
Comments on Barry Morris' Affect, Albert Ellis, and Rational-Emotive Therapy

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I am naturally pleased with Barry Morris' article, because it solidly promulgates the *emotive* element in Rational-Emotive Therapy (R.E.T.). As I have been pointing out for many years, in R.E.T. "rational" does *not* mean *unemotional* but *appropriately*—and often very strongly—emotional (Ellis, 1962, 1985, 1988). When something goes against people's basic desires and goals and they feel quite sad, irritated, concerned, or frustrated, such feelings are viewed in R.E.T. as being self-helping and therefore, "rational." Why? Because they motivate these people to try to *change* the source of their troubles and make themselves happier. If, conversely, they feel calm, serene, indifferent, or resigned—as Epictetus wrongly advised—they will rarely push themselves to change their environment or themselves.

Moreover, if harassed people feel panicked, depressed, enraged, or self-pitying, they are more than likely to act foolishly and self-defeatingly. So R.E.T. clearly defines their disruptive or overly-stoical emotions as "disturbances," while it defines self-propelling and self-actualizing feelings as "appropriate" and "healthy." (Ellis & Becker, 1982; Ellis & Dryden, 1987; Ellis & Harper, 1975).

Do I personally behave "appropriately" when I am emotionally aroused? For the most part, yes—after practicing R.E.T. on myself for many years. But not always. Sometimes, as Barry shows, I feel quite irritated and raise my voice to clients or workshop participants. I am then, if you want to use the word "anger," angry at their *acts*. But I also sometimes slip and make myself enraged at and damning of the people who commit "wrong" acts. At such times, I almost immediately recognize that I am *inappropriately* furious, note that I am demanding that the offenders *absolutely should not be* the way they indubitably are, force-remind myself, "They *should* and *must* act that abominable way right now because they *are* behaving in that manner. Tough!" I then immediately become unenraged—but still feel appropriately sorry and disappointed that the offenders are behaving the way that they do behave.

I am far from perfect in this respect and still have a long way to go. But I shall keep using R.E.T. on myself until I more frequently have strong *appropriate* and less often have powerful *inappropriate* feelings. I hope!

References

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