



THE TOOL:

ABCs of REBT #1 (Urge Coping)

EFFECTIVELY USED FOR WHICH OF THE 4 POINTS?

Building Motivation Coping with Urges Problem Solving Lifestyle Balance

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED: Flipchart/Markers or Blackboard & Chalk

WHAT IT IS: A method to reduce or eliminate the emotional upsets which fuel urges to use.

WHEN IT IS USED: (Common question or statement that may prompt using this tool)

To analyze a lapse/relapse - "What made me do it?" and to develop coping statements for anticipated lapse/relapse - "How will I handle the situation?"

This is a good tool to use whenever a member gets upset at urges and/or gives in to urges.

EXAMPLE OF ITS USE IN A SMART RECOVERY® MEETING:

ABC's of COPING WITH URGES

When you relapse, the question to ask is not "What made me do that", but rather, "How did I talk myself into it?" When you get upset at an urge, then lapse or relapse, it is not the urge (A) that causes your relapse (C). It is your beliefs (B), your irrational self-talk. Four common beliefs (self-talk) which can lead you to an emotional disturbance and a relapse are listed under the B's below.

A = Activating event or Adversity: URGE TO USE.

B = Beliefs or IRRATIONAL SELF-TALK ABOUT URGES.

1. This urge is UNBEARABLE. I CAN'T STAND IT!
2. This powerful urge MAKES ME USE!
3. This urge WON'T GO AWAY UNTIL I USE!
4. This urge is DRIVING ME CRAZY!

C = Emotional and Behavioral Consequences of your thoughts about urges such as discomfort anxiety and GREATER URGES.

Disputing Irrational Beliefs

You may effectively help yourself with **low frustration tolerance and anxiety** about urges when you **DISPUTE** your irrational Beliefs and then forcefully replace them with **Rational alternatives**. The following page contains some examples of **DISPUTES** and **Rational alternatives**.

Dispute: *Where is the evidence this urge is unbearable and I can't stand it?*

Answer: There is no evidence. There is evidence the urge is hard to bear, but not impossible, and there is evidence I don't like it. But, because I am standing, I CAN stand it.

Rational alternative: I don't like urges, but I CAN STAND them.

Dispute: *Is there any evidence that an urge makes me use?*

Answer: No. There is none. The urge makes life unpleasant, but it doesn't force me to do anything.

Rational alternative: Nothing makes me use! I can decide not to!

Dispute: *Is there any evidence this urge absolutely will not go away until I use?*

Answer: No there isn't. It may take a long while to go away if I don't use, but nothing says it has to remain if I do not use.

Rational alternative: Urges are time limited. This urge will go away whether I decide to use or not!

Dispute: *Where is the evidence this urge is driving me crazy?*

Answer: There is none. I may drive myself crazy about the urge, but the urge doesn't do it to me. I can choose not to be disturbed about this urge.

Rational alternative: I do not have to go crazy about this urge. I will remain sane while I live through it.

Other types of thoughts we use to talk ourselves into remaining addicted, and suggested rational alternatives:

SELF DOWNING

irrational belief (IB) Other "strong and competent" people have what it takes to change, but not a worthless "no-good-nick" like me.

rational belief (RB) Competent traits such as self-control are not something one "has." Such skills are developed through practice. I can strive to change my behavior for the right reason -- to enjoy my life, rather than for the wrong reason -- to prove my "worth."

LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE (SELF-PITY)

(IB) It's *too hard* to change.

(RB) Yes, it is hard to change, but not *too hard*. As a matter of fact, it is much harder NOT to change.

(IB) It *shouldn't* be this hard. There *must* be an easy way.

(RB) It is about as hard as it "should" be. There is no magic solution, and there is seldom gain without pain in this world.

(IB) I *can't* do what I don't feel like doing.

(RB) JUST DO IT! I didn't feel like getting out of bed today, but did it anyway. Does anybody go to the dentist because they "feel like it?"

(IB) It's *not fair* that I have this problem!

(RB) Perhaps many things are not "fair," but we had best accept that they ARE.

(IB) I *shouldn't have to* quit!

(RB) You don't have to. But you might more fully realize that you want to and then choose to act upon this desire.

Acknowledgments: [Alcohol: How To Give It Up And Be Glad You Did](#) by Philip Tate; [When AA Doesn't Work for You: Rational Steps to Quitting Alcohol](#) by Albert Ellis and Emmett Velten. Thank you Team Members: Nick Rajacic, Joe Milon, Phil Tate, Michler Bishop