

## The Three Core Irrational Cognitions (Albert Ellis) & Acceptance

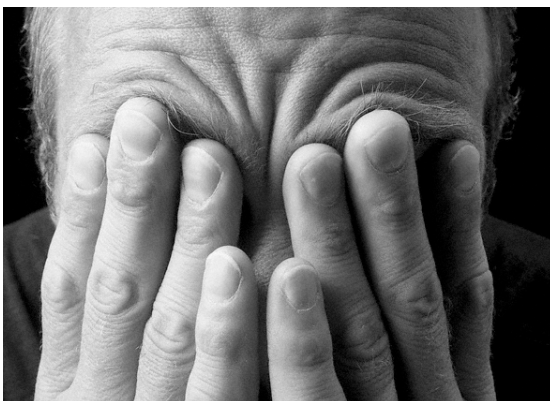
**Albert Ellis – one of the founding fathers of CBT** – says that problematic irrational thinking stems from three core ‘irrational cognitions’ – illustrated thus:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>How I am:</b>         | I <i>must</i> be thoroughly competent at all times, or else I am incompetent and worthless!   |
| <b>How you are:</b>      | You <i>must</i> treat me reasonably, considerately, and lovingly, or you are a bad rotten evil person and you <i>should</i> be blamed and damned for your horrible treatment of me!                 |
| <b>How the world is:</b> | Things and conditions <i>must</i> be <i>absolutely</i> as I want them to be, and <i>must</i> never be too difficult or frustrating, otherwise life is awful, terrible, catastrophic and unbearable! |

From these ‘**musts**’ (demands) stem other irrational beliefs... such as ‘shoulds and oughts’ - eg:

*Everyone should love me, or else I am unloveable. I should always be successful, or else I’m a failure. When things are scary, I should be able to cope. I shouldn’t feel so shy and nervous - what’s wrong with me?... etc.*

**Dr Ellis coined some colourful phrases for this thinking :  
 ‘awful-ising’, ‘terrible-ising’, ‘absolutistic’, ‘I-can’t-stand-it-itis’, and ‘musterbation’...**



The theory is that actually life is random - sometimes unfair, sometimes difficult and frustrating – and that’s just how it is. Our ‘**demands**’ on life – ourselves, others and the world – are the core of our problems. Our aim is to replace demands with ‘**preferences**’ – to restructure our irrational unhealthy thinking with rational healthy alternative thinking, using mental tasks and worksheets (homework!), until we have new hardwired thinking that **respects and has unconditional acceptance of ourselves, others, and the world**. Big job? It can be done! (check the next page for more Ellis style typical irrational beliefs and disputes that illustrate what this means).

**Task: refute the three core Ellis irrational cognitions with new healthy replacements...**

(Pair up (move around!) - form and flip chart)

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>How I am:</b>         |  |
| <b>How you are:</b>      |  |
| <b>How the world is:</b> |  |

## 12 typical irrational beliefs and disputing statements

(review and think about these... they are expanded 'Ellis' irrational cognitions)



|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1.</b> The idea that it is a dire necessity for adults to be loved by significant others for almost everything they do...</p>         | <p>... instead of their concentrating on their own self-respect, on winning approval for practical purposes, and on loving rather than on being loved.</p>  |
| <p><b>2.</b> The idea that certain acts are awful or wicked, and that people who perform such acts should be severely damned...</p>         | <p>... instead of the idea that certain acts are self-defeating or antisocial, and that people who perform such acts are behaving stupidly, ignorantly, or neurotically, and would be better helped to change. People's poor behaviors do not make them rotten individuals.</p> |
| <p><b>3.</b> The idea that it is horrible when things are not the way we like them to be...</p>   | <p>... instead of the idea that it is too bad, that we had better try to change or control bad conditions so that they become more satisfactory, and, if that is not possible, we had better temporarily accept and gracefully lump their existence.</p>                        |
| <p><b>4.</b> The idea that human misery is invariably externally caused and is forced on us by outside people and events...</p>             | <p>... instead of the idea that neurosis is largely caused by the view that we take of unfortunate conditions.</p>  |
| <p><b>5.</b> The idea that if something is or may be dangerous or fearsome we should be terribly upset and endlessly obsess about it...</p> | <p>... instead of the idea that one had better frankly face it and render it non-dangerous, and, when that is not possible, accept the inevitable.</p>  |
| <p><b>6.</b> The idea that it is easier to avoid than to face life difficulties and self-responsibilities...</p>                            | <p>... instead of the idea that the so-called easy way is usually much harder in the long run.</p>  |
| <p><b>7.</b> The idea that we absolutely need something other or stronger or greater than ourself on which to rely...</p>                   | <p>... instead of the idea that it is better to take the risks of thinking and acting less dependently.</p>   |
| <p><b>8.</b> The idea that we should be thoroughly competent, intelligent, and achieving in all possible respects...</p>                    | <p>... instead of the idea that we would prefer to do well rather than always need to do well, and accept ourself as a quite imperfect creature, who has general human limitations and specific fallibilities.</p>  |
| <p><b>9.</b> The idea that because something once strongly affected our life, it should indefinitely affect it...</p>                       | <p>... instead of the idea that we can learn from our past experiences but not be overly-attached to or prejudiced by them.</p>   |
| <p><b>10.</b> The idea that we must have certain and perfect control over things...</p>   | <p>... instead of the idea that the world is full of improbability and chance and that we can still enjoy life despite this.</p>  |
| <p><b>11.</b> The idea that human happiness can be achieved by inertia and inaction...</p>  | <p>... instead of the idea that we tend to be happiest when we are vitally absorbed in creative pursuits, or when we are devoting ourselves to people or projects outside ourselves.</p>  |
| <p><b>12.</b> The idea that we have virtually no control over our emotions and that we cannot help feeling disturbed about things...</p>    | <p>... instead of the idea that we have real control over our destructive emotions - if we choose to work at changing the "musturbatory" hypotheses which we often employ to create them.</p>   |

(Recommended resource: [www.stressgroup.com](http://www.stressgroup.com) - sign up to this website resource for more information...)

**Task: create your own 'demand' statements and disputing 'preference' statements...**

| <b>Demand (irrational - unhealthy)</b>  | <b>Preference (rational / healthy)</b>  |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Example: I'm in a hard place right now and it's hard to cope. It's not fair. My friends are horrible, they're so selfish. They have NO CLUE of my life and how hard it is. Why aren't they calling me and taking care of me? They think I'm a pain in the bum. I bet they talk about me behind my back. That's it. I'm not going to do the things I do for them anymore, they can get lost.</i></p> | <p><i>I would prefer it if my friends were unfailingly kind and attentive to me, and it disappoints me that they don't seem to give my situation much thought – but I understand that I can't 'mind-read' them and that it's not really likely that they're doing it deliberately to disrespect me. People are governed by their own thoughts and priorities. I will try to unconditionally accept our relationships and not impose my 'should and must and ought' demand thinking on them.</i></p> |
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