

Three Minute REBT:

Perceptions of Truth in Emotional Disturbance

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When your emotions are disturbed, they seem to contain a truth. Yet when you act on your disturbed emotions, the results are easily self-defeating. Here are some examples:

- You feel an urge to drink, and you think the truth of the matter is that you really *need* a drink. Yet, when you drink, you have problems.
- You feel worthless and really believe that you are. Then you act as if you are worthless, which, of course, isn't good.
- You feel angry; you act on it, and the result is bad.

That's not what correct thinking and feeling is about, is it? How can we make sense of this?

Consider this: First, emotions go hand in hand with thoughts and desires. You strongly want something and you think *I want it* which creates an emotion. Next you think, *I must have what I want* and you feel an urge ... and more: you create a belief about the way things are, i.e., the truth. It's from your absolutistic *must* that the feeling of truth in your irrationality originates.

Other beliefs such as *should, ought, have to, got to* mean the same as *must*. Also, beliefs containing hidden *musts* do the same thing. They are: *can't stand, awful, horrible, and terrible*, damnations of people, and beliefs that people are worthless.

These beliefs easily get you entangled in hindering ideas that are far more complex than are important in healthy living. Yet, you may not want to give them up thinking you'd be giving up part of what you know to be "the truth." In REBT we teach people to eliminate them, because, when people seek evidence for their *musts*, they don't find any, and when they cling to them they hinder themselves.

The kinds of truths worth holding do not include absolutistic truths about you, others, and the universe. Instead, seek and be guided by knowledge about what you want and what is going on with the universe that helps you get what you want. *I want. Now, how do I get what I want?* is helpful and worthwhile; *I need what I want* is hindering and nonsense.