

HOW MY THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY HAS INFLUENCED AND CHANGED OTHER PSYCHOTHERAPIES

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ABSTRACT: In this article I address three main questions: (a) how psychotherapy has changed the modern world of psychology, (b) how it has changed the modern world in general, and (c) how my special form of psychotherapy, rational emotive behavior therapy, and its derivative, cognitive behavior therapy, have changed the recent theory and practice of psychotherapy.

HOW PSYCHOTHERAPY HAS CHANGED THE MODERN WORLD OF PSYCHOLOGY

In the 1890s, experimental psychology was already something of a going concern, with several outstanding studies being published by Hermann Ebbinghaus, William James, Wilhelm Wundt, and other pioneers in psychology. Psychotherapy existed, mainly in the area of hypnosis, but it produced few important studies. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, Sigmund Freud, and other therapists began to teach their theories and practices widely and to influence the modern world of psychology. They showed how people could get disturbed about external events and also disturb themselves, that they could be treated psychologically, and that their cognitions and emotions could be changed significantly by their relationships with a therapist. Those findings were augmented by the behavioral studies of Ivan Pavlov and John B. Watson early in the twentieth century, and psychotherapy began to be applied to many children and adults and to become a very

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important part of psychology. The assessment and treatment of people's disorders grew by leaps and bounds in several ways:

1. Clinical psychology became an important aspect of psychology, and many psychologists began to practice it along with their teaching and doing psychological experiments.
2. Many more research studies started to be conducted with human as well as with animal subjects.
3. Clinical psychologists and psychotherapists began to comprise the majority of members of the American Psychological Association as well as other professional groups, such as the American Counseling Association, The American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists, and the American Association of Marital and Family Therapists.
4. Psychological assessment and psychotherapy, which had originally been mainly cognitive, began to use many emotional and behavioral methods and to integrate them with cognitive procedures.

HOW PSYCHOTHERAPY HAS CHANGED THE WORLD

As the twentieth century progressed and the twenty-first century began, psychology in general and psychotherapy in particular has importantly changed the world in many ways, including:

1. Emotional disturbance and mental illness, which were once looked on as shameful and horrible, have now largely come out of the closet—especially in the United States and Europe—and are often considered part of the natural human condition. Unfortunate and handicapping, yes, but not damnable.
2. In consequence, literally millions of people in modern countries are now being treated, and letting others know they are being treated for emotional-behavioral problems.
3. Personality characteristics and difficulties are being widely discussed in the public media, including novels, plays, poems, newspapers, radio, TV, and films. Practically all the important media describe people dealing with external disasters and also with internal and self-created problems. What used to be considered the worst and most private behaviors—such as incest, sexual abuse, and homosexuality—are now openly revealed and discussed.
4. Politically and religiously active individuals now often reveal their emotional feelings and sexual inclinations, and are much more accepted by people when they do so.

5. As psychotherapists teach their clients and their readers to give up damning themselves and other people for their problem behaviors, the general public in Western civilization has become considerably more forgiving and less damning of this kind of behavior.
6. Psychological self-help materials have become widely used and discussed, have helped people considerably by themselves and along with therapy, and have also served to improve people's attitudes toward mental illness.

HOW MY THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY HAVE INFLUENCED AND CHANGED OTHER PSYCHOTHERAPIES

When I began to evolve rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in 1953 and started to practice it and promulgate it in 1955, there was little cognitive therapy being practiced in the United States. Several therapists, including Pierre Janet (1898), Alfred Adler (1926), and Paul Dubois (1907) used it, but it had fallen into disrepute because of the influence of Freud (1964), Rogers (1961), Perls (1969), and other relationship and experiential therapists and practitioners. I persisted in my highly unpopular ways, and by the 1960s, other cognitive behavior therapies (CBT) started to be used such as those of Aaron Beck (1976), William Glasser (1965), Albert Bandura (1997), and Donald Meichenbaum (1992). Soon the cognitive-behavior movement was thriving.

Today, CBT and REBT are exceptionally popular and have influenced and modified—sometimes significantly—the other psychotherapies in these and other ways:

1. Hundreds of controlled outcome studies have been done showing that CBT and REBT are significantly effective (Hollon & Beck, 1994; Lyons & Woods, 1991) with many kinds of clients.
2. Influenced by these studies, empirically backed psychotherapy has become popular and been endorsed by the Division of Clinical Psychology of the American Psychological Association and several other influential groups.
3. A very popular movement has worked to integrate different forms of psychotherapy and to have practitioners use a wide variety of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral methods. Many more methods are now regularly employed by most therapists than they previously were.
4. As a result of my promulgating rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), Beck's cognitive therapy has begun to use general philosophic

teaching as well as the disputing of specific irrational and dysfunctional beliefs to help people reconstruct their destructive beliefs, feelings, and behavior. In particular, REBT has influenced many therapists to help their clients to accept these general helpful philosophies:

- a. *Unconditional self-acceptance*. Clients are taught how to accept themselves *unconditionally* and fully whether or not they perform well and are approved by significant others. They are instructed how to criticize and change their *behaviors* while unconditionally accepting their *self*, their *being*, and their *personhood* (Ellis 1962, 1994, 2001a, 2001b; Ellis & Harper, 1997; Rogers, 1961).
- b. *Unconditional other-acceptance*. REBT practitioners help clients to unconditionally accept *other people* fully while disapproving and possibly criticizing some of their *thoughts, feelings, and actions*. They learn to accept the *sinner* but not his or her *sins* (Ellis 2001a, 2001b; Rogers, 1961).
- c. *Unconditional life-acceptance (UOA) or high frustration tolerance (HFT)*. Clients are shown how to accept and not to awfulize about world conditions, but to push themselves to try to improve unfortunate conditions. They are encouraged to change what they can change and *accept*—but not to *like*—what they cannot change (Ellis 1962, 2001b; H. H. Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998; Niebuhr, in Pietsch, 1993).

In these and several other philosophical ways, REBT has for many years strongly, emotionally, and persistently encouraged therapists and their clients to achieve profound philosophic changes that will help them feel better, get better, and remain remarkably less disturbable (Ellis, 1999). It has thereby influenced other psychotherapies and hopefully induced them to be more effective.

5. REBT and CBT have not only helped to widen the scope of individual and group therapy but have led to the development of lectures, courses, workshops, and other presentations, as well as many kinds of self-help materials, that have taken psychotherapy to the masses. The future of therapy may well lie in many forms of educational adaptations to schools, business associations, religious groups, and other groups that will much more universally apply it to almost everyone. Let us hope so! If that transpires, psychotherapy will increasingly help to influence and change the world!

SUMMARY

Psychology has greatly grown and developed in the last 150 years and psychotherapy has notably advanced with it. In turn, psychotherapy has amazingly grown and has significantly influenced the general field of psychology. Psychology and psychotherapy have helped to change the mod-

ern world significantly. My special form of therapy, rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) has sparked the growth and development of cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) and in several ways helped create a revolution in the whole field of psychotherapy.

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