

Three Minute REBT

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Discovering Irrational Beliefs Creating Anger

People often think that other people create their anger. *They make me angry* is a common statement. If that were the case, there would be little you could do about your anger except to stay away from most people. Fortunately, others don't create your anger. In REBT, we teach that your own thinking corresponds with your anger more than the actions of others.

To discover your thinking that creates your anger, REBT suggests you that look for the event about which you are angry and then look for your belief about that event. Think, *what happened that I'm angry about?* You may recall an event such as someone cut you off in traffic, failed to follow through on an agreement, or treated you with disrespect. Next, ask yourself, *what am I telling myself about (name the event) that gets me to feel angry?*

Many people answer, *Why'd they do that?* with an intense and frustrated tone of voice. That response, however, is a question, and questions do not create anger.

You're probably telling yourself *I don't like their behavior. They're mistaken for acting that way.* But, that too doesn't get you bent out of shape with anger. That gets you annoyed or disappointed.

Look to see if you can find something like *They should not act that way. They're no damn good for doing what they did.* Statements that contain *shoulds* and damnations are of the sort that create emotional disturbance, and when you are going from wanting others to treat you nicely to believing they *should*, then you easily upset yourself with anger.

Try this exercise: Repeat several times *They should not act that way. They're no damn good for doing what they did.* Notice how you feel.

How do you discover your anger? Focus on the event about which you are angry. Then, look for the *shoulds* and damnations in your head that accompany your anger. When you do, you'll discover a significant belief that you can begin to deal with.

One of the main procedures taught in REBT for diminishing anger is Disputing Irrational Beliefs (DIBs). Let's do it now.

Irrational Belief: *They should not act as they did. They're no damn good for doing what they did.*

Disputing question: *Is there any evidence that my belief is true?*

Answer: *No. I definitely do not like their actions. But, I cannot prove that they absolutely should not do it. And, they're definitely mistaken, but that doesn't prove them to be no good.*

Disputing question: *What good can happen to me if I give up my belief?*

Answer: I'll diminish my anger. I will not like their behavior, but I will not be irrational about it. I may also be able to think of their more positive qualities, if any, and decide how I will go about relating to them even with their faults.

When you do the above analysis and therapeutic excise, you may begin chipping away at your anger. Doing it many times may help you eliminate it almost completely.