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ALSO BY DR. ALBERT ELLIS

How to Control Your Anger Before It Controls You
How to Control Your Anxiety Before It Controls You
How to Stop Destroying Your Relationships
How to Keep People From Pushing Your Buttons
How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything—Yes, Anything!

The Albert Ellis Reader

Available from the Citadel Press/Kensington Publishing Corp.

Anger

How to Live With and Without It

Revised and Updated

Albert Ellis, Ph.D.

CITADEL PRESS
Kensington Publishing Corp.
www.kensingtonbooks.com

CITADEL PRESS BOOKS are published by

Kensington Publishing Corp.
119 West 40th Street
New York, NY 10018

ISBN: 978-0-80653811-2

Updated electronic edition: March 2017

ISBN-13: 978-0-8065-3812-9
ISBN-10: 0-8065-3812-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2002110882

For Janet L. Wolfe
With love

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Foreword Whenever I give a talk on Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) and discuss Dr. Albert Ellis's theory of emotional disturbance—namely, that it is not things, people, or events that make us disturbed, but rather our *beliefs* about things, people, or events that create our emotional and behavioral disturbance—I tell the audience that there's good and bad news to this idea.

Let's get the bad news out of the way . . . We have to face it: it feels really good to blame other people for our problems, to say, "My boss/spouse/child/customer service representative made me so angry!" That's because it feels good not to take responsibility for our emotional reactions. However, if we subscribe to the theory espoused by Al (who credits it to the Greek philosopher Epictetus), we can't blame others for our reactions. Ultimately, we are responsible for how we react emotionally and behaviorally. Well, that's no fun.

Now for the good news . . . I don't know about you, but I haven't been successful at controlling many of life's events or the people in my life. That's good news? Yes, because even though so much of life is out of our control, if we go along with Epictetus and Al, we can at least control how we respond.

So what's behind anger? If you have ever seen someone who was angry, you've definitely seen some type of demand or expectation being placed by that person on him-or herself, or on others, or on world conditions; the same was true for anyone who saw you when you were angry. Frustration intolerance in the form of "I-can't-stand-it-itis" was also surely in evidence, as well as self-and other-downing. Next time you find yourself angry at something or someone, see which of these beliefs you're holding.

Anger: How to Live With and Without It was originally written in 1977, revised in 2003, and is now being relaunched in a new print edition and as an e-book. In the 2003 edition, Al wrote a postscript entitled "How to Deal With International Terrorism," which was largely a response to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. Now, Al trained and mentored me, and I worked with him for many years; I knew he was a genius. After reading this postscript, however, I couldn't escape an eerie feeling about him. He had deconstructed the mind-set of the terrorists, using the concepts of REBT, and he had also provided readers

remarkable tools to cope with those tragic events.

Unfortunately, obnoxious and unfair behavior on the one hand and international terrorism on the other have only increased throughout the years, and neither seems to be going away anytime soon. Al's outstanding insight, experience, and foresight, evidenced in *Anger: How to Live With and Without It*, make this self-help book in its entirety, and the postscript in particular, still applicable and relevant to the world we live in today. Perhaps more important, the tools he provides to address the reader's unhealthy anger are a gift that will keep on giving no matter how the world is in the future.

Albert Ellis dedicated his life to helping people with their emotional and behavioral upsets. What would he say about how germane his comments and suggestions remain in today's unstable, unpredictable world? I envision him with that big smile, in his confident (but not cocky) tone, saying, "It's simply because REBT works!"

—Raymond A. DiGiuseppe, Ph.D.

Preface

Why another book on anger? Although numerous books tell us how to deal with anger, none of them seems to work effectively and efficiently in most situations. These books generally support one of two positions. Some advise you to assume a passive, nonresistant attitude when you think others treat you unfairly. Such an attitude may give people the impression that you very much control yourself and the situation, but it hardly helps you achieve anything else. Many people may assume that your passivity and acceptance of their "unfair" treatment means that you do not object to their treating you shabbily or unfairly. Therefore, they have no reason to stop their mistreatment. Your passivity will give others a green light, so to speak, to deal with you as they please.

On the other hand, a multitude of books advise you to openly and freely give vent to and fully express your feelings of anger and rage. They fail to indicate that when you express these feelings it will encourage others to return your resentment.

You can easily see that both of these approaches have many weak points and that neither of them succeeds in presenting an effective solution to the problem of anger.

The solution? Epictetus, a remarkably wise Stoic philosopher, pointed out some two thousand years ago that you *choose* to overreact to the obnoxious behavior of others while you could more wisely choose to react differently. Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) has found that by following the age-old wisdom of many philosophers and by combining it with the most modern methods of psychotherapy, you can learn to reduce self-defeating, angry reactions and to live successfully with the feelings that you may still experience.

Can you do this by yourself? Yes, you definitely can—as Dr. Robert Harper and I particularly show in a previous book, *A Guide to Rational Living*. Here I will explain exactly how you can create your own *philosophy of anger* by consciously and unconsciously subscribing to absolutistic thinking and how, by changing your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that underlie and accompany your rage, you can greatly reduce it. Through careful attention to REBT theory and practice, you can learn effectively to deal with your anger in a remarkably short period of time.

The first edition of this book was published in 1977 and was a pioneering self-help book that explained what anger is, what harm it frequently does to people and their relationships, and how to use Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy to

significantly reduce it. This edition has sold very well for twenty-five years, has been useful to many of my psychotherapy clients, and has helped to minimize the rage of hundreds of people who have enthusiastically written me about it.

A revised version of this book, *How to Control Your Anger Before It Controls You*, authored by me and Raymond Chip Tafrate, was published in 1997 and has also done very well. To my surprise, however, both the first edition *and* the revised one continue to sell many copies. Readers find the first uniquely persuasive and often use both books to help them overcome their anger. The two books, though containing some of the same material, supplement each other. So the publisher has decided to keep both of them in print and has asked me to bring *Anger: How to Live With and Without It* up to date.

I have been happy to do this, especially since many serious forms of rage have increased considerably in recent years. Thus, we now have more child abuse, wife battering, child and teenage violence (including murder) than ever before. National and international warring has led to the terrorism of September 11, 2001. Unhappily no end is in sight—nor is any easy solution. An immense reeducation of practically all children and adults throughout the world is required to stem this tremendous tide of violence.

The theory and practice of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, which is espoused in this book, is no panacea or miracle cure for personal and group violence. But it and several closely related philosophies may importantly contribute to stemming it. Read this book, help yourself by its messages of collaboration and peace, and do what you can to spread them widely to your relatives, friends, and everyone else. What better can you do for yourself and the world?

—Albert Ellis, Ph.D.

Acknowledgments

Just about all published books, these days, result from collaboration between the author and several other important contributors. So with this one. First, I want to thank the many clients I have cited, though quite anonymously, in this book for their invaluable contributions. My editors at Citadel Press have been particularly helpful. Although I take full responsibility for all the ideas in the book, these and my clinical associates at the Albert Ellis Institute in New York have contributed mightily to them and to this book.

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“What disturbs people’s minds is not events but their judgments on events.”

—Epictetus

1

Must You Feel Angry?

You'd better face the hard reality that situations that frustrate or prevent you from attaining your goals and from enjoying what you want really do exist. But have you no choice but to feel angry at these everyday "horrors"?

Most mental health experts agree that you must feel anger. They see the newborn infant as expressing emotions comparable to anger and rage in the first hours of life. And throughout all ages of development humans confront almost daily their own feelings of anger and those of other people whom they encounter. Most authorities say you need your anger to protect yourself from the onslaughts of a hostile and aggressive world. If you do not always remain on your guard, you will stay vulnerable to others who will dominate and exploit you, jeopardize your freedom and property, and take advantage of your passivity by abusing you for their own personal gain with no regard to your welfare.

What, exactly, is anger? It is a special *combination* of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, when you are (or think you are) severely frustrated by unfortunate conditions and by people's "unfair" behavior. As Howard Kassinove and his collaborators point out and as Mark Terjesen and Raphael Rose agree, when you feel angry, you have a negative internal feeling state accompanied by thinking and perceptual distortions and deficiencies (especially misappraisals and attributions of other people's injustice). Your angry thoughts and feelings lead you to physiological arousal and tendencies to act against your "aggressors."

Many authorities on anger, including Raymond DiGiuseppe, believe that angry (and depressed) individuals "are unstable in the way they assign blame and have an unstable sense of self." Raymond Chip Tafrate and his research associates found that subjects high on trait anger were more prone to dysfunctional thinking and also experienced a greater number of physical sensations than people who were low on trait anger. Aron Siegman and Selena Snow discovered that the full-blown expression of anger is a form of emotional disturbance while the mere inner experience of anger is not.

At the same time, as I shall show throughout this book, anger is often self-protective, is a very normal human response, and has helped preserve the human race.

Your failing to fight for what you want leaves you the alternative of remaining

passive when others take advantage of and prevent you from achieving your goals. Thus, most authorities today generally leave you with one of two alternatives for dealing with anger: Feel the anger but sit on it, squelch it, deny and repress it.

Feel the anger and freely express it.

Squelching your anger doesn't get you much of anywhere, and unexpressed rage will do you more harm than candidly and freely expressed feelings. Sigmund Freud's *hydraulic theory* states that anger and other emotions have a tendency to increase in intensity—to expand under pressure like steam in a kettle—so that if you squelch your emotions, if you don't give free vent to them, you run the risk of doing some real harm to yourself. Physical harm such as stomach ulcers, high blood pressure, or other sometimes more severe psychosomatic reactions result. In addition, refraining from giving honest expression to your feelings—keeping these feelings pent up inside you—doesn't help you lose your anger. Quite the contrary. You will, in all probability, feel much worse. For your anger hasn't gone away, but stays right there in your "gut." And now you can easily turn overly critical of yourself for not standing up for your rights with those who have caused the injustice.

Conversely, if you let yourself feel authentically angry and let others know about your feelings, you may encounter problems of quite another nature. For people will receive your free expression of anger in most instances as an outwardly aggressive or hostile action, and will probably close themselves off from you and defensively respond to you with *further* hostility.

Some therapists in the field have attempted to solve the problem with still another alternative, what they call *creative aggression* (or *constructive anger*). This differs from the above *free-expression* method in that you express yourself more controllably and hope (often against hope!) that others will willingly listen to your point of view.

In the following example I will attempt to illustrate the dynamics of the other theories and then, using the same example throughout the book, will investigate the alternatives and solutions that Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy offers. I am confident that if you pay close attention to these principles, you will see that you can deal with problems relating to anger and other emotions effectively and efficiently by use of the REBT guidelines.

Let us say that I have promised to share an apartment with you as a roommate and to share the rent, provided you fix up and furnish the place. This seems agreeable to you. You go to a good deal of trouble and personal expense to keep your part of the bargain. At the last minute I inform you that I have made other plans and cannot, will not keep my part of the agreement. You feel extremely

angry with me; not only have you gone to considerable expense to keep your agreement, but you are distinctly inconvenienced in that you must at the last minute look for another roommate.

You may at first keep your feelings of anger to yourself. But because you have those feelings, unexpressed, your underlying resentment greatly interferes with our friendship. So you see that nothing gets resolved, that your seething interferes with your other activities as well, and that this solution won't work.

You decide to confront me with your feelings, to *express* them. "Look here," you say, "I won't have you treating me like this! After all, you said you'd share the apartment with me after I had furnished it. I would never have fixed it up had you not agreed to share it with me in the first place. You've clearly done me in, and acted really rottenly. How could you have done a thing like that to a friend? I've never done anything so nasty to you, and I really don't see how you can expect anyone's friendship if you treat people so terribly."

Or instead, given the convenience of my having the capacity and willingness to play it with you, you use *creative aggression*, express your anger controllably, and "prepare" me for what will come. Receiving my permission to open up about your feelings, you go ahead to express your anger.

Although your perception of my unfairness to you may be correct, your presentation of it (either through the free-expression method or through creative aggression) *can* do more harm than good. Both approaches focus on my wrong, even if creative aggression allows for a softening of the blow. Through that focus, you can easily set the stage for additional problems with me.

By openly criticizing me for my "outrageous" behavior, you can push me to *defend* it. Then any steps I might take to treat you more fairly would be halted.

Remember also that I, like most people, may have strong self-downing tendencies. When you point out to me my "error" or my unappealing characteristics, I may carry your implications further than you even intended. Hence, from your critical remarks, no matter how well, how creatively put, I may feel guilt or self-downing, and will frequently try to make you equally self-blaming. We'd better acknowledge these very real problems as inherent in either of the two approaches that recommend expressing your anger. Nonetheless, acknowledging this still does not solve your problem: What do you *do* with your anger?

So far we have seen holding in your anger brings dubious results. Yet freely expressing it creates many other problems. Creative aggression seems a more workable solution but still shares some of the same difficulties.

Another alternative—that of *Christian forgiveness*—involves the turning of the other cheek. But in this often hostile world in which we live, this is

somewhat impractical. People may feel far less intimidated by you and thus all the more tempted to take advantage of your "good nature." You may behave beautifully, but unfortunately, that does not mean that others will respect you and treat you equally well.

After examining the above alternatives in dealing with your anger, you may see that each approach may work in a given situation, but not in *all* situations. Further, each one of these approaches has serious and destructive drawbacks. So let us look for a formula that will allow you to deal with difficult situations and get what you want without damaging your own integrity or inciting anger in others.

The following chapters will introduce methods that are free of the drawbacks of the other approaches already discussed. If you read carefully and give your full attention to the techniques presented in this book, if you take the time and trouble to think seriously about, experiment with, and test out these concepts in your own life, and if you energetically and conscientiously practice them over a period of time, I believe that you, too, will see and enjoy the changes that REBT has helped bring about in the anger problems of my clients and readers.

2

How You Create Your Own Anger: The ABCs of REBT

The ABCs of REBT (Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy) can give you what I call an elegant approach to the problem of dealing with your anger. Not a magical formula—quite the contrary, since REBT concerns itself with seeking solutions and dealing with your problems in a realistic manner. It prefers to stick with hardheaded facts of reality—not with airy theories.

How exactly did the theory of REBT evolve? What does it have that makes it different from and often more effective than other forms of psychotherapy?

The basic principles of REBT have evolved from my own extensive clinical research and experience, further supported by numerous experiments done in this area. During my career as a psychotherapist I have had occasion to use many different techniques in treating my many clients. These years have shown me and my trainees that most of the psychoanalytic approaches are ineffective, inefficient, and fail to meet the problems of most people who seek therapy. I say this from my own personal experience. Although the field of psychotherapy includes many techniques and approaches to helping people, most of its methods are too expensive and time consuming for both clients and therapists. Naturally, emotional problems themselves have enormous costs, and if long drawn-out types of therapy show positive and lasting results, the investment seems well worth it. But alas, such therapies, according to my own observations, do not appear to work out.

I have drawn many of the important principles of REBT from the wisdom of philosophy as well as from the most modern psychological advances. Since my youth I have made the in-depth study of philosophy a hobby; and by incorporating some of its principles into my therapeutic approach, I discovered that my clients could achieve more effective results in far less time than when I used other approaches. I found that by my presenting a philosophical as well as a psychological analysis, the client could enjoy the fruits of two sciences and benefit considerably from our efforts.

Although I’d naturally advise you to consult a competent rational therapist when you have a serious problem, you can use REBT to efficiently “therapize” yourself with little outside help. In this book I will explain how you create your own anger *philosophically*—by consciously or unconsciously subscribing to absolutistic, demand-oriented thinking. If you understand exactly how to control

and operate your thinking, you will enable yourself, with the guidance of this book, to undercut and change the counterproductive and destructive aspects of your anger. REBT has designed methods in which you can dissolve your rage no matter what unjust events happen to you.

Perhaps the most distressing fault that I realized while using the usual techniques of psychotherapy was this: Upon termination of many years of therapy, clients still could not confront life's difficult situations on their own without the continued help of their therapist. I felt that after spending all that time and money my clients certainly deserved better results. Rather than continue with these methods, I began to experiment with some ideas of my own. By combining philosophy with various approaches used in therapy, I devised the fundamental principles of REBT. The results were rewarding: Instead of depending on me to give them useless interpretations, my clients now had a realistic perspective with which to think and behave. In a relatively short time they began to show more rapid and lasting progress than from previous methods.

With most of my clients, I use realistic examples to help them work through their problems. Here, for the sake of clarity, I shall mainly stick to one consistent example throughout the book; so we shall continue with the illustration already introduced in chapter 1. I have promised to share an apartment with you if you go ahead and fix it up and furnish it. We have agreed that from then on we will share the expenses. You have so far lived up to your half of the agreement, but at the last minute, without ample notice or explanation, I withdraw from my portion of the agreement. You become enraged with me.

How, by using REBT methods, can you overcome your hostility?

We begin by locating C—the *Emotional* (or *Behavioral*) *Consequence:* your anger.

Next we look for A—your *Adversity* or *Activating Event*. I failed to uphold my portion of an important agreement between us.

As we look at A and C, it may appear that A causes C. REBT theory assumes, however, that although your Adversity or Activating Event directly *contributes* to your Emotional Consequence, it does not really *cause* it. We do not always easily see the dynamics of cause and effect. Yet if we look closely at this relationship between A and C—as we will throughout this book—we will find other factors involved and find that although my withdrawing from our agreement may have inconvenienced and disappointed you greatly, my "unjust" action alone does not necessarily make you feel angry with me.

If we conclude that C directly results from A, then we would have to assume that whenever we encountered any one particular A, we would always expect a particular C. For instance, we know that water boils at one temperature and

freezes at another, and we find this true for all situations involving water and temperature. Yet when people and various situations interact together, such laws of causality do not hold true. Most of us know occurrences in which we were surprised by a person's reaction to a given situation. For instance, we have often heard of victims of brutal crimes who, instead of cooperating with the police and courts to bring their assailant to justice, have done just the opposite. They have gone so far as to actually help their assailant avoid prosecution. If we examine one hundred people, all victims of the same crime, we would surely find a large variation of responses among these people. Some would act in the above manner, others would obsess themselves with the arrest and prosecution of the perpetrator, and yet others would respond at various points between these two extremes. An Emotional and Behavioral Consequence, although affected by an Activating Event or Adversity, does not directly and exclusively result from it.

Another important point to keep in mind: We do, in fact, have choices and control over our responses to every situation, and our feelings and responses often remain much more within our control than we realize. The more aware we are of our existing alternatives, the more likely our ability to consider the situation in its proper perspective before we take action. The intermediate thought process that we carry on *between* A and C is an evaluation in which we make a decision that will determine our response. The more aware we make ourselves of this intermediate phase, the better chance we have of making a choice that makes us likely to achieve our goals. Through such choices we minimize the possibility of interfering with our progress by impulsive behavior.

The sciences of linguistics, philosophy, and psychology have each attempted some explanation of the dynamics of thought and cognition as they affect our Emotional Consequences. We rarely give much consideration to cognition, or how we think, and therefore we seldom are aware of the influence it has upon our actions and reactions.

You, like every other person, have developed a *Belief System* that you rely upon to assist you in making judgments and evaluating situations, ideas, people, and events. Although you have your own personal belief or value system, you also have many beliefs consistent with others in your given society or culture. Yet in some important ways the Belief Systems of different cultures significantly differ. We continually discover that customs and behavioral patterns that we judge barbaric and crude exist in civilized cultures. We also know that an individual may hold a number of different Belief Systems at once, that cultural norms change during an individual's lifetime, and that individuals can change, sometimes radically, their feelings and opinions about many things in order to remain happy and productive in an ever-changing world.

As each society establishes sets of beliefs, values, and norms that bind its inhabitants together cooperatively, its religious, political, and parental teachers pass on guidelines that serve as foundations for the development of our own personal Belief Systems. Therefore, our individual Belief Systems include ideas not entirely our own. Much of what we think good or bad, right or wrong, we have imbibed from others.

Even though beliefs are influenced by environment, no universal norm exists. No action or person rates as either good or bad in and of itself, but instead is rated by somewhat arbitrary and changeable standards.

Let us turn our attention to B, your Belief System. Before advancing a detailed explanation of B, let us clarify one main point. Although B exerts an extremely strong influence upon your reactions at C, we'd better not see B as the only factor in determining C but always remember that A *also* influences your reactions. Your behavior at C, then, follows a combination of A and B. As we shall see later, you often cannot influence A although you can determinedly try!

Your conception of reality is not merely your responses to current external stimuli. This conception instead stems from a vast storehouse of your previous experiences and your personal beliefs and associations related to these experiences. Every action you take follows a series of thoughts, no matter how independent these actions appear. You tend to avoid those situations that you consider repulsive, harmful, or distasteful, while you seek those that seem to you desirable.

Actually, the ABCs of your feelings and actions are more complicated than I have just indicated. As I pointed out in 1956 in my first paper on REBT at the American Psychological Association's annual convention, your Consequences (C's) include thoughts, feelings, and behaviors—all of which integrally influence each other. When you think, you *also* feel and behave; when you feel, you *also* think and behave; and when you behave, you *also* think and feel. Activating Events (A's) also include and interact with Beliefs (B's), and with Consequences (C's). We shall discuss this in detail later.

Using the REBT model and once knowing what is happening at B and what are your Consequences at C, I have found it easy to locate quickly and accurately important details about what you are most likely telling yourself at B, your Belief System. Then I can show you (and other people) how to deal with life's difficult situations and teach you to use the REBT model yourself. Of course, literally thousands of Activating Experiences and Emotional Consequences exist. Yet REBT has discovered that in almost any situation you may place B in one of a few categories. Once aware of both A and C, you can find B with little difficulty—as I shall show you farther on in this book.

If your C (Consequence) is anger, REBT shows you that your feelings of anger (or any other self-defeating feeling) largely result from your perceiving a "negative" experience at A. It also shows you that your Belief System has strongly influenced your feelings at C. At this point REBT seeks to help you discover exactly what beliefs contribute to this anger and show you how you can alter them by examining their unreality and irrationality. You then can change your unhealthy and unproductive feelings of rage to healthy and productive feelings of sorrow, disappointment, and frustration.

Who actually originated the ABCs of anger and of other human disturbances? Probably the ancient Asian, Greek, and Roman philosophers, from whom I first derived them. Lao-tzu and Gautama Buddha, both of whom lived in the sixth century B.C., saw that people partly create and can choose to uncreate their angry feelings; and Seneca and Epictetus, in the first century A.D., and following the Greek Stoic philosophers from the fourth century B.C., were quite clear about people's ability to construct and deconstruct their angry feelings and actions. Seneca wrote a book, *On Anger*, in which he gave scores of examples of how we make ourselves feel angry and how we can change our thinking and action to change our feelings.

After I developed Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) between 1953 and 1955 and presented my first paper on it in 1956, a good many therapists started working with and researching the cognitive-behavioral approach to anger and produced many studies and case histories supporting it. These included Aaron Beck, Jerry Deffenbacher, Raymond DiGiuseppe, Chris Eckhardt, Howard Kassinove, Raymond Novaco, and Chip Tafrate. As a result of their studies and many others, the ABCs of inducing and reducing rage have been well established in the psychological literature. Ready for you to use!

7

Some Methods of Thinking Your Way out of Anger

Antiawfulizing and antimusturbation form a core of rational thinking to uproot your feelings of anger, rage, resentment, and fury. You awfulize and resort to musturbation in four major ways, and once you tell yourself that you find something *awful*, that it *must* not exist the way it does, you also frequently convince yourself of other related Irrational Beliefs. Let us now look at these common irrationalities and at how you can work on them.

REBT refers to one of your beliefs as *I-Can't-Stand-It-itis*. We frequently find this type of awfulizing or musturbation in statements like: "I *can't stand* being treated so unfairly and being put to such great inconveniences by your unfair treatment!"

What we call Debating, as part of Disputing, in REBT, merely means asking yourself questions that will challenge your Irrational Beliefs. The obvious challenges consist of "Why?" "How?" "In what manner?" "What evidence exists for this?" "Where can I find the proof?" Thus, you ask yourself, "Why or in what manner can't I stand such unfair treatment?"

If your answer to this turns out to be something like "I *can* stand it because it doesn't really seem that terrible," you would seem on the right track, but in fact, your answer doesn't quite suffice. First of all, by using the word *terrible*, you will have, as we have noted earlier, a difficult time defining the term itself. Even if you yourself don't find the situation so terrible, a friend or some outsider might judge it as terrible. Others could then sway you into irrational modes of thinking, even if you had already successfully debated the idea of terribleness yourself. Agreeing with someone else's concept of terribleness most likely will encourage you into believing that you *can't* stand it and that Ellis *shouldn't* act in that terrible way. For, as I have stressed before, the four basic kinds of IBs people tell themselves to create their emotional upsets tend to interact so that one leads to the other:

1. "It is *terrible* for Ellis to treat me that way" seems also to mean—

2. "I *can't stand* his behaving in that terrible manner!"

3. "Therefore, he *absolutely shouldn't* act in that terrible way."

4. "He *is* a terrible person to treat anyone, especially me, that way."

In one way these seem like four different Irrational Beliefs. But terribleness, I-Can't-Stand-It-itis, musturbation, and damning oneself or others all represent

different forms of the same basic proposition. If we start with one of these forms, we often imply or overtly end up with the other forms as well.

REBT hypothesizes that if you can stop believing—really and thoroughly stop believing—in one of these forms of irrationality, you will then tend to stop believing in the others. No certainty about this, but you have the tendency to do so.

We return now to debating I-Can't-Stand-It-itis. If we forget, then, about terribleness, my unfair treatment of you leads to an evaluation such as, "Because Ellis has treated me exceptionally unfairly and has caused me great amounts of unnecessary harm, I *can't stand* his doing that to me!" You can now ask yourself the question: "*Why* can't I stand it?" With the idea of terribleness omitted, it appears that you see the situation as intolerable because you think you have experienced *too much* pain; *too much* suffering has resulted from my unfair action. You have somehow escalated much pain and trouble into *too much* pain and trouble. The term *too,* as used here, has a highly exaggerated, surplus implication. You use it to demand that I (and others) must create only so much inconvenience and *no more* for you. After that point you consider the pain *too much*.

Thus, whenever you have the idea that you can't stand the degree of unpleasantness that you experience with my unfair treatment, you suffer not only frustration but frustration intolerance (FI) as well. We can loosely describe FI as the tendency to rant and rave at, rather than merely dislike, frustration. The ranting and raving makes you feel much *more* frustrated than you would otherwise feel. If you Debate, and keep Debating, your I-Can't-Stand-It-itis, you will arrive at a more practical attitude for dealing with frustration and a new philosophy or cognitive Effect (E), which we can call I'll-Never-Like-It-But-I-Can-Stand-It-itis.

The question of whether you will make this basic change in attitude still remains. Anything you believe you can also definitely *refuse* to believe. You cannot control to any great degree what actually exists, but you do control—almost completely—what you *think about* what exists. While you have very little control over how I treat you (fairly or unfairly, well or badly), you do have many choices over the manner in which you *view* my unfair behavior. Thus, even if you judge my actions toward you as unfair and others agree that you have really been treated unfairly, you still can choose to:

1. Believe that you *can't stand* this unfairness or that you can.

2. Define the unfairness as *awful* or to define it as merely bad.

3. Think I *must not* treat you in an unfair manner or to think it *preferable* that I not treat you this way;

4. Judge me as a thoroughly horrible person or to judge me as a person who has acted unfairly toward you in this particular respect.

If you will challenge and debate your hypotheses that you have little or no choice but to feel that you *can't stand* my treating you badly and that you *can't stand* it because you find it *too* bad and that it *shouldn't* be so bad—if you will challenge this, then you will do something effective about surrendering these Irrational Beliefs.

Let us now go on to debate your next IB: "Dr. Ellis *should not, must not* treat me unfairly!" You can Dispute this IB as follows: "Granted that Ellis has dealt with me unfairly and that most people in our society would agree that he has, why *must* he not abuse me in this unfair manner?" If we approach this question from the point of social morality, one might say that if the people in general ignored the *oughts* and *shoulds* of its social, moral, and ethical standards, their society could not survive as a civilized unit. Yet morality doesn't actually determine what *ought* or *should* exist; it merely establishes guidelines with regard to either right or wrong. In other words, civilized morality states that one *had better* act "properly" rather than "improperly" and goes on to say that otherwise bad results will accrue. If bad results occur by someone's actions, the members of a society may feel impelled—because of civilized morality—to penalize the transgressor in order to encourage him to act otherwise in the future.

To avoid quibbling, let us clearly define the difference between "had better" act as opposed to "ought to" act in a certain manner. The statement "You *had better* act in a certain manner in order to bring about good social results" has as its follow-up statement, "If you do not act in such a manner, your community, members of your society, will decide that poor results have occurred and that you and their society will suffer." This statement seems realistic since we can observe right and wrong acts and discover whether they really do lead to good or bad results for you and your community. We can check this by consulting impartial observers.

However, the statement, "You *ought to* act rightly to get good results," implies the following hypotheses: "If you do not do what you *ought* to do . . .

1. " . . . poor results must occur for you and for everyone in your society."

2. " . . . some universal law commands that you deserve to get bad results and necessitates that dire things will happen."

3. " . . . you are a totally bad person."

4. " . . . you cannot possibly accept yourself and strive for real happiness in life."

The first of these propositions ("If you do not do what you ought to do, poor results must occur for you and for everyone in your society") seems highly

exaggerated, for if you act wrongly, it would seem most unlikely that you and everyone in your society would suffer. The second and third propositions are overgeneralizations and unfalsifiable and unverifiable. And the fourth proposition again is false, since some people manage to accept themselves and to strive for (and gain) a good deal of happiness in spite of the fact they behave wrongly or immorally.

Thus, we see that two somewhat similar, yet contradictory, ideas exist here. For when you hold the idea that "People *ought* to treat me, *must* treat me better," you really imply:

1. "I would find it highly preferable if they did treat me better" *and*

2. "Because I would find it preferable, they have to treat me better."

Although the first belief is rational, the second one seems highly irrational. We hold, in REBT, that if you stick with the Rational Belief ("I would find it highly preferable if they did treat me better"), you would merely feel sorry and displeased with the poor treatment you actually received. Yet if you persist, as many people have a tendency to do, in the Irrational Belief ("Because I would find it preferable, they have to treat me better"), you would in all probability end up feeling very angry. Therefore, to minimize your anger, you'd better ask: "Why *must* I (or anyone) be treated fairly at all times?" The rational answer: "Although it would be desirable to be treated fairly at all times and although social rules declare it advisable for people to act fairly to me, no universal law exists that I *must* get treated fairly."

If you agree with the above, you will find that you will feel sorry and disappointed when others treat you unfairly, but you won't feel dysfunctional anger and rage.

Let us once again review the main REBT formula that we have discussed up to this point.

Activating Experience or Adversity (A): I have treated you unfairly by withdrawing from an agreement we have made.

Rational Belief (RB): "I find Dr. Ellis's action deplorable and unfortunate."

Healthy Consequence (HC): feelings of frustration and displeasure.

Irrational Belief (IB): "How awful! He should not, must not treat me in that manner."

Unhealthy Consequence (UC): anger and rage.

Disputing and Debating (D): You detect your IBs and Dispute and

Debate them by asking yourself questions that challenge your interpretations or beliefs regarding my treatment of you.

Effective New Philosophy (E): "I can see no reason why Ellis *must* treat me fairly even though I would definitely prefer it. He can treat me any way he wants, however wrong he may be."

Behavioral Effect (BE): loss of anger, relief, and return to the Healthy Consequence (HC): feelings of sorrow and disappointment.

Until you go through these ABCs and DEs many, many times, until you do them vigorously, strongly, and powerfully, and until you act on them over and over again, you will tend to sink back into your Irrational Beliefs and into your Unhealthy Consequences. Only with continual practice will you minimize your IBs and, even then, never for all time to come. You will often tend to regress into your former habits—as all humans do. You will hardly attain perfection at all times, yet by using the REBT methods you can often use your ability to recognize your IBs and UCs by using the process of Debating and Disputing them as they recur.

In most situations where you feel enraged, you have a human tendency to equate the particular anger-producing action with the person responsible for it. ("He *is* a terrible person to treat me that way!") You give global ratings to individuals because of their actions. We have already discussed this type of reasoning in chapter 3. Yet because of its importance and because it constitutes one of the most difficult of your Irrational Beliefs to debate, we will now briefly review it again.

Your globally rating people and their actions implies that only a *rotten person* can act in a rotten *manner* and that all rotten acts are done by rotten people. Further, and more specifically, it implies that any person who does anything you deem bad or unjust must be a *bad person*. If a good person performs good acts, then he can *never* do anything bad, for he *is* a good person and capable of only good acts. If a bad person performs bad acts, he can *never* do anything good, for he *is* a bad person and can perform only bad acts. This was clearly pointed out in 1933 by Alfred Korzybski in *Science and Sanity*. He called your tendency to make this illogical jump "the *is* of identity" and said that virtually all humans follow it. As noted in chapter 3, Rational Beliefs start with chosen desires or preferences—for instance, "I want to remain alive and achieve happiness"—and they evaluate acts or traits as "good" or "bad" according to how people's behaviors aid or block their chosen desires or goals. They evaluate behaviors as

helpful or unhelpful to *people;* but they do not evaluate or judge people *themselves,* in their "essence" or their "totality." For by making such a global evaluation of *humans,* you overgeneralize and tend to sabotage your survival and happiness.

Is there, then, no such thing as a bad person? REBT holds that no, there are no bad people and, similarly, there are no good people. Although some do more "good" and others do more "bad" deeds, all people do some of both. A human is a *process,* not a *thing* or an *activity*. Your expectation that people act in a certain manner at all times is irrational, for as humans we can never be all good or all bad at all times and in every situation. Keep in mind the multidimensionality of people. Their many acts may make considerable contributions to humanity, and at the same time they may also have many deficiencies. For instance, a man might be a great scientist and his work may be of great benefit, yet in his personal life he may consistently treat others unfairly and unjustly. By avoiding rating people globally, you allow yourself to see their many aspects even though they may on occasion treat you unfairly.

Back to our apartment-sharing illustration. My withdrawal from our agreement may have unfairly harmed you, but if you rate me globally for this, if you make yourself angry with me for this action, you no longer allow yourself to enjoy my qualities that induced you to want to share an apartment with me in the first place. Thus, with your anger, you may cut yourself off from rewarding personal experiences with me (and others) in the future.

Giving global ratings to other people also encourages your human tendency to rate yourself globally, to place the same unrealistic expectations on yourself as you place on others. In this way you seek to gain self-esteem or self-confidence —frequently called ego strength—by living up to these expectations. But even though you may act fairly or justly in many situations, you may also fail to do so from time to time. When this occurs, you tend to feel depressed and self-downing because you have failed to live up to your expectations of yourself. Self-confidence includes and always leaves you on the brink of self-deprecation. Self-esteem leads to self-downing. Ego strength involves incipient loss of ego. You don't normally have self-esteem without self-disesteem. Just as you begin to like yourself because you do the right, good, or fine thing, you also begin to hate or deprecate yourself because you do the wrong, bad, or even ordinary thing. Self-esteem, if you feel it, requires continual booster shots, and the only real and effective booster seems to consist of more good deeds, more high ratings for your traits. If you give global ratings to yourself or others, you will feel forced to change your estimations of you and them continually. However, if you stick to rating only your behaviors, you will remain far less confused and

more consistent in your rating the effectiveness of what you think, feel, and do.

In REBT we consider virtually all *anger at a person* unhealthy. If you feel angry about my act of unfairness, you at worst consider it very bad and think that *I'd better* change it for the trait of fairness. That seems rational because as long as I act unfairly, I will needlessly hurt you and others, and you, they, and even I would find it preferable to avoid that. You could, of course, consider my unfairness *awful*, meaning totally—or 100 percent—bad, but that would be irrational since you would then exaggerate. As long as you stick to thinking of my unfairness as highly undesirable and as long as you stick to hating *it*, we can call you healthfully angry. We can define healthy anger as extreme annoyance, irritation, frustration, pique, or displeasure at my unfair acts. Your healthy anger leads to determination to stay away from me because of my misdeeds, and possibly your *attempt* to get me to change, to act more fairly. All these reactions seem quite sensible. But if you view my unfairness as awful or totally bad, and you also view *me* as bad for acting unfairly, you exaggerate or create unrealistic thinking—and may feel anger, resentment, rage, fury, and wrath about me *and* my behavior.

Theoretically, you could acknowledge your anger and feel healthily angry with me for my unfairness. But the vast majority of the time that you feel angry, you think that because you don't like my behavior, it absolutely *must not* exist, that I who created it *should not* have acted the way I did, that you find it awful that I acted unfairly, and that I am a *bad person*.

You can feel extremely annoyed and displeased and may call those feelings healthy anger. The trouble with doing so arises from your tendency to refuse to face your feelings of "real" or dysfunctional anger and to insist that you merely feel annoyed when you truly feel very angry. So I personally prefer to think of practically all emotions of anger as unhealthy and self-defeating, even though I acknowledge that you may prefer to label some of them as "healthy." I fully acknowledge that whenever I honestly feel "angry" I not only *want* people to act well but also *demand* or *command* that they do so. If you can feel "angry" without such a demand or command, fine—you can then say that you feel "healthy anger." But for the sake of clarity and finer discrimination, I would prefer to label your "healthy anger" as "strong annoyance" or "profound irritation" at other people's *behaviors*.

I have said that if you rate my deeds, such as my fairness to you and others, as good, this may be accurate and rational, but that if you rate *me* as good for acting well, you are being inaccurate and irrational. You tend to help me raise my self-esteem by rating me as "good." But then I also will tend to put myself down when you rate my traits and me as "bad." Global rating rarely works, since all

humans possess a number of faults no matter how many good qualities they may have. For even if I always acted fairly to you and others, I wouldn't always do everything else well. No human does. So your esteeming me as *a person* because I act good is not practical in this world of exceptionally fallible humans.

You and I had better avoid the idea of self-esteem and self-confidence. If I esteem myself and see myself as a person who almost invariably does good and wins the plaudits of others, I also will strongly tend to castigate myself when I do bad. As we agreed, I will do bad on many occasions. Moreover, when I feel self-disrespect, lack of confidence, or low self-esteem, I almost automatically will assume not merely that I have certain disabilities and deficiencies, but that I *have* to continue to have them. For if I am no good or worthless for treating you and others unfairly, then how can a rotten me, an individual whose essence consists of worthlessness, change and behave better in the future? If I see myself as an unfair person, won't I predict that I will keep acting unfairly and probably fulfill my own prophecy? Self-esteem and its concomitant, self-downing, practically never steadily work. Therefore, using self-esteem to help myself feel better about my acts won't produce very good or lasting results. If this seems true, for what purpose should I rate myself?

When I say of myself, "I am a good person, and I really like my goodness. I would be a worthless person without it," I mean that I like myself *because* I act good and would dislike or down myself if I acted bad. Besides the disadvantages already mentioned, this type of good–bad self-rating has the great disadvantage of keeping me anxious if I do not always live up to the expectations I have imposed on myself. And I imply something still more by the idea of self-esteem: Because I do such good things, act exceptionally good in many respects, I can legitimately see myself as a *better person* than anyone else. You may do good, too, and I view that as fine. But I tend to feel that I can do better, outstandingly better, and qualify as a *really* good person. I have to show everyone, including myself, that I am a *better* human. What we call self-esteem, then, often amounts to grandiosity, when we think of ourselves as better or more worthy than other people.

One of our primary purposes in self-rating is that we try to show not only that we are human (which is true, no matter what we do) but also that we are superhuman, or superior to all other humans. When we say, "I have self-esteem," we really say that we are nearly perfect, godlike, and noble. We don't merely mean that our *traits* are superior to those of others; we actually mean that our essence is better than that of others. We may also mean that if we don't excel over other humans and become universally acknowledged as superior, we have little or no value.

I have always found it interesting that when people do something poorly, they not only see themselves as pretty worthless individuals, but also tend to accept and forgive others, very often, for exactly the same deficiency. For example, if someone writes a poor essay, he may often, upon realizing the poor quality of the work, view himself as a total failure who can never write well. Yet if someone else were to write something equally poor, he would tend to forgive the other person's deficiency. People tend to feel far more self-critical than critical of others because they demand almost perfect behavior of themselves.

If you encounter an excellent writer—far more skilled than yourself—you may feel so resentful and intimidated by the other's success that you can neither appreciate nor learn from his skills. For this would involve admitting that person's superiority insofar as writing. Having accepted your own inferior writing ability, you would most likely automatically surrender your total self-worth. For these and many other reasons, you'd better wisely avoid attempting to rate either yourself or others by any one of their good or bad traits. It can lead mainly to self-defeat.

I do not question here the idea of evaluating and judging specific traits and characteristics in yourself and others. You may passionately like or dislike anything you choose. I stress the idea of carrying your judgment of a trait into other areas of a person's total makeup. I would suggest that your wisest approach is evaluating each trait individually and comparing all these traits—both those that you find appealing and those that you find distasteful. With this overview, you can then decide whether you had better avoid or seek out a particular person. But not to damn or worship him or her!

If you see that person's bad as well as good traits, you can *accept* her with distasteful characteristics. In every individual you will find disagreeable acts and traits. You may, of course, attempt to help someone alter her "bad" traits, but you'd better not make that change necessary to continuing the relationship: for often you will find a person's deficiencies unchangeable. Until you readily accept that people have a combination of good and bad characteristics you will find it difficult and frustrating to enter into any kind of honest close relationship with another.

If we can accept fallibility in ourselves and in others, we will no longer demand that a person *should* or *must* act in a specific manner at all times. We will no longer insist on perfection and will no longer find imperfection intolerable. We will be more appreciative of our own qualities and those of others. This more realistic attitude will also better enable us to live happy and productive lives.

While you may often find it difficult to tolerate negative aspects of your

intimates, you also do not want to live without those same people and their traits that you enjoy. The illustration of the apartment-sharing agreement serves as a good example of this situation, too, for you discover that you have to live without something that you wanted very much but that you could not have. If you would face your loss rationally—and not demand that I, who broke the agreement with you, feel guilty or inferior—you could perhaps at some time in the future again agree to carry out our agreement. Granted, a while may have to pass before this would occur, but if you act rationally during the difficult period of our relationship, we could have an excellent chance to resolve our difficulties.

In using the REBT approach to the problem of rage, you uniquely concentrate on changing yourself, rather than changing me. This frees you from the self-disturbing that accompanies anger, anxiety, and depression. Instead of expending time, thought, and energy on me and my "rottenness," you use your strength to get what you want from me as quickly and as easily as possible. Rage will only bring you further unpleasantness, such as feuding with me.

The REBT method encourages your independence and helps you realize your potential as a human while teaching you to accept your shortcomings without creating feelings of worthlessness. By reducing unhealthy attitudes about yourself and others, you can come to realistic views. You live in a rough world; and if you expect to get the important things that you want, you had better prepare to deal with its situations and people in a hardheaded manner.

With REBT tools, you will find yourself well equipped to live happily and sanely—to unupsettedly confront the daily frustrations that often plague your life. You can also cope better with situations and people or conditions that block your goals. To achieve such an outlook seems well worth the effort that the REBT method requires.

8

Some Methods of Feeling Your Way out of Anger

In this chapter we shall discuss some of the emotive methods used in REBT to overcome your anger. By "emotive" I mean a forceful, hard-hitting, sometimes dramatic way of interrupting and changing your anger and a method that focuses on your "feelings" or "desires"—which invariably include "thoughts" and "actions" but which we can somewhat arbitrarily describe in their own right. "Behavioral" methods, which we consider in the next chapter, may overlap with "emotive" methods but tend to stress "actions" rather than "feelings."

The first and perhaps most important of the emotive methods of overcoming anger is unconditional self-acceptance or self-respect. This includes the strong resolve to accept yourself fully, no matter what you may do, including making yourself angry.

If you were to come to me, an REBT therapist, and tell me that you keep angering yourself, I would try to show you—by my attitudes and behavior toward you—a model of what REBT calls unconditional other-acceptance (UOA). I would agree with you about the disadvantages of your anger, but I would accept you as a human *with* your wrong behavior and would not in any way put you down for having it. My unconditionally accepting you, as Carl Rogers pointed out, with bad behavior may well enable you to accept yourself and to have more time and energy available to change that behavior. Of course, others don't always accept you. But even if almost everyone tends to severely criticize you for your feelings and behavior, you can still accept yourself fully. For if you take the criticisms of others to heart, if you *agree* with them that you are a worthless person because of your poor actions, you *choose* to agree with their notions. You could, instead, listen to these people, fully acknowledge their negative opinions about you and your actions, and then only see your *behavior* as inappropriate, but not that you are a *bad person* for having such behavior. You then would *decide* to disagree with them. (If you can decide to *agree* with others' globally downing you for your anger, you can also decide to *disagree* with them.) If you already tend to down yourself without much influence from others for your unhealthy feelings and actions, you can decide not to agree with your own self-downing attitudes. You can decide to accept yourself with your anger while acknowledging it as a fault that you would like to amend. This strong decision amounts to an emotive method of self-choosing.

The more decisively, the more strongly and firmly you determine to accept yourself and to refuse to down yourself *at all*, no matter what you do in life, the more you will *feel* self-accepting. You accept yourself, as George Herbert Mead and Harry Stack Sullivan pointed out, by hearing other people's positive appraisals of you and adopting them as your own. You can also be self-accepting by figuring out for yourself that you can have that feeling, no matter what, and by firmly deciding, *choosing* to accept yourself even though you may hold some emotions (such as anger) that you wish to alter. The next step involves your working continually at *maintaining* your feeling of self-acceptance. We believe an idea strongly not merely because certain people keep repeating it to us but also because we consciously or unconsciously repeat it to ourselves over and over.

Even if you have a physiologically biased idea—such as the notion that cake tastes good and meat tastes bad—you keep repeating this idea to yourself many times. Especially when you eat cake, you tell yourself how good it is and how much better it is than steak. Unaware or semiconsciously, we put a good deal of effort into endorsing one idea ("Cake tastes great!") and "verifying" an opposing idea ("Steak tastes rotten!"). Out of this kind of perpetual work and practice comes your strong—and highly emotive—conviction about the relative merits of cake and steak.

Similarly, you can practice fully accepting yourself with your anger, and the more often and more strongly you work toward this acceptance, the better you will feel about yourself. In REBT we assume that anger does you more harm than good and that knowing this, you would prefer to minimize it. We view surrendering your IBs as an important part of minimizing anger and enjoying a happier life. At the same time we stress the importance of fully accepting yourself and of repeating to yourself unconditional acceptance.

Another emotive technique consists of Rational Emotive Imagery (REI), formulated in 1971 by Dr. Maxie C. Maultsby Jr., a rational-behavior psychiatrist. I have adapted it as follows: First, you imagine a negative event that normally leads to your feeling angry. Vividly and intensely imagine, for example, that I not only refuse to share the apartment with you and unjustly withdraw from our agreement, but that I also deny I ever made such an agreement with you. I strongly assert that you fabricated the whole story in an attempt to make me into a bad guy.

Now imagine this negative experience and let it evoke intense feelings of anger and rage. Let yourself feel enraged at me, both for going back on my word and for denying we had ever made such an apartment-sharing agreement. Rather than avoid these angry feelings, let them erupt with their fullest intensity; let

yourself fully experience them for a few minutes.

After you have really and truly experienced your rage for a while, push yourself—really try to push yourself—to change these feelings. Use what you have learned from REBT and work through the ABCs step by step. If you feel anger, don't think that you can't change this feeling by talking to yourself. You can. You can change it at almost any time by working at doing so: by getting in touch with your gut-level feeling of anger and by pushing yourself to change so that you experience different and more healthy feelings, such as keen disappointment and irritation at my behavior. You definitely have the ability to make this emotional change. So give it a sincere try; concentrate and do it.

After you have pushed yourself to feel the Healthy Consequences of keen disappointment and irritation rather than your dysfunctional feelings of anger, take a careful look at what you have done to make these changes and try to retrace or recapture the exact steps of your mental process. You will note that you have in some manner changed your Belief System at point B, and thereby changed your Emotional Consequences at C. You may produce this change by telling yourself, "Oh, well, I'll never like Ellis's denying we ever had our agreement, but he definitely has the right, as a fallible human being, to act in that obnoxious manner." Or, "He really has inconvenienced me greatly by his unfair behavior, but my world won't come to an end because of that inconvenience. How annoying! But I don't have to view it as all that bad."

Let yourself clearly see what you have done by carefully and closely examining what important changes in your Belief System you have made. Make yourself fully aware of the new Rational Beliefs (RBs) that create your new Healthy Consequences (HCs) regarding the unpleasant A—my acting unfairly to you and then denying my unfairness.

If your angry feelings do not change as you attempt to change them, don't give up. Keep fantasizing the same unpleasant experiences or events and keep working at your emotions until you do change them from unhealthy to healthy negative feelings. You create and control your feelings, and you *can* change them.

Once you succeed in feeling disappointed or irritated rather than angry and once you see exactly what beliefs you have changed in your head to make yourself feel disappointed but not emotionally disturbed, keep repeating the process. Make yourself feel angry; then make yourself feel disappointed and annoyed but not angry; then look again at exactly what you did to bring about these changes. Keep practicing by doing this over and over again until the process becomes familiar and increasingly less difficult to carry out.

If you keep practicing Rational Emotive Imagery (REI) for a few minutes

every day for several weeks, you will reach a point where whenever you think of an event about which you would normally make yourself angry, you will tend automatically to feel disappointed and annoyed rather than enraged.

If you have trouble practicing REI every day, you can reinforce or motivate yourself by rewarding yourself after you use it with some personal indulgence that you particularly enjoy. On days when you fail to do your REI exercise, you can deny yourself something you like or penalize yourself by doing some task you find distasteful.

I have rarely met an individual who could not keep practicing REI to reduce anger. Over the past years I have taught hundreds of people this method, and those who actually and sincerely worked at it have in most cases been able significantly to reduce their tendencies to anger themselves at many situations.

You can also employ REI methods to create pleasurable feelings about someone, which will distract you and overcome your hostile feelings. R. W. Ramsay, a cognitive-behavior therapist at the University of Amsterdam, has done some experiments and has worked with a technique he calls emotional training. As applied to anger, you can adapt his emotional training as follows:

Think of an intensely pleasant experience you have had with the person with whom you now feel angry. When you have fantasized such a pleasant experience and have actually given yourself unusually intensely warm feelings toward that person, continue the process. Recall pleasant experiences and good feelings, and use them to overcome your angry feelings.

Rational Emotive Imagery and pleasurable self-training use the same principle of anger indoctrination that originally contributed to the formation of your IBs. Left to your own devices, you not only create anger toward others but also keep practicing and practicing these feelings until they “naturally” arise again. You may not be consciously aware of it, but you do this kind of practicing with regard to your unhealthy negative emotions. By the same token, then, you can deliberately practice achieving healthy negative emotions, as you do in REI, or you can deliberately practice positive or pleasurable emotions, as in Ramsay’s emotional training technique. If you actively use these methods, they can help you achieve feelings other than anger.

REBT uses my famous *shame-attacking* and *risk-taking exercises* to help you overcome feelings of self-downing, but you can employ them to reduce anger as well. When I invented these exercises, I realized that most people upset themselves by making themselves feel ashamed: ashamed of doing something wrong and ashamed of others’ witnessing their wrongdoing and thinking badly of them. In the shame-attacking exercise I try to get my clients to do things that they consider “risky,” “shameful,” “embarrassing,” or “humiliating,” such as

telling strangers that they have just been released from a mental institution, yelling out the time of day in public, or wearing outlandish clothing. They then can see that these "shameful" acts really don't make them feel embarrassed or lead to self-downing unless they themselves decide to feel that way. They can also see that the shameful acts do not cause as much concern in the minds of others as the potentially "shamed" think they will; that others quickly forget about these acts, rarely concern themselves much with them. If you feel terribly ashamed or embarrassed by various harmless acts—like singing in public—you, too, can try a few of them until you see that not only can you bear to do them, but you can also learn much by performing them and can even come to enjoy them.

At times we cover up feelings of shame or embarrassment with those of anger. You can use the same method described above to practice feeling neither shame nor anger. For example, suppose a waiter in a high-class restaurant gives you poor service and you feel ashamed to bring it to his attention or to complain about it—for fear he will treat you with disdain or, perhaps, make some disparaging remarks about you. Force yourself, under such conditions, to speak to the waiter about the poor service and even ask him to do something you normally wouldn't: replace your soup, for instance, which you find too cold, with warmer soup. By doing this, you will see that your "shameful" act really has no intrinsic "shamefulness." As you do it, also try to get yourself to feel that the waiter has his own human fallibility and that once you express your displeasure with his behavior, you do not have to condemn him for behaving badly.

Similarly, if you tend to feel hostile toward people who act unfriendly to you, go out of your way "shamefully" to encounter some of them: Horn in on a conversation they are having with someone else, or insist that you have met them before when you really haven't. By working against your shame in this connection, you will probably see that you may invent some of people's unfriendliness as a protection against your "shamefully" encountering them and that, in reality, they don't feel very hostile or unfriendly toward you.

Risk-taking and shame-attacking exercises are assertive behaviors. This brings us to regular assertion training, which REBT has used since its inception and which is an excellent way to tone down feelings of anger. For just as anger frequently covers up feelings of shame, it also stems from deep-seated feelings of unassertiveness. You would like, for example, to say no to a friend's request that you have no desire to fulfill, yet you don't feel comfortable about asserting yourself. Perhaps you fear being rejected if you say no, so you withhold your feelings and go along with your friend's wishes. Because you act unassertively,

you can easily begin to hate yourself for acting so weakly and to hate your friend for manipulating you into doing something you don't want to do.

If unassertiveness leads to hostility, you may often resolve your anger by training yourself to act more assertively. Thus, if you firmly keep refusing to "go along" with individuals who try to get you to do so, you will not act weakly, you will have no reason to condemn your behavior or yourself for it, and you will not condemn others for "forcing" you to do what you do not want to do.

Assertion training, though it falls under behavioral methods of combating anger (which we will consider in the next chapter), also can be done emotively when you strongly desire to act assertively and fail to do so. If you sincerely want to say no to someone but hesitate because you fear rejection, you might try forcing yourself to say it until you "naturally" feel good saying it and can easily say it again and again. Your practicing such assertiveness training is an evocative-emotive procedure.

Forcing yourself to behave differently from the way you usually do comprises the main emotive element here. As I keep noting, "emotional" thinking and "emotional" activity are strong, forceful behaviors. When emotional, you very much want (or "need") things to go or not go in a certain way, and you feel highly motivated to get what you want. Emotionally, you move *powerfully* toward or away from various people and conditions. Forcing yourself to change your behavior (especially when you have trouble doing so) is an emotive, dramatic way of self-modification. Assertion training frequently is this kind of forcing.

In REBT we have always employed some of the role-playing and behavioral-rehearsal techniques originally created by J. L. Moreno and then adapted by Fritz Perls and other Gestalt therapists. Whereas Moreno, Perls, and others tend to use these techniques largely for abreactive purposes—that is, for the reliving of early emotional experiences and for cathartic release—we tend to use them in more behavioral ways, as espoused by behavior therapists.

Suppose, for example, that you want to tell someone off about something you dislike without raging, and you have trouble doing so. As your therapist, I might get you to try to express the feelings you have about this situation. You might then role play yourself, and another person (or myself) might role play the part of the individual whom you wish to confront. You would first tell exactly how you feel about the circumstances, perhaps trying to express yourself as honestly as possible. Then I and other onlookers (such as the members of your therapy group) would give a critique of your presentation, commenting on whether you spoke (1) too hesitantly; (2) too angrily instead of assertively; (3) quite appropriately. If you did well, we might ask you to repeat the performance

several times, merely to rehearse it and get you used to it. If you did poorly, we might ask you to try doing it again in different ways, until you seemed to express yourself not only the way you felt but also in the way that would most likely bring you the results you wanted.

When alone, you can do this kind of role playing or emotive acting out in your head, in front of a mirror, or with the use of an audio recorder. Or you can do it with the help of a friend or a group of friends. It does not require a therapist or a therapy group, though often you will find such a setting useful.

You can employ REBT-type role playing, either with yourself or with others, not merely to express yourself and your feelings or to let off steam, but also to show yourself that you really create your own angry feelings and that you have much better choices. Many kinds of psychotherapies believe that if you feel angry at someone, you have to let out this anger before you can deal with the situation sensibly. They encourage you to scream or yell loudly at someone, pound pillows (which may represent the person you wish to strike), or otherwise "let yourself feel" your anger.

Considerable clinical evidence indicates, however, that the more you take out your anger this way, the angrier you tend to become. REBT offers a good explanation for this occurrence. If you, for example, deliberately insult someone who has done something "wrong" to you or if you pound on a pillow that represents that person, you in all probability tell yourself something like, "He really did treat me unfairly and I hate him. He *absolutely should not* have acted that way toward me, and I really hope that he gets punished for treating me so badly!"

As you release your feelings in this way, you will "confirm" your Irrational Beliefs about the person you think has abused you. He has acted 100 percent wrongly; he had no right whatsoever to make such mistakes; he is a *rotten person* for acting in that way; he deserves to be punished. Perhaps after you release your hostility in this active manner, you will go back and review what actually happened and somewhat forgive the other person for his "awful" acts. More than likely, however, your expressed hostility will serve only to help you exacerbate the "terribleness" of these acts and make you feel, for the present and the future, even angrier.

Some people, after physically or verbally expressing their hostility to others (or to the world), see how much they keep making a mountain out of a molehill, and then calm down and feel only disappointed and sorry about the way others treat them. But the majority of people seem to "confirm" their irrational view that others *shouldn't* act badly toward them and that bad acts mean the entire person is bad. Ironically, the more these people "release," "ventilate," or

"abreact" their anger, the angrier they feel, and the more likely they will tend to make themselves angry again at other unfairness. So although occasionally in REBT we help some people express their pent-up feelings of anger (for example, by encouraging them to tell someone off in one of our group therapy sessions), and although we help them show their feelings of annoyance or displeasure at the behavior of other people, we almost always try to help them see that they really create their own feelings of anger and that they have much better choices.

REBT emphasizes that when you feel others treat you unfairly, you had better acknowledge your feelings of anger, if you have them, admit that you largely create these feelings, and surrender the shoulds and musts with which you create these unhealthy feelings. In this way you can end up feeling very disappointed and sorry rather than angry, and you can perhaps choose to express these healthy feelings instead of choosing to express your unhealthy hostile feelings. Many research and clinical studies have been done reviewing the psychoanalytic hypothesis that letting your anger directly out, either verbally or actively, will reduce your rage. Almost all these studies show that this idea is largely a myth. Among scholars who have reviewed the results of these studies are B. J. Bushman and R. F. Baumeister, *Harvard Mental Health Newsletter,* Howard Kassinove, and Carol Tavris.

REBT by no means objects to your having intense feelings, including negative ones, but it encourages you fully to acknowledge, get in touch with, and stop denying such feelings. It shows you how to discriminate healthy feelings of annoyance and displeasure from unhealthy feelings of rage. REBT teaches you how to keep the former and how to change the latter. It gives you a choice about whether—and how—you express your feelings to others. No matter how you feel, you'd better honestly recognize your feelings. But recognize doesn't necessarily mean endorse. Nor does it mean express. Some of your authentic feelings you can fully endorse and had better express. But not all of them!

9

Some Methods of Acting Your Way out of Anger Like enjoyment or pleasure, emotional disturbance—as noted long before modern psychotherapy came into existence—has a strong habituating component. This habituating tendency works more or less automatically and unconsciously and plays a large and important part in disturbed thinking, emoting, and behaving. We can explain this compulsion to repeat your anger as follows: People probably first began to treat you unfairly during your early childhood when you almost completely depended on others for the gratification of your urges. You probably thought something like: "They must not treat me that unfairly!" Having made this statement to yourself, you might have made yourself feel angry and lashed back at unjust people. But over a period of time, as you "practiced" this irrational belief, you swiftly, easily, and automatically began to make this idea—that you must receive only "fair" treatment and that others must not treat you in any other manner—part of your basic philosophy. So now, as this thought habitually and automatically occurs, you "practice" feeling very angry and lash back at people whom you think angered you.

Your thinking, your feeling, and your activity—the whole complex of your anger—therefore are immediate, reflexive, habituated responses. After a while you began merely to perceive that as soon as anyone treated you unfairly, you instantaneously felt angry and you then lashed back at an unfair person. Then you probably concluded—mistakenly—"The act of this individual's treating me unjustly automatically makes me angry." Actually, you habitually made *yourself angry*.

Although we allow our unconscious habituation tendencies to take over many of our originally conscious activities, we never entirely eliminate the cognitive elements directing our thinking and behavior. When we do well at something, we normally have an underlying philosophy, "I want to do well at this activity and will try to do it as well as I can." When we have poor responses to something, such as quickly and instantly making ourselves enraged at another's unfair behavior, we also seem to have an underlying philosophy, this time an absolutistic *should* or *must* attitude that sabotages our desire to do well and creates our self-defeating behavior.

Perhaps uniquely among major psychotherapies and self-help procedures,

REBT fully recognizes that we can and do have conscious and unconscious ideas behind our "automatic" or habituated feelings and actions. It shows you how to look for and identify and then dispute and significantly change your philosophies that do not seem to work best for you—notably, your irrational philosophies. But it also acknowledges the enormous influence and power that habituated, "practiced" behavior has on thoughts and feelings. REBT's behavioral homework assignments try to harness and use that power constructively.

For instance, if you keep having a difficult time learning to play tennis because you feel inferior and put yourself down for not making any progress at mastering the game, you can—in spite of your negative attitudes—force yourself to play daily. Although your self-defeating views and self-downing feelings will interfere with your learning to play well quickly, they may not interfere with your learning to the point where you won't be able to play the game at all.

Despite your feelings and your inhibiting tendencies, you can persist at practicing playing. As you do so, you ultimately play tennis better, and finally you begin to play well. At that point in your progression you realize: "I thought I could never play tennis even adequately, but I now see that I can play fairly well. I still will not always play perfectly, but I see that I can play well enough."

By forcing yourself—in spite of your self-downing attitudes and your inhibitory behavior—to keep practicing tennis, you can actually affect your negative attitudes and thereby give up your self-downing about playing tennis. You can probably do this more swiftly and thoroughly if you also look at and dispute your Irrational Beliefs. But just as your beliefs influence your behavior, your behavior also influences your beliefs. You therefore have a choice of working on changing both your beliefs and your behavior or of changing either one to help you change the other. REBT encourages you to make both these choices. It not only uses highly cognitive and emotive methods (that largely involve changing attitudes and feelings), but also tries to get you to employ a number of active-directive, behavioral methods (that mainly involve changing overt actions). An important form of treatment, one in which REBT has pioneered extensively, consists of active, *in vivo* (in your own life) homework assignments. This means that we give almost all our regular clients—and we can teach people like you to give yourself—steady homework assignments to assist them in overcoming various emotional problems.

Using our illustration, let us assume that you feel angry with me for withdrawing from our agreement and that you seek help from an REBT therapist. Your first homework assignment might consist of your maintaining contact with me while you keep working through your problems of anger. For if you immediately break off this contact because you are angry toward me, your

withdrawal is something of a cop-out.

Your goal need not merely include your efficiently stopping me from treating you unfairly again—which you could nicely do if you discontinued your relationship with me—but also can include getting yourself to feel only healthily disappointed or annoyed with my unfairness. If you stop contacting me, you may decrease your anger at me for the wrong reasons—because you are not around me. You will have done little to improve your own behavior and feelings. Thus, if you cease to feel angry at me because you forget about me and what I have done, what kind of change have you made? You will still, presumably, maintain the same philosophy as before. You merely won't activate that philosophy because you don't presently have any Activating Event in which you will employ it. This amounts to something like your angering yourself immensely because a man steals from you and your then feeling little anger toward him because he does not have the opportunity to steal from you again.

Avoidance of persons and situations does little to alter your anger-creating philosophy. You still have it, and you will continue to use it to enrage yourself whenever unfair experience occurs again. If, however, you take the homework assignment of continuing to stay in some kind of relationship with a man who has treated you unjustly and even perhaps give him an opportunity to repeat his poor treatment, and if you maintain this ongoing contact and *still* don't anger yourself about what he has done to you, then it would appear that you've really worked on, and to a considerable degree changed, some of your irrational, anger-creating beliefs.

Your homework assignment or behavioral project can consist of two parts: first, your behavioral activity itself *(maintaining the contact with an unjust person)*; second, your cognitive activity *(working on your ideas about people and their treatment of you while you continue to participate with them).* I favor homework assignments with both behavioral and cognitive components, because by using this dual approach my clients can personally work through their emotional and behavioral problems simultaneously and use their own thoughts and actions to gain a clearer understanding of the connections among the factors we have been discussing.

In many situations anxiety accompanies anger. You may make yourself angry because you feel anxious about confronting others about their poor and unfair behavior, and by angering yourself you cover up the feeling of helplessness that accompanies anxiety. Thus, you use anger to create the false sense that you are working at doing something about your anxiety.

In vivo homework assignments can help you work out your compound difficulties of anger, anxiety, and depression in several ways. As mentioned, one

way involves staying in an unpleasant or obnoxious situation and working through your disturbed feelings about it. For example, if you felt anxious about confronting me about my unfair treatment, you could force yourself to confront me about a number of my lesser faults. You might mention such things as my failure to meet or call you when I had said that I would or my speaking nastily to you.

You can try another approach to dealing with your feelings of anxiety or self-downing about having your anger. You can force yourself to realize that you have a right, as a human, to have feelings of anger. By acknowledging this shortcoming and deploring your anger but not damning *yourself* for having it, you would gain self-acceptance. In accepting yourself, you would also feel less intimidated about your other feelings, such as anxiety in anger-producing situations. You would then find it far easier to dispute your Irrational Beliefs, for you would allow yourself awareness of them.

Behavioral homework assignments can help you habituate yourself to face "disturbing" experiences and deal with them rationally. You see that you can survive happily in spite of your frustrations. In acquiring the discipline these assignments demand, you tend to increase your frustration tolerance. This greatly helps, since emotional disturbances—anger, anxiety, depression—in part result from frustration intolerance (FI). We often remain anxious about confronting people because we refuse to bear the discomfort that we would temporarily feel if we confronted them. We sometimes make ourselves angry because we refuse to acknowledge the reality of frustrating situations and passively accept them when we cannot easily and quickly remove them. By refusing to tolerate the difficult situations, we may sustain our anger, for through our inability to work through disappointing problems we do not give ourselves the opportunity to change the Irrational Beliefs that they should not exist.

Good activity homework assignments therefore help you stay with and tolerate unpleasant situations until you can effectively change them. The more you do this kind of homework, the more you tend to increase your tolerance for frustration and thereby minimize your tendencies to make yourself angry and depressed.

Joseph Wolpe, a famous behavior therapist, pioneered an effective *systematic desensitization* exercise that you apply through thinking and relaxing rather than through live *(in vivo)* action: Let yourself think of some situation in which you normally would feel very angry. As you picture it, let yourself relax by using any one of a number of techniques, such as yoga, or thinking of pleasant relaxing scenes. As you relax, your rage tends to dissipate. After you have practiced interrupting your anger with relaxing exercises over a period of time, you may

well get to a point where you no longer feel anger in these situations.

Or you can use a hierarchy of "anger-creating" scenes, as Wolpe would again suggest. Write down a series of such scenes, ranging from mildly angering to greatly angering. Begin by picturing the milder type of situation and immediately interrupt your feelings of anger by letting yourself relax. After you no longer feel angry at this situation, go on to picture a more provoking situation and interrupt that one, again by relaxing. By continuing this process of training yourself to interrupt your anger, you establish a gradual sequence of desensitization to these situations. After you have gone through your own hierarchy of mildly, moderately, and intensely angering scenes and have succeeded in relaxing instead of feeling enraged, you will tend to feel desensitized to many kinds of frustrating situations.

Further details of using systematic desensitization combined with relaxation techniques are given in my book *How to Control Your Anger Before It Controls You*, which I authored with Chip Tafrate.

You will find systematic desensitization (SD) somewhat similar to Rational Emotive Imagery (REI), although it has an important difference. SD advocates that you begin with the least provoking situation and gradually work your way up to a more dramatic experience. You have to relax every time you go through the hierarchy of anxiety-creating or anger-inciting scenes that you imagine. REI, on the other hand, asks that you *begin with* the worst possible situation and let it flood your senses. Thus, you actively *force yourself* to change your feeling from an unhealthy one, such as anger, to a healthy one, such as disappointment. You may find both these methods effective.

REBT also makes use of B. F. Skinner's technique of *operant conditioning*. This self-management technique uses the principles of reward and penalization. You reward yourself with a prize (such as food, approval, or a much-sought-after privilege) when you perform a desired behavior; and use a penalty when you do not perform it.

Using penalties, as well as reinforcements or rewards, does not amount to the same thing as damning and putting yourself down for your poor behavior. Let us make a clear distinction between a *penalty* and a *punishment.* If you keep having temper tantrums and you wish to stop having them, for instance, you can legitimately deprive or fine yourself with some kind of penalty. In this case the term *penalize* simply means to deprive yourself of something you consider beneficial or enjoyable in order to help you change your undesirable behavior. To punish yourself, on the other hand, means (1) to penalize yourself in the sense just noted *and* (2) to denigrate yourself as a person for meriting the penalty.

Skinner's work has led to considerable criticism because with operant conditioning you can subtly manipulate people by using reinforcing principles to get them to do many things they don't really want to do. The technique can be abused, especially in controlled environments, such as schools, hospitals, and prisons. As used in REBT and most other forms of behavior therapy, however, operant conditioning mainly takes the form of contingency management or self-control applications. Clients who wish to change their self-defeating behaviors and, particularly, to discipline themselves when they normally have great trouble doing so, agree to carry out assignments and to accept pleasant reinforcements only if they complete their assignments satisfactorily. They also may agree to accept certain penalties if they do not carry out their assignments.

Self-management can also be used by individuals who make contracts with themselves. Writers and artists have for many centuries helped themselves work at their crafts for a minimum period of time each day by allowing themselves to eat, read, or talk to their friends only after they have put in this allotted amount of time. Millions of people have induced themselves to diet, exercise, or do other unpleasant tasks by imposing some stiff penalty on themselves if they do not live up to the contracts they make with themselves.

To apply this principle to our REBT theory, let us say that you have trouble spending time every day working on disputing your Irrational Beliefs and working on your other homework assignments. You know that you can use REBT theory effectively by working amply at it. You can make a contract with yourself, and to make your commitment more formal, you can write your agreement down in very clear terms. As a reward (or reinforcer) for having carried out your homework, you can select any activity or indulgence you particularly enjoy. Each day that you spend the required time disputing and debating your IBs, you can reward yourself. Failure to meet the requirements of your contract will result in a penalty (some activity or thing you find highly distasteful). You may sometimes find it preferable to seek the help of another person to assist you in enforcing this contract. A close friend or associate will often happily assist you, for when people care for you, they enjoy seeing you improve. Also, arranging with a friend to monitor you helps ensure that penalties and rewards are faithfully enforced.

Because people have such a wide range of likes and dislikes, I will not outline specific rewards and penalties. In general, rewards had better be desirable. I would also suggest you select rewards that you can receive immediately upon completing your daily assignments since they will then tend to work more effectively.

Like rewards, devise penalties within reason. Too severe or hard-to-enforce

penalties will not be carried out. Penalties can consist of (1) not getting a reward and (2) depriving yourself of, or interrupting a part of, your daily routine that you enjoy. For instance, if you eat ice cream daily, you can deprive yourself of it on days when you earn a penalty. A penalty can also consist of a burden you impose on yourself in addition to the two mentioned above. Let us say that you generally take a cab or drive yourself to work because of your hatred of public transportation. As a good penalty you can force yourself to use this hated and inconvenient method. This is an effective penalty since you force yourself to put up with it twice: on your way to work and on your way home. A penalty can also add a burden to your daily routine, such as mowing your lawn.

If you wish, you can institute a special reward and penalty system. If you do your homework every day of the week, for instance, you can give yourself a super reward on the weekend—such as going to dinner at a special place. If you haven't kept your agreement, you can impose a special penalty like getting up early on a weekend morning to do some bothersome chore.

Let me reiterate the difference between penalty and punishment. As I tell my clients, you may decide to penalize laboratory animals for going down the wrong pathways in a maze in order to help them discover the right pathways. But you certainly wouldn't scream at or brutalize them if they hadn't responded correctly. You do this essentially, however, when you punish (rather than merely penalize) yourself for inefficient behavior—you put yourself down as a human.

So long as you stay with the idea "I want *to give up my anger,"* you can logically follow it with: "and since I find it so hard to give it up and so difficult to train myself to work against it, I want to find a penalty that will help me work at giving up this anger." If you use this kind of formula, your desire to accept the penalty outweighs your desire to avoid the difficult task of disciplining yourself against your anger. You willingly impose a penalty on yourself in order to overcome your unwillingness to accept the pain of changing your behavior.

When you punish yourself, rather than penalize yourself, however, you really tell yourself, "I *must* give up my anger and make myself more disciplined; if I don't do what I *must* do, I not only will penalize myself, but will also put myself down for not keeping my agreement with myself." The punishing equation includes an absolutistic *must* and a self-downing consequence of that *must*. Many people find it difficult to make the necessary distinction between these two ideas, for they feel that some force in the universe degrades them when they have promised themselves to do something sensible and then have failed to follow through with that promise. REBT tries to help people stop this type of self-flagellation.

REBT also employs a good deal of assertion training (AT), strongly geared to

help people act assertively rather than aggressively. When you assert yourself, you merely seek what you want and avoid what you don't want. However, when you act aggressively, you also add a hostile component to your feelings and behavior: Your belief that others have no right to block you from getting what you want leads you to feeling contemptuous toward them for refusing to give it to you. REBT teaches you how to distinguish assertion and how firmly and persistently to strive for the things you want without hating others, unnecessarily antagonizing them, refusing to compromise, and demanding or commanding that they *must* give you everything you desire.

REBT sets the stage philosophically for your trying to act assertively rather than aggressively and in this respect differs significantly from less discriminating therapies. Once you understand the key REBT principle and fully accept the fact that others do not make you angry but that you have the responsibility for creating your own rage, you can much more effectively perform many assertion training exercises that will help you overcome a good deal of your fury.

Self-assertion involves considerable risk taking: doing what you really want to do; refraining from doing what you really don't want to do. Naturally, other people may feel annoyed by or think disparagingly of you for your assertiveness. Assertiveness therefore entails possible penalties, and you had better consider these before you assert yourself, particularly in some instances where you assert yourself with a supervisor or boss. You may deem the risks you take too high, and thus you may decide not to assert yourself. Deliberately holding back on asserting yourself may at times constitute very rational behavior.

Many of the times when you behave passively, however, you view normal risk taking as being *too* risky because you are overconcerned about gaining the approval of other people. Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy shows you how to risk the disapproval of others in order to allow yourself the freedom of asking for what you want. It helps you first break down your avoidance of risk and then make more overt and assertive moves.

Some common assertive homework assignments that we would encourage you to try if you are using REBT include the following:

Take specific risks

Think of a few things you would like to do but have felt extremely afraid to do and have therefore avoided. Like sending back a poorly cooked dish in a restaurant. Or wearing an article of clothing that looks garish. Or eating a

sandwich when riding a bus or subway train. Or raising your hand in a large audience to ask what the other people in the audience think is a foolish question. Or telling someone important to you that you dislike his behavior, while trying not to put him down for performing badly.

Risk rejection by asking for something

Think of something you really want—such as sex, a special food, a back rub, or going to a movie—something you think will result in refusal if you ask for it. Risk this refusal by specifically asking one of your associates, friends, or relatives for this favor. When refusal has occurred, try to talk the other person into rescinding this refusal. If you don't succeed, try on some other occasion to get what you want.

Risk saying no or refusing something yourself

Pick something that you don't usually want to do but that you often do in order to please others—such as going out to eat, having sex in a certain way, or carrying on a conversation for a long period of time—and deliberately take the risk of refusing to do this. You can at times forcefully refuse, just to make the risk of saying no greater. Or you can nicely but firmly refuse, and persist at refusing, even though the other person keeps trying to get you to do it.

Do something ridiculous or "shameful"

As noted in the previous chapter, you can do some shame-attacking exercises. Think of something you and most other people would think foolish for you to do in public and deliberately do this "shameful" or "embarrassing" thing. Like singing at the top of your lungs in the street. Or walking a banana, as if walking a dog or a cat on a leash. Or wearing a headband with a large yellow feather stuck in it. Or stopping a little old lady and asking if she would help you cross the street.

Deliberately fail at an important task—or act as if you had

Make yourself fail at a task that you normally would not want to let people see

you fail at, and make sure they know about your failure. While playing in a baseball game, for example, deliberately drop a fly ball that practically falls into your hands. During a public speech make yourself stutter for a while. Tell people that you have failed an examination when you have really passed it.

Assert yourself coolly

Many of the proponents of assertion training who swear by the fight-'em-and-assert-yourself school forget that playing it cool often is a better way of getting what you want. Coolly assert that you live for your own enjoyment, and not for helping others. You feel determined to have your way prevail.

As Lois Bird correctly points out in regard to a mate who would get along better with a partner, "I don't care what you feel on a gut level; you don't have to spread it all over the verbal landscape. You can turn it off and talk to (your mate) with your cool intact." She doesn't quite note that this cool behavior makes you more assertive, in many instances, than overtly telling your partner off.

Rehearse resistance to giving in

George Bach and Herb Goldberg advocate a form of rehearsing resistance that consists of your getting together with a partner who makes a request of you and then giving him a reason why you don't want to fulfill this request. Your partner keeps coming up with reasons why you should fill the request, and you keep saying no—giving good reasons for your refusal. This rehearsal continues until you say, "You've convinced me," or your partner says, "I see that I won't succeed in convincing you, so I think we'd better stop."

Courageous confrontation

As noted above, hostility and violence often stem from lack of courage. You refuse to go after what you want and then, hating yourself for your own weakness, you feel angry and combative toward those with whom you have acted weakly. Especially in males, as Sherwyn Woods notes, "violence is a restorative act, attempting to restore masculine self-esteem via aggressive demonstrations of power and strength." When you are violent, you often deny feelings of passivity and dependency that in our society are deemed feminine.

One antidote to this kind of unassertiveness is courageously confronting those with whom you disagree. Certainly, overt conflict may then result, but at least you will get things out in the open, and may resolve them. If, therefore, you will courageously confront those with whom you seriously disagree, your confrontation may well show others that you have relatively little fear, will try to have your side prevail, and deserve consideration and perhaps compromise.

How do you perform this kind of direct confrontation? By showing yourself that you can stand opposition and rudeness and that if others dislike you, you need not dislike yourself. While so doing, you often had better force yourself—yes, force yourself!—to verbally confront your opponents. No matter what the initial pain of so doing, remember that the pain of nonconfrontation generally is much worse—and more prolonged!

Feedback

Robert E. Alberti and Michael E. Emmons, in *Your Perfect Right*, explain in detail how therapists can help their clients, especially their marital counseling clients, by rehearsing with and modeling for them assertive rather than aggressive behavior. You can do this kind of rehearsal by having one of your friends witness and "referee" a mock fight between you and, say, your mate or your boss. Set up a specific scene of conflict; decide with your onlooker exactly what you and your antagonist will do; have your witness critique your role playing; then replay the "drama," getting more feedback and coaching by your onlooker. Do the same role play several times, until you perfect it.

Without an onlooker, you can use an audio recorder or video recorder to "observe" you and your partner during your role playing and can get feedback from the recorded scene to see how you have done and how you can improve. Sometimes you can use the recorder, and sometimes you can use a live witness. At still other times you can have live verbal differences with your partner and then ask one or more onlookers to report back to you what they heard and how they felt about your own and your partner's assertiveness.

Prior preparation

Assertion often consists of preparing yourself in advance to deal with passive aggressors or procrastinators. One of your friends may not ask you to do things you don't want to do but may promise to meet you for appointments and never

show up or consistently turn up late. If so, you then set very precise and active rules, such as "If you don't show up by ten-thirty and I haven't heard from you by phone, I shall go to the movies by myself." In making these rules, make sure that you don't make them idly and that you stick to them.

Clearly distinguish assertion from aggression

Alberti and Emmons make a fine point of clearly distinguishing assertive from aggressive behavior, following some prior leads by Arnold Lazarus and my own writings. As Lazarus and Allen Fay note, "Assertion involves taking a stand, resisting unreasonable demands, or asking for what you want. Aggression involves putting another person down. Assertion is positive, aggression negative." The main differences among unassertive, assertive, and aggressive behavior include the following:

- *Unassertive behavior:* You want something and do not honestly express your want or make any effort to obtain it. You resort to indirect, passive, somewhat dishonest actions. You frequently do not admit to yourself what you really want and don't want. You needlessly inhibit yourself and even deny some of your basic desires. You tend to feel anxious, hurt, and angry.
- *Assertive behavior:* You want something, honestly acknowledge to yourself that you want it, and for the most part try to get it. You act openly with others, but strongly and persistently try to get what you want for yourself. You feel self-interested and self-enhancing. You value other people's values and goals but often prefer your own somewhat to theirs. You are active and expressive.
- *Aggressive behavior:* You feel angry toward others for blocking your goals and often try to do them in rather than to get what you want. You strongly believe that they should not, must not thwart you. You are emotionally honest, but act in an all-for-me and me-for-all way. You express yourself fully—and frequently overdo it. You often feel righteous and superior to others and tend to damn them. You may later feel—or not feel—guilty about your hostility.

If you will see the differences among these three kinds of behavior, and not only think you have a choice between unassertiveness and aggression, you can train yourself, along the lines outlined in this book, to act truly assertively, with responsibility toward yourself and others—as Arthur Lange and Patricia Jakubowski and other REBT-oriented therapists advocate.

Acting assertively

Some of the elements of acting assertively, as outlined by Lange and Jakubowski and by Janet L. Wolfe, include these behaviors:

- When expressing disapproval of, or your desire not to do, something, use a decided no. Don't hedge or leave the decision up to the other person. Don't make yourself defensive or apologetic.
- Speak in an audible, firm voice. Avoid whining and making harsh and accusatory statements.
- Give as prompt and brief a reply as possible, without using long pauses or interruptions.
- Try to have others treat you with fairness and justice and point out when they don't. But don't insist or command!
- When asked to do something you consider unreasonable, ask for an explanation and listen to it carefully. Where appropriate, suggest an alternative act or solution you would prefer.
- Honestly express your feelings without using evasion, attacking the other person, or trying to justify yourself in a defensive manner.
- When expressing displeasure or annoyance, try to tell the other person the aspects of the behavior that you don't like. Don't attack, name-call, or imply that the person deserves damnation!
- Recognize the usefulness of I-messages instead of you-messages, but also note that the former provide no panacea. Joseph Wolpe, one of the pioneers in assertion training, tended to advocate I-messages and the use of anger in the learning of assertiveness. But therapists like Arnold Lazarus and David D. Hewes point out that I-messages, too, can include a great deal of self-defeating rage while appropriate you-messages may not. Thus, if you object to the way a salesman deals with you, you can angrily say, with an I-message, "I get miffed in this kind of setup, when I try to buy a shirt from you and you behave the way you do to me." Or you can nonangrily, with a you-message, say, "You really seem to feel uptight today. No wonder you act this way." Lazarus, thus, with his you-message, includes an understanding of the other person and even a positive reinforcement. So use but don't overvalue I-messages.

Degrees of assertiveness. Marlowe H. Smaby and Armas W. Tamminen note that there are various degrees of assertiveness and that some are appropriate for different kinds of situations or with different partners. Using minimal assertiveness, you merely hold your ground and refuse to let another control you, as when someone tries to horn in on a line ahead of you and you merely point to

the back of the line and indicate that he had better head for it.

Using the next level of being assertive, you recognize another's side of the issue and feelings about it; but without vindictiveness, you solidly hold your ground. Thus, if a friend wants you to lie for him, you say, "I can see how you feel about this and why you want me to do it and how disappointed you will feel if I don't. But I also have strong feelings that I don't want to do this and will possibly get into some kind of trouble. So I wish you wouldn't ask me to do it. In fact, I feel somewhat uneasy about it now that you have asked."

Using a higher-level, bargaining assertiveness, you still firmly hold your ground but also go out of your way to see the other's point of view and find some sort of compromise solution. Thus, you may say to the friend who wants you to lie, "I can see how you feel about this and why you want me to do what you want and how disappointed you will feel if I don't. But I also have strong feelings that I don't want to do this and will possibly get into some kind of trouble, so you can see how I feel about it and why I won't do it. Still, I think I can see another way to help you. I will stick pretty much to the truth but will really go out of my way to get that person to give you a job so that he can see how capable you are. I will recommend that he give it to you even though you may lack the experience he desires."

If you practice these different levels of assertion and use them discriminatingly, you can act the way you want to act and still remain on good terms—even very friendly terms—with others.

If you take these assertive risks within the context of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, you won't feel terribly ashamed by them and you won't down yourself for acting in a way that seems at times foolish. Your goal in REBT doesn't consist of taking social risks or of bucking conventions simply for the sake of doing so. REBT stresses the gains you can make by the mere act of taking these risks. In taking them without worrying too much what other people might think of you, you assert yourself while, at the same time, convincing yourself that nothing *horrible* will happen. Also, you keep learning that you can tolerate the disapproval of others although you may not particularly like it. This enables you to feel that no person, including yourself, can legitimately put you down globally or evaluate you as a rotten person when you perform an unpopular act.

I don't claim that you will automatically surrender all your angry feelings and actions and turn into an individual who feels healthily displeased but never unhealthily enraged when unpleasant things occur. For even if you act appropriately assertive on practically all occasions, you may still remain an injustice collector who not only finds things wrong with others and with the

world, but also whines and screams when such unfair things happen. I do hold that one of the main instigators of your anger lies in your acting passively and unassertively. But I contend that if you practice acting more assertively—while realizing that you do not need the approval of other people who may see you as *too* assertive—you will tend to feel less anger with less frequency than you do presently.

REBT stresses education and, consequently, employs all types of psychoeducational methods, including reading materials, audiovisual aids, charts and diagrams, slogans, and *modeling*. If you saw me as a therapist and presented to me your problem of often angering yourself at people who treat you unfairly or inconsiderately, I would try to act as a model of REBT's antianger philosophy for you. Thus, if you came late to therapy sessions, failed to listen—for whatever reasons—to what I kept saying to you, refused to do your homework assignments, or otherwise showed resistance to changing, I would attempt to *show you that I definitely disliked your behavior but that I did not angrily condemn you for displaying that behavior*.

Not that I would necessarily show complete calm or indifference to such actions. I most probably wouldn't! I take my work as a therapist very seriously, and if you failed to listen, for instance, I would still emphatically try to get you to see your self-defeating philosophies (your IBs) and would try to teach you how to uproot them. I would not angrily condemn you for your inattentiveness.

I would not want you to develop an emotional dependence on me and to change yourself because *I* wanted you to do so. This brings to mind something I discussed earlier in this book. I pointed out that when you openly criticize others for their "outrageous" behavior, you risk their urge to *defend* that same behavior. They would probably not feel the need to hold on to their "outrageous" behavior if you allowed them to reach critical conclusions about it on their own. So with my getting you to change authentically, I would attempt to get you to do so for your own benefit and only incidentally for mine.

To do this, I would act as a good model for you to follow: as someone who could show you more about your irrational behavior (anger) through modeling displeasure at your *behavior* but not anger at *you*.

Assuming, then, that it would be helpful to you for someone to serve as a rational model, the question remains: How could you get this kind of benefit for yourself without actually seeing an REBT therapist? The answer: Find good models in your own life.

Unfortunately, most people whom we encounter hardly fall into this category. In fact, they tend to anger themselves just as often about trivial unfairnesses or injustices as they do important ones. Exceptions, however, do exist—an unusual

friend or teacher, an occasional relative, an associate—people who feel determined to overcome life's unniceties and who actively keep working at doing so.

Talk to these people.

Try to learn from them how they manage to keep reasonably cool in the face of life's annoyances.

Observe them in action. See if you can model some of your own feelings and behaviors after theirs.

Find them in books and other biographical materials, for literature is full of figures who often suffered great frustrations without making themselves unduly angry or upset.

Seek out these rational models and learn about their lives.

Other behavioral methods of working against anger that REBT finds effective follow:

Exposure to hostility

If you have the help of a therapist or therapy group or if you know REBT and attempt to use it with yourself, exposure to hostility, in the course of group therapy or in the course of your regular life, may help you. This does not mean that the hostility *itself* changes you, for it frequently serves as a bad model. But your practicing *coping* with this hostility, especially under therapeutic supervision, may help you handle yourself more effectively as you begin to look closer at and understand the nature of your hostility. As mentioned earlier, taking yourself out of a situation merely leaves the problem in a latent state, unsolved.

Constructive activities

As Andrew S. Wachtel and Martha Penn Davis and other researchers have indicated, individuals tend to feel alienated, anonymous, and impersonal. If such individuals can experience devotion to some highly constructive group or cause, they may divert themselves from, first, their sense of alienation and anonymity, and then some of their anger.

Early conditioning

Victor H. Denenberg and M. J. Zarrow did a series of fascinating experiments

involving newborn mice, raised in one group by rats, in another—control—group by mice. They found "the mice reared by rats were heavier than the mouse-raised control mice; they also were less active in the open field and preferred to spend time near a rat instead of near a mouse. Our most dramatic finding was that the rat-reared mice would *not* fight when placed in a standard fighting-box situation . . ." This contrasted with the occurrence of a great many fights among control mice reared by mouse mothers, thus showing that the "natural" tendency of mice to fight can be significantly altered when they are "unnaturally" reared.

Other experimenters have found that mice raised in close proximity to dogs or cats will not later be attacked by these natural "enemies," while mice raised without this contact will suffer attack. Denenberg and Zarrow note that "we must therefore reject any hypothesis that states that aggression is a genetically determined, instinctive response that cannot be modified by experience.... This is not to suggest that genetic factors are not important. It is obvious that they are. What we are saying is that *both the genetic background and the environment in which those genes grow and develop must be considered* jointly *if we are to advance our understanding of behavior patterns."*

If we apply this information to the human condition, people subjected to early conditioning designed to lessen their anger may decrease some of their biological tendencies to act angry and violent. Naturally, you can now do little about your own childhood, but you can give some thought, if you have children, to helping condition them to act less hostile.

Diversionary measures

As noted above, constructive action may serve as a good diversion to hostility, and so may less constructive behaviors. Norman Zinberg, following the ideas of William James and Sigmund Freud, wonders whether some kinds of competitive and semidestructive activities, such as organized sports and politics, can successfully help to sublimate anger more than other kinds of activities, such as private enterprise. No one as yet truly knows, but the *REBT position assumes that highly aggressive pursuits, such as dog-eat-dog industrial competition and prizefighting, help make humans more rather than less hostile.*

Robert Barton and Paul Bell found that mild degrees of sexual arousal served to inhibit subsequent physical aggression in experimental subjects. The use of reciprocal inhibition as a diversionary measure also tends to reduce feelings of anger. From the evidence available, *it would appear that all kinds of enjoyable,*

constructive, and even neutral diversions can serve to interfere with and at least temporarily to ease hostility. Consequently, if you want to control your own angry feelings, you can consider using such distractions to help train yourself so that ultimately you will permanently tend to feel less enraged when confronted with obnoxious stimuli. As diversions, you can use thoughts, fantasies, games, activities, emotional involvements, pleasures, or any number of other activities. Discover what particularly works for you in this regard.

Coping procedures

One of the main factors that seems to help almost all disturbed emotional reactions consists of your engaging, and knowing full well that you engage, in effective coping procedures. Richard Pisano and Stuart P. Taylor, for example, found that forty individuals who had records as high aggressors against others reduced their aggressiveness not when they received punishment for aggressing or when given money for not aggressing, but when allowed to give equal punishment to those who attacked them.

When the aggressors realized they could cope effectively and capably with their opponents, they felt more secure and less hostile and punitive. And a good many other experiments similarly show that *when people feel that they definitely can cope effectively with some situation, they handle it better and upset themselves less about it.* I would therefore recommend that you try to develop a good set of coping measures that you can employ when faced with obnoxious events and badly behaving people. If you know that you can deal adequately with someone who treats you unfairly, you will have less of a likelihood of angering yourself at the person. This does not constitute an ideal solution—since you may see that you do not cope effectively with an aggressor. But it will help in many instances.

Cognitive awareness and desensitization

Ray Novaco conducted an experiment that involved showing people how to manage their anger through relaxation methods alone, through REBT alone, and through relaxation combined with REBT. He found that REBT worked better than relaxation and that both methods combined worked better still. We find the same thing in regular sessions of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: If we first show clients how they philosophically create their feelings of anger—by

whining about injustices and frustrations and demanding that these absolutely must not exist—we then can best show them how to relax, how to instruct themselves in anger-coping methods, and how otherwise to live with and finally to remove their rage.

By using REBT, you can do the same thing for yourself. Acknowledge fully that you create your own feelings of ire and see how you do so—by insisting and commanding that something exist when it doesn't or that something must not exist when it indubitably does. As you understand this and work to modify your commands on others and on the universe, you will find yourself more able to employ the various behavioral methods that I have outlined in this chapter.

Let me emphasize once again that although REBT has a distinct theory of human nature, of emotional trauma, and of effective psychotherapy and although it uses many eclectic techniques, it is not an eclectic theory. It covers, in some respects, perhaps thirty or forty different methods, many of which vary greatly, but it employs them in the framework of the general REBT theory.

Its behavioral methods, for example, do not consist merely of symptom removal. If REBT therapists persuade you to practice several behavioral techniques—such as activity homework assignments, operant conditioning, and assertion training—to help decrease your feelings of anger, they will not do so merely to get you to stop feeling angry right now, while you remain in therapy. They will try to see that you leave therapy with a good understanding of how you incite yourself to anger and how you can stop this in the future as well as in the present—to stop it under very difficult conditions that might later arise in your life.

By giving you theoretical understanding and practical techniques that you can employ yourself, REBT attempts to provide you with a treatment methodology that will enable you not only to *feel* better, but to *get* better—for the rest of your life.

11

Ripping Up Your Rationalizations for Remaining Angry

Since there exist many rational reasons for giving up our feelings of anger and such sensible ways of dealing with these feelings, why do we find it so easy, then, to ignore them? Why do we favor—even, at times, revel in—staying angry?

Probably, first of all, because anger has definite biological roots, which we will now consider.

As many ethologists, physiologists, sociologists, and other scientists have shown, a great deal of evidence indicates that you make yourself angry partly for biological reasons. Donald T. Lunde and David A. Hamburg, for example, have shown that in animals—as well as human children and adults—fighting behavior prevails in males much more than in females because of the influence of testosterone, the male hormone. Additionally, Yoram Jaffe and his associates have discovered that sexually aroused males and females are more aggressive than nonaroused subjects; and Edward Donnerstein and his research group have found that highly erotic stimuli tend to facilitate and maintain aggression in males.

R. C. Boelkins and J. F. Heiser, after examining research data from animal and human studies, conclude that we can view aggression "as an adaptive behavior having its origins in genetically coded neural mechanisms . . . acted upon by both hormonal and psychosocial factors." The famous psychologist Harry F. Harlow held that "aggression most likely remains in man as a solid component of his biological heritage as a primate." Sigmund Freud, considering a great amount of clinical and anthropological evidence, gave us this summary statement:

> The bit of truth behind all this—one so eagerly denied—is that men are not gentle, friendly creatures wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked, but that a powerful measure of desire for aggression has to be reckoned on the part of their instinctual endowment.... Civilized society is perpetually menaced with disintegration through this primary hostility of men towards one another.... The tendency to aggression is an innate,

> independent, instinctual disposition in man . . . it constitutes the most powerful obstacle to culture.

Many outstanding social and physiological scientists have held that biological, hereditary, and chemical factors play a pronounced part in human aggression—along with psychological and sociological learning.

Other social thinkers, such as Ashley Montagu, hotly dispute this view. Montagu states that human "aggressiveness is a learned form of behavior. There is absolutely no evidence whatever; indeed, the evidence is entirely in the opposite direction, that man is in any way 'programmed' to behave aggressively."

Montagu seems partly right, for no *conclusive* evidence exists for the programming of aggression, anger, and violence in humans. But most authorities agree that we have innate tendencies to be easily self-programmed in such ways. For many reasons, our biological tendencies predispose us to react angrily.

In *The Psychology of Aggression*, K. E. Moyer notes that certain allergens can, in some people, lead to many types of irritability, including acute and chronic physical violence. Anthropologist Ralph Bolton, studying exceptionally hostile tribes like the Qolla of Peru, found that a higher protein intake tended to create opposite behavior. Sociologist Pierre L. van den Berghe summarizes his views on human aggression and available resource competition by saying that ". . . Homo sapiens rates high on territoriality, hierarchy and aggression, and that these forms of behavior are biologically predisposed. . . an understanding of human behavior must necessarily be both biological and socio-cultural."

Many other scientists—especially ethologists such as Konrad Lorenz, Robert Ardrey, Desmond Morris, N. Tinbergen, and Lionel Tiger—have likewise beaten the drum in recent years to apprise us of the fact that hostility has fairly evident biological roots. And even those who have criticized their "findings," such as Edward C. Ryterband, have admitted that at least part of their argument appears valid. Ryterband, for instance, has noted: "No intelligent arguments can or should deny that environment has significant effects on all of man's behavior. Increasingly, evidence has accumulated not that there are instincts which control us, but that much of our behavior springs from both genetic and environmental sources."

Erich Fromm, in his *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, largely concerns himself with showing that we don't have specific or insurmountable instincts to destroy ourselves or to wage ceaseless feuds and wars. He stoutly opposes the

instinctivist-hydraulic model of aggression that writers like Freud and Lorenz espouse—the model that says that we as humans have innate destructive or aggressive energies and that if we do not express and utilize them directly, they will force us into extreme forms of violence, such as war, genocide, and suicide. At the same time, Fromm admits that the data of the neurosciences that he reviews "have helped to establish the concept of one kind of aggression—life preserving, biologically adaptive, defensive aggression. They show that man is endowed with a potential aggression which is mobilized by threats to his vital interests."

So even Erich Fromm, obviously, does not completely oppose a biological basis to anger and aggression. He merely shows that this basis does not doom us to the worst forms of aggression, particularly mass murder, which some other theorists, including Freud, seem to think it does. Also, as Morton Deutsch points out in reviewing Fromm's book, his basic thesis holds that destructiveness (and, presumably, all other character traits) results from the interaction of various social conditions with human existential drives—such as our awareness of our powerlessness, our ignorance, and our death. But these existential drives themselves have a clear-cut biological basis, as I think Fromm admits. So his seeming antagonism to biological forces in our nature remains very partial.

In recent years much evidence has shown that human aggression has both strong biological *and* environmental (social-learning) elements. Granted that almost all contemporary theorists acknowledge anger's strong biological as well as sociological roots, don't mistakenly "use" the biological basis as a reason for not changing your own irate behavior. Granted that you have innate tendencies to enrage yourself at the real and imagined injustices of the world. Admitted that you have strong predispositions to condemn others as a whole for some of their behaviors and to wish them dead for doing "wrong" and "immoral" acts, I still ask: Why must you *go along* with those physiologically based tendencies? And what justifies your using its "historical" basis as an *excuse* for your rage?

Don't forget, in this connection, that you have numerous other biologically based urges that you nearly always control—and with good reason. You naturally and biologically spit, chew, defecate, and pass flatus. But do you do so unrestrainedly, without any controls on yourself?

No matter how strong are your inherited predispositions to scream at others, tell them how completely stupid they act, and pummel them into the ground when they seriously treat you unfairly, the fact still remains that you don't *have* to do any of these behaviors and you can usually (if not always) appreciably cut them down if you willingly work hard to do so. No evidence exists that you will necessarily end up with an ulcer or high blood pressure if you block or control

your rage any more than it exists for your winding up diseased if you control several of your other biological functions.

As a member of society I personally squelch many of my biological, pleasure-oriented urges and I do so every day in the week, perhaps even every hour of the day. I eat less than I want, copulate on only limited occasions, frequently keep silent when I would thoroughly enjoy continuing to talk, go fully clothed in even the hottest of weather, and restrict my biological urges in countless other ways. Not only do I manage to get by with minimum or moderate discomfort as I limit myself in these ways, but I actually often feel pleased to do so. As a diabetic, for example, I *enjoy* curbing my diet and forcing myself away from sugary foods that I would relish but are also almost lethal for me. Curbing my anger does not unbearably frustrate me. In fact, in some ways, I manage to enjoy my self-curbing, too!

People also hold on to their anger because they do not realize their alternatives. Even downtrodden individuals, such as minority groups or women, whom our culture has sorely tried and abused, need not give vent to their anger, nor must they cravenly submit to exploitation and subjugation. They have more than the grim choice of: (1) passively submitting to their controllers, letting themselves get "walked over," or (2) angrily ranting, raving, or actually resorting to violence. Of these two choices, the first seems definitely the worse and includes unassertive subservience. So I definitely do not recommend that.

In REBT we seek a third path, one that exists *between* cravenly giving up what you want and nastily telling others off—fighting them to the death. We advocate, instead, *determined opposition*. If I, for example, lived as a woman in our still antifeminist society, I would realize how many injustices and handicaps I had to bear because of my femaleness, and I would fervently dislike, oppose, and even hate these needless barriers. But I would not (in much the same way that my male oppressors bigotedly scream and whine against female rights and privileges) idiotically convince myself that "Because social rules treat me unfairly, they *must* not exist! How *awful* that they do! I *can't stand* society's discriminations! The people who promulgate and sustain these rules are *totally rotten tyrants*, whom we have to annihilate entirely if we want these horrible customs changed!"

In other words, no matter how disappointed, frustrated, and determined I felt about antifeminist traditions, I would not waste my time and energy screaming and wailing about such prejudices. Instead, I would determinedly organize myself and my sympathetic cohorts to fight and change them. Claudeen Cline-Naffziger partly sees this third, nonangry, determined path toward social change when she notes: "Florynce Kennedy's analysis of action-oriented anger is

educative for both women and their therapists. She suggests that instead of women putting down other women, husbands, family, or custodians as is wont to occur, women must be encouraged to put their anger energy on the sources of power. Anger energy is more potent when focused on those above rather than those around or below."

Previously, Ms. Cline-Naffsiger noted that "most women have such a reservoir of anger and so much energy stored up in tending it that they need screaming, kicking, yelling sessions to release the excess and get the burden down to a manageable size." She failed to see that this kind of screaming and kicking behavior carries with it a distinct *philosophy* of anger—namely, that things *must* not remain indubitably unpleasant even when they almost certainly *will*, at least for a while, remain that way. And she doesn't see that such tactics will mainly siphon off energies that women could put to constructively fighting to change the social system.

Moreover, as thousands of years of human history have proved, once a downtrodden group angrily and violently pits itself against a group of ruling oppressors, its childish demandingness frequently leads to equal irrationality and lack of rational judgment against its opponent. So either the original rulers get back into power and savagely annihilate the rebels or (as in the somewhat typical cases of the French and Russian Revolutions) an even more extreme group of rebels takes over from the original group—and a frightful and almost completely senseless bloodbath and suppression of human liberty ensues.

As a longtime revolutionary myself, particularly in the fields of sexual permissiveness and psychotherapy reform, I have frequently made angry outbursts against my "reactionary" opponents, and sometimes I still do. But I have almost always found that my anger does more harm than good for my own cause and that I work more effectively for what I want and against the stupidities I don't want when I vigorously, forcefully, determinedly—and *non*angrily—keep fighting for what I consider just, good, and efficient.

Scores of psychologists such as George Bach and Herbert Goldberg point out the great harm that we do to ourselves by refusing to acknowledge and express our feelings of ire. In agreement with Freud, they insist that "when open aggressive expression or interpersonal encounters are suppressed, either for conscious reasons, such as the desire to be polite or 'nice,' or for deeper motivations, such as the fear of angry interchanges, these feelings are not lost. Rather they are driven underground, so to speak, and re-emerge transformed behind socially acceptable masks."

Such remarks require careful consideration. Bach and Goldberg seem to mean that you may sometimes have *disturbed* reasons for suppressing or repressing

feelings of anger. Thus, if I treat you unfairly, you may first feel you have to act politely to me in order to show everyone, including me, how you rate as a "nice person." We can call this "disturbed" because you then tend to run your life mainly for others and not enough for yourself. You make yourself so concerned about my and others' opinions that you refuse to ask yourself what *you* really want—and you feel frustrated and unhappy for surrendering too easily to any opposition.

Your second disturbed reason for suppressing anger: your fear of possible rejection and anger if you risk telling me your feelings of displeasure. You would really like to show me my unfairness and try to get me to act better toward you, but you feel terribly afraid of such a confrontation because it might turn into an angry interchange. You again start worrying too much about what *I* might think of you and too little about what *you* really want. Once again, this means that you feel you have to make yourself into a totally "nice person" who rarely quarrels with anyone, seldom risks disapproval. Unassertion, or the giving up of what you really want in order to desperately win another's acceptance, means that you fail to live, that you give up much of your healthy desiring, and that you fail to ever let your own individuality emerge.

If wanting to be a "nice person" and fear of rejection are your motives for squelching your feelings of anger, you will drive underground some of your *other* feelings—especially your feeling that you have a right to exist in this world and to have others treat you fairly. Bach and Goldberg quite rightly point this out. But they also seem to forget that you could have quite different, *healthy* reasons for not feeling or expressing anger—namely, your wish to have more loving, cooperative, and friendly relations with me and others and your desire to have more of the things you want and less of the things that you do not want in life.

In other words, Bach and Goldberg fail to see that while you can (1) unhealthily need and insist on others liking you, you can also (2) healthily desire and want to get along better with them. If you have the first need, you then, peculiarly enough, tend to suppress the second set of feelings, and, perhaps more important, you also suppress your desires to get along with yourself and to try to achieve what *you* want to do in life. Since, however, you *do* want others to like you and you *also* want to get what you desire out of life, the overpolite demeanor that Bach and Goldberg deplore denies this—and especially denies your own wants and preferences. But Bach and Goldberg, unfortunately, forget that when you healthfully surrender your dire *need* for others' approval, you can still healthfully retain your *desire* for their affection. You can therefore consciously suppress (instead of consciously repress) some of your angry

feelings—and thereby get along better with them and with yourself. Overpoliteness may unduly restrict you, but normal politeness may distinctly aid both your interpersonal and intrapersonal relations.

The various arguments in favor of anger often have a fairly sensible core, but this easily gets escalated out of proportion to the underlying half-truths it contains. Of course, anger has its good points! So do murder, tyranny, revolution, baby seal hunting, and cannibalism. All these expressions of the human spirit can be self-fulfilling and sometimes—though not too often!—do somewhat more good than harm. Moreover, if we completely removed them from the human condition, we would suffer a distinct loss.

So with anger. Many authorities have rightly pointed out its humanitarian elements. Israel Charny holds that "aggression is an omnipresent, instinctive force in all of life which we might best define as the purposeful, pulsating energy or strength for being that is one's life force." Albert Solnit indicates that "in children the aggressive behavior serves to make contact with the love object and gain libidinal satisfaction." Martin Roth points out that political, religious, and revolutionary wars have a pronounced altruistic element because they would not have occurred without the peculiarly human characteristic of self-sacrifice.

Edward Sagarin shows how suppressed people can acquire respect for themselves through hatred for others. W. W. Meissner contends that "human aggression has a positive and constructive role to play in the development of man's religious spirit." Edward D. Joseph sees aggression as including behavior and activities, mental and otherwise, that emerge as forceful and that involve a direct approach to the object. Nevitt Sanford indicates that we want children "to be angry about the right things (human exploitation for example) and to express their anger in ways that help to counter destructiveness." Chris Meadows designates anger as "the emotion which primes aggressive behavior in defense of life and integrity." Rolland S. Parker points out that expression of anger and aggression may help people confront and master difficult situations.

All these points make some sense. But they also may be considerably misleading. For they mainly confuse "anger" or "aggression" with assertiveness, the strong motivation to change obnoxious stimuli, and the determined effort to effect that kind of change. True, hostility contains such constructive elements. But even more true: You can keep these elements and still minimize what we normally call hatred and rage.

The apologists for anger and aggression apparently do not see this. They do not define their terms clearly enough, or they hopelessly think that you can only assert yourself—especially in the face of difficult or obnoxious conditions—through a childish demandingness or whining that things should not, must not

exist the way they do, and through consequent feelings of anger. Wrong! You can keep your determination and your assertiveness without grandiose rage if you think clearly and act forcefully along the lines outlined in this book!

Anthony Storr whitewashes anger in this way: "Only when intense aggressiveness exists between two individuals . . . love can arise." True—if you train yourself to feel and act entirely unemotionally, with no passion whatever, you will knock out "bad" emotions like hostility—and "good" ones like love. But rational, as I keep emphasizing to my clients and to audiences all over the world, does *not* mean unemotional. It means *healthily* emotional. Storr, for example, seems to believe that you need aggressiveness in order to love, and I believe that you don't. But although both of us may be overgeneralizing, neither of us may be irrational—unless we also believe that our view *has to,* absolutely *must* prevail. Our passion doesn't make us irrational—but our dogma does!

"Constructive" aggression advocates believe that if people "do you in" and you let yourself have a brief or mild period of anger against them, you handle yourself well, while if they treat you just as badly and you let yourself intensely and prolongedly hate them, you handle yourself badly. This idea has some sense to it since long and extreme hatred usually makes for worse results than short and moderate hatred. But few, if any, of the abreaction-encouraging writers or therapists seem to realize that *all* anger, even one percent anger, tends to include *should, ought,* or *must,* and that even your one percent anger differs significantly from the 99 percent irritation that you would feel if you applied your irritation only to my *actions* rather than to me as a whole person.

If you limited your reaction in that healthy manner when I treated you unfairly, you could, for instance, strongly say to yourself, "I loathe Ellis's behavior! I thoroughly wish that he would not act that way! I feel very determined to get him to treat me better." In that way, you would tend to feel exceptionally irritated at my actions and would be unusually determined to get me to stop them rather than weakly and briefly telling yourself—or me—"I really hate him for treating me that way! He *absolutely should not* have done that!"

Remember, in this connection, the old joke about the woman who tells her highly conservative parents that she "is a little bit pregnant." Either her pregnancy exists—or it doesn't. Her statement that she is a "little bit" pregnant doesn't face the real issue: that she *really* is. If you make yourself act only a "little bit" angry for "a little while," you obscure the fact that you still take a mistaken position about people's unpleasant behavior and still *command* that they not act that way. In my view, murdering a hundred people definitely is worse than murdering one. But that hardly makes the single murder right or

proper!

Dr. Robert I. Daugherty has stated that "sometimes, anger can be fun." Yes, once in a while, arguing gets your adrenaline excitedly going. It can be the highlight of your day.

Yet we had better not forget, in this connection, that Hitler *enjoyed* sending millions of Jews and Gypsies to the gas chambers. Stalin and other tyrants *felt great* about imprisoning, torturing, and finally managing to kill many of their political opponents. Many harmful human acts can seem fun, such as overeating, overdrinking, drug taking, and playing hooky from school. Most of these "fun" conditions, however, consist of short-range hedonism and in the long run lead you—and especially the people you feel angry at—into all sorts of difficulties. Although your *basic* goals in life had better be pleasure, happiness, and enjoyment, your going for certain *immediate* gains, such as those bestowed by rage and violence, hardly helps you achieve your main purposes.

Patti Hague expresses this idea: "Maybe by nurturing myself and having more faith in my lovableness and my relationships I'll not be so fearful of angry responses from others and I'll let my newfound freedom to express anger become powerful instead of dwarfing it with tears." As people frequently do, Ms. Hague seems to assume that displeasure results in anger or tears with no alternative available. And she also implies that if she has lovableness and can act well in relationships, she has the leeway to express her anger without disadvantage and thereby to gain honesty and self-respect.

Another half-truth! For if Ms. Hague looked at the situation more rationally, she could fully accept herself *with* her failings—including her unlovableness and her poor relationships. Making self-acceptance contingent on good acts is a risky procedure! Assuming that Ms. Hague could manage unconditionally to accept herself, she could then better afford to express her displeasure to others, to say to them, for example, "I really don't like the way you keep treating me and wish you would stop it!" *Anger*, however, would go far beyond this kind of displeasure and would stem from the idea, "Because I don't like the way you keep treating me, you *must* not continue to do so, and if you do, I see you as a rotten person!" No matter how much Ms. Hague might fully and unconditionally accept herself, making herself angry in this grandiose way still is damning others, and she would mainly replace self-condemnation with denigrating others. Still a mistake!

Various types of therapy, such as Reichian, primal, and bioenergetic therapy, claim that if people react violently and angrily in a therapy session or group, they actually lose their hostility and act less angrily in real-life situations. However, as far as I can see, many people who undertake these kinds of

therapies end up by feeling more angry as the therapy "progresses." I have talked with hundreds of individuals who think they have "successfully" undergone Gestalt, psychoanalytic, and various kinds of "rage" and "fight" therapies, and the majority of them have felt and acted more hostilely than they did before their "cure." This substantiates the experimental work of Dr. Leonard Berkowitz and several other psychologists who consistently find in research studies that individuals who punish, curse at, and otherwise aggress against wrongdoers usually begin to feel more angry instead of simply blowing off steam and feeling less irate.

People who act out their anger and retaliate against those who act unfairly may, of course, *sometimes* wind up by feeling less angry. For a variety of reasons. (1) They temporarily run out of energy and get too exhausted to continue their rage. (2) They acknowledge and face their feelings of anger and thereby help desensitize themselves to such feelings. (3) By expressing their fury, they note their own asinine reactions and show themselves how foolishly they behave—and need not behave in the future. (4) They irrationally believe that now that they have told someone off for acting badly, that person "deserves" forgiveness. (5) They like the fact that they have asserted themselves, instead of fearfully bottling up their displeasure at the "wrongdoers." Liking themselves for this assertiveness, they feel more able to accept others with their "wrongdoing." (6) They once in a while, by expressing their anger (instead of more sensibly expressing their displeasure), induce "wrongdoers" to change their ways; they feel very good about this change and therefore surrender their anger. (7) They often get a lot of approval from anger-inciting therapists or therapy groups, feel good about this approval, and temporarily forget their anger.

For many reasons such as these, anger-inciting therapy may sometimes work. But even when it does, it tends to augment the *philosophy* of anger. While you keep screaming and cursing at people for acting badly, you keep reinforcing your notion that they *must* not do what they did and that they are lousy *individuals* for acting this *horrible* way. Consequently, even when your *current* anger at them subsides, you make yourself furious at them and other wrongdoers in the future. So while anger-inciting therapies "work," at least to some extent, they often end up by creating more harm than good.

Leslie Greenberg and Sandra Paivio advocate an "emotionally focused treatment of anger." But they note that their expressive approach "distinguishes between overcontrolled anger and unregulated anger." It assesses different anger processes and states "for the purposes of appropriate intervention." It is therefore emotive *and* cognitive.

Bach and Goldberg insist that "constructive aggression increases as hurtful

hostility is reduced and informative impact is increased." They therefore advocate some "aggressive rituals," such as bataca fights, in the course of which angry people fight each other in limited ways and make sure that others do not get too badly mauled. The participants in these ritualistic fights know that they set definite limits, give themselves only a short time span in which to fight, set up various restrictive rules, use a good deal of playacting, and sometimes fight in a deliberately outlandish and extreme way. Thus, they add an element of absurdity and humor to what they do. Under such conditions, they not only allow themselves to let off steam, but also acknowledge and show themselves that a real fight, with no holds barred, has bad results and that they'd better not engage in *that* kind of a struggle.

On the other hand, fighting in a limited or playacting form also has its distinct limitations. While the fighters scream at each other or hit each other with harmless bataca bats, they usually tend to rethink that their enemy *does* act 100 percent wrongly and *must* stop doing so or will be a louse. Such controlled fighting may temporarily help the participants—but largely because they still think that they indubitably behave correctly and that the hated person behaves badly. They demand, as end result, that the other must unquestionably act better in the future. No real forgiveness or acceptance of human fallibility is present in such ritualistic fighting. So even when such techniques temporarily work, they have their serious limitations.

Yet another limited and dubious view of why we hold on to anger was expressed by William James: that since as humans we have innate tendencies toward violence, we'd better let ourselves have other intense emotional outlets and thereby provide ourselves with a moral equivalent of war. Erich Fromm cites the allegation that if Hitler's concentration camp guards had released their repressed urges toward sexual sadism in their sexual relations, they would have shown more kindness to the prisoners. Fromm takes a very skeptical view toward this theory.

I agree. Several studies have shown that people who get sexually aroused can act more sadistically and violently toward their victims than those who lack such arousal. True, some individuals, if they participate actively in situation A—such as picketing for a political cause or engaging in a sex orgy—will therefore feel diverted from participating in situation B—such as violently assaulting some of their peers or those over whom they have control. But other individuals will do exactly the opposite. They will perversely learn, from the first set of experiences, how to act more assertively and aggressively in the second set of experiences and will therefore behave more instead of less angrily.

People take different messages from the same experiences. One woman grows

up with an alcoholic, badly behaving mother and therefore decides never to take a drink for the rest of her life. Her sister grows up with the same mother, decides that drinking seems a good way to get through life, and makes herself into a severe alcoholic. As we keep emphasizing in REBT, Activating Experiences, at point A, *do not* make you feel Emotional Consequences, at C. Your beliefs or interpretations *about* those experiences do. Consequently, out of one hundred people who have frustrating experiences at A, twenty may make themselves less hostile at the people who "anger" them—and eighty may make themselves more hostile.

The body therapies, such as Reichian and bioenergetic therapy, abreactively encourage people to give vent to their anger or to release the bodily armorings that block the expression of pent-up feelings of rage, and they do on occasion thereby lead to a catharsis of anger. By using these therapies for assertion rather than for anger, some people actually wind up less angry. But such therapies lead many people to do just the opposite. Mostly, these therapies tend to augment anger. The majority of body therapy clients seem to make themselves considerably more hostile as their therapy progresses.

Body therapists, of course, vary enormously, just as other therapists do. Alexander Lowen and his followers frequently incorporate considerable rational, anger-interrupting philosophies. Many years ago, before he became well known, Lowen told me that as he manipulated people's bodies, he also employed several modes of cognitive therapy—including Freudian, Jungian, and Adlerian techniques. If you read his works carefully, you will see that he still does, even though he primarily stresses psychomotor methods. Other body-oriented therapists seem to do likewise.

One of Lowen's followers, Dr. Alice Kahn Ladas, writes in this respect:

> Bioenergetic analysis is not primarily a ventilative therapy. The basic concept is not the ventilation of anger . . . but the capacity to stand on one's own two feet literally and psychologically. For many people, this involves becoming aware of anger, rage, or even hatred that has been repressed in the past or in the present. Anger that has been repressed in the past inevitably produces certain types of chronic muscular tension. One may pull one's punches until one has a widow's hump, or lead with one's chin until one has a stiff jaw. It is the job of a bioenergetic therapist to loosen such chronic postures and, when this is done, feelings of

> anger or rage may be experienced. At such a time, the person in therapy is encouraged to discharge them *in the therapy session*. A competent bioenergetic therapist definitely discourages the acting out of character problems outside of the therapeutic encounter. The analytic aspect of therapy involves the use of intellect to understand and integrate feelings that come up during the session. This is done through discussion.

As you can easily see, Dr. Ladas uses body material largely to *reveal* anger—and then uses rational discussion to discharge it. In REBT we similarly encourage people to *acknowledge* their feelings of hostility, to *understand* how they create them, and to *work* at giving them up. We do this more efficiently and with less danger of illegitimate conclusions on the client's part, than occurs in various body therapies.

A large amount of clinical and experiential data shows that expressing your anger may help to reduce your rage and to feel relieved. Some of this "evidence" seems partly correct, and some of it seems exaggerated. Naturally, you can temporarily feel better, and even less irate, if you directly or indirectly express your anger toward others. But you almost always temporarily release yourself, and in the long run you repeat your hostility-creating philosophies—that the people who hurt you *should not, must not* act the way they indubitably do—and also build up future angry reactions. Occasionally you let off steam—and then realize that you don't have to totally condemn your opponents. But usually, you see them as more contemptible than ever, and you tend to hate them more.

Many experiments have shown that when subjects let out their anger on others, they usually feel angrier. Leonard Berkowitz, James A. Green, and Jacqueline R. Macaulay allowed one group of frustrated subjects to strike the frustrator and another group not to do so. Those who did the striking proved just as apt to anger themselves about the same individual in the future. Berkowitz, Arnold Buss, and Seymour Feshbach did separate experiments in which they inhibited their subjects' aggression, and all of them found that direct or indirect inhibition tended to reduce rather than to augment hostile behavior. Summarizing many such studies, Feshbach notes that "our own observations indicate that *acknowledging and labeling the affect [anger] provides a sufficient degree of expression in most instances of anger arousal [italics mine]"* and that *overt* expression of it therefore does *not* seem necessary.

Feshbach also significantly observes: "Most psychotherapists agree that the

reduction in anger that occurs in patients for whom anger has been a major problem is primarily a result of insight and more refined discrimination rather than the cathartic expression of the affect. Cognitive reorganization may be a far more effective means of reducing violence than promoting its sublimated or free expression." Helene Papanek, a noted Adlerian therapist, also notes that for the expression of hostility to bring about therapeutic change, such expression had better result in a learning experience and help strengthen people's social feeling —for example, give them a better focus on learning to express and to experience themselves in new positive ways.

The view that if people, especially children, see angry and violent actions in books, on the movie screen, or on TV, they will experience a vicarious cathartic effect and will tend to release their own inner anger harmlessly has little sustaining evidence. Very little! Some children and adults, under some conditions, may view or read about violence and may thereby release their own anger, instead of giving vent to it. But as Dr. Leonard M. Liebert and his associates have shown, the reverse seems to hold in many more instances. In one of their reports, for instance, they conclude: "At least under some circumstances, repeated exposure to televised aggression can lead children to acknowledge what they have seen as a partial guide for their own actions. As a result, the present entertainment offerings of the television medium may be contributing, in some measure, to the aggressive behavior of many normal children. Such an effect has now been shown in a wide variety of situations."

The same thing happens in this respect as may happen with other kinds of disturbance. Most children or adults, when shown models of other people who behave in a disturbed manner sexually, socially, morally, or otherwise, decide that such behavior doesn't seem right for them and may strongly determine *not* to engage in it. But a certain minority of individuals, when witnessing self-defeating or antisocial acts, use them as "good" models. Such vulnerable individuals may take on some of the worst aspects of the models and may thereby harm themselves. The notion, therefore, that humans normally release their aggression harmlessly when they witness anger or violence does not fit the facts.

Studies of people's indirectly expressing themselves angrily by viewing films, reading violent stories, having hostile fantasies, or otherwise using indirect means of anger catharsis have shown even less evidence for the value of abreaction than have studies of overt hostility. Leonard Berkowitz, in a paper on "The Effects of Observing Violence," found that watching violence generates more violent reactions in many people.

The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence

submitted a report indicating, according to *U.S. News and World Report*, that "television has been loaded with violence. It is teaching American children moral and social values 'inconsistent with a civilized society.'" The Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior also did a special study of children's viewing television violence and concluded that there exists "fairly substantial experimental evidence for short-run causation of aggression among some children by viewing violence on the screen.... Extensive violence viewing precedes some long-run manifestations of aggressive behavior."

Many authors, including Victor B. Cline, Arnold Arnold, and Jacques-Philippe Leyens and his coworkers have shown that the witnessing of violent films by children and adults will help increase feelings and acts of aggression. Albert Bandura and Clarissa Wittenberg have summed up some of the data as follows:

> This body of research points up the fallacies in several popular ideas. One is that violence only affects those who are already violent or deviant and involved in aggression. This has not been borne out. All viewers tend to be affected. Normal children also learn and are encouraged to perform aggressive acts by viewing them under certain circumstances. Another idea is that if parents instill in their children adequate standards of what is right or wrong, the violence they see will "wash over them." It was clearly demonstrated that even where children can label behavior as bad or wrong, they may imitate it if it was successful, and the conflicts would be resolved more often by a reevaluation downward of the worth or the role of the victim. Whether or not the observed aggressive acts are successful becomes more important than the moral value of these aggressive acts. Perhaps the most prominent idea which has been questioned is that of catharsis. There is no evidence that viewing violence, at least in most forms, dissipates aggressive drives and makes a person more healthy. In fact, it has been demonstrated that a frustrated viewer watching violence would become less inhibited and more likely to act on violent impulses.

Many other studies, such as that by Mary B. Harris and George Samerott, also present evidence against the hydraulic view of anger: the view that you have to vent your anger in some overt or fantasized form or else it flows out of you in violent or self-harming ways. Jack E. Hokanson summarizes many of the studies in this field by noting that "the results show clearly that overt aggression does not inevitably lead to either physiological tension reduction or a reduction in subsequent aggression." If anything, these studies indicate that in our culture "aggression will have at least a temporary arousal-reducing effect, and that the likelihood of future violence will be enhanced."

In another view of anger-inciting studies, Richard Walters concludes that "the series of studies reported above lend considerable support to the belief that the observation of violence in real life or on film or television can have harmful social consequences."

Which means? That the view that you'd better let out your anger and cathartically let others know how you feel, or at the very least let it out symbolically by viewing violent films or other representations, represents a nice theory—but one hardly borne out by the facts!

Rollo May theorizes that violence stems largely from naïveté or innocence and that if we have greater knowledge, accept the evils of the world, and work at achieving our own individuality while at the same time acknowledging our social responsibility, we will feel less hostile.

He makes some good points. Knowledge itself probably won't make us unangry at others. But if we accept ourselves and others *with* our and their evils, we will stop commanding that these evils not exist and will make ourselves less hostile. Acknowledging social responsibility in itself also does not eliminate hostility—and may actually increase it. If I acknowledge that I'd better treat you fairly and let you live and do your own thing, as long as it does not interfere too seriously with mine, I will tend to accept the reality of my living as a social person and will not hate you when you want me to treat you nicely or justly. So responsibility, in that sense, lets me have a higher frustration tolerance and therefore feel less angry at you and at the world.

At the same time, however, I can easily say, "Because *I* act responsibly, you should do so, too! And because you don't do what you *should*, you are a rotten person who hardly deserves a good existence!" With this kind of "responsible" thinking, I can easily make myself angry at you. Similarly, by striving for more individuality, I can either believe, "I want what I want, but if I don't get it, and you don't give it to me, tough!" Or: "I need what I want, and if I don't get it, and you block me from achieving it, how awful!" In the latter case, I may make

myself hostile.

Innocence, in other words, does not merely include my seeing the world as a nonevil, marvelous place. More important, it may include my demandingness—my believing that the world *must* not have evil in it and that it *has to* work the way I want it to work. With this kind of absolutistic innocence, I will probably make myself angry.

Psychoanalytic and primal therapies hold that people have to get in touch with their past hostility toward their parents and the intense rage they felt when young in order to work through their hostility today. This is often a mistaken view: No good evidence exists for it and considerable facts are directly contradictory.

First, many children don't rage that badly when they feel frustrated. They certainly don't like it, but they fairly calmly persevere and do not act like little gods who *must* not get frustrated.

Second, when children do whine and scream, inwardly or outwardly, about their parents' frustrating behavior, their own tendencies to enrage themselves are the real issue, not merely the acts of their parents. To say that these acts made them angry is often false. *They* caused their own screaming *about* their frustrations. Similarly, if they have an allergy to, say, grapefruit and their parents keep feeding them grapefruit, we cannot conclude that their parents made them (except genetically) allergic or caused them to break out in a rash. Their parents *contributed* to their allergic reactions but didn't truly *cause* them.

Third, even some highly vulnerable children, once they get frustrated early in life and inwardly or outwardly scream about frustrations, manage to come to terms with, stop screaming about, and ultimately accept them. Only *some* children grow into adults who seem to remember the original frustration and screaming forever, plaguing themselves about it many years after it first occurred.

Finally, even when self-plaguing adults yell and scream today about what happened many years ago, they frequently make themselves more rather than less angry at their parents for frustrating them—and more angry about the "insults" and "horrors" that the world foists on them. Their "unrepressing" their anger usually helps them to escalate it rather than to give it up. Only if they stop believing, today, that their parents *should have* treated them better, and are total *worms* for not doing so, will they likely surrender their feelings of anger. Such a change in their Belief System is unlikely in various kinds of primal therapies.

Most people who feel very angry know quite well how they feel and only occasionally do not know it. Most of them seem *too much* in touch with their feelings—and consequently keep making themselves angry all the time.

Almost any therapist can, of course, bring out "hidden" anger by inducing

clients to scream, to go through painful physical exercises, to beat pillows, or to remember "horrible" childhood incidents. How much of this anger represents unconscious or repressed hostility, however, and how much does the therapist *presently* incite? Answer: Much of it may fall in the latter rather than the former category.

Remember, in this connection, that according to REBT theory, we naturally and easily *make ourselves* angry; have an underlying biosocial *tendency* to do so. Consequently, if I as your therapist get you to playact anger toward me or a member of your group, forcibly restrain you so you cannot move, poke you in the gut, or imply that your mother really was a bitch for unduly restricting you, I will have no trouble in helping you make yourself angry *right now*. Having a talent for foolishly inciting yourself, you will usually follow my instigative lead and will make yourself just about as angry as I want you to feel. But this hardly proves that, all along, you really *did* violently hate me, or your mother, and that I now have merely made you conscious of this feeling. Probably, for the most part, you really like me, and your mother, but you *occasionally* feel hostility toward us. This hardly constitutes serious "unconscious" rage on your part.

Therapy-instigated anger, therefore, rarely represents your true or basic feeling, only occasionally reveals your general resentment, frequently exaggerates how angry you feel—and may *encourage* you to make yourself angrier than you usually would. It boosts the therapist's ego—and, often, hinders you. If you have a therapist who seems obsessed with your getting in touch with your angry feelings, rather than helping you acknowledge and *give them up*, you'd better suspect his own motivations—and run to another therapist as soon as possible!

Theodore Isaac Rubin holds that real anger leads to warmth and health and seems as necessary as eating or loving. He implies that if your anger takes the form of spontaneous, direct expression of feelings of displeasure, we can then call it "real" and look forward to cultivating rather than suppressing it.

This view has its dangers. To use a term like *real anger* amounts to using a term like *real love.* All love, as I have said in *The American Sexual Tragedy* and other writings, is "real" love—whether short or enduring, mild or passionate, conjugal or romantic. *Real* mainly means existent—and not ideal. So with anger. Virtually all anger falls under the heading of "real," and it seems to consist of two fairly clear-cut factors: (1) sincere and sometimes profound disappointment when someone treats you unfairly or badly and (2) the Irrational Belief that this unfair or bad treatment should not, must not exist, and that its perpetrator is a totally rotten individual. The more sincerely, directly, authentically, and spontaneously you experience anger, the more it seems to include both these

factors.

Rubin means that when people treat you unfairly, you can feel intense disappointment, sorrow, regret, and frustration, and that *this element* of anger often has a healthy quality because it helps you go after what you want and fight against the injustices of the world. Rubin fails to define anger very accurately and also believes it aids love. I believe it often does just the opposite. The more you express your sincere disappointment with people's bad behavior, the more they tend to feel turned off, less loving. Sometimes, of course, they agree that they have disappointed you in some ways, and they change those ways, thus helping create a warm and healthy relationship between the two of you. But often nothing of the sort happens!

Moreover, when you express downright anger—no matter how directly and spontaneously you give vent to it—you imply that others do not have the right to disappoint you and that they thus are no good. This almost always turns them off and leads them to return hatred rather than love. Occasionally, if you express great hostility toward someone for whom you truly care, you will make yourself so contrite that you will act much better after apologizing that your love for them and theirs for you may increase. Also, if they have sufficiently strong positive attitudes toward you to begin with, your anger may inspire them to go out of their way to make amends to you and to cement your relationship. Occasionally! But don't count on it. In most cases love begets love, and hate begets hate.

Jay Kuten, along with Theodore Rubin and George Bach, also develops the thesis that rewarding sexual love requires a joint recognition of individual integrity, which you and a partner can enhance by adaptive exchanges of anger. The first part of Kuten's thesis makes good sense since you will not likely love anyone else too much if you do not first accept yourself and strive for a goodly degree of individual integrity. But normally you would attain such integrity by assertiveness, not by hostility. If you show your partner that you want some degree of individuality and that you will, if necessary, break up the relationship if you don't get it, you will have a greater likelihood of ultimately forming a warm and lasting relationship than if you angrily insist that your mate not frustrate you. Assertiveness and good love relationships correlate fairly highly; hostility and love do not!

You may wonder about rage-reduction techniques, such as that of Dr. Robert Zaslow, where a therapist and a member of a therapeutic group deliberately tickle a person, hold him down, and throw taunts and invectives designed to enrage that person—until he feels relaxed and assertive rather than enraged. Almost any therapeutic technique will work—sometimes. Fight therapists, such as George Bach, sometimes endorse it, and are sure that Zaslow's claims are

valid. Says Zaslow: “I’m doing for rage what Freud did for sex. Today, rage is socially unacceptable, just as sex used to be. But rage is really esthetic. When the tiger goes for his food in the jungle, it’s an esthetic expression. That’s the only way he can survive, and he’s beautiful at it. As Dante said, hell is a place waiting for heaven to shine through. Rage is hell, and rage reduction propels you into heaven.”

Brave words! But the actual results don’t always seem to bear them out. Several clients of therapists using rage-reduction methods have reported feeling harmed. Although some individuals have probably received help by these rigorous methods, I would doubt whether they more than temporarily overcame their feelings of deep-seated hostility and would guess that most of them ended up more hostile. Other unfortunate results of this kind of treatment seem common and sometimes fairly severe. Dr. Hyman Spotnitz has commented, “The new development of encouraging physical contact with patients, I am sorry to say, leads to violent outbursts, as my own experience of many years ago showed. Therefore, I do not encourage such actions. A study of the literature and case reports will show that where therapists unnecessarily touch their patients or struggle with them physically, the therapy is unsuccessful.”

Fritz Perls claimed that we have to give in to our aggression and express it directly toward others or toward the world because otherwise we will reflect it and take it out on ourselves. I disagree. We can, of course, refuse to display our anger toward others and then condemn ourselves for failing to do so. In this case this anger may be reflected back onto ourselves. But we can also, and probably more likely, directly take out our anger on others—and then *also* condemn ourselves for doing this. The main point that many fail to realize in their anger therapies is that no hydraulic force exists that makes us angry here (that is, against others). Our attitude *toward* our nonexpression may well make us feel depressed and self-downing. But the strain of not expressing our feelings remains like the strain of other kinds of nonexpression: a moderate strain that we can easily master. As a diabetic I strain myself to forgo eating sugar, which I really like to eat, but I merely tell myself, “Tough! Sugar does me much more harm than good; so I will force myself to give it up.” I feel only moderate strain, and no anger against the world, from my decision to forbear.

As a human, I may strain myself to forgo expressing my feelings of anger toward my boss or my partner when I’d feel good—temporarily! —about letting them out. I then may foolishly tell myself, “I *shouldn’t* have to control my anger. In fact, I wouldn’t feel angry at all if that louse didn’t act the way he does. Why can’t he change, and not make me angry or, at least, let me express my anger? And why can’t I ‘strongly’ express it and take the consequences, thereby proving

how noble I am?" Because of these irrational ideas, I may make a federal case out of not expressing my anger—and I *therefore* choose to turn it inward and take it out on myself. But I can *stop* this crazy kind of thinking and acting if I choose.

14

Postscript: How to Deal With International Terrorism

The first edition of this book was written in 1976 and published in 1977, when international terrorism was rampant but not as serious as today. The events of September 11, 2001, and continuing incidents of world strife have multiplied international raging and the threats to peace. How can you deal with terrorism?

Not very easily! I gave an invited address, "Fanaticism That May Lead to a Holocaust: The Contributions of Scientific Counseling and Psychotherapy," to the American Counseling Association's annual convention in New York in 1985 (published in 1986 in the influential journal of the ACA). Although in 1985 our world was not in imminent danger from fanatical terrorists, my paper highlighted several important ways that it might well soon be at risk: (1) Political governments of the world are unlikely to start nuclear warfare because they are led by responsible leaders who fear reprisals in kind. (2) Small groups of dedicated fanatics may, if they can, start a nuclear conflagration because they are out to prove that they are 100 percent right and that their opponents—the rest of us—are 100 percent wrong. (3) Such groups of fanatics include kamikaze fighters who are certain that they will be rewarded in an afterlife if they kill themselves and others in terrorist attacks. (4) Modern technology, which keeps improving, makes it possible for a few bigots to decimate much greater numbers of the rest of us than was previously possible. (5) Eventually the day will come when a paltry few individuals can use nuclear (and other) weapons to wipe out billions of people and other living creatures. Billions? Yes, billions.

"Is there," I asked in 1985, "any feasible answer to this grave, impending problem?" Yes, I optimistically answered: the worldwide use of scientific counseling and psychotherapy to minimize bigotry, prejudice, grandiosity, and other elements of absolutistic thinking. But I faced the hard fact that effective psychotherapy takes too long and is too expensive to be used with billions of people. I said that "we had better adapt it to educational applications so that virtually all humans from kindergarten onward can be shown what they are doing to endlessly upset and infuriate themselves and are presented with cognitive, emotive, and behavioral techniques they can use to calm themselves to think and act more rationally. Large-scale education—in the schools, in community groups, in religious institutions, and in every mass media format—had better incorporate therapeutic technologies and bring them to the masses.

Yes, all the masses." Brave words for 1985!

I had forgotten these specific antiterrorist words when I wrote on September 12, 2001, my monthly response to the Ask Albert Ellis question for our institute's Web site. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon had just occurred. I briefly presented the REBT view on terrorism without consulting my 1985 paper. Here is my website response to a current question:

Ask Albert Ellis, September 2001

How would one go about using REBT in order to cope and to help others cope with the tragic events that took place on September 11? I am looking for a proactive way to deal with the brutality of this act, but find that my Irrational Beliefs and *shoulds* are getting in my way.

Dr. Ellis answers:

Your Irrational Beliefs and *shoulds* that get in your way probably include:

1. "I absolutely *must* be able to figure out a way to stop terrorists from acting so brutally and killing and maiming so many people, and there is something very weak and inadequate about me because I can't find a way to stop this kind of terrorism."
2. "The terrorists and their backers have perpetrated some of the worst deeds imaginable; this makes them *completely rotten people* who *should absolutely be exterminated*—quickly—since only killing all of them will stop this deed from happening again."
3. "Because the world is so full of cruel violence and terrorism, it is a totally despicable place and I cannot continue to live in it and be at all happy."

These ideas are irrational because, as Alfred Korzybski noted in *Science and Sanity* in 1933, they are unrealistic and illogical overgeneralizations that render people "unsane." My 1962 book, *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*, showed that all three of these beliefs—and many similar absolutistic *shoulds* and *musts*—lead you (and innumerable other people) to make yourself not only very sad and displeased with the terrorists' abominable

behavior, but also to dysfunctionally overwhelm yourself with panic, rage, and depression. Thus, the first of these Irrational Beliefs will cause you to loathe your entire self, or personhood, not to only deplore your weakness and inadequacy to halt terrorism. The second of these Irrational Beliefs will make you thoroughly despise the terrorists (and all other people who do cruel deeds) and consume yourself with rage. The third of these Irrational Beliefs will make you hopelessly depressed about the present and future state of the world and encourage you to obsessively contemplate—and perhaps actually commit—suicide.

Ironically, these three self-defeating *shoulds* and *musts* are probably very similar to those held by the terrorists, who unsanely killed themselves and thousands of innocent people for what they considered a holy crusade. They first considered themselves powerless because they could not stop America from "cruelly" siding with their enemies; and they therefore felt that they *absolutely had to* punish America to prove that they themselves were powerful and worthwhile individuals. Second, they devoutly believed that Americans *absolutely must not* oppose their position and that *all Americans are complete devils* who deserve to be wiped out. Third, they dogmatically convinced themselves there is no use living in and trying to lead a happy life in such a totally evil world; and therefore, by killing the infidels, they would attain eternal, blissful life. So, with these unsane beliefs, they enthusiastically killed themselves along with countless innocent people.

If you and the rest of America and world citizens keep reinforcing your Irrational Beliefs, you will enrage yourself against the terrorists and their backers and in the process will likely encourage them to increase their fury against Americans and other people who oppose them, and will encourage more retaliation by them, by us again, until the cycle of retaliation precipitates a worldwide war and quite possibly the end of our planet. As ancient lore and modern history have amply shown, love begets love and hatred and violence beget increased hatred and violence—with no end in sight!

You ask how REBT would help you cope with and help others cope with the tragic events of September 11. That requires a long answer, which I can only briefly summarize here.

First, you can use REBT to teach yourself—and all others—*unconditional self-acceptance*. That is, you fully accept yourself with all of your warts and flaws, while heartily disliking and doing your best to change some of your self-defeating behaviors and bad behavior toward others.

Second, you can use REBT to *unconditionally accept all other people* as persons, no matter how bad they act. You can, of course, firmly try to induce them, in a variety of ways, to change their self-sabotaging and immoral thoughts, feelings, and actions. In Christian terms, you unconditionally accept all *sinners* but not their *sins*. Ultimately some behaviors may require sanctions or imprisonment for individuals.

Third, you *unconditionally accept life*, with its immense problems and difficulties, and teach yourself to have high frustration tolerance. As Reinhold Niebuhr said, you strive to change the unfortunate things that you can change, to accept (but not to like) those that you cannot change, and to have the wisdom to know the difference.

If you achieve a good measure of these three REBT philosophies—that is, unconditional self-acceptance, unconditional other-acceptance, and unconditional life–acceptance—will you therefore be able to convince terrorists to change their absolutistic bigoted ways? Not exactly. But you will cope much better with terrorism, help others to cope with it, and model behavior that can, if you strongly encourage it to be followed around the world, eventually reduce it to a minimum. This will take many years to effect, and will require immense and persistent educational efforts by you and others to promote peaceful and cooperative solutions instead of hateful and destructive "solutions" to serious national and international difficulties. If we fail to work on our own belief systems to produce this long-term purpose, we will only ensure renewed terrorism for decades, and perhaps centuries, to come.

Are you willing to keep relentlessly working for REBT's recommendations for self-peace, peace to other humans, and peace to the world? If so, you may help people of goodwill to think, plan, and execute eventual answers to terrorism and many other serious world problems.

As you can see and as you might expect, my REBT philosophy of how we can react to terrorism, and how you can use it to possibly save the world from its assaults, is still the same. I promise no perfect or short-range solutions to this problem. None.

Using the REBT thinking, feeling, and behaving methods described in this book, you can do what I have recently shown many of my individual and group therapy clients as well as my workshop participants—that is, how to react to terrorism. *Minimize your anxiety about terrorism.* Terroristic incidents will reoccur. For the time being, there's no stopping them. So be very concerned about dealing with terrorism and helping others, especially your children, to cope with it. And do as much as you can to promote a psychological educational attitude in yourself and others that will help to minimize terrorism.

Be concerned—but not overconcerned and panicked. Incidents will occur, but not often to you and your loved ones. Fortunately, only a few fanatics will find it feasible at present to plot, scheme, plan, and carry out terroristic attacks. These few may disrupt and kill thousands, but not millions. You and your loved ones will most probably be affected but still spared. You and they will survive. But if you don't, you will merely die before your time. So live and try to enjoy your life while you may!

Minimize your depression about terrorism. Terrorism is expectantly bad—one of the worst things that can happen to you and to others. But it is not *totally* bad, as bad as it could possibly be. It always could be worse—like a shooting star that destroys the entire earth. It is never *awful*, meaning badder than it *absolutely should* be. You can *stand it*—find some happiness in a terroristic, war-filled world. It is *just* very, very bad. Period. If you accept the REBT antiawfulizing philosophy, you will be quite sad about present and future terrorism—but not make yourself feel depressed and hopeless.

Minimize your rage about terrorism. Terroristic violence is, by normal social standards, extremely unfair—to its murdered and maimed victims, to you and your loved ones, and to humanity as a whole. It may possibly have some advantages—such as the removal of present and future unpleasantness—but it wreaks so much harm and encourages so much continuing hatred and reprisals that its gains are most questionable. Its cost-benefit ratio is, in both the short and long run, distinctly minus. So also with your rage about terrorism. Your strong distaste and dislike about it, if unaccompanied by rage and vindictiveness, may well help you to survive, to prepare, and in some practical ways to reduce or prevent it. But your raging about it, and your damning its practitioners as *evil people*, will most likely encourage more terrorism.

Your raging against terrorism, moreover, has many personal disadvantages. It encourages you to be obsessed with people you hate. It consumes much time and energy. It brings you more frustration than the actual problem it creates. It may easily lead to several psychosomatic ailments, such as cardiac and intestinal problems. It augments your overgeneralizing and your musturbatory thinking. It makes you as bigoted and damning as the terrorists themselves. It helps make you act impulsively and foolishly. And so forth and so on!

Instead of raging against terrorism, you can achieve most of the advantages of making yourself incensed by powerfully disliking it, steadily denouncing it, intensely thinking about it, and determinedly doing everything you can do to plan and scheme to teach others to act against it strongly, but not frantically!

This brings me to consider in more detail spiritual and religious techniques of dealing with your terror of terrorism, which I have only briefly mentioned so far. Spiritual methods largely go together with a humanistic–existentialist approach, which REBT heavily supports. You could, of course, believe in spirits, such as angels and tooth fairies, whom you could endow with peace-loving qualities and thereby help calm your fears and enable you to cope with and predict the end of terrorism. Few of you probably do these days, and certainly I personally don't. If it serves you well, use it.

"Spiritual Goals and Spirited Values in Psychotherapy" one of my papers (recently published in the main Adlerlian journal) shows how therapists have increasingly used spirituality. But they largely give it an existential–humanistic meaning, and have encouraged their clients to create a vital, absorbing meaning and purpose to their lives and to devote themselves to helping others, their community, and the world instead of only to individual "selfish" interests." This kind of spiritual approach is one of the main teachings of REBT. As shown throughout this book, it espouses unconditional other-acceptance (UOA) together with unconditional self-acceptance (USA) and unconditional life-acceptance (ULA). As I indicate in *Overcoming Destructive Beliefs, Feelings, and Behaviors,* it also favors the developmental therapy of Allen Ivey and Sandra Rigazio-DiGilio, which encourages therapists to use cognitive, emotive, and behavioral methods to cope with their clients' stressful social conditions but also to try to better these conditions.

This, then, is a kind of spirituality you can embrace when faced with terrorism. Try as best you may to develop a long-lasting and meaningful purpose for your own life; aid as much as you can the benevolent purposes of others; and persistently strive to help the present terroristic world change for the better. Try, aid, and strive!

Allen Ivey and his associates, along with many other psychologists such as

Derald Wing Sue, have pioneered in promoting multicultural aspects of therapy. As I indicate in my newly revised edition of *Overcoming Resistance,* anger, rage, terrorism, and other serious disturbances are accompanied by rigid, absolutistic thinking—which to some extent afflicts all humans, including human therapists. Consequently, therapists from one culture tend to be prejudiced against and in important ways oppress clients of another culture. As Drs. Ivey, Sue, and other multicultural therapists emphasize, we had better make enormous efforts to counterattack this bigotry.

You, too, may tend to be strongly biased against multiversity, and to view people of a different sex, ethnic group, political and economic status, or religious persuasion with prejudiced attitudes. Almost inevitably! Your narrow-minded, one-sided views may create and maintain the many aspects of anger and rage we have been discussing in this book. Strong multiverse thoughts, feelings, and actions are required to counteract all-too-human bigotry and help alleviate rage and terrorism. Are you ready to think, feel, and act to do so?

Terrorism has many severe psychological and physical disadvantages. Like emotional disturbance itself, it has important secondary symptoms that often exacerbate its primary symptoms. As explained earlier, when you make yourself enraged at people who treat you badly, you suffer the primary feeling of anger. But then you may enrage yourself at your raging, and thereby suffer the secondary symptoms of guilt, self-downing, and depression. These secondary symptoms are sometimes worse than the primary rage because they may lead to all kinds of emotional pain as well as serious external disadvantages. Thus, if you damn and depress yourself about your raging, you may turn off other people, work inefficiently, enjoy practically nothing, and even commit suicide. You feel hopeless and you act hopelessly.

Secondary symptoms are acknowledged and can be treated with REBT and many other forms of therapy. They are so devastating that they can hardly be ignored. But are the secondary and also the tertiary symptoms of terrorism equally clear? Probably not—let us look at some of them.

Some primary results of urban terrorism are fairly obvious. Citizens are killed or maimed. Buildings and other structures are destroyed. Transportation is disrupted for months. Jobs are lost, some never to be replaced. People are hospitalized and may require long-term medical treatment. Residents may become temporarily homeless and some may never find good living quarters again. Billions of dollars can be lost by individual businesses, governmental agencies, charitable and other institutions. People who found themselves in the center of the terrorism and others who were far from there but who witnessed it on television or who read about it can be emotionally terrorized with intense

anxiety, rage, and depression during or after their experiences. On and on! Too many grim results to count. But what about the secondary results? Again, too many to count.

Let us first consider the normal concern, vigilance, and caution that people follow when terroristic incidents occur. These feelings were and still are being experienced by thousands of American and other people and will lead to improved cautions at airports and other dangerous places now and in the future. This will result in all kinds of difficulties, time expended, and expense for tens of thousands of people. I personally travel a great deal—about forty flights a year—to American and foreign cities to give workshops and lectures. Though I haven't cut down on these trips, because I rationally think that the chance of my getting hurt or killed is still very slight (less than one chance in a million for the year 2002), I still am quite inconvenienced on my trips. I have to leave earlier for the airports, take extra time to check in and clear my baggage, cut to a bare minimum the items I take with me (no little pair of scissors), make sure that I pack everything myself, and so on. But I can't avoid these extra troubles, so I unupsettedly put up with them. However, I and many other people are inconvenienced by them, and that is our penalty for the authorities' exerting normal caution. Yes, even healthy caution—like paying for fire insurance—exacts penalties.

Serious anxiety or panic about terrorism (or anything else) also brings on many difficulties and penalties. Thus, if I were panicked about the slight possibility that terrorism would kill or harm me, especially if I take plane flights, I would probably cancel all my trips and thereby limit myself and lose money for the Albert Ellis Institute, which gets all the income from these trips. But since I am only *concerned* and *not* panicked, I put up with the inconvenience that follows from the authorities' natural caution and take my trips as usual. Concern and anxiety (overconcern) lead to many difficult inconveniences!

Concern, however, usually does not create secondary symptoms—concern about concern. This is because concern is helpful and I (and the authorities) favor it. But anxiety (overconcern) is often very uncomfortable and leads to anxiety about anxiety. People tell themselves, "Since anxiety is uncomfortable and brings about such bad results, I *must not* feel anxious, *must not* feel anxious!" Then they feel anxious *about* their feelings of anxiety—they produce a *secondary* symptom. They also then get *worse* results!

Anxiety itself and anxiety about anxiety often lead to irrational and self-defeating phobias. The view that "Elevators must always be perfectly safe!" creates phobias about riding in elevators—which are fantastically safe and result in perhaps a few accidents every year out of billions of elevator rides. "I must

not be anxious about riding in elevators!" creates anxiety about elevator anxiety —and produces worse phobias. People unnecessarily walk up and down stairs, refuse to work in skyscrapers or live in apartments in tall buildings, and panic about living on higher floors when they do reside in them. None of these phobics have been hurt or have even heard of people who were seriously hurt in elevator crashes. Still they panic and still they panic about their panic. This is what is happening, and will continue to happen, as the result of September 11 terrorism. Millions of Americans and other people who were nowhere near the World Trade Center and their friends and relatives did not directly suffer from the attacks are now terrified about tall buildings, loud noises, taking airplane flights, walking in the streets, using bridges, tunnels, and subways, living in New York, visiting New York, and scores of other things that before the terrorist attacks they unthinkingly, unfearfully enjoyed. Yes, millions!

The dismal results of this kind of panic have multiple levels. *First: panic.* "I *should be* perfectly safe and obviously I'm not and that's *terrible!* My friends and relatives and other people *absolutely should not* be in danger and obviously they are, and that's awful!"

"I absolutely should be able to do something to stop this kind of terrorism and I can't do anything to stop it. I'm an inadequate weakling!" "Stopping terrorism is hopeless, so I can't be happy in any way while it continues."

Second: panic about panic. "I must not panic! I'm a weakling for panicking! Not everybody panics as badly as I do and I should have much more control over myself than I have!" "My panic makes me feel very uncomfortable and I can't stand such discomfort! I can't be happy *at all* with it!"

Third: panic about restrictions and personal and other losses caused by terrorism. "I *can't stand* the restrictions and losses caused by the terrorism and the precautions we must now take!" "The discomforts and sorrows stemming from the terrorism absolutely *should not* exist. They're *too* hard to bear, *too* depriving and *awful*!"

Fourth: panic about responding so badly to the results of the terrorism. "I *absolutely shouldn't* take the restrictions and the losses caused by the terrorism so badly! I must not be such a ninny and make myself completely desolate when I am *merely* deprived by those losses and restrictions!"

On several levels, then, you can panic yourself about the existence of terroristic dangers. You can panic about your panic, about your panic about your restrictions and losses connected with terrorism, and about your weakness and frustration intolerance in not bearing up under these restrictions as well as you supposedly *should* tolerate them. The ways in which you can upset yourself and upset yourself about upsetness are almost endless!

On a personal level, disturbing yourself about terrorism (primary disturbance) and disturbing yourself about disturbing yourself (secondary disturbance) have many emotional and practical consequences. But, fortunately, you are a constructionist who has been born and raised with the ability to reduce your disturbances. Yes, even your disturbablity. That's what I keep showing how to do in this book. However, you have little ability to quickly help reduce other people's primary and secondary disturbances or to reduce the economic, political, and social results of their upsetablilty. What about *that?* Can you alleviate these grim results of what we can call tertiary consequences of disturbance? I think you can.

The terrorism of September 11, 2001, together with people's panic (and panic about their panic), has led to many socioeconomic problems, such as job losses, boycotts of tall buildings, reduced air travel, tourism losses, and more. Can you personally do anything to curtail these considerable problems? Yes. Although you cannot create miracles in this respect, here are some of the specific things you can do if you apply the theory and practice of REBT as described in this book to your and other people's panic about terroristic attacks.

1. *Be realistically concerned.* For many reasons that I have given in this chapter, terrorism like that of September 11, 2001, had better be one of your prime concerns. Especially given the developments of deadlier and more easily applied technology, it could—and already has—wreaked great havoc and could one of these days possibly wipe out the human race. Nuclear and medical "advances" march on. Do everything you can, politically and socially, to let your legislators know of your concern and your determination to act on it.

2. *Watch your unrealistic and illogical panicking.* Terrorism probably won't kill you and your loved ones, nor the entire human race, at least not today or tomorrow. Most likely, it can be cut down and perhaps ultimately abolished. But panic, raging, and damning of all terrorists may augment rather than reduce it. Terrorists commit evil deeds but are not evil people. Accept the sinner but not the sin. Dispute your overgeneralizing about terrorism, terrorists, and everything else. As Alfred Korzybski said in 1933, you *are* not and can't *be* what you *do*. For you do tens of thousands of things in your lifetime—and will keep doing them until you die. You and the terrorists cannot be totally and finally evaluated. You and they are an ongoing *process.*

3. *Watch your panicking about your panicking.* It is bad, but you are never a *bad person* for experiencing it. Intensely telling yourself, "I must not panic! I must not panic!" will usually *increase* your panicking, and its dismal results. Hate your panic, but never hate *yourself* for panicking.

4. *Don't horrify yourself about the restrictions and personal and social losses*

caused by terrorism. They are bad enough without your demanding that they *absolutely must not* exist and that you *can't stand* them and be happy *at all* if they do. As Reinhold Niebuhr noted at the beginning of the twentieth century, stoically *accept*—not *like*—what right now you cannot change.

5. *Don't panic about taking the losses and the restrictions of terrorism so seriously.* And don't panic about panicking about them, either. It would be lovely if you were stronger and less upsettable in this respect—but you don't *have* to be. Accept the grim results of terrorism when you cannot, for the present, change them; and accept your panicking reactions to these facts while you work at making your reactions healthy negative feelings, like strong sorrow and regret, instead of unhealthy negative feelings like panic and rage.

6. *Work at achieving less upsettability.* You will inevitably die anyway, so focus on living as happily as you can while you're alive and on finding some degree of happiness in spite of some of the worst things—such as terrorism—that may happen to you. When exceptionally bad things like terrorism occur, choose to feel strong but nondestructive emotions like constructively savoring your possible last moments. Practice this in advance, and be prepared for the worst that could happen.

7. *Try to teach others how to follow some of the foregoing principles and practices.* Try to teach your children, relatives, friends and acquaintances how to make themselves less disturbed about terrorism and less disturbed about their disturbances. This kind of teaching REBT to others may well help you use it more thoroughly on yourself!

8. *Do your best to aid community and social interests.* Try to see that antidamning, accept-the-sinner-but-not-the-sin philosophies are routinely taught to all children in the public, private, and parochial school system so that terroristic urges become minimized. If you choose, acquire a vital absorbing philosophy of social interest that will add to your healthy self-interest and thereby benefit you and other people.

Once again, I realistically emphasize that terrorism will not immediately go away, and that only in the long run will we minimize it. Education, not bickering and arguing, can presumably work. Meanwhile, here are some practical steps that you personally can take, even while terrorism and its exceptually harmful results continue. Take the above self-changing steps and consider acting constructively against some of the destructive consequences of terroristic activities.

- Stay with most of your usual personal and interpersonal pursuits even though there is *some* greater danger of your being harmed.

• Take the normal risks of traveling, and especially of flying, that you took before September 11, 2001, and don't contribute to airline disruption and economic losses.
• Take vacations and tours that you would normally take in "good" times.
• Have normal fears of living or working in extremely tall buildings—such as the Empire State Building—but not of *all* high-rises.
• Spend your income as you regularly would. Don't contribute to economic problems in your community by underspending on "dangerous" trips and vacations that are statistically only slightly riskier than they were before the terroristic events of September 11, 2001. Don't convince yourself that they are "terrible" risks for you just because the terroristic attack of September 11, 2001, made them fatal to others.

As you consider doing—or not doing—these "risky" things, don't go to ridiculous extremes. On the one hand, don't escalate your possible dangers and radically avoid them. Don't, for example, avoid *all* flying, *all* trips, or frequenting all tall buildings on the false assumption that these activities are *exceptionally* "dangerous" and that your phobias about them will *absolutely* save you and your loved ones from harm. These are dubious assumptions, will be overly restrictive, and will, if you and many others follow them, lead to severe economic and social consequences. They will—perhaps!—protect you, but create much communal, including ultimate *personal*, harm.

On the other hand, don't throw all caution to the winds and insist on flying carelessly checked planes, in very bad weather, with a group of strangely acting people, and without any flight insurance. Even under these conditions, your plane will most probably not be hijacked and you will be safe. But I wouldn't risk it, if I were you.

*

To review: In the short run, terrorism has been with us for many centuries and is, because of technological advances, getting worse. Stopping it will probably take many years of individual and group education. While doing your best to aid its demise, you can use REBT and other aspects of Cognitive Behavior Therapy to surrender your primary anxiety stemming from your insistences that terrorism *absolutely must not* exist. You can change them to strong preferences and thus minimize your ego anxiety ("I and my loved ones *must* have a guarantee that we will succeed in stopping it and *must not* be harmed!") and your discomfort anxiety ("The great inconvenience and dangers caused by terrorism *absolutely must not* plague me and my loved ones!"). You can also minimize your

secondary anxiety ("I *absolutely must not* be self-destructively panicked or depressed about my disturbing myself about terrorism!").

You could also stop yourself from agonizing about the dismal consequences of terrorism and from agonizing about your agonizing. You can then take several steps to live with real concern about terrorism and its prevention while taking practical steps to stop yourself and encourage others from unconsciously contributing to the social, political, and economic consequences that tend to follow terroristic acts and to distinctively exacerbate these consequences. By stopping to think before you act out of panic, you may contribute to cutting down the tertiary costs of terrorism, which often accompany the costs of primary panic and secondary panic *about* panic.

Appendix: Techniques for Disputing Irrational Beliefs (DIBS) If you want to increase your rationality and reduce your self-defeating irrational beliefs, you can spend at least ten minutes every day asking yourself the following questions and carefully thinking through (not merely parroting!) the healthy answers. Write down each question and your answers to it on a piece of paper; or else record the questions and your answers on a tape recorder.

1. ***What self-defeating irrational belief do I want to dispute and surrender?***

• *Illustrative Answer:* I must receive love from someone for whom I really care.

2. ***Can I rationally support this belief?***

• *Illustrative Answer:* No.

3. ***What evidence exists of the falseness of this belief?***

• *Illustrative Answer:* Many indications exist that the belief that I must receive love from someone for whom I really care is false:

a. No law of the universe exists that says that someone I care for must love me (although I would find it nice if that person did!).

b. If I do not receive love from one person, I can still get it from others and find happiness that way.

c. If no one I care for ever cares for me, which is very unlikely, I can still find enjoyment in friendships, in work, in books, and in other things.

d. If someone I deeply care for rejects me, that will be most unfortunate; but I will hardly die!

e. Even though I have not had much luck in winning great love in the past, that hardly proves that I must gain it now.

f. No evidence exists for any absolutistic must. Consequently, no proof exists that I must always have anything, including love.

g. Many people exist in the world who never get the kind of love they crave and who still lead happy lives.

h. At times during my life I know that I have remained unloved and happy; so I most probably can feel happy again under unloving conditions.

i. If I get rejected by someone for whom I truly care, that may mean that I

possess some poor, unlovable traits. But that hardly means that I am a rotten, worthless, totally unlovable individual.

j. Even if I had such poor traits that no one could ever love me, I would still not have to down myself as a lowly, bad individual.

4. ***Does any evidence exist of the truth of this belief?***

• *Illustrative Answer:* No, not really. Considerable evidence exists that if I love someone dearly and never am loved in return that I will then find myself disadvantaged, inconvenienced, frustrated, and deprived. I certainly would prefer, therefore, not to get rejected. But no amount of inconvenience amounts to a horror. I can still stand frustration and loneliness. They hardly make the world awful. Nor does rejection make me a turd! Clearly, then, no evidence exists that I must receive love from someone for whom I really care.

5. ***What are the worst things that could actually happen to me if I don't get what I think I must (or do get what I think I must not get)?***

• *Illustrative Answer:* If I don't get the love I think I must receive:

a. I would get deprived of various possible pleasures and conveniences.

b. I would feel inconvenienced by having to keep looking for love elsewhere.

c. I might never gain the love I want, and thereby continue indefinitely to feel deprived and disadvantaged.

d. Other people might down me and consider me pretty worthless for getting rejected—and that would be annoying and unpleasant.

e. I might settle for pleasures other than and worse than those I could receive in a good love relationship; and I would find that distinctly undesirable.

f. I might remain alone much of the time; which again would be unpleasant.

g. Various other kinds of misfortunes and deprivations might occur in my life—none of which I need define as awful, terrible, or unbearable.

6. ***What good things could I make happen if I don't get what I think I must (or do get what I think I must not get)?***

a. If the person I truly care for does not return my love, I could devote more time and energy to winning someone else's love—and probably find someone better for me.

b. I could devote myself to other enjoyable pursuits that have little to do with loving or relating, such as work or artistic endeavors.

c. I could find it challenging and enjoyable to teach myself to live happily without love.

d. I could work at achieving a philosophy of fully accepting myself even when I do not get the love I crave.

You can take any one of your major irrational beliefs—your *shoulds*, *oughts*, or *musts*—and spend at least ten minutes every day, often for a period of several weeks, actively and vigorously disputing this belief. To help keep yourself devoting this amount of time to the DIBS method of rational disputing, you may use operant conditioning or self-management methods (originated by B. F. Skinner, David Premack, Marvin Goldfried, and other psychologists). Select some activity that you highly enjoy that you tend to do every day—such as reading, eating, television viewing, exercising, or social contact with friends. Use this activity as a reinforcer or reward by *only* allowing yourself to engage in it *after* you have practiced Disputing Irrational Beliefs (DIBS) for at least ten minutes that day. Otherwise, no reward!

In addition, you may penalize yourself every single day you do not use DIBS for at least ten minutes. How? By making yourself perform some activity you find distinctly unpleasant—such as eating something obnoxious, contributing to a cause you hate, getting up a half-hour earlier in the morning, or spending an hour conversing with someone you find boring. You can also arrange with some person or group to monitor you and help you actually carry out the penalties and lack of rewards you set for yourself. You may of course steadily use DIBS without any self-reinforcement, since it becomes reinforcing in its own right after awhile. But you may find it more effective at times if you use it along with rewards and penalties that you execute immediately after you practice or avoid practicing this rational emotive behavior method.

Summary of Questions to Ask Yourself in DIBS

1. *What self-defeating irrational belief do I want to dispute and surrender?*

2. *Can I rationally support this belief?*

3. *What evidence exists of the falseness of this belief?*

4. *Does any evidence exist of the truth of this belief?*

5. *What are the worst things that could actually happen to me if I don't get what I think I must (or do get what I think I must not get)?*

6. *What good things could I make happen if I don't get what I think I must (or do get what I think I must not get)?*

Disputing (D) your dysfunctional or irrational Beliefs (iBs) is one of the most effective of REBT techniques. But it is still often ineffective, because you can easily and very strongly hold on to an iB (such as, "I absolutely must be loved by so-and-so, and it's awful and I am an inadequate person when he/she does not love me!"). When you question and challenge this iB you often can come up with an Effective New Philosophy (E) that is accurate but weak: "I guess that

there is no reason why so-and-so must love me, because there are other people who will love me when so-and-so does not. I can therefore be reasonably happy without his/her love." Believing this almost Effective New Philosophy, and believing it lightly, you can still easily and forcefully believe, "Even though it is not awful and terrible when so-and-so does not love me, it really is! No matter what, I still need his/her affection!"

Weak, or even moderately strong, Disputing will therefore often not work very well to help you truly disbelieve some of your powerful and long-held iBs; while vigorous, persistent Disputing is more likely to work.

One way to do highly powerful, vigorous Disputing is to use a tape recorder and to state one of your strong irrational Beliefs into it, such as, "If I fail this job interview I am about to have, that will prove that I'll never get a good job and that I might as well apply only for low-level positions!"

Figure out several Disputes to this iB and strongly present them on this same tape. For example: "Even if I do poorly on this interview, that will only show that I failed this time, but will never show that I'll always fail and can never do well in other interviews. Maybe they'll still hire me for the job. But if they don't, I can learn by my mistakes, can do better in other interviews, and can finally get the kind of job that I want."

Listen to your Disputing in an audio recording. Let other people, including your therapist or members of your therapy group, listen to it. Do it over in a more forceful and vigorous manner and let them listen to it again, to see if you are disputing more forcefully, until they agree that you are getting better at doing it. Keep listening to it until you see that you are able to convince yourself and others that you are becoming more powerful and more convincing.

References Note: I have made every effort to include in these references the authors mentioned in the text. But many of them were famous writers whose classic works can easily be found and others were, for one reason or another, unavailable. Consequently, the majority of the important authors, but not all of them, are listed in these references.

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