

## **Three Minute REBT**

### **Stages of Severe Anger Development**

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In Chapter 6 of the book titled *Alcohol: How to Give It Up and Be Glad You Did*, I presented Albert Ellis' theory of addiction, which includes stages of emotional disturbance combined with drinking that may contribute to the formation of addiction. In the present article, I present a similar formulation for the creation of a severely disordered manner of interpersonal relations based on anger.

#### **Primary Disturbance**

First, you make yourself angry at people by telling yourself *People must treat me nicely and kindly, and just the way I want. When they don't, they're no damn good and should be punished.* Another irrational belief creating anger is *People should help create a rational, sensible world, preferably one that accommodates my preferences about fairness, my biases about how people should act, and my beliefs about how the world should operate.* Your anger may be precipitated by Low Frustration Tolerance, such as *Others must not frustrate me. I can't stand it when they do. When others frustrate me, they should be punished.*

#### **Secondary Disturbance**

You rationally notice that your anger defeats you. Then you irrationally make yourself disturbed about your anger by thinking something like *I must not be disturbed; it makes me inferior and worthless.* You may add *Everybody knows I'm a nut case and that makes me worthless. I don't stand a chance at gaining their approval, and I need their approval.*

With your secondary disturbance, you become more disturbed and find it more difficult to reduce your anger.

#### **Quit Trying to Eliminate Your Anger**

You try to help yourself; you fail. You get disturbed at the difficulty of change; you decide to quit trying.

*It's too hard to change. I can't stand the hard work. I'd prefer to stay as I am than to do the hard work of change.*

*I'm so bad, nobody can help me.*

## **Excuses and Rationalizations**

You make excuses and rationalizations for your behavior. Examples are:

*It's normal to feel this way. Anyone would get upset at the things I get upset about.*

*Because someone really did harm me, my anger is justified.*

*All I did was express my feelings. Anyone would, and those who get upset at me for this obviously have a worse problem.*

*Others make me angry. If they wouldn't treat me so badly, I wouldn't be this way.*

## **Develop Social Relationships—Both Cooperative and Hostile—Based on Anger**

You may encourage and teach other people to express anger at those with whom you are angry (this sometimes happens in SMART Recovery<sup>®</sup> groups); you may join hate groups, and spread messages of hatred to others.

You develop methods of hurting others, and you pride in yourself at the ways you develop to hurt them. You work at being “the best of the bad.”

You look for opportunities to hurt others. For instance, someone makes a mistake, and you pounce on him or her.

## **Vicious Circle**

You express hatred for others; they respond by treating you badly; then you think they're out to get you, and they think the same about you. You both continue your hostilities until someone backs out of the fray or a completely different understanding of the problem eliminates the anger.

In REBT, we believe you can greatly reduce and perhaps eliminate your anger. Your goal in doing so is to have greater tolerance of others and greater acceptance of their behavior. Specific ideas and techniques will be presented in the next issue of *News and*

*Views.*