

# Three Minute REBT: REBT and Secondary Disturbances

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**Alcohol: How to Give It Up and Be Glad You Did**

One of the most important concepts in REBT is secondary disturbance: when you upset yourself about getting upset. For example, you may notice that you are anxious, then you may feel shameful about being anxious. The secondary disturbance, i.e., shame, creates an even greater disturbance than the first, and you keep it longer.

If you ever tell yourself, I must not get upset, or I can't stand this depression, you are creating a secondary disturbance. Sometimes addictive behavior can be a secondary, or even tertiary, disturbance. An example is when you tell yourself, I can't stand this stress; I've got to drink.

When you find yourself disputing your irrational beliefs without benefit, you also may be upset at an upset. Your secondary upset is preventing your disputing from being effective.

The first step in eliminating this problem is to develop awareness of your secondary disturbance. You can recognize and accept that it is entirely possible to observe yourself getting upset and disturbing yourself about it.

The second step is to do the ABC's to discover your belief that creates your secondary upset. Ask yourself, what am I telling myself that gets me upset at my depression, anxiety, drinking, etc.

Next, dispute the irrational belief. For example, dispute the belief that you must not be disturbed, or that you can't stand stress (or a craving), and that you've got to drink. The resulting effective new philosophy may be something like, I can stand this stress; I don't like it, but I can stand it.

A good result of this process is greater self-acceptance. You more fully realize and accept that you are a fallible creature, that you can create self-defeating feelings and acts, and that you are not damnable. With this, you will also be able to deal with your primary upsets more quickly, easily, and successfully.

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