, vacation site selection and so on. Apparently we all have this capacity — to use it well and to improve upon it is another, and difficult, matter. The basketball center may exercise key plays magnificently but foul up less stressful plays, for example.

22. Overgeneralization tendencies. The tendency to overgeneralize is closely allied to discrimination problems discussed above and is an all too frequently practised type of extremism. The number of students who have the habit of exaggerating good and bad situations is legion, especially among younger adolescents. A suggestion to plan a science exhibit is not just a "good idea" or "bad idea" but "terrific" or "awful." Exaggeration of the "awful" is perhaps the most neurosis-creating behavior extant.

23. Slow learning tendencies. Most persons have a tendency to learn many things slowly. While external influences such as the fear of failure, the need to impress others, or the preoccupation with learning a variety of subjects instantaneously may increase these tendencies, there seem to also be physiological reasons for slow learning. Many students seem to require a

number of repetitions or experiences before it occurs to them that one cannot refuse to study and still expect to be an honor roll student or never practise and still intend to be a star quarterback.

24. Rashness and over-impulsivity. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" suggests that tempting fate is a natural component of the human personality. Although it is necessary and advantageous for a child to take some risks and act on impulse in order to gain experience and self-confidence, to habitually act before thinking can lead to unhealthy foolhardiness. As Ellis points out "the chances are that many of the world's outstanding generals, explorers, statesmen, inventors and artists were born with far more than the average share of impulsivity and that their biological heritage in this respect constituted at least one of the main reasons for their becoming outstanding."[26] However, a student who constantly and impulsively challenges a teacher's statements is not necessarily destined to become great.

25. Perceptual time lag. There is a perceptual immediacy in humans and other animals which allows them to see or sense a dangerous situation and rapidly counteract it. Nevertheless, where emotion is concerned there is a distinct time lag between how a person perceives a situation and how he reacts to it. A student who repeatedly skips school to avoid taking tests is

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[26] Ibid., p. 407.

overlooking the fact that he will eventually be penalized whether it is by failing the course, by having to face parental disapproval or by having to make up the tests he missed. The momentary pleasure of evading a distasteful task is minimal when contrasted with the ultimate consequences.

26. Ease of survival with disturbance. Persons with serious physical handicaps find it difficult to survive in a competitive world. Unfortunately, a person with an emotional disturbance is often able to get along quite well without having to rid himself of his emotional handicap. For example, a student who fears reciting in class can repeatedly find excuses or ways of avoiding being called upon to recite. In time he adjusts to the fear and comes to know the limits of it. In fact, there seems to be no problem at all and it no longer appears worthwhile to attempt to overcome the fear since avoidance is so much more simple.

27. Physical malaise. It is not unusual to discover that a student is having a difficult time concentrating on his school work because of a severe headache or other physical discomforts. It may well be that during these periods of physiological debility the individual is not as well able to muster his thinking resources as he is at other periods of his life, and that consequently he is then prone to think irrationally and to bring on negative emotional states.[27]

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[27] Ibid., p. 412.

28. Difficulty of sustained discipline. Sustained discipline, while enjoyable at certain times, tends to become boring; yet, it is often necessary in order to reach desired goals to follow a plan of sustained discipline. The college-bound youth may prefer going out every night to spending a number of evenings studying, but allowing himself to indulge in either extreme — constant study or incessant neglect of his studies — would ultimately result in loss of desired goals. He would either lose the opportunity to attend college or the gratification of socializing.

Nothing has been said of other biological factors that should at least be mentioned in passing, such as nutritional deficiencies, premenstrual disturbances, sensory problems, and various diseases. Each of these reinforce what has been said before regarding man's biological limitations to achieving mental health.

Recognition of these biological determiners of human behavior prepares the school counselor to better understand the whole person with whom he is dealing. He more readily accepts each student as being first genetically predisposed, as the rational therapist believes, to emotional difficulties in varying degrees, and that he then later is the victim of environmental traumata which help actualize these predispositions. Although the student can overcome these predispositions by hard work

and effort throughout his whole life, he can never get rid of them entirely; they are always basically there.

Some means of tackling these biological determiners affecting human behavior are given here:

1. Change the biological tendency or specific human trait to the degree possible.

Physical malformations with which some children are born are significantly corrected when treated in time by professional therapists. Inborn mental deficiencies too can be rectified with the help of specially trained school personnel and counseling. The slow reader, if he is discovered promptly by an alert counselor using diagnostic reading tests and other techniques, can be taught to change this handicap to a great degree, thus minimizing the disability by adolescence or adulthood.

2. Improve inborn talents. While the student may be hindered sometimes by time, lack of motivation, finances, etc., to correct the natural mental defects, he can add to his inborn talents. That student who has a natural tendency toward being a good creative writer can be encouraged to do his writing and eventually, perhaps, become a great creative writer. The counselor by means of the Guidance Program's Student Appraisal Services can provide the data which will highlight the individual's talents and suggest the means whereby the student can best utilize his positive qualities and abilities.

3. Modify the environmental factors of behavior. Since the student's behavior is a product of both heredity and environment, he can change or at least limit the hereditary influence on his behavior by modifying the environmental element. An asthmatic college student was having a very difficult time with his studies due to his allergy and was becoming very irritable toward his classmates. The counselor suggested he consider moving to a drier climate. The student did so and within a relatively short time his academic and social standing improved. The change in environment contributed greatly to the change in the student's behavior.

4. Realistically acknowledge the hereditary defects and disadvantages.

A serious constituent of mental balance is the recognition of one's inherited deficiencies and acceptance of them. The student who tends to give up easily in the face of challenging tasks can advance well beyond his own expectations if he applies himself within his own limitations. But if he refuses to recognize his weakness and attempts undertaking an extremely difficult assignment to belie his proven disability he is amplifying his difficulty with the inherited deficiency. The student who knows himself, on the other hand, can with persistent hard work overcome his biological predispositions toward

psychological handicaps and live an enjoyable, productive life.[28]

In summary, Rational-emotive Psychotherapy in theory and practise emphasizes man's fallible, limited human existence. It points out that the child is very much the result of heredity as well as environment, endowed with biological limitations which help him to tend toward thinking illogically and to maintain this illogical, irrational way of thinking. It further states that if he is born with a tendency to act in a certain manner, it is exceptionally difficult and sometimes impossible to induce him to behave in a manner that is radically different from this tendency. But this Ellisian method further contends that the student can be taught, with proper guidance, to accept himself as worth-while even when he fails, so that he will be able to go forth into adolescence and adulthood with maximum self-acceptance and full ability to overcome the innumerable stresses of modern life.

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[28]Albert Ellis, How to Prevent Your Child from Becoming a Neurotic Adult, pp. 9-11.

CHAPTER III

THE THEORY OF RATIONAL-EMOTIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY

Rational-emotive Psychotherapy is relatively new in counseling and psychotherapeutic circles. Dr. Albert Ellis, developer of this systematic method of treating a wide range of emotional problems, was trained as a psychotherapist in the field of marriage and family counseling. Following this training, Ellis embarked on an intensive study of Freudian psychoanalysis. It was his hope to find an effective technique to advise people how they could live a rational and productive life. The marvelous results of depth therapy which he hoped for through the analytic process did not occur.

In 1952 Ellis began to move away from the passive orthodox Freudian psychoanalytic technique to a more active psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy. By 1954 Ellis' clinical work with his patients took on a radically new slant which eventually would be the breakthrough for him and Rational-emotive Psychotherapy. Ellis explains why the change took place:

> Where I had previously tried to show them (patients) how they had originally become disturbed and what they must actively now do to counter their early-acquired upsets, I saw that I had been exceptionally vague in these regards, and that, still misled by Freudian-oriented theories, I had been stressing psychodynamic rather than philosophic

> causation, and had been emphasizing what to undo rather than what to unsay and unthink. I had been neglecting (along with virtually all other therapists of the day) the precise, simple declarative and exclamatory sentences which the patients once told themselves in creating their disturbances and which, even more importantly, they were still specifically telling themselves literally every day in the week to maintain these same disturbances.[29]

For the rest of that year Ellis experimented clinically with a wide variety of patients, putting to test his theory:

a. that human emotions are most importantly caused and controlled by thinking;

b. that since emotions largely result from thinking, one may appreciably control one's feelings by controlling one's thoughts;

c. that negative feelings result from sentences reflective of irrational attitudes, i.e. philosophies having no bases in reality;

d. that, therefore, a person may change the nature of his feelings from negative to positive (or neutral) by changing the internalized sentences, or self-talk, or personal philosophy of life with which he largely created the feelings in the first place.

Thus, he tested in practise the theory that the therapist's or counselor's role is to help the client find out what he is now saying in the way of internalized sentences, to question the rationality of what he discovers he is saying, or believing,

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[29]Albert Ellis, Reason and Emotion, p. 22.

and to substitute more rational, more realistic self-talk and sound philosophy of living.

By the beginning of 1955, the basic theory and practise of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy was formulated.[30]

Ellis readily admits that the concept that man's feelings are heavily influenced, if not always caused by thinking, is not a new idea.[31] Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher, who lived in the first century, noted in the Enchiridion: "Men are disturbed not by events, but by the views which they take of them."[32] The perceptive Bard of Avon saw the relationship of thinking and emoting. It was a dejected Hamlet when Shakespeare had him utter those immortalized words: "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."[33] The dejection was brought on by Hamlet's own negative thinking that for him living in Denmark was living in a prison.[34]

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[30] Ibid., p. 33.

[31] Ibid., p. 35.

[32] Whitney J. Oates, (Ed.,) The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers, (New York, 1940), p. 469.

[33] William Shakespeare, "Hamlet," The Complete Works of Shakespeare, (New York, 1949), Act II, Scene II, Line 259, p. 1084.

[34] Ibid.

Ellis cites no less than thirty-two modern day therapists[35] who independently formulated most of the principles found in Rational-emotive therapy, and who use these principles in their own schools, clinics, and private counseling practises.

The key to understanding the Ellisian theory is to be familiar with its view of emotions, thinking, and their relationship in the complex of human behavior. It states that

> man is a uniquely rational, as well as a uniquely irrational animal; that his emotional or psychological disturbances are largely a result of his thinking illogically or irrationally; and that he can rid himself of most of his emotional or mental unhappiness, ineffectuality, and disturbance if he learns to maximize his rational and minimize his irrational thinking.[36]

Emotion and thinking are two of four basic, interrelated processes in the human being. The other two processes are sensory-perception and movement. Emotion is described as that

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[35]The therapists are: Adkins (1959), Adler (1927, 1929), Alexander and French (1946), Berne (1957), Cameron (1950), Dejerine and Gaukler (1913), Diaz-Guerrera (1959), Dollard and Miller (1950), Dubois (1907), Eysenck (1961), Frank (1961), Grimes (1961), Guze (1959), Herzberg (1945), Johnson (1946), Kelly (1955), Levine (1942), Low (1952), Lynn (1957), Meyer (1948) Phillips (1956), Robbins (1955, 1956), Rotter (1954), Salter (1949), Shand (1961), Stekel (1950), Thorne (1950, 1961), Wolberg (1954), and Wolpe (1958, 1961). See Ellis, Reason and Emotion, pp. 35-36. The reader is referred to C. 18, pp. 316-374 in Reason and Emotion where Ellis discusses the main differences between the Rational-emotive approach to counseling and psychotherapy and that taken by some of the other schools of therapeutic practise.

[36]Albert Ellis, Reason and Emotion, p. 36. See also A. Ellis "Rational Psychotherapy," The Journal of General Psychology, LIX (1958), 35-49.

exceptionally intricate state of reaction which is integrally related to all other perceptual and response processes.[37] Thinking includes the total composite of bio-electric changes in the brain cells, remembering, learning, problem-solving and similar psychological processes.[38]

All four fundamental life operations are taking place in the individual even though one may be more apparent than the others. A student taking a semester examination may be thinking of the test answers, yet it would be more accurate to say that he perceives, moves, feels, THINKS about this exam. While the student's thinking process is emphasized in the complex activity of taking the examination, the other three processes are taking place at the same time, indicating an integrated relationship to such an extent that one is not seen or understood apart from the other three processes.

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[37]Albert Ellis, "Rational Psychotherapy," Journal of General Psychology, p. 35. Stanley Cobb in his Emotions and Clinical Medicine (New York, 1950) is cited by Ellis as being in agreement with his conception of emotion: "1) an introspectively given affect state, usually mediated by acts of interpretation; 2) the whole set of internal physiological changes, which help (ideally) the return to normal equilibrium between the organism and its environment, and 3) the various patterns of overt behavior stimulated by the environment and implying constant interactions with it, which are expressive of the stirred-up physiological state (2) and also the more or less agitated phychological state (1)."

[38]Albert Ellis, "Rational Psychotherapy," Journal of General Psychology, p. 35.

Thus, emotion and thinking, according to the theory of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy, are assumed not to be two entirely distinct processes, but significantly to overlap; they are in some respects and for most practical purposes essentially the same:

> A large part of what we call emotion, in other words, is nothing more or less than a certain kind — a biased, prejudiced, or strongly evaluative kind — of thinking. What we usually label as thinking is a relatively calm and dispassionate appraisal (or organized perception) of a given situation, an objective comparison of many of the elements in this situation, and a coming to some conclusion as a result of this comparing or discriminating process.[39]

Further, if emotion can be caused[40] by one's thinking, it can also be controlled by it. This idea is vividly portrayed in the case of a junior who became very upset when he learned that he had missed becoming a member of the Honor Society by a few points. The student then reasoned himself into a state of calmness by telling himself how silly it was to let himself be upset over what had happened.

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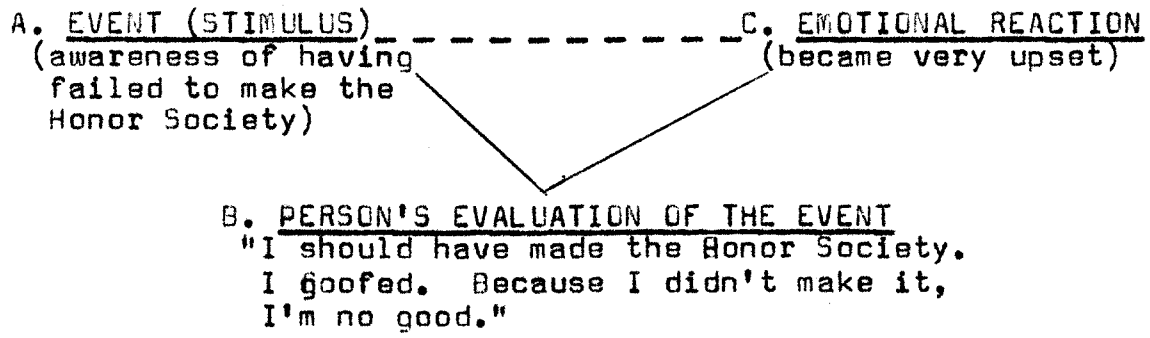
[39] Ibid., p. 36.

[40] Ellis is quick to note that "emotion has no single cause or result." Instead, he says, "(Emotion) can be said to have three main origins and pathways: (a) through the sensorimotor processes; (b) through biophysical stimulation mediated through the tissues of the autonomic nervous system and the hypothalamus and other subcortical centers; (c) and through the cognitive or thinking processes. We may also, if we wish, add a fourth pathway and say that emotion may arise through the experiencing and recirculating of previous emotional processes (as when recollection of a past feeling of anger triggers off a renewed surge of hostility.)" A. Ellis, Reason and Emotion, pp. 39-40.

Disordered emotions, therefore, can often (though not always) be ameliorated by changing one's thinking.[41]

The control that thinking has on emotion can be diagrammed in the following manner, using the example just given:



What is called an emotional reaction, becoming upset (C) in this example, is really a reaction to biased, prejudiced, and (most important) strongly evaluative thought (B). The evaluative thought causes and maintains the emotion. Depending on how these thoughts are interpreted, the emotional reaction is favorable or unfavorable, leading to a healthy or disturbed individual. In the instance above, the thinking was negative at first; hence the emotional reaction was unfavorable, resulting in an upset adolescent.

Then by combatting the negative ideas, the student was able to regain his former emotional state as follows:

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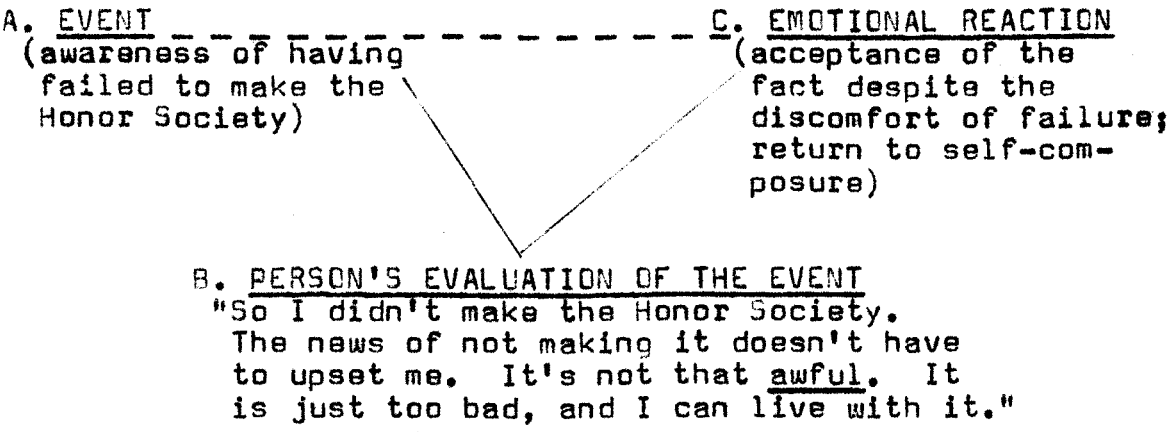
[41]Albert Ellis, "Rational Psychotherapy," Journal of General Psychology, p. 36.



Thus, it is rarely the stimulus (A) which triggers the emotional reaction (C). Rather, it is almost always the individual's belief, attitude toward, or interpretation of A (B) which actually leads to the emotional reaction (C).[42]

If the thinking processes usually cause and maintain human feeling as discussed above, then:

a) what is the mechanism of thinking?

b) how does thinking relate to emotional upset?

In reference to the first question, what makes up the thinking process, according to rational-emotive theory, is, in a word, self-verbalization.

> Man is a uniquely language-creating animal and he begins to learn from very early childhood to formulate his thoughts, perceptions, and feelings in words, phrases, and sentences. Unless, as we have noted, some very serious disease process intervenes, the human tendency to think in words, rather than in pictures, sounds, touch units, or other possible methods of internal

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[42]The theoretical construct is referred to by Ellis as the A-B-C theory of personality and emotional disturbance. See A. Ellis, Reason and Emotion, pp. 126-129.

> representations, is nearly complete by adolescence or adulthood. If this is so (and we know of no evidence to the contrary), then for all practical purposes the phrases and sentences that we keep telling ourselves usually are or become our thoughts and emotions.[43]

The thinking processes relate to feelings in that when the individual makes a strongly negative evaluation or assessment of events and tells himself, in the form of internalized sentences and phrases, the results of the evaluation, a negative feeling (emotion) results. On the other hand, when the assessment is strongly positive, a pleasant emotion results. When the evaluation is not strongly positive or negative, little or no feeling results. This corresponds to what is usually meant by looking at a situation or event "objectively" or "dispassionately."

This discussion lends itself to two practical questions:

1. Why do people evaluate negatively in the first place?

2. Why do some people evaluate the same events more strongly than do other people?

The answer to both questions lies in the person's "philosophy of life" — his outlook on life, including the entire set of attitudinal and belief systems. The theory of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy contends that disturbed or emotionally upset individuals have attitudes and beliefs which do not correspond to the realities of the world in which they live;

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[43]Albert Ellis, A Guide to Rational Living, p. 26.

such beliefs and attitudes are illogical, i.e., are irrational. Everything perceived, whether it be an external event or an internal event such as a memory or idea, is evaluated in terms of the individual's own standards and values, i.e., what he believes things should or should not be, what he believes something is worth, etc. This evaluation is a cognitive response, sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious. The cognitive response may, of course, be positive (the event is good or beneficial to me), negative (the event is bad or is harmful to me), or neutral (the event is meaningless or is not relevant to me). This response, when forceful or strong enough, leads to a feeling — an emotion — which may be, respectively, positive, good or beneficial, or negative, bad or harmful. The relatively neutral evaluative response would, logically, not lead to a positive nor a negative affectual response. Or in Ellis' words,

> An individual emotes when he evaluates something strongly -- when he clearly perceives it as being "good" or "bad," "beneficial" or "harmful" and strongly responds to it in a negative or positive manner. Emoting usually, probably always, involves some kind of bodily sensations which, when perceived by the emoting individual, may then reinforce the original emotion. Emotions may therefore simply be evaluations which have a strong bodily component, while so-called non-emotional attitudes may be evaluations with a relatively weak bodily component.[44]

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[44]Albert Ellis, "Operational Reformulation of the Basic Principles of Psychoanalysis," Psychoanalytic Review, (1956), 43: 163-180.

The basis for man's propensity toward a self-defeating philosophy of life is essentially in his biological structure. As discussed in Chapter II of this paper, man is an imperfect being, slow to change, fallible, limited. He is biologically disposed to be irrational and that only with the greatest difficulty can he induce himself to be fairly consistently logical in his thinking and behavior. But the actual level or irrational thinking depends heavily upon the philosophy of life learned by the individual during his developmental period. During this period he is constantly exposed to certain inaccurate assumptions gleaned from his environment. These assumptions are sustained by "self-talk" — a sort of self-dialogue in which the person continually affirms and acts upon his own faulty suppositions, until they become an integral part of his presently held (and still constantly self-reindoctrinated) philosophy of life.[45]

The assumptions mentioned here are those "good values," beliefs, theories in American society which adults have handed on dogmatically, with little or no examination, to succeeding generations.[46] Love, success, concern for others, evil, etc., are such abstract ideas that when coupled with theories and

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[45]Albert Ellis, Reason and Emotion, p. 22.

[46]Ibid., p. 60.

attitudes as : "In order to be happy, it is necessary to be loved or to be a success," or "He is an evil person so stay away from him," widespread human disturbances and prejudices are spawned. Should these notions be presented by a parent or some authority figure to the child, who then internalizes them as part of his attitudinal system, these ideas will cause and maintain the disturbance and unhappiness.

How these ideas are inculcated into the young is exemplified in the authoritarian, closed-minded school teacher who instills his preconceived set of attitudes and qualities of the "ideal student" into his pupils. "The ideal student is the perfect student. All of you must strive to be perfect." Instead of allowing the students to learn what a <u>good</u> student is by their mastering learning situations as they arise, he has indoctrinated them with self-defeating, perfectionistic thinking. He has also robbed them of intelligently facing future conflicts of life in using their own judgment, by forcing them to conform to his biased beliefs and ideas. Since the teacher's word is so highly respected by the small children, the damage to early realistic thinking on the part of the children will already have been done.

> It is hypothesized, in other words,,that human beings are the kind of animals who, when raised in any society similar to our own, tend to fall victim to several major fallacious ideas; to keep reindoctrinating themselves over and over again with these ideas in an unthinking

> autosuggestive manner; and consequently to keep actualizing them in overt behavior. Most of these irrational ideas, are, as the Freudians have very adequately pointed out, instilled by the individual's parents during his childhood, and are tenaciously clung to because of his attachment to these parents and because the ideas were ingrained, or imprinted, or conditioned before later and more rational modes of thinking were given a chance to gain foothold.[47]

Many of the faulty sentences causing and sustaining emotional difficulties are based upon and derived from what Ellis lists as "the irrational ideas which cause disturbances" even as they themselves are derived from more basic philosophical outlooks on life. The irrational ideas as outlined by Ellis are first presented in sentence form and then analyzed briefly.

1. The idea that it is a dire necessity for an adult human being to be loved or approved by virtually every significant other person in his community.

2. The idea that one should be thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving in all possible respects if one is to consider oneself worth-while.

3. The idea that certain people are bad, wicked, or villainous and that they should be severely blamed and punished for their villainy.

4. The idea that it is awful and catastrophic when things are not the way one would very much like them to be.

5. The idea that human unhappiness is externally caused and that people have little or no ability to control their sorrows and disturbances.

6. The idea that if something is or may be dangerous or fearsome one should be terribly concerned about it and should keep dwelling on the possibility of its occurring.

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[47]Albert Ellis, Rational Psychotherapy, p. 6.

7. The idea that it is easier to avoid than to face certain life difficulties and self-responsibilities.

8. The idea that one should be dependent on others and needs someone stronger than oneself on whom to rely.

9. The idea that one's past history is an all important determiner of one's present behavior and that because something once strongly affected one's life, it should indefinitely have a similar effect.

10. The idea that one should become quite upset over other people's problems and disturbances.

11. The idea that there is invariably a right, precise, and perfect solution to human problems and that it is catastrophic if this perfect solution is not found.

#1. THE IDEA THAT IT IS A DIRE NECESSITY FOR AN ADULT HUMAN BEING TO BE LOVED OR APPROVED BY VIRTUALLY EVERY SIGNIFICANT OTHER PERSON IN HIS COMMUNITY.

It is the concept of the <u>dire need</u> which makes this statement irrational. This is because the individual who thinks he has such a need is demanding (in part, what is meant by a "psychological need") is something which is impossible. No one has yet, nor is it likely that anyone ever will be, either loved or accepted by everyone by whom he would like to be. Because of others' own intrinsic prejudices and values, some people whom one values highly will inevitably dislike or be indifferent to him. In addition, the behavior to which this idea would lead, assuming (falsely) that it were possible to be loved or accepted by everyone, would be very self-defeating because (a) one would have to expend a majority of his time to accomplish this feat, leaving little time to do other things,

and (b) one would have to be obsequious, and would have to give up his other wants and desires in order to satisfy this particular one, thus making him much less of a self-directed individual than he could be. This perfectionistic striving for universal love or approval at all costs goes back in part to one's childhood upbringing.

> In raising children we wittingly or unwittingly teach them — or propagandize them — to accept several important propositions: a) that they should be "good"; b) that it is disastrous if they are not "good"; c) that they should try to win the love and approval of virtually everyone; and d) that it is tragic if they fail to win the love and approval of even a single human being.
>
> If children are well indoctrinated with these premises and permitted to grow up without their being modified, they are virtually doomed to neurosis. They will then almost certainly spend the rest of their days trying to do the impossible; always be "good" and always win the love and approval of everyone. And, since inevitably they will not succeed at these impossible tasks, they will acquire deep-seated feelings of inadequacy and self-hatred on the one hand, and of frustrations and hostility on the other.[48]

It is this irrational concept, especially in the idealistic students, which leads them to failure, self-hate, lack of self-confidence and self-defeat. They have not met their standards of approval, have not satisfied their demands to be universally loved, and so the inutile cycle begins: "He doesn't like me. I can't do anything right. Since I can't do anything

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[48]Albert Ellis, How to Live with a Neurotic (New York, 1957), pp. 72-73.

right, people can't like me. I'm no good." Frustrations and depressions result.

> Feeling that they are inferior, and desperately needing the approval of others, they are afraid to take chances, afraid to try creative activity because they feel they may fail at it and thereby reap disapproval. Being afraid to try, they have no chance to practise doing things, and having no practise, naturally they lack skill in these things. Then they are doubly or quadruply convinced that they are worthless and inadequate and that they cannot do anything well. This leads to further inaction, further failure, and further self-depreciation.[49]

#2. THE IDEA THAT ONE SHOULD BE THOROUGHLY COMPETENT, ADEQUATE, AND ACHIEVING IN ALL POSSIBLE RESPECTS IF ONE IS TO CONSIDER ONESELF WORTH-WHILE.

The irrationality in this statement is heavily disguised. Success stories are usually popular with most people and can influence a person's measurement of his own personal worth. If he is not "succeeding" in relation to whatever goal he has set, the student who tells himself he must achieve at any price will inevitably be burdened with a feeling of worthlessness.

In reality, achievement is not, except by arbitrary definition, related to one's intrinsic worth.[50] That is, success is something apart from the person's actual existence. It does not add "value points" to the person's existential dignity nor does failure take anything away from it. It is a basic tenet of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy that by the very fact that a

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[49] Ibid., pp. 82-83.

[50] Albert Ellis, A Guide to Rational Living, p. 93.

person exists, he has merit, he is incalculably worth-while to himself because he has potential to be happy and to achieve, even though he may currently be accomplishing neither.

This all-important distinction between personal dignity and personal success is often missed by students. For example, a freshman in one of the large Chicago high schools was forced to leave school for temporary diagnostic treatment at a Zone mental health center. Findings showed that the boy had driven himself to emotional and physical exhaustion in pursuit of a self-styled success story. Having taken on too many tasks, he began to experience failure rapidly. Since he initially equated self-value with being successful, his personal defeats on the academic and athletic scenes spelled self-degradation. Instead of wholeheartedly <u>trying</u> to succeed backed by a realistic awareness of his own physical and intellectual limitations, he <u>demanded</u> success in spite of them.

The belief that one must be competent and successful tends to detour a person from the main goal originally desired: fulfillment. As in the case of the boy previously mentioned, the person demands success in all possible respects, makes it an end instead of a means. In his preoccupation for success, he spends a good part of his life oblivious to the things which make life worth living.

#3. THE IDEA THAT CERTAIN PEOPLE ARE BAD, WICKED, OR VILLAINOUS

AND THAT THEY SHOULD BE SEVERELY BLAMED AND PUNISHED FOR THEIR VILLAINY.

The concept that certain people are intrinsically bad and should be punished stems from the theological or philosophical doctrine of free will whereby a person supposedly has the freedom to act "rightly" or "wrongly" as related to some absolute standard dictated by the "natural law"; therefore, if an individual uses his free will to behave "wrongly" he is wicked. Such thoughts are not only unscientific since terms like free will and natural law are definitional and cannot be proven or disproven, but they are unreasonable as well since they are grounded on the idea that blame and punishment will persuade a person to stop his wrongdoing and behave differently in the future. Although criticism and punishment sometimes cause a change for the better, just as often the opposite results; namely, the person's actions become worse.

Instead of presuming that punishment will correct "wrong" behavior, it would be considerably more rational to realize that human beings are fallible and can be expected to make mistakes. The important thing is not so much blaming oneself or another for wrongdoing as learning from these mistakes in order to prevent their reoccurrence.

#4. THE IDEA THAT IT IS AWFUL AND CATASTROPHIC WHEN THINGS ARE NOT THE WAY ONE WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE THEM TO BE.

The person who reacts to a frustrating situation with

pronounced and enduring anger or depression is displaying overtly what he is verbalizing internally: "This is not going my way. I think it should, and because it isn't, it is making me extremely angry and upset." The individual's self-talk is in effect inducing mental strain by irrationally demanding that unpredictable circumstances go his way. Thus, what may have been a small delay or imposition is easily exaggerated out of proportion. By believing thusly the individual has already surrendered self-control and has placed himself at the mercy of his environment.

An obvious by-product of such irrational thinking, that is, that things should be the way we want them, instead of it would be nice if things were the way we want them, is dissipation; dissipation of time and energy. For example, a student in a remedial reading class would literally waste hours thinking about how terribly unfortunate it was that he should have to do so much extra work when he would rather be with the others socializing and enjoying himself. The extra time spent over the books was not profitable because he became self-pitying, dejected and miserable. Believing himself a victim of circumstance, he refused to channel the time and energy spent on daydreaming into work, which would have improved his reading considerably.

To become exceedingly upset because things are not going the way one wants them to is irrational for another reason. It indicates a failure to realize that while reality may temporarily

block a person's goals, it cannot defeat the person. Man is unique among the animals for his versatility and ingenuity in time of crisis. He can hurdle any frustrating event, either by changing the circumstances through his intelligence, or by accepting them.

#5. THE IDEA THAT HUMAN UNHAPPINESS IS EXTERNALLY CAUSED AND THAT PEOPLE HAVE LITTLE OR NO ABILITY TO CONTROL THEIR SORROWS AND DISTURBANCES.

People tend to believe this because it is a deceptively comforting thought. Student Jones is unhappy. Asked why, she says, "Because of Teacher So and So," or, "This math problem is too hard," or a hundred other outside forces are disturbing her. It is only one step farther to conclude that since unhappiness comes from the outside, a person has practically no control over his feelings. His feelings are, therefore, at the mercy of the outside forces and he can do nothing about them.

Thus, an individual who believes unhappiness has an external origin, aside from having incurred some physical harm, attributes unhappiness to the wrong causes.

> In our present society, people rarely do physically or economically assault you; and almost all their "onslaughts" consist of psychological attacks which have little or no power to harm you unless you erroneously <u>believe</u> that they are harmful. It is impossible for you to be harmed by purely verbal or gestural attacks unless <u>you</u> specifically <u>let</u> yourself -- or actually <u>make</u> yourself be harmed. It is never the words or gestures of others

that hurt you -- but your attitudes toward, your reactions to these symbols.[51]

When unhappiness is caused from within, so too, are negative feelings controlled from within. Feelings have already been described as largely composed of the person's perceptions, thoughts and evaluations. Feelings, then, to a large degree are under the sway of the person himself. The belief that emotions are outside one's control arises out of the difficulty to control or change them, mainly because they do not know how to do so properly.

#6. THE IDEA THAT IF SOMETHING IS OR MAY BE DANGEROUS OR FEARSOME ONE SHOULD BE TERRIBLY CONCERNED ABOUT IT AND SHOULD KEEP DWELLING ON THE POSSIBILITY OF ITS OCCURRING.

Due concern over some impending danger is an intelligent mode of behavior. When the concern becomes excessive, moving out of the realm of reality, it and the behavior following the concern become inappropriate. The overly-concerned individual often makes himself excessively anxious by convincing himself that something terrible is going to happen and that until it does he cannot get it out of his mind.

There have been cases where a child, having heard numerous stories about accidents, was afraid to walk to school because he feared being run over as he crossed a street.

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[51]Albert Ellis, Reason and Emotion, p. 72.

Certainly there is always a possibility that one could be run down while crossing at an intersection; however, excessive fear and concern will not prevent such an occurrence and the possibility of an accident never occurring at all is as great as the probability that it <u>might</u> occur.

Worrying about something that may never happen may bring on one or more of the following problems:

1. Excessive worry <u>prevents objective judgment and effective action</u>. The student who is extremely fearful about forgetting his memorized speech for English class can convince himself that he is not prepared even though he may well be. When a momentary lapse of memory takes place, instead of pausing or ad libbing until his memory returns, he panics thereby ruining what might have been a learning experience for the class and a satisfying experience for the speaker.

2. Similarly, extreme worry often leads to <u>exaggerating the chances of the feared incident occurring</u>. The night before the school play is sometimes a night of terror for many of the participants. They upset themselves with thoughts of missing cues, knocking down scenery and other supposed catastrophes. More often than not, the nocturnal fears create situations in the imagination which are never borne out in front of the lights.

3. Exaggerated fears in the face of inevitable events

contribute to further complications. A freshman student was told that due to failing grades she would have to repeat the school year. She became very upset and concerned. During the summer months she was seeing her doctor regularly for a nervous stomach condition, which was diagnosed as a psychosomatic disorder. Besides not being able to change the school verdict, the girl created additional disadvantages of illness about this situation long before it actually occurred.

#7. THE IDEA THAT IT IS EASIER TO AVOID THAN TO FACE CERTAIN LIFE DIFFICULTIES AND SELF-RESPONSIBILITIES.

The ensnaring complacency that this irrational statement proffers has led many students down the trail of life's regrets. The following, true incident illustrates this point.

In a small junior-senior high school complex in northern Indiana a husky, good-looking sophomore student nicknamed "Coolbreeze" was talking to some of his classmates. "At twelve noon on my sixteenth birthday I'm walking out of this school forever." This student, an above-average young man in intelligence, literally lived the philosophy of "the easy way out is the best way out." He had spent a good part of his school life avoiding difficult problems and responsibilities including offers to be nominated for class positions and to take part in school organizations. On his sixteenth birthday, at the time he had announced, "Coolbreeze" pompously departed from the school premises.

Three years later, almost to the day he left, "Coolbreeze" returned to the old school, a wiser but disenchanted man. His self-confidence was at a low ebb. The irresponsible life was fast becoming a dissatisfying one. He was completely bored with his present occupation, one of a long line of poor paying, low-level jobs. He had avoided, most of his life, those tasks which would have contributed a brighter, more interesting future.

#8. THE IDEA THAT ONE SHOULD BE DEPENDENT ON OTHERS AND NEEDS SOMEONE STRONGER THAN ONESELF ON WHOM TO RELY.

A person who lacks self-esteem and personal worth may see reliance on another stronger than he as a short cut to obtaining what he believes he does not have. As the reliance on another gains momentum, the weak individual increasingly goes along with the wishes, commands, suggestions of the stronger individual, thus becoming less, rather than more confident. Any self-decisions are conditioned by how they may concur with the independent one's resolves. The individual relinquishes more and more of his individuality and develops a greater need to be led. In the meantime, his ability for solving problems decreases. He learns less and less how to handle daily difficulties and therefore must rely more and more on the strength of the other person, hence reducing self-confidence yet more. As a result, the dependent person grows more anxious and feels more worthless, which further heightens his dependency

need. Therefore, he begins another quest for someone stronger to help him out of the dilemma.

One case involving this problem concerns a set of fraternal twins. Both the boy and girl were of average intelligence. The girl, however, adjusted more easily to new situations. By the time they began school the boy had become accustomed to relying on his sister for everything. In class they tended to sit next to each other when possible, thereby enabling the boy to cheat during tests. By eigth grade the girl's achievement was considerably higher than her brother's whose scholastic standing fell to a drastically low level.

After reviewing their aptitude tests and interest inventories, the school counselor suggested that upon entering high school the girl might follow the business curriculum while the boy tried vocational courses. The counselor hoped to lessen the boy's dependency on his sister by giving him the opportunity to study subjects which he was capable of understanding and managing without her help. By being separated from his sister, the boy discovered that he was able to work alone and his joy in personal accomplishments led to an increase in self-confidence which diminished the need to depend on his twin.

#9. THE IDEA THAT ONE'S PAST HISTORY IS AN ALL-IMPORTANT DETERMINER OF ONE'S PRESENT BEHAVIOR AND THAT BECAUSE

SOMETHING ONCE STRONGLY AFFECTED ONE'S LIFE, IT SHOULD INDEFINITELY HAVE A SIMILAR EFFECT.

The individual who lives his life by the past is the proverbial farmer who "puts his hand to the plow, but keeps looking back." He assumes that because something was true in some situations it is equally true in all circumstances. Guidance-counselors and teachers would be a wealthy lot if they collected a dollar each time they heard a student, being encouraged to work harder in some subject, remark: "It's no use. I won't get this stuff. I never was any good in numbers, English, etc."

Such an individual sets up a philosophy of living somewhat similar to Spinoza's. The past conduct is fused with the present, the past becoming the causal chain in which each link of behavior is necessarily connected with the preceding link, just as in the process of reasoning where every conclusion is grounded on premises.

It is illogical to assume that whatever the early conditioning or influences of one's childhood were the pervading effects remain because of the original conditions. Actually, the effects of the past continue because the individual maintains them by self-propagandizing. By this self-talk he can eliminate the need for finding new solutions to daily problems -- he either gives up entirely or he returns to old, ineffectual methods, assuring himself that he tried and that's the way

things have always been with him anyway.

Besides the stifling effect on productivity and originality, by telling himself how determined he is by past behavior and events the individual deprives himself of the enjoyment of attempting new adventures and experiences.

#10. THE IDEA THAT ONE SHOULD BECOME QUITE UPSET OVER OTHER PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS AND DISTURBANCES.

A person seldom realizes how little control he has over the behavior of others or how little power he possesses to change that behavior no matter how upset he might become over the conduct of someone else. Take, for example, the case of a girl who allows or causes herself to become perturbed over the fact that a classmate constantly brags about cheating in a particular course. Despite the facts that the actions of her fellow student will not affect Jean's grades since she and Gail have different curricula, or that Gail may be discovered cheating and thereby have to answer for her deed, or that the necessity on Gail's part to let others know that she "outsmarted the teacher" indicates personal disturbance, it is irritating to Jean that Gail should behave in such a manner. This irritation results not from the classmate's behavior itself but from the irrational ideas or sentences Jean tells herself concerning the behavior.

Other than reporting the girl's actions to school authorities there is little, if anything, that Jean could do about the

situation. As Ellis points out:

> Even when we induce others to change by becoming upset over their actions, we pay a sorry price for our self-created disturbance. Certainly, there must be, and there invariably are, other, less self-defeating ways in which we can calmly go about trying to get others to correct their wrongdoings. But, for the most part, our getting terribly disturbed about others' behavior helps neither them nor ourselves.[52]

#11. THE IDEA THAT THERE IS INVARIABLY A RIGHT, PRECISE, AND PERFECT SOLUTION TO HUMAN PROBLEMS AND THAT IT IS CATASTROPHIC IF THIS PERFECT SOLUTION IS NOT FOUND.

Children and adolescents living in today's society get a double message from the adult world. The one message is that the probability of finding certainty, absolute control, and perfect truth in human existence is so minimal that it is irrational to base any serious hopes on discovering them. The message continues: "You must first accept the world as it is, filled with chance and probability; then, adjust your life and striving for happiness accordingly."

The other message, beaming loudly and clearly over radio, television, on the movie screen, in magazines and newspapers is completely different. According to the mass media, if you are not irresistible to the opposite sex, physically trim, financially successful, etc., you are a failure and your life is a disaster. Advertisements for mouthwashes, diet-colas, glamorous vacations, etc., promise instantaneous solutions to

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[52] Ibid., p. 86.

social and personal problems. Even academic difficulties can be overcome by speed-reading, speed-writing, easy-to-do math books and courses. Should the person not find the elixir of happiness advertised in these media, life is no longer worth living.

The irrationality of this second message rests in the absolute insistence that it will be catastrophic if one does not completely solve the basic problems immediately and perfectly. Actually, by the person's very insistence, he will bring on some catastrophe (an acute state of panic or depression) when, as inevitably will happen, this perfect and immediate solution is not present.

In summary, the fundamental premise upon which Rational-emotive Psychotherapy is predicated is that thoughts produce emotions. Since, for Dr. Ellis, the originator, thoughts are largely words or sentences which a person tells himself, he literally talks himself into a disturbed condition. Illogical thinking and irrational ideas are a basic cause of most emotional disturbances. Rational-emotive principles indicate that this is a learned process, although man's biological nature equips him for it, too. Ellis has listed a large number of typically "neurotic" statements which are common to the Western culture. For the sake of brevity, these statements can usually be reduced to three categories: 1) Catastrophic

sentences; 2) shoulds, oughts, and musts; 3) blame. Rational therapy makes the client aware of his statements so that they can be brought to light, analyzed, attacked, and expunged. Thus, with this therapy, the individual's problems are attacked directly and swiftly by dealing with the proximal cause of his disturbances — his internalized sentences.

CHAPTER IV

SOME TECHNIQUES OF RATIONAL-EMOTIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY ADAPTED TO SCHOOL COUNSELING

> Those who allege that RT is too authoritarian and controlling do not seem to face the fact that virtually all psychotherapies, including the nondirective, passive, client-centered, and existentialist techniques, are actually distinctly authoritative and controlling. The therapist, because of his training and experience, is by virtue of the fact that he is presumably less disturbed than his patient, and is often older and/or wiser, he is something of an authority — or parental-figure.[53]

The technique employed in the use of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy and counseling is active and direct. By this is meant that the client is allowed on the average of 15 minutes to express his problem(s). At the end of that time, the counselor quickly shows the individual the illogical ideas that make up his disturbance:

> a) the therapist serves as a frank counter-propagandist who directly contradicts and denies the self-defeating propaganda and superstitions which the patient has originally learned and which he is now self-instilling; b) the therapist encourages, persuades, cajoles, and occasionally even insists that the patient engage in some activity (such as his doing something he is afraid of doing) which itself will serve as a forceful counter-propaganda agency against the nonsense he believes.[54]

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[53] Albert Ellis, Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy, p. 365.

[54] Ibid., p. 95.

All the activities of the counselor in this role have one main goal: That of finally inducing the person to internalize a rational philosophy of life just as he originally learned and internalized the irrational views of his parents and his community.

The counseling is done in a forceful, emphatic manner and in simple language that the client understands.

The dynamic questioning and challenging of the client's irrational ideas is based on the premise that emotional problems are the result of overdramatic thinking (thinking which is of a superstitious, bigoted nature). Accordingly, emotional problems are considered to be best attacked on an active battle front. This is not to be confused with preaching, which is a blameful attempt at persuasion. Rather, clients are respected as dignified human beings and their false beliefs are vigorously attacked, not they as persons. After a few sessions of very active work by the counselor, he then becomes less active as the client begins to show signs of self-challenging.[55]

The method suggested for school counseling is closely akin to that which Ellis[56] uses in marriage counseling and

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[55] Ibid., p. 371.

[56] Ibid., p. 211.

actually is part and parcel of the general technique of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy:

1. The counselor listens to the student very carefully to find out what his basic philosophies of life are.

2. The counselor shows the student that he has these philosophies and that they are related to his symptoms, i.e., behind his inefficiencies, mistakes, there are invariably important irrational, unrealistic philosophic assumptions.

3. The counselor indicates to the student what his real (self-defeating) goals or outlooks are.

4. The counselor helps the student discover why his basic premises are irrational and how he makes illogical deductions from them.

5. The counselor explains to the student that as long as he retains the attitudes and philosophic premises that he holds, self-defeat is inevitable.

6. The counselor points out how the student can find his own basic philosophies underlying his symptoms and upsets.

7. The counselor shows the student how to challenge, question, and uproot his unsound philosophies of life and the illogical deductions which he makes from these premises.

To dynamically demonstrate how the technique works, a simulated counseling session is presented, interrupted at each successive step of the procedure by an analysis of the

dialogue between the counselor and student.

COUNSELING SESSION:

Student: "I'm the one who made the appointment to see you. My name is Jim Talbot."

COUNSELOR: "Come in, Jim. You can sit right there, if you like. How can I help you?"

S: "I'm not sure, but anyway, this is the problem. I'm working with two other students on a biology lab experiment. Things aren't working out. It's obvious that these two don't like me. The teacher won't let me change partners. He said I've got to work it out myself. I'm unhappy about the whole thing. So, how am I supposed to do the experiment?"

ANALYSIS: 1. Jim readily reveals his fundamental philosophy in his relationship to other students. He believes he <u>needs</u> to be liked and approved by those with whom he is importantly involved for him to effectively accomplish what he has set out to do. He sets up a perfectionistic, unattainable goal. Since the need has not been met, and in fact cannot be, he becomes concerned, frustrated, and thus worried and unhappy.

C: "But you aren't unhappy for the reason you think you are."

S: "I'm not? Well, why am I unhappy then?"

C: "It's very simple — as simple as A-B-C I might say. A, in this case, is the fact that these students don't like you. Let's assume that you observed their attitude correctly and were not merely imagining that they don't like you."

S: "I assure that they don't. It was quite evident."

C: "Very well, let's assume they don't like you and call that A. Now, C is your unhappiness — which we'll definitely assume is a fact, since you do feel it."

S: "I definitely do."

C: "All right, then: A is the fact that the students don't like you. C is your unhappiness. You see A and C, and you assume that A, their not liking you, causes C, your unhappiness, but it doesn't!"

S: "It doesn't? What does, then?"

C: "B did."

S: "What is B?"

C: "B is what you said to yourself while you were doing the lab assignment with the two students."

S: "What I said to myself? But I didn't say anything."

C: "You did. You couldn't possibly be so unhappy or upset if you didn't. The only thing from without which could possibly make you unhappy is if the specimen cabinet were to fall on you. Obviously, therefore, you must have told yourself something to make yourself unhappy."

S: "But I tell you . . . honestly, I didn't say anything."

C: "You did. You must have. Now think back to your being with these students. Think what you said to yourself, and tell me what it was."

S: "Well, . . . I . . ."

C: "Yes?"

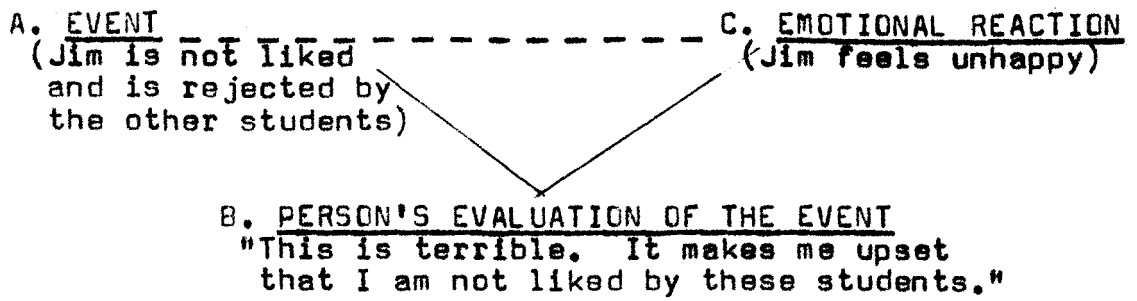
S: "Well, I guess I did say something."

C: "I'm sure you did. Now what did you tell yourself when you were with these students?"

S: "I . . . well, I told myself that it was awful that they didn't like me, and why didn't they like me, and how could they not like me, and . . . you know, things like that."

C: "Exactly! And that, what you told yourself, is B. And it's always B that makes you unhappy in situations like this. Except, as I said before, when A is a specimen cabinet falling on your head. That or any physical object might cause you real pain. But any mental or emotional onslaught against you — any word, gesture, attitude, or feeling directed against you — can hurt you only if you let it. And your letting such a word, gesture, or attitude hurt you, your telling yourself that it's awful, horrible, terrible — that's B. And that's what you do to you."

ANALYSIS: 2. Using the ABC Theory of Personality and Emotional Disturbance, the counselor methodically and swiftly exposes the underlying ideology to Jim, an ideology which he was following regarding the students with whom he was working and from whom he was encountering the rejection. The method followed by the counselor can be diagrammed in this manner:



Jim unknowingly revealed in the interview a need for approval. It was so great a need, he told himself, that when it was not fulfilled, the rejection spelled catastrophe to his way of thinking. This kind of philosophy of living which was ruining Jim emotionally had to be unmasked by the counselor. Otherwise, it would continue prompting feelings of unhappiness in Jim without his knowing why. Such thinking would set up continuous perfectionistic demands that he achieve mightily in order to prove that he should be approved and liked. When there is even the slightest possibility that he may not measure up to others' (really his own) expectations, he can easily become woefully self-depreciating (and thus depressed) and tend to evaluate himself as worth absolutely nothing.

The counselor set up the procedure of exposing the irrational thinking by helping the student to analyze the entire episode in a simple, uncomplicated manner. Proceeding from the known to the unknown with Jim, the counselor first pointed out the situation and the feelings in Jim's experiences,

namely, the rejection and the feelings of unhappiness. The missing link in explaining the student's behavior was his evaluation of the situation, the self-talk. It was this self-defeating dialogue with himself which actually produced the unhappy sentiments.

S: "What shall I do then?"
C: "I'll tell you exactly what to do and consider this a homework assignment! I want you to go to the lab class and work on the experiment with the same students with whom you've had difficulty. But this time, instead of trying to get them to like you or think that you're a grand guy or anything like that, I want you to do one single thing."
S: "What's that?"
C: "I want you to merely observe, when you're with them and they don't like you, what you say to yourself. That's all -- merely note your own silent sentences. Do you think you can do that?"
S: "I don't see why not. Just notice my own sentences, what I say to me?"
C: "Yes, just that."

(In the next session the counselor asked the student if he had done his "homework" and he said that he had.)

C: "And what did you find?"
S: "It was bad, really bad. All I heard me telling myself were self-pitying things."
C: "Precisely. That's what you keep telling yourself -- nothing but self-pitying statements. No wonder you're unhappy!"
S: "I can see now that I was simply feeling sorry for myself since I thought it was terrible not to be accepted and liked. In the beginning, in fact before the lab experiment team was set up, I wanted to be with these guys. They're top students in the class. I figured our experiment would be among the best ones if we worked together."
C: "There is no doubt that you wanted a successful experiment and saw this as a real possibility by being teamed up with these particular students. However, the successful experiment was actually secondary to your real goal. The real goal, as is evidenced by your exceptional reaction when the goal was not reached, was their approval, their liking you."

S: "I must admit, once I became upset, the success of the experiment no longer mattered. I just was more and more dejected."

C: "Exactly. Once the real goal, that of being liked and accepted by these two boys was not being reached, you began to tell yourself how terrible it is having failed and that there must be something wrong with yourself, and so on. The more you thought about it, talking to yourself about the terribleness of the entire mess, the more unhappy and upset you became."

ANALYSIS: 3. By now the student recognized the premise upon which he based his worthwhileness and happiness -- that those people whom he sees as important must like and approve of him. As this thought became dominant, he made the satisfaction of this need his goal. The proposition was disguised under many forms and was unrecognizable to the boy himself. He thought he wanted to be with these above-average classmates in order to produce a better lab experiment when, in fact, the main purpose was to gain their approval and acceptance. Having uncovered the real goal of his actions through the aid of the counselor, the student was able to recognize the actual cause for his emotional difficulty.

S: "All right, I became upset, felt worthless, didn't care anymore what happened to the experiment because I thought it was terrible to be rejected. What I still don't understand is what's so wrong with finding it necessary to be accepted by the group? My parents and teachers always told me that it is important to be accepted. You're an outcast if you're rejected by the people you care for."

C: "No, it <u>isn't</u> terrible! It may be unfortunate, it may be uncomfortable, it would be nicer if they liked you. But it is <u>not</u> a tragedy. You are still alive, aren't you? You still have the use of all your senses. You still can live, think, love, and enjoy living, can't you?"

S: "I see what you mean."

C: "But getting back to your question. Believing that you have a dire need to be loved or approved is not so much right or wrong thinking as irrational, for several reasons. To mention a few,

1. Such thinking sets a perfectionistic, unattainable goal because even if 9 out of 10 accept or love you, there will always be one person who doesn't and so on.

2. Such thinking invariably places you in a position of evaluating yourself and your worth in terms of how much other significant people in your life approve and accept you and how well you do in your performance with other people. Since you can't please everyone, you wind up with a very confused self-assessment; a self-defeating assessment in most cases.

S: "In other words, my mistake was in thinking that I needed their approval and that I had to ingratiate myself with them. The more rational approach would have been to see this as desirable but not the end of everything if I couldn't obtain their approval. I actually had set up an impossible goal. Since I couldn't reach it, I got myself upset by telling myself how terrible they were, I was, and the whole confounded situation was."

ANALYSIS: 4. Prior to this part of the interview the student realized that his thinking was operating on faulty presumptions, assumptions, and philosophies. Their soundness was finally challenged when held up to the light of objective, reasonable scrutiny. Often it is apparent to the counselor that this may be the first time the student has ever questioned age-old and so-called revered ideas, values, and traditions. What the student did not understand was why such ideas and values are unreasonable except that they have caused emotional trouble. The counselor is then at a distinct advantage: that of being able to indicate the fallacies and falsehoods found to be

inherent within them. It is not uncommon for the client to add his own which leads to further conviction on his part as to how faulty his former conceptualizations were.

S: "It's becoming apparent that I don't have much choice left in the matter."

C: "Oh, you have a choice all right. Either to continue telling yourself that it is absolutely necessary and that you deserve to be approved or liked and that it is unfair and awful that you are not approved by them, or anyone else for that matter, and keep causing those unhappy feelings you've been experiencing; or change the self-talk into reasonable dialogue with yourself and be considerably happier."

ANALYSIS: 5. The counselor, up to this juncture, has guided the student to recognize the causes of the emotional difficulties he encountered in the laboratory. He also explained that sustained irrational thinking was at the root of his poor, immature feelings. The next step rested solely on the student's decision to retain the sentences which were creating the state of emotional unhappiness or to significantly change his unreasonable beliefs, thereby modifying his conflicting and self-defeating values toward those leading to a more meaningful existence.

At this point the counselor might suggest some reasonable alternative solutions to the problem:

1) That he not try to eradicate all his desires for approval but to extirpate his inordinate, all-consuming ones.

2) That he realize that true self-respect never comes from the approval of others but from liking oneself and following most of one's own interests whether or not others approve one's

doings.

3) To the extent that it is desirable and practical for him to win the approval of others, he should try to do so in a calm, intelligent, planful way rather than in a frantic, hit-and-miss manner. To this end, he should realize that one of the best ways to win love is sincerely to give it.[57]

S: "I know what I must do to be happy, but getting rid of these ideas won't be easy. I've thought this way since I was a child."
C: "I understand how you feel. Changing a life-long thinking pattern is no easy task. Obviously, it will take time. Perhaps these tips may be helpful:

1. As soon as you begin to feel angry, hurt, guilty, tense, anxious or depressed, observe exactly what you had been telling yourself just prior to experiencing this kind of negative feeling.

2. Start tracing your internal verbalizations back to their philosophic source. By this I mean, what did you assume had to be in order for the situation to be a happy one? In this instance, for example, you had to be liked and it was terrible that you weren't, etc."

ANALYSIS: 6. If the counseling session has been successful, the student will indicate a positive attitude toward solving the problem, but may be somewhat hesitant what to do if and when it should re-occur. The counselor can present to the student a simple plan to halt another emotional onslaught -- at the first sign of the upset, check to see what beliefs he is harboring and internalizing which are causing conflicts with reality.

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[57] Ibid., p. 62.

S: "As I see it then, when I find my thinking going back to the former illogical pattern, I should be able to stop it before any upset occurs."

C: "That is true, but not completely. When you have observed or discovered the philosophic beliefs behind your being hurt (or more accurately, behind your hurting yourself), you are to challenge, question and attack the irrationality of these beliefs. Thus, you might ask yourself, 'Why must I (or anyone else) be loved?' 'Why do I (or anyone else) deserve to be approved merely because I'm a nice fellow and a fair student?' 'Why is it unfair and awful that I am not loved or approved by this particular group of students?'"

S: "It's really asking myself, 'What am I telling myself and why?'"

C: "Right. By this time you will have learned to change your irrational philosophies, to keep telling and convincing yourself that it was not necessary, though it may have been desirable, for you to be liked; that you did not deserve to be approved by others simply because you behaved well with them and wanted their approval; and that not being approved or being liked by others might well be inconvenient, but that it was hardly terrible or catastrophic."

S: "If I do what you suggest, and I have every reason to believe I can, then I should enjoy doing the experiment and whatever school activities no matter what my companions think of me."

C: "Well, the enjoyment isn't guaranteed, but the removal of the old state of near-panic and unhappiness are. Good luck, Jim. Keep in touch with me if you wish."

The student was shown how to observe, track down, question and change some of the fundamental irrational ideas behind his unnecessary emotional disturbances. Eventually, as was evidenced in later meetings, he came truly to disbelieve the nonsense he had believed for many years and to substitute much more realistic, effective philosophies instead. In particular, he came to see that it was not especially important, even though it was desirable, that other people like or love him; and as he did come to see this, his main symptoms, which

included extreme shyness and lack of self-confidence, vanished.

From the foregoing counseling interview and step-by-step analysis of the technique used in Rational-emotive Psychotherapy the school counselor may have noted the following points about the method:

1. It is very flexible, adaptable to practically every conceivable problem of emotional adjustment (within the confines mentioned earlier) brought into the counselor's office.

2. It is simple to work with, obviating the need for referring to endless testing instruments, complicated instruction manuals, and an encyclopedic memory of presented test data.

3. It forces the counselor to take the student where he is in his problem. One need not spend much time ferretting out historical and symbolic interconnections which, although they may be very interesting to both the student and the counselor, have little to do with changing cognitive, emotional, and motoric behavior patterns.

CHAPTER V

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Counseling or psychotherapy is aimed at producing constructive behavioral and personality change. Rational-emotive Psychotherapy's impressive growth in the past decade implies that it is indeed highly effective in bringing about these desired goals.

Its applicability, once limited to the not too psychotic, fairly intelligent clients, who were reasonably young when they came for treatment[58] has now broadened extensively to include a wide variety of clients. Among them are autistic, mentally retarded and brain-damaged children,[59] psychotic and borderline psychotic patients.[60]

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[58] R. Harper, Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy, p. 125-126.

[59] K. Piser, "Use of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy with Exceptional Children," Lecture VI in a series entitled, Introduction to Rational-emotive Psychotherapy (unpublished notes: Chicago Institute of Rational Living, Evanston, Illinois) January, 1968.

[60] A. Ellis, "The Treatment of Psychotic and Borderline Psychotic Patients," paper delivered at Symposium on Therapeutic Methods with Schizophrenics, V. A. Hospital, Battle Creek, Michigan, May 16-17, 1963.

The utilization of Rational-emotive Psychotherapy in counseling normal school-age children is very recent, however, and published reports of its effectiveness in this area are still scarce. Two elementary school systems in which the results in the use of Ellis' method have been positive are in Summit County, Ohio, and Schaumburg Township School System, Cook County, Illinois.[61]

In the first account, the author, Dr. Wagner, associate professor of Psychology at the University of Akron, Ohio, speaks of Rational Counseling as a newly-developed approach to counseling school-age children, easily and effectively applied by the school psychologist and school counselor.

Some modifications, he notes, were necessary in transferring this rational approach to the school setting, particularly with younger children. The counseling staff found that verbalizations and beliefs of children differ somewhat from adults. For the counselor to be optimally effective in dealing with students, it was necessary to recognize and even anticipate what the child was saying to himself.

The verbalizations and beliefs Wagner found in children with emotional difficulties of varying degrees included:

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[61]Edwin Wagner and Morley Glicken, "Counseling Children: Two Accounts," Rational Living, Vol. 1, No. 2, 26-30.

1. It is terrible if parents deny love, play favorites, fight among themselves or behave in other irrational ways.

2. Teachers (principals, counselors) should be perfect, e.g., fair, interesting, knowledgeable, understanding.

The children easily overlooked the human, fallible elements in their parents and other authority figures. They would then interpret the disturbed, irrational behavior of their elders as catastrophic and react by condemning them.

3. Self-worth depends on achievement in relation to a particular peer group, e.g., one must be good at athletics, popular with boys, good-looking, or tops scholastically.

Missing the crucial distinction between intrinsic self-worth and extrinsic achievement was a common error in judgment by these children. Being actively involved in life was stressed by the counselors as the real enjoyment in life.

4. Sexual misapprehensions; e.g., it is wrong to masturbate, it is bad to pet, a male teenager must be a sophisticated Don Juan or a sexual acrobat in order to be a "man."

In the area of sex, students viewed thoughts or acts of a sexual nature as intrinsically wicked. The rational counselors found that by having the students relate sexuality to a health society, the faulty thinking was dispelled to a great degree. The students came to understand that a) sexual thoughts or acts are never wicked in themselves although, to be sure, certain types of sexual behavior are inefficient because they get them in trouble; b) that sex in this culture is a learned,

complicated set of behavior, and it is natural enough for a young person not to be highly knowledgeable and competent.

5. It is horrible that grownups do not understand or cater to young people.

Instead of accepting acts of misunderstanding on part of adults as inconvenient, the children were prone to interpret these actions as horrible and hence serious deterrents to their happiness. Rational counseling was successful in changing this kind of thinking by pointing out the role of frustration in their existence — namely, a part of living and growing up. It forced the children to ask themselves why they told themselves it was horrible when things did not go their way. It demanded a new look into their simple but already confused philosophy of life.

The Ohio counseling staff developed a wide variety of techniques in dealing with the children such as:

1. Employing the language level of the child. (Not talking down to him, but avoiding sophisticated or "grown-up" language.)

2. Using humor liberally.

3. Emphasizing the self-defeating aspects of maladjustive behavior and de-emphasizing the moral, social or disciplinary aspects.

4. Making liberal use of concrete examples.

5. Treating the child as an equal.

6. Using obvious internalized sentences as an icebreaker; e.g., "Most boys your age tell themselves it's wrong to

masturbate. Do you feel this way?"

7. Admitting that other people are often inefficient and disturbed, instead of rigidly insisting that adults are always right.

8. Emphasizing the need for homework and practise. It is useful to compare the development of rational thinking to a series of homework assignments which take time and effort but pay off in the long run.

Wagner concluded his report by referring to Rational Counseling as "explanatory, educative and didactic . . . ideally suited to the problems and limitations of school counseling.[62]

Working primarily with aggressive and withdrawn children, Glicken, a social worker in the Cook County, Illinois school system chose Rational Counseling (or Therapy as he calls it) because it represented for him a no-nonsense, highly structured approach to counseling and therapy. In six months, using Rational Therapy exclusively with elementary children, most of whom had above average to superior intelligence, and all of whom were experiencing learning difficulties, the results were very encouraging:

> Movement has been reported by teachers and parents in up to 85% of the children seen, with academic improvement existing in virtually all cases.
>
> The best results have been seen among the withdrawn, and particularly with the passive child who displays what the worker calls the "Judo Syndrome." These are children who dream of magical cures to their problems, and judo seems to be the cure of all small and weak boys. Possibly the reason for this success is the aggressive approach taken by the worker in forcing children out of their shell and in ridding them of reliance on magical cures.

> Results with aggressive children, although mainly good, have been less successful, and although few of them display significantly less aggressive and often dangerously violent ways of coping with problems, their behavior in class often improves, as does their academic work.[63]

Glicken adds a final note that the school has been very receptive to Rational Therapy. Teachers say that it seems more practical than some of the typical counseling methods they have come in contact with, and that it gets at issues instead of skirting on the edge of vagueness.

Both accounts concur in that Rational Counseling (or Therapy) has been found to be a successful method of counseling children in the elementary school setting. It seems a well-suited approach to the time limitations and large caseloads of the public schools, and has been well accepted by parents and teachers who have utilized the method of counseling.

This thesis began on the assumptions:

1. that most school counselors admittedly are somewhat ineffective, ineffectual and inaccurate in the treatment and counseling of normal students with emotional difficulties;

2. that school counselors have neither a very good theory nor a very useful treatment approach in psychoanalytically-oriented therapy, counseling or casework -- all practically names for the same thing.

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[63] Ibid.

3. that school counselors are thinking more in terms of an effective, short term, truly depth-oriented approach applicable within the reality confines of a school setting.

This paper has suggested that Rational-emotive Psychotherapy may be such an approach. It remains to be explored even further, perhaps in sequences of empirically designed comparative studies.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Edward F. Ramesh has been read and approved by the director of the thesis. Furthermore, the final copies have been examined by the director and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dec 16, 1968
Date

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