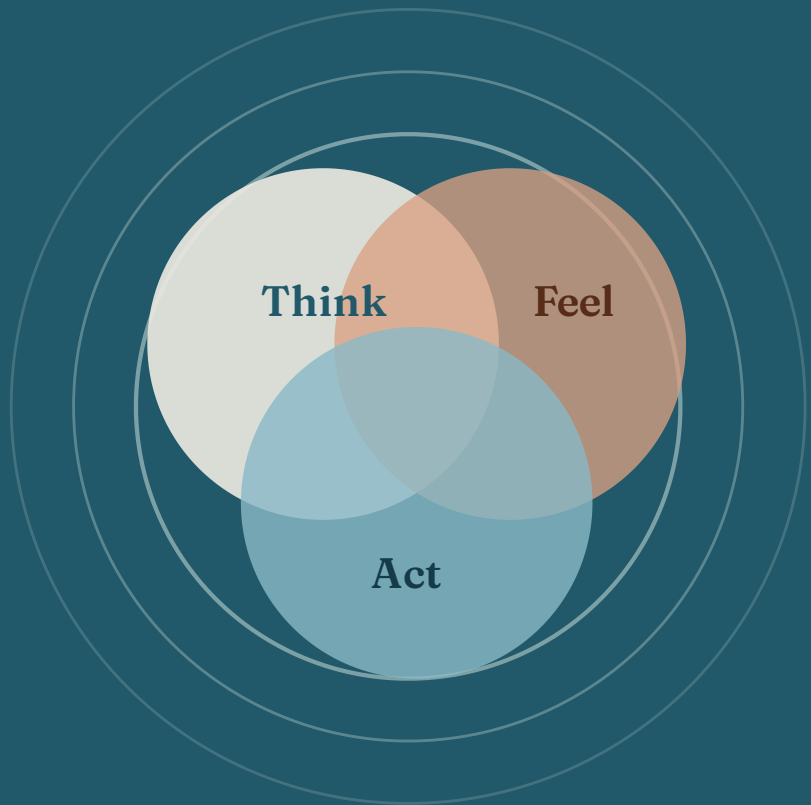




RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY

How We Think Influences How We Feel

A client guide to REBT: your core beliefs, common unhelpful thinking styles, and how to monitor and challenge your thoughts. Includes worked examples and worksheets.



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How to use this booklet

- Read the first two parts in order. They explain the ideas the worksheets are built on.
- Use the thinking styles section as a reference. You don't need to memorise it. Flick back to it when you're filling in a worksheet.
- Whenever you notice a strong emotion (anger, anxiety, low mood, guilt, hurt), treat it as your cue to fill in a worksheet. Do it as soon after the event as you can.
- Bring your completed worksheets to your sessions so we can go through them together.

This booklet supports the work you do with your psychologist. It isn't a replacement for treatment. If you are in crisis, turn to page 22 for support services.

What is REBT?

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) was developed by psychologist Albert Ellis in the 1950s. It was one of the first forms of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), and it is still widely used today.

The central idea in REBT is simple. It isn't only what happens to us that shapes how we feel. It is also what we tell ourselves about what happens. The Greek philosopher Epictetus said something similar nearly 2,000 years ago: "People are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them."

Our thoughts happen so automatically that we rarely stop to look at them. We tend to believe the situation made us feel a certain way. But two people can go through exactly the same experience and have completely different emotional reactions, depending on how each of them sees it.

The same situation	Person 1 tells themselves...	Person 2 tells themselves...
Both are made redundant from the same job on the same day.	"This is the worst thing that could ever happen. I'll never find another job. I can't cope." Feels: panicked, hopeless. Stays in bed.	"This is really bad and I'm upset. But I've found work before and I'll take it one step at a time." Feels: sad and concerned. Updates their resume.

Both people are upset, and they have every reason to be. The difference is in *how* upset and what they do next. Person 1's thinking adds an extra layer of distress on top of a hard situation, and it makes it harder to act.

What REBT aims to do

- **Notice** the thoughts and beliefs that run underneath your strong emotions.
- **Question** the ones that are rigid, extreme or unhelpful.
- **Replace** them with more flexible, realistic beliefs.
- **Practise** until the new way of thinking becomes a habit.

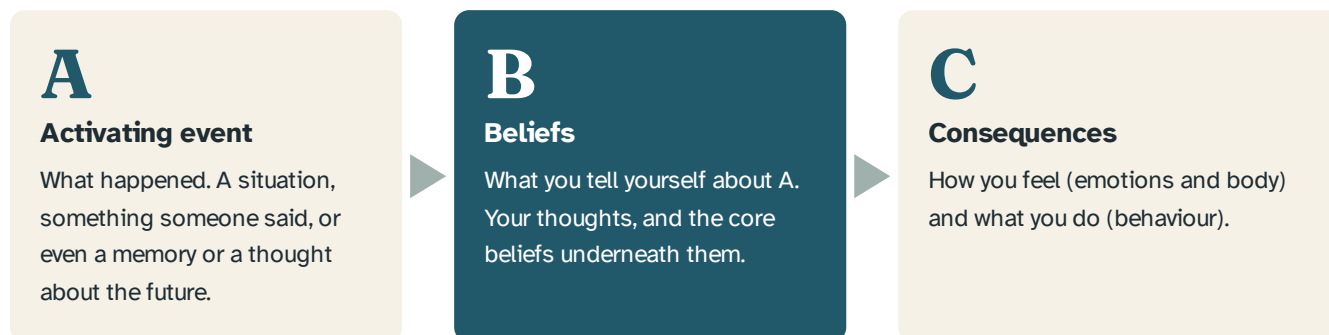
What REBT is not

REBT isn't "positive thinking", and it doesn't mean pretending everything is fine. It also doesn't mean your feelings are your fault, or that real problems don't matter. Some events are genuinely painful, like losing someone you love, and strong sadness is a healthy response to them. The aim is to feel *appropriately* upset about bad things, instead of overwhelmed by them.

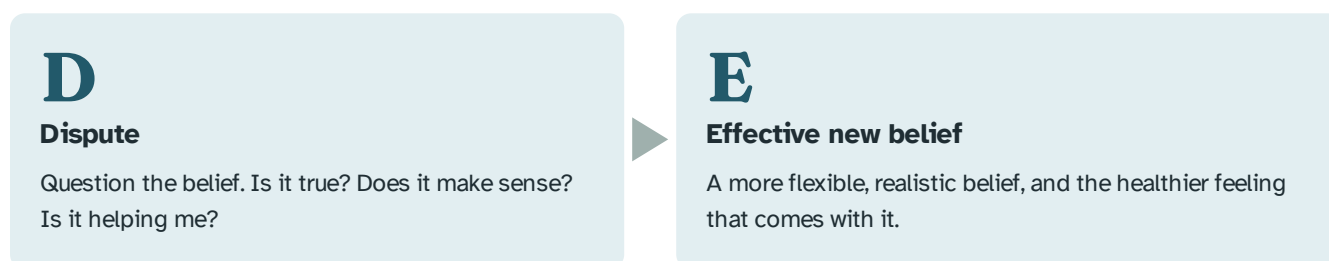
The good news is that if our thinking plays a big part in how we feel, then changing our thinking can change how we feel. That puts more control back in your hands.

The ABC model

REBT uses a simple framework to break an upsetting moment into parts. Most people assume A causes C. REBT says B sits in between, and B is the part you can change.



Once you can see your B, you add two more steps:



An example

A: Event	Your manager emails late on Thursday: "Can we have a quick chat tomorrow morning?"
B: Beliefs	"I must have done something wrong. If I lose this job it will be a disaster. I couldn't cope."
C: Consequences	Anxious 8/10. Can't sleep. Rehearses worst-case conversations all night.
D: Dispute	"What's the actual evidence I'm in trouble? She didn't say. Even if the news is bad, would it really be the end of the world? I've handled hard conversations before."
E: New belief	"I'd prefer it's good news, but I can handle whatever it is." New feeling: concerned 3/10. Gets some sleep.

How this links to the worksheet

The thought monitoring worksheet at the back of this booklet follows the ABC model. Situation is your A. Thoughts is your B. Feelings is your C. Challenge thoughts is your D. Alternative thought and New feeling are your E.

Rigid beliefs and flexible beliefs

REBT describes four kinds of unhelpful (sometimes called "irrational") beliefs. Each has a healthier, more flexible alternative. The flexible version still lets you care about things. It just stops them from taking over.

Rigid belief	Sounds like	Flexible alternative	Sounds like
Demands Turning wants into rules	"I must do well." "They should treat me fairly." "Life has to be easier than this."	Preferences Wanting, without insisting	"I'd really like to do well, but I don't have to." "I'd prefer they treated me fairly, but they don't have to."
Awfulising Making bad things the worst	"This is awful." "It's the end of the world."	Keeping perspective Bad, not the end of the world	"This is bad, maybe very bad, but it isn't the end of the world. Worse things could happen."
"I can't stand it" Low frustration tolerance	"It's too hard." "I can't bear this."	"I can stand it" Higher frustration tolerance	"This is hard and I don't like it, but I can bear it, and it's worth bearing for the things that matter to me."
Rating and condemning Judging a whole person or life	"I'm a failure." "He's a complete idiot." "Life is rotten."	Unconditional acceptance Of yourself, others and life	"I'm a fallible human who failed at this one thing." "He did a thoughtless thing. That doesn't make him worthless." "Life has good and bad in it."

Demands are the root

In REBT, demands are seen as the main source of emotional upset. The other three usually grow out of them. Once you believe something *must* happen, it seems awful when it doesn't, you tell yourself you can't stand it, and you start judging yourself or others harshly for it.

Why "need" is the key word

Wanting to be liked, wanting to do well, and wanting life to go smoothly are all completely normal. There's nothing wrong with any of them. The trouble starts when a *want* turns into a *need*: when we believe we **NEED** it in order to be OK as a person. To need something means to depend on it. And if our sense of worth depends on something we can't fully control, we are always at risk of falling apart when it doesn't happen.

That idea is at the centre of the three core beliefs on the next pages.

The three core beliefs

Most of our upsetting thoughts can be traced back to one of three core beliefs. These beliefs shape our everyday thinking, our emotions and our behaviour. We all hold them to some degree. They become a problem when we depend on them to feel OK about ourselves.

Core belief	The rigid version (the NEED)	Emotions it tends to trigger
Approval Approval-seeking beliefs	"My worth depends on other people liking, loving or approving of me."	Anxiety, hurt, jealousy, depression
Perfectionism Perfectionistic beliefs	"My worth depends on achieving, succeeding and performing well."	Anxiety, guilt, shame, depression, anger at myself
Frustration tolerance Poor frustration tolerance beliefs	"Life and other people must go my way, and I can't stand it when they don't."	Anger, frustration, self-pity, hopelessness

When these needs are being met, life feels great. We're liked, we're succeeding, and things are running smoothly. The trouble begins when they aren't. How do you feel about yourself when you sense someone doesn't like you? Do you see yourself as worthless when you fail at something important? How do you cope when life doesn't go to plan, or you don't get your own way?

How we see ourselves during these stressful times has a big influence on whether we cope or fall apart.

How this fits with REBT theory

Albert Ellis described three main demands that people make: on **themselves** ("I must do well and win others' approval, or I'm no good"), on **other people** ("Others must treat me well and fairly") and on **life** ("Life must be easy and comfortable"). The first two core beliefs in this booklet split Ellis's first demand into its two parts: approval and achievement. The third core belief covers demands on other people and on life, which is why it so often shows up as anger.

The next two pages describe each core belief in more detail. As you read, notice which one sounds most like you. Many people have one that's strongest, and some have a mix.

1. Approval-seeking beliefs

Active when your self-worth depends on another person liking, loving or approving of you.

For approval seekers, the inner world is often very busy. They constantly look at themselves through other people's eyes, and use what they think others think of them to decide their own worth. They NEED people to like them in order to feel good about themselves. Everyday negative interactions can become big problems, because approval seekers are acutely aware of other people's behaviour and watch it closely.

Typical thoughts

"Oh no, she hates me now!"

"He didn't come home on time. He doesn't love me anymore!"

"I bet she thinks I'm an idiot."

Common patterns

- Mind reading and jumping to conclusions
- People-pleasing, trouble saying no
- Seeking reassurance
- Taking things personally

RIGID

"I NEED people to like me to feel OK about myself."

FLEXIBLE

"I like being liked, but I don't need everyone's approval to accept myself."

2. Perfectionistic beliefs

Active when your self-worth depends on achieving, succeeding or performing well.

Perfectionists feel good about themselves when they are achieving and performing well. But when they fail at something (which is a normal part of learning), or fall short of their own expectations, they feel awful about themselves as a person, and often see themselves as a total failure. They NEED to achieve and succeed in order to feel good about themselves. Worry about failing in the future often drives them, and they can become very focused on regaining control when things feel out of control.

Typical thoughts

"If it's not perfect, I've failed."

"I should have done better."

"I'm going to stuff this up."

Common patterns

- High expectations, all-or-nothing thinking
- Guilt and anger from demanding thinking
- Over-preparing, or putting things off for fear of failing
- Being very hard on yourself after mistakes

RIGID

"I NEED to succeed and get things right, or I'm a failure."

FLEXIBLE

"I want to do well and I'll work at it, but I don't have to be perfect. Failing at something doesn't make me a failure."

3. Poor frustration tolerance beliefs

Active when you believe life, and the people in it, must run smoothly and go to plan, and that you can't cope when they don't.

People with poor frustration tolerance often sell themselves short and feel defeated. They tell themselves they can't cope with what life throws at them. They may turn to alcohol, drugs or other quick fixes to escape the discomfort, or procrastinate to avoid a painful task. They can also become angry quickly, because they are less tolerant of other people's behaviour and of situations that don't go their way. They often feel things are unfair and "shouldn't" be happening to them.

When life is running smoothly, they feel fine. But when things get too hard, they start to feel bad about themselves as a person, and can feel hopeless. They NEED life to run smoothly, and according to their rules, in order to feel OK.

Typical thoughts

"I can't stand it!"

"They shouldn't be doing this to me!"

"I should be able to cope."

"I need it now!"

"This is the worst thing in the world and I can't stand it."

Common patterns

- Demanding thinking (the "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts"), which fuels anger
- Labelling people negatively, being judgemental and condemning
- Road rage and name-calling
- Catastrophising
- Avoiding, procrastinating, giving up early

RIGID

"Life **MUST** go smoothly and people **MUST** do the right thing. I can't stand it when they don't."

FLEXIBLE

"I'd prefer things to go smoothly and people to treat me fairly, but they don't have to. When they don't, it's hard, but I can stand it."

Which one is most like you?

Think about the last three times you felt very upset. For each one, ask: was I worried about what someone thought of me (approval), about how well I was doing (perfectionism), or about things not going my way (frustration tolerance)? You may notice a pattern.

You are worthwhile no matter what

Your worth as a person doesn't depend on who likes you, how well you do (or how far from "perfect" you are), or what happens to you in your lifetime. We all have the same worth as human beings, regardless of wealth, gender, culture, religion, or anything else.

The two coins

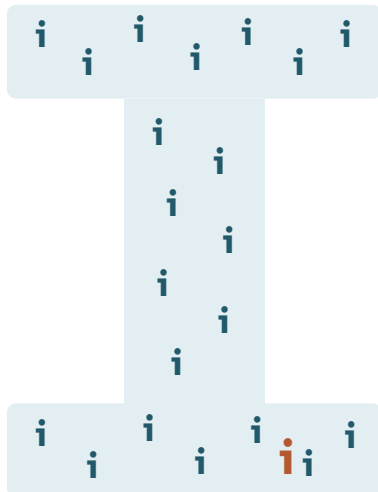


Imagine a brand-new, shiny one-dollar coin, fresh from the mint and never used. Now imagine another one-dollar coin that is old, dented and grubby. It has been in circulation for years and has been everywhere a coin could possibly go. How much is each coin worth?

The answer, of course, is the same: one dollar. The dents don't change its value. The same is true for you.

Rate your actions, not yourself

REBT encourages what's called **unconditional self-acceptance**. This means accepting yourself as a whole, fallible human being, while still being honest about the things you do. Your actions can be good or bad, helpful or unhelpful. You can work to change them. But no single action, or even a long list of them, adds up to a verdict on you as a person.



The Big I and the little i's

Picture yourself as a big letter I, made up of hundreds of little i's. Each little i is one thing about you: kind to your friends, good cook, late to work on Tuesday, snapped at your partner, loyal, funny, forgot to pay a bill.

When you make a mistake, that's one little i (the orange one). It's real, and it's worth owning. But it doesn't turn the whole Big I bad. You are far more than any one thing you do.

It's OK to want things

It's fine to like being liked, to want to achieve, and to prefer a stress-free life. Everyone does. When things are going well, enjoy feeling good. You just don't **NEED** these things in order to accept yourself.

Healthy and unhealthy negative emotions

The goal of REBT is not to feel nothing, or to feel happy about bad things. When something bad happens, feeling bad is appropriate. REBT separates negative emotions into two kinds.

Healthy negative emotions fit the situation. They come from flexible beliefs, they help you deal with the problem, and they pass. **Unhealthy negative emotions** are more extreme. They come from rigid beliefs, they tend to make the problem worse, and they can hang around long after the event.

Unhealthy	Healthy alternative	Usually about	The unhealthy version tends to...	The healthy version tends to...
Anxiety	Concern	A threat or danger	Overestimate the danger, avoid, seek reassurance	See the risk realistically, face it, make a plan
Depression	Sadness	Loss or failure	Withdraw, feel hopeless, put yourself down	Grieve the loss, reach out, still see a future
Unhealthy anger (rage)	Annoyance, healthy anger	Someone breaking your rules, or being frustrated	Attack, insult, hold grudges	Assert yourself while still respecting the other person
Guilt	Remorse	Breaking your own moral code	"I'm a bad person." Punish yourself	"I did a bad thing." Take responsibility, make amends
Shame	Disappointment, regret	Others seeing a weakness or mistake	Hide, avoid people, feel exposed	Stay connected, accept yourself
Hurt	Sorrow	Being treated badly by someone who matters	Sulk, withdraw, "poor me"	Let the person know how you feel

Give yourself permission to feel

It's OK to feel disappointed, frustrated, annoyed, sad, worried, concerned or embarrassed. These are normal emotions, and you may need to give yourself permission to feel them. They become a problem to work on when they turn into their extreme forms (rage, anxiety, depression) and start to have a negative impact on your life.

So on your worksheet, success doesn't mean your feeling drops to zero. It means your feeling becomes less intense, or shifts to its healthier version: from anxiety to concern, from rage to annoyance, from depression to sadness.

Fifteen common thinking styles

These are common patterns in the way our thoughts get distorted, especially when we feel angry, anxious or low. They are very likely to make you feel worse. When you notice a strong emotion, write your thoughts down and check whether they match any of these styles. It's common for one thought to fit more than one.

01 All-or-nothing thinking

Also called: *Very extreme*

Seeing things in only two boxes: success or failure, good or bad, love or hate. Anything short of perfect gets filed under failure. The flip side is seeing yourself as fabulous when one thing goes well, which sets you up for a hard landing later.

SOUNDS LIKE

"If it isn't perfect, it's rubbish."

"I ate one biscuit, so the whole diet is blown."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

Mia gets 92% on a work assessment. She spends the evening going over the questions she got wrong and decides she is "hopeless at this job".

Often linked to: **Perfectionism**

02 Overgeneralising

Also called: *Very broad*

Taking one event and treating it as a pattern that will repeat forever. Watch for words like always, never, everyone, nobody, nothing and everything.

SOUNDS LIKE

"Nothing ever works out for me."

"Nobody ever listens to me."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

After one unsuccessful job interview, Tom tells himself, "No one is ever going to hire me."

Often linked to: **Approval** **Perfectionism** **Frustration tolerance**

03 Labelling and condemning

Also called: *Very broad, very judgemental*

Summing up a whole person with a single word, usually because of one thing they did. It can be aimed at yourself ("I'm useless") or at others ("He's a complete idiot"). Condemning goes a step further: finding fault everywhere and deciding that people, including you, deserve to be written off.

SOUNDS LIKE

"I'm such a loser."

"They're completely useless."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

Priya forgets her friend's birthday and decides, "I'm a terrible friend." She has remembered it every other year.

REBT tip: rate the behaviour, not the person. Forgetting a birthday is a poor action. It doesn't make someone a poor human being.

Often linked to: **Perfectionism** **Frustration tolerance**

04 Catastrophising (awfulising)

Also called: Very catastrophic

Blowing a bad event up into the worst thing that could happen, or "making a mountain out of a molehill". Words like awful, horrible, terrible, disaster and tragic are the giveaway. While doing this we also tend to forget our own ability to cope.

SOUNDS LIKE

"This is a disaster."

"This is the worst thing that could ever happen."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

Jack's car breaks down on the way to a job interview. "That's it, my whole future is ruined." He doesn't think to ring and reschedule.

REBT tip: something can be bad, even very bad, without being the end of the world.

Often linked to: [Approval](#) [Perfectionism](#) [Frustration tolerance](#)

05 Mental filter

Also called: Very negative

Picking out one negative detail and dwelling on it until everything looks dark. It's like wearing sunglasses indoors: the whole room looks gloomy, even though the lights are on.

SOUNDS LIKE

"The whole night was ruined."

"All I could think about was that one comment."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

At her birthday dinner Sarah gets twenty warm messages and one sarcastic remark from her uncle. She replays the remark all night.

Often linked to: [Approval](#) [Perfectionism](#)

06 Disqualifying the positive

Also called: Very negative

Good things happen but they "don't count". Compliments are explained away and successes are put down to luck. It keeps a negative view of yourself in place even when the evidence says otherwise.

SOUNDS LIKE

"They were just being polite."

"Anyone could have done that."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

Ben's manager praises his report in a team meeting. He thinks, "She only said that because she has to."

Often linked to: [Approval](#) [Perfectionism](#)

07

Mind reading

Also called: *Very skewed*

Assuming you know what other people are thinking, usually something negative about you, without checking. A small clue gets treated as proof.

SOUNDS LIKE

"I bet she thinks I'm an idiot."

"He's annoyed with me, I can tell."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

A friend hasn't replied to Leah's text after five hours. "She's angry with me." (Her friend was at work with her phone in a locker.)

Often linked to: **Approval**

08

Fortune telling

Also called: *Very unscientific*

Predicting that things will turn out badly and treating the prediction as fact. It drives a lot of anxiety and can stop us from trying at all.

SOUNDS LIKE

"I'm going to stuff up the presentation."

"I'll never get better."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

The night before his medical results, Raj lies awake certain it will be bad news, and starts planning for the worst.

Often linked to: **Approval** **Perfectionism**

09

Emotional reasoning

Also called: *Very unscientific*

Using a feeling as proof that something is true. Feelings are real and worth listening to, but they are not evidence about the facts.

SOUNDS LIKE

"I feel stupid, so I must be stupid."

"I feel anxious, so something bad must be about to happen."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

Kate says no to an extra shift and then feels guilty. "I feel guilty, so I must have done something wrong." Saying no was reasonable.

Often linked to: **Approval** **Perfectionism** **Frustration tolerance**

10

Demands (shoulds and musts)*Also called: Very demanding*

Turning a preference into a rigid rule: for yourself, for other people, or for the way life should go. Demands on yourself tend to bring guilt and pressure. Demands on others tend to bring anger. Demands on life tend to bring frustration and self-pity. In REBT, demands are seen as the root of most emotional upset.

SOUNDS LIKE*"I should be over this by now."**"People must be on time."**"This shouldn't be happening to me."***REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE**

Stuck in traffic, Dan thinks, "These idiots should get out of my way!" and arrives at work furious.

REBT tip: swap "must" for "I'd prefer... but it doesn't have to be that way."

Often linked to:

Approval

Perfectionism

Frustration tolerance

11

Low frustration tolerance*Also called: Very comfort-orientated*

Telling yourself that something is too hard or too uncomfortable to bear, and going for relief right now instead of what you want in the long run. It is behind a lot of procrastination, anger and reaching for alcohol, food or other quick fixes.

SOUNDS LIKE*"I can't stand it."**"It's too hard."**"I need it now."***REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE**

Lisa has put off her tax return for five months because "I just can't face it." The late fees are now adding to her stress.

REBT tip: if you are still standing there, you are standing it. "This is hard" is usually more accurate than "I can't stand it".

Often linked to:

Frustration tolerance

12

Personalising and blaming*Also called: Very skewed*

Taking responsibility for things that were not completely, or at all, in your control. The reverse also happens: blaming other people for something that was mostly your doing.

SOUNDS LIKE*"It's all my fault."**"It's your fault I'm in this mood."***REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE**

Noah's teenage son fails a maths test. Noah decides, "I'm a bad parent." His son admits he didn't study.

Often linked to:

Approval

Perfectionism

Frustration tolerance

13 Minimising (Pollyanna thinking)

Also called: Very Pollyanna-ish

Shrinking things that do matter. This can mean brushing off your own achievements, pretending a problem isn't there, saying something doesn't matter to you when it does, or pushing away feelings like anger, worry or sadness.

SOUNDS LIKE

"I'm fine, it doesn't bother me."

"It was nothing."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

After a break-up, Emma tells everyone she's fine and keeps busy so she doesn't feel sad. A week later she snaps at her kids over nothing.

REBT is not "positive thinking". The aim is realistic thinking, and that includes letting yourself feel healthy sadness or concern.

Often linked to: **Approval**

14 Unrealistic ideals

Also called: Very super-idealistic

Holding a romanticised picture of how your partner, children, job, home or life ought to be. Real life can never match it, so it always feels like a let-down.

SOUNDS LIKE

"If he really loved me, he'd just know what I need."

"Christmas has to be perfect."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

Chris expects his new job to be exciting every day. By the first dull week he feels cheated and starts looking at job ads.

Often linked to: **Perfectionism** **Frustration tolerance**

15 Rumination

Also called: Very obsessed

Going over and over the same thought or problem without getting anywhere. It feels like problem solving, but it mostly keeps the bad feeling going. It is very common with depression and anxiety.

SOUNDS LIKE

"Why did I say that? Why did I say that?"

"What if... what if... what if..."

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

Sophie lies awake until 2am replaying a conversation with her boss and what she should have said.

Ask yourself: "Am I solving this, or just spinning?" If you're spinning, write the thought down and come back to it at a set time.

Often linked to: **Approval** **Perfectionism** **Frustration tolerance**

When it's more than a thinking style

Stress, lack of sleep, alcohol or drugs, and some health conditions can change the way we perceive things. Seeing or hearing things other people don't, or feeling that your thoughts have lost touch with what's real, isn't a thinking style to challenge on a worksheet. Tell your psychologist or GP as soon as you can (see page 22).

Quick reference

Keep this page handy when you're filling in a worksheet. The middle column shows the short "Very..." name you may have seen in earlier handouts.

	Thinking style	Also called	Sounds like	Often linked to
1	All-or-nothing thinking	Very extreme	"If it isn't perfect, it's rubbish."	Perfectionism
2	Overgeneralising	Very broad	"Nothing ever works out for me."	Approval Perfectionism Frustration tolerance
3	Labelling and condemning	Very broad, very judgemental	"I'm such a loser."	Perfectionism Frustration tolerance
4	Catastrophising (awfulising)	Very catastrophic	"This is a disaster."	Approval Perfectionism Frustration tolerance
5	Mental filter	Very negative	"The whole night was ruined."	Approval Perfectionism
6	Disqualifying the positive	Very negative	"They were just being polite."	Approval Perfectionism
7	Mind reading	Very skewed	"I bet she thinks I'm an idiot."	Approval
8	Fortune telling	Very unscientific	"I'm going to stuff up the presentation."	Approval Perfectionism
9	Emotional reasoning	Very unscientific	"I feel stupid, so I must be stupid."	Approval Perfectionism Frustration tolerance
10	Demands (shoulds and musts)	Very demanding	"I should be over this by now."	Approval Perfectionism Frustration tolerance
11	Low frustration tolerance	Very comfort-orientated	"I can't stand it."	Frustration tolerance
12	Personalising and blaming	Very skewed	"It's all my fault."	Approval Perfectionism Frustration tolerance
13	Minimising (Pollyanna thinking)	Very Pollyanna-ish	"I'm fine, it doesn't bother me."	Approval
14	Unrealistic ideals	Very super-idealistic	"If he really loved me, he'd just know what I need."	Perfectionism Frustration tolerance
15	Rumination	Very obsessed	"Why did I say that? Why did I say that?"	Approval Perfectionism Frustration tolerance

Questions to challenge your thoughts

This is where you question your thinking and shake it up a bit. In REBT this step is called disputing. You don't need to use every question. Pick the two or three that fit your situation best.

Is it true?

Checking the evidence

- Where is the evidence that this thought is true? Where is the evidence against it?
- Did they really do or say that? Is that what actually happened?
- Am I making assumptions? Am I trying to read their mind?
- Are they really ALWAYS like that? Is it really NEVER?
- What other explanations might there be for their behaviour?
- How likely is it that this thought is true?

Does it make sense?

Checking the logic

- Just because I want it to be that way, does it HAVE to be that way?
- Just because I feel it, does that make it true?
- Does one mistake make me a failure as a whole person?
- They aren't me. They weren't brought up the same way, haven't had my experiences and haven't learnt what I've learnt. Why should I expect them to do things my way?
- Are my expectations too high?

Is it helping me?

Checking the usefulness

- Is this thought helping me to get what I want?
- How is thinking this way making me feel, and how is it making me act?
- What would I do differently if I didn't believe this?

What's the bigger picture?

Getting some perspective

- In the bigger picture, how much does this really matter? Will it matter in a year?
- Even if the worst did happen, would I survive? How have I coped with hard things before?
- What would I say to my best friend if they were in this situation?
- Do I really need to take this personally? Could they just be having a bad day?

What am I feeling?

Checking in with your emotions

- Is it OK to feel the way I do? Is this the healthy or unhealthy version of the feeling?
- Whose problem is this, anyway?
- Why am I angry? What else am I feeling underneath it (hurt, worry, sadness)?
- Which core belief is being activated here: approval, perfectionism or frustration tolerance?

Flexible coping statements

This is where you bring it back to your self-worth and rein in your dependence on the core belief. Use these as a starting point for the "Alternative thought" column. They work best when you put them in your own words, so that you actually believe them.

For approval-seeking beliefs

- "I don't NEED people to like me in order to feel good about myself."
- "What others think of me is none of my business!"
- "It's nice to be liked, and I can cope when someone doesn't like me."
- "Things are rarely as bad as I imagine them to be."
- "I am worthwhile no matter what."

For perfectionistic beliefs

- "While it's good to achieve and be recognised by others, I don't NEED achievement or recognition in order to feel good about myself."
- "I've done many things successfully in the past, and I can succeed again."
- "Mistakes are part of learning. Failing at something doesn't make me a failure."
- "I accept myself as I am, flaws and all."
- "I am worthwhile no matter what."

For poor frustration tolerance beliefs

- "I don't NEED everything in my life to run smoothly in order to feel good about myself."
- "This is hard, but I can stand it."
- "I have the skills and ability to get through this. I've coped in the past and I will again."
- "I'd prefer people did things my way, but they don't have to."
- "I am worthwhile no matter what."

When you're angry with someone else

- "They're a fallible human being, just like me. They did something I don't like. That doesn't make them a bad person."
- "I can let them know I'm annoyed without needing them to change."

How to fill in the thought monitoring worksheet

Work across the page from left to right. The first three columns describe what happened. The last three are where you change it. Blank worksheets start on page 23.

1 Situation What happened? Just the facts.	2 Thoughts What was I telling myself? Any thinking styles?	3 Feelings Name it. Rate 0 to 10.	4 Challenge thoughts Is it true? Does it help? (page 17)	5 Alternative thought Flexible, believable, back to my worth (page 18)	6 New feeling Name it. Rate 0 to 10.
WHAT GOES HERE					
What were you doing? What just happened? Stick to the facts: who, what, where and when. Don't include thoughts or feelings in this column.	What was running through your mind? What were you saying to yourself? Write your thoughts word for word, even if they seem silly or harsh.	How were you feeling? Angry? Anxious? Depressed? Guilty? Hurt? Rate the strength from 0 to 10, where 10 is the strongest you have ever felt it.	Question your thinking and shake it up a bit. Use the questions on page 17.	Bring it back to your self-worth, and rein in your dependence on the core belief. Use the coping statements on page 18.	How do you feel now? Name the feeling and rate it from 0 to 10.
TIPS					
A situation can also be a memory, or a thought about something that might happen.	If you can name the unhelpful thinking style, it's easier to challenge. Are you: - personalising things too much? - being too negative, or too positive? - looking for things to confirm your beliefs? - not seeing the bigger picture? - trying to be a mind reader? - fortune telling? - overgeneralising? - demanding? - too judgemental, or too hard on yourself?	Remember it's OK to feel disappointed, frustrated, annoyed, sad, worried, concerned or embarrassed. You may need to give yourself permission to feel these. It's the extreme versions (rage, anxiety, depression) that need working on.	You don't have to answer every question. Pick the few that fit. Aim to write at least three or four sentences. Ask: "What would I tell my best friend right now?"	Make it believable, not just positive. If you don't believe it, it won't change how you feel. Start with a coping statement, then add something specific to this situation.	Your feeling from column 3 will usually be less intense, or will have shifted to a healthier emotion. It doesn't need to reach zero. It takes practice. Over time you'll be able to do this in your head without writing it down.

Worked examples: one situation, three reactions

All three examples start with the same event. Each person has a different core belief active, and so a different emotion. Notice how the challenge and alternative thought target that particular belief.

1 Situation What happened? Just the facts.	2 Thoughts What was I telling myself? Any thinking styles?	3 Feelings Name it. Rate 0 to 10.	4 Challenge thoughts Is it true? Does it help? (page 17)	5 Alternative thought Flexible, believable, back to my worth (page 18)	6 New feeling Name it. Rate 0 to 10.
Someone said they would call last night, and they didn't.	"Bloody bastard! He always does that! If he says he's going to call, he should call!" Labelling, overgeneralising, demands. Core belief: frustration tolerance	Angry 10/10	He really isn't a "bastard". That's labelling his whole person. I just don't like it when he lets me down. I was looking forward to talking with him. It isn't helping me to generalise here either. It's not true that he always does this. And why should he call, just because he said he would? People break promises all the time. I have in the past. Maybe he's just busy and will call when he can.	"I don't NEED everything in my life to run smoothly in order to feel good about myself. He's a fallible human being, like me. I'm worthwhile no matter what."	Annoyed, disappointed 3/10
Someone said they would call last night, and they didn't.	"Maybe something bad has happened? Maybe he doesn't like me anymore?" Catastrophising, mind reading. Core belief: approval	Anxious 8/10	There's no point jumping to conclusions or making this bigger than it really is. I'm sure I'd hear if something was wrong. There's no evidence he doesn't like me just because he didn't call. Maybe he simply forgot or got caught up. I've forgotten to call someone before.	"Things are rarely as bad as I imagine them to be. I don't NEED people to like me in order to feel good about myself. I'm worthwhile no matter what."	OK, slightly concerned 2/10

Worked examples (continued)

1 Situation What happened? Just the facts.	2 Thoughts What was I telling myself? Any thinking styles?	3 Feelings Name it. Rate 0 to 10.	4 Challenge thoughts Is it true? Does it help? (page 17)	5 Alternative thought Flexible, believable, back to my worth (page 18)	6 New feeling Name it. Rate 0 to 10.
Someone said they would call last night, and they didn't.	"I bet he couldn't be bothered talking to me. I'm so negative. Why would he want to? I've got nothing important to say. I wish I could do the things I used to do. I'm such a failure." Mind reading, disqualifying the positive, labelling. Core belief: perfectionism	Depressed 9/10	I don't know why he didn't call. Maybe he simply forgot, or couldn't for some reason. I'll call him tomorrow if I don't hear from him. It isn't helpful to put myself down. It will take time to beat this depression, and I have to be patient. If I'd had a heart attack or broken my leg, I couldn't expect to run a marathon straight away. Just take one day at a time. Just because I feel like I've failed doesn't mean I actually have. Many people go through depression and go on to lead productive lives. I still have things to look forward to, and I have many skills.	"Depression does not equal failure. I accept myself as I am. I've done many things successfully in the past and I can succeed again. Things can work out if I keep working towards my goals, one step at a time. While it's nice to achieve and be recognised by others, I don't NEED this in order to feel good about myself. I am worthwhile no matter what."	Sad, a little hopeful 4/10

What made the difference?

The event was identical in all three examples. The anger, the anxiety and the low mood each came from a different belief about it. When the belief changed, the feeling changed too, and none of the new feelings dropped to zero. Annoyance, mild concern and sadness are healthy responses to being let down.

If your thoughts turn to not wanting to be here

When mood is very low, thoughts like "everyone would be better off without me" can come up. These are important. Please don't work through them alone on a worksheet. Tell your psychologist or GP, or call Lifeline on 13 11 14. See page 22.

When to get extra support

Thought monitoring is a skill that takes practice, and it's normal for it to feel hard at first. But some experiences need more than a worksheet. Please contact your psychologist or GP if:

- you have thoughts of harming yourself, of not wanting to be alive, or that others would be better off without you
- you are seeing or hearing things other people don't, or feel your thoughts have become out of touch with what's real
- you are relying more on alcohol, drugs or other quick fixes to get through
- your distress stays very high, or keeps getting worse, even with practice
- filling in the worksheets leaves you feeling worse instead of better

In an emergency

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call **000** or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

24-hour support lines (Australia)

Lifeline

13 11 14

Crisis support and suicide prevention. Text 0477 13 11 14 or chat at lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service

1300 659 467

For anyone affected by suicidal thoughts, including family and carers

Beyond Blue

1300 22 4636

Support for anxiety and depression. Chat online at beyondblue.org.au

13YARN

13 92 76

Crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

My own support plan

My psychologist	Ms. Julie-Anne L. Peake , Clinical Psychologist, myMHC Mobile: 0435 025 393 Email: Julie-Anne@mymhc.com.au Book online: www.mymhc.com.au
My GP	
A person I can call when things are hard	
Things that help me when I'm struggling	

Phone numbers checked October 2026. Services can change, so check healthdirect.gov.au if a number doesn't work.

Thought monitoring worksheet

Core belief active? ☐ Approval ☐ Perfectionism ☐ Frustration tolerance

1 Situation What happened? Just the facts.	2 Thoughts What was I telling myself? Any thinking styles?	3 Feelings Name it. Rate 0 to 10.	4 Challenge thoughts Is it true? Does it help? (page 17)	5 Alternative thought Flexible, believable, back to my worth (page 18)	6 New feeling Name it. Rate 0 to 10.
Date: _____		___ /10			___ /10
Date: _____		___ /10			___ /10

Thought monitoring worksheet

Core belief active? ☐ Approval ☐ Perfectionism ☐ Frustration tolerance

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Date: _____		___ /10			___ /10
Date: _____		___ /10			___ /10

Questions to ask at your next session

Albert Ellis and Robert A. Harper, *A Guide to Rational Living*. A readable introduction to REBT by its founder.

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YOUR PSYCHOLOGIST

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ABN 87 804 953 581 · Provider No. 260262FK

If you are in crisis: call 000 in an emergency, or Lifeline on 13 11 14 (24 hours).

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