

## Three Minute REBT: What's Rational and What's Not

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Once people learn of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), many want to help themselves with it. But their thinking isn't as easily discernible as they want, and they become confused about what's rational and what's not. Here are some ways to help you know.

First, rational thinking is defined as thinking that helps you achieve your goals. On the other hand, irrational thinking is thinking that easily defeats you.

A criterion that is *not* indicative of rational thinking is normality. For example, some people think *My thinking is normal; anybody would feel that way*. In REBT, we recognize that most people are irrational at least some of the time so that "normal" entails some degree of irrationality.

### **Here is a list that assumes rational thinking.**

You relate to people mostly in a manner that creates good will and the attainment of mutual goals.

You manage frustrating situations either by solving your problems or by accepting what you can't change and then moving on.

You accept your problems -- those of the past, the present, and those anticipated in the futures -- as unwanted events to be dealt with constructively.

You accept others as fallible, and you choose to relate to them satisfactorily as such.

You succeed at attaining your goals most of the time.

Your emotions are helpful in solving your problems and seeking your goals.

You practically never give up on seeking personal happiness, no matter how difficult life is for you.

You fully accept yourself when you fail.

## **Irrational thinking includes these:**

You demand that others act as you want.

You whine if things don't go as you want.

You damn others for their mistakes.

You find pleasure in creating discomfort for others.

You focus on shortcomings and mistakes, both yours and others, without finding a way to correct them or merely accept them and manage them constructively.

You feel overly frustrated, shameful, anxious, guilty, or angry.

You fail to accept yourself when you are irrational.

Of all these irrationalities, the most important is the last. When you fail to accept that you are a fallible, irrational creature, you more than double your misery, and you fail to eliminate your irrational beliefs, and hence, most of your problems. Similarly, the last rational statement in the first list is probably most important.

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