

Three Minute REBT  
Meditation on Thinking

by Philip Tate, PhD

Our society teaches us little about the importance of our mental activity. Regarding health, we learn more about medical care, diet, and exercise. Yet on a day-to-day basis, our view of life is equally important in how well we live it.

Consider, we go through life being aware of all sorts of things that can hurt us. We sometimes get angry by thinking that someone should do something about some of these things. Most people don't acknowledge that their thinking about these events often affects them more than the events themselves. People with "road rage," for example, sometimes stay angry for a long time. Some pull off the road for a while to cool down. Yet they are not aware that their beliefs create their rage.

What if that person had a medical problem or vitamin deficiency that contributed to such behavior? Wouldn't you recommend he or she do something about it?

Indeed, most people can do better. REBT teaches you to focus on your thinking in order to reduce emotional disturbances. By doing the ABCs you learn to discover irrational beliefs. By disputing these beliefs, you weaken them.

Here's something not taught in traditional REBT. I call it "meditation on

thinking.” First, sit quietly. Then close your eyes and clear your mind by allowing your thoughts to stop completely. Every time your mind wanders, repeat to yourself what you just thought of, and bring your attention back to nothing. Do this, and discover what you learn of your mental activities.

Possible discoveries are: (1) You do not have complete control of your mental activities; (2) you easily get distracted and think of things you didn’t plan to think of; (3) you stay with those distractions unless you deliberately bring your mind back; and (4) some of your thoughts contain emotions that are clearly different from the feelings you have when you are not thinking.

We can educate ourselves. REBT illuminates and diminishes our beliefs that help maintain debilitating reactions and enduring bad habits. Meditation on thinking facilitates awareness of mental activity as it happens. When we practice these procedures, we increase our awareness and our freedom to act as we desire.