

Albert Ellis Believes That We Get Upset Due To A. What Others Say. B. What Others Say. C. What Has Happened.

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Understanding human emotions and reactions has been a central focus in psychology for decades. Among the many influential thinkers, Albert Ellis stands out as a pioneering figure, especially in the realm of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). His core belief that our emotional disturbances are largely shaped by our beliefs and interpretations of events has significantly influenced modern psychological approaches. In particular, Ellis posited that we often get upset due to specific cognitive patterns related to what others say and do, as well as what has happened in our lives. This article explores Ellis's perspective in detail, examining how our perceptions and beliefs about external events contribute to emotional upset, and how understanding this can lead to healthier emotional regulation.

Albert Ellis's Core Philosophy: The Role of Beliefs in Emotional Responses

The ABC Model of Emotional Disturbance

At the heart of Albert Ellis's approach is the ABC model, which describes how emotional disturbances are triggered:

- A (Activating Event): An external event or situation.
- B (Beliefs): The individual's interpretation or beliefs about the event.
- C (Consequence): The emotional or behavioral response resulting from the beliefs.

Ellis emphasized that it is not the event (A) itself that causes emotional upset, but rather the beliefs (B) about the event. For example, two people might witness the same comment (A), but their reactions (C) differ based on their beliefs about what that comment signifies.

The Three Sources of Upset According to Ellis

Ellis identified three primary sources that lead us to become upset:

1. What Others Say
2. What Others Do
3. What Has Happened

While these sources may seem external and uncontrollable, Ellis argued that the emotional impact depends largely on our beliefs about these sources.

1. What Others Say

One of the most common triggers for emotional upset is what others say. Words can be powerful, and our interpretations of others' comments often determine our emotional response. For example, if someone criticizes us, we might feel anger, shame, or sadness depending on how we interpret their words.

Ellis's Perspective:

Ellis believed that many emotional disturbances stem from taking others' words personally or believing that their criticisms reflect our worth. If we interpret a critical remark as a personal attack, we are likely to get upset. Conversely, if we recognize that the comment may stem from the other person's issues or is not a reflection of our worth, we can respond more calmly.

Common Cognitive Distortions in Response to Others' Words:

- Personalization: Believing that others' comments are about us personally.
- Overgeneralization: Assuming one negative comment reflects our overall worth.
- Labeling: Assigning negative labels based on what others say.

2. What Others Do

Actions speak louder than words, and how we perceive others' behaviors can be a significant source of emotional upset. For instance, being ignored, rejected, or treated unfairly can trigger feelings of hurt, anger, or frustration.

Ellis's Perspective:

He emphasized that reactions to others' actions are often rooted in our beliefs about fairness, justice, and self-worth. For example, if someone cuts in line, our upset depends on whether we interpret this as a personal disrespect or just a minor incident. Our beliefs about the importance of social norms and our self-respect

influence our emotional response.

Examples of How Beliefs Shape Reactions:

- Believing that being ignored is an intentional slight → feeling insulted.
- Interpreting someone's actions as a reflection of our value → feeling hurt.
- Seeing others' behavior as unfair → feeling anger or resentment.

3. What Has Happened

Past events, especially traumatic or negative experiences, can influence our current emotional state. While these events are outside our control, our beliefs about their significance and meaning sustain or diminish our upset.

Ellis's Perspective:

He argued that dwelling on past events and attaching negative beliefs to them perpetuate emotional distress. For example, believing that a failure in the past defines your entire worth can lead to ongoing feelings of inadequacy and despair.

How Beliefs about Past Events Affect Present Feelings:

- Viewing a past failure as proof of personal incapacity → feelings of hopelessness.
- Believing that "nothing will ever change" based on past experiences → feelings of helplessness.
- Interpreting past trauma as a defining trait → ongoing anxiety or depression.

How Our Beliefs Mediate Emotional Responses

Understanding Ellis's emphasis on beliefs highlights the importance of cognitive appraisal in emotional regulation. Two individuals experiencing the same external event can have vastly different emotional reactions depending on their beliefs.

Example Scenario:

Imagine you receive critical feedback at work.

- Person A believes, "This means I am incompetent." → Feels upset, anxious, or depressed.
- Person B believes, "This is an opportunity to improve." → Feels motivated and calm.

This illustrates that external events are neutral; it is our belief system that determines whether we get upset.

Common Cognitive Distortions That Lead to Upset

Ellis identified several cognitive distortions that amplify distress:

- Catastrophizing: Expecting the worst outcome.
- Black-and-White Thinking: Seeing situations as all good or all bad.
- Overgeneralization: Applying one negative experience broadly.
- Personalization: Taking responsibility for things outside our control.
- Should Statements: Rigid rules about how things should be, leading to frustration when unmet.

Recognizing and challenging these distortions is key to emotional well-being.

Practical Applications: How to Manage Upset According to Ellis

Understanding that our beliefs influence our reactions empowers us to change our responses. Here are some practical strategies based on Ellis's cognitive-behavioral approach:

1. Identify and Challenge Irrational Beliefs

- Ask yourself:
 - Is this belief based on facts or assumptions?
 - Is it helpful or harmful?
 - What evidence supports or contradicts this belief?
- Replace irrational beliefs with rational, balanced thoughts.

2. Reframe External Events

- Recognize that external events are neutral; your interpretation creates the emotional impact.
- Practice viewing situations from different perspectives.

3. Accept What Cannot Be Changed

- Focus on your reactions rather than trying to control external events.
- Develop tolerance for uncertainty and unpredictability.

4. Practice Emotional Detachment from Others' Opinions

- Understand that what others say or do reflects their issues, not your worth.
- Cultivate self-acceptance and confidence independent of external validation.

5. Use Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)

- REBT, developed by Ellis, encourages actively disputing irrational beliefs and replacing them with rational ones.
- Regular practice can lead to more stable and positive emotional responses.

The Benefits of Applying Ellis's Insights

Implementing Ellis's principles can lead to numerous psychological benefits:

- Reduced anxiety and depression
- Increased resilience to stress
- Improved self-esteem
- Better interpersonal relationships
- Enhanced emotional regulation skills

By understanding that our upset is often rooted in our beliefs about external events, we gain the power to change our emotional landscape through cognitive restructuring.

Conclusion

Albert Ellis's belief that we get upset due to what others say, what they do, and what has happened underscores the importance of our cognitive interpretations. External events are inherently neutral; it is our beliefs—often distorted or irrational—that generate emotional distress. Recognizing and modifying these beliefs through rational thinking and cognitive-behavioral techniques can significantly reduce upset and promote mental well-being. Embracing Ellis's insights empowers individuals to take control of their emotional responses, leading to a more balanced, resilient, and fulfilling life.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Albert Ellis's main belief about the cause of getting upset?

Albert Ellis believes that we get upset primarily due to our beliefs about what others say or think, as well as our interpretations of past events.

How does Albert Ellis explain emotional upset in terms of external influences?

Ellis explains that emotional upset arises when we give excessive importance to what others say, making their opinions or judgments a source of distress.

According to Albert Ellis, how does past experience influence our emotional reactions?

Ellis suggests that our reactions are often triggered by how we interpret what has happened to us, especially if we hold rigid or irrational beliefs about these events.

What role do beliefs play in Albert Ellis's explanation of emotional upset?

Beliefs are central; irrational or rigid beliefs about what others say or what has happened can lead to feelings of upset and distress.

Can changing our beliefs help reduce emotional upset according to Albert Ellis?

Yes, Ellis advocates for Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), which involves challenging and changing irrational beliefs to reduce emotional distress.

How does understanding Ellis's view help in managing emotional reactions?

By recognizing that our upset is often caused by our beliefs rather than external events, we can work on changing those beliefs to better manage our emotional responses.

Additional Resources

Albert Ellis Believes That We Get Upset Due To A. What Others Say. B. What Others Say. C. What Has Happened.

Exploring the Foundations of Emotional Distress: Albert Ellis's Perspective on External Influences

In the realm of psychological theory and therapeutic practice, few figures have left as profound a mark as Albert Ellis. Renowned as the founder of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), Ellis revolutionized our understanding of the human emotional landscape. Central to his approach is the assertion that much of our distress stems not from external events themselves, but from the beliefs and interpretations we assign to those events. At the core of this idea lies a deceptively simple yet deeply impactful statement: **We get upset due to A. What Others Say. B. What Others Say. C. What Has Happened.**

While this phrase might appear redundant at first glance, it encapsulates Ellis's nuanced view of how external factors—be they spoken words, societal messages, or actual occurrences—serve as catalysts for emotional upset when intertwined with our internal beliefs. This article endeavors to dissect this concept thoroughly, exploring its theoretical underpinnings, practical implications, and relevance in contemporary psychology.

The Theoretical Underpinnings of Ellis's Viewpoint

The ABC Model: A Foundation of REBT

At the heart of Ellis's philosophy is the ABC model, a framework designed to clarify the dynamics of emotional disturbance:

- A (Activating Event): An external event or situation.
- B (Belief): The interpretation, belief, or attitude about the event.
- C (Consequence): The emotional or behavioral response.

Ellis posited that it is not the activating event (A) that directly causes emotional upset, but rather the belief (B) about that event. This distinction is pivotal; it shifts the locus of emotional distress from external circumstances to internal cognitive processes.

Implication: By changing maladaptive beliefs, individuals can alter their emotional responses, leading to healthier mental states.

The Emphasis on External Influences

Within this framework, the phrase "A. What Others Say" underscores the significance of external verbal messages—comments, criticisms, praise, or societal expectations—that influence our beliefs. Ellis believed that humans are social creatures inherently influenced by the opinions and judgments of others, which can either bolster self-esteem or undermine it.

Key ideas include:

- Social validation: Our need for acceptance makes us sensitive to external evaluations.
- Internalization of external messages: Repeated external comments can become ingrained beliefs.
- Conditional self-worth: Tying self-esteem to external approval leads to vulnerability.

Dissecting the Components: A Closer Look at the Causes of Upset

A. What Others Say

This component emphasizes the role of external verbal interactions:

- Criticism and Rejection: Negative comments can trigger feelings of inadequacy or anger.
- Praise and Approval: While generally positive, overreliance on external validation can foster dependency.
- Societal Messages: Cultural norms and media influence beliefs about oneself and others.

Examples:

- An employee receives a harsh critique from a supervisor, leading to feelings of worthlessness.
- A teenager hears peers mocking them, resulting in anxiety or depression.

Therapeutic Insight: Recognizing that such external inputs are external to one's core self can help individuals challenge maladaptive beliefs.

B. What Others Say (Reiteration for Emphasis)

The repetition of this point in Ellis's phrase highlights the persistent impact of external communication. It underscores the importance of understanding that external verbal cues are pervasive and often subconscious.

Impacts include:

- Reinforcement of self-concept.
- Formation of core beliefs over time.
- The potential for external messages to distort reality.

C. What Has Happened

This component refers to actual events or circumstances—things that literally occur in our environment:

- Losing a job.

- Being involved in an accident.
- Experiencing a breakup.

Distinction from external speech: While these events are tangible, Ellis emphasized that the emotional response is mediated through our interpretation of these events.

Example: Two individuals experience unemployment; one perceives it as a temporary setback, while another sees it as a personal failure. Their emotional responses will differ based on their beliefs.

The Interplay Between External Inputs and Internal Beliefs

How External Factors Trigger Emotional Responses

Ellis's model makes it clear that external influences act as triggers. They are not inherently upsetting; rather, they become so when interpreted through maladaptive beliefs.

Scenario Analysis:

External Input	Belief	Emotional Response	Potential Behavior
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Criticism from boss	"I'm incompetent"	Shame, anger	Defensive or withdrawal
Praise from peers	"I'm accepted"	Confidence, happiness	Positive engagement
An accident occurs	"I'm helpless"	Fear, despair	Avoidance or catastrophizing

The Role of Beliefs

The core of Ellis's theory is that beliefs—often automatic and subconscious—determine whether external inputs lead to distress. These beliefs can be:

- Rational: Flexible, realistic, and adaptive.
- Irrational: Rigid, unrealistic, and maladaptive.

Examples of Irrational Beliefs:

- "I must be perfect to be worthwhile."
- "Others must approve of me, or I am worthless."
- "Things should always go my way."

When external messages align with irrational beliefs, emotional distress intensifies.

Therapeutic Implications: Challenging External-Source Beliefs

Cognitive Restructuring

Ellis's REBT aims to identify and dispute irrational beliefs rooted in external influences. Therapists guide clients to:

- Recognize the origin of their beliefs.
- Evaluate the rationality of those beliefs.
- Develop healthier, more adaptive beliefs.

Practical steps include:

1. Discerning the external input (What was said or what happened).
2. Identifying underlying beliefs.
3. Challenging irrational beliefs through logical examination.
4. Replacing them with rational alternatives.

Strategies to Mitigate External Influence

- Developing internal validation: Building self-esteem independent of external approval.
- Practicing cognitive defusion: Detaching from external comments.
- Fostering resilience: Accepting external events and messages without overreacting.

Contemporary Relevance and Criticisms

The Modern Context: Social Media and External Messages

In today's digital age, external influences are more pervasive than ever. Social media platforms serve as constant sources of external commentary—likes, comments, shares—that can profoundly affect beliefs and emotions.

Considerations:

- The validation-seeking cycle.
- The rise of cyberbullying and its impact.
- The amplification of societal standards and judgments.

Criticisms and Limitations

While Ellis's focus on external influences is foundational, some critiques include:

- Overemphasis on cognition: Underestimating biological or unconscious factors.
- Cultural variability: Different cultures have varying sensitivities to external opinions.
- Situational nuances: Not all external events or speech are equally impactful.

Practical Applications and Case Studies

Case Study 1: Workplace Criticism

A middle-aged professional receives a negative review. Initially upset, they reflect on their beliefs and recognize that their self-worth was tied to external approval. Through REBT, they challenge the irrational belief that "my value depends on my boss's opinion" and work towards internal validation.

Case Study 2: Social Media Feedback

A teenager experiences anxiety after receiving negative comments online. Recognizing that these comments are external stimuli, the individual learns to question the beliefs that "these comments define me," reducing their emotional impact.

Conclusion: Recognizing External Influences as Triggers, Not Causes

Albert Ellis's assertion that "We get upset due to A. What Others Say. B. What Others Say. C. What Has Happened" encapsulates a vital insight into emotional regulation. It emphasizes that external inputs—words, actions, events—are mere triggers that activate underlying beliefs. Our emotional health depends significantly on how we interpret and respond to these external stimuli.

Understanding this dynamic empowers individuals to develop resilience, challenge irrational beliefs rooted in external influences, and cultivate internal sources of validation. In an era saturated with external messages, Ellis's insights remain remarkably pertinent, guiding both therapeutic practice and personal growth.

By recognizing the external origin of many upsetting stimuli and focusing on internal belief systems, we can take proactive steps to foster emotional well-being and navigate life's challenges with greater equanimity.

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Say B What Others Say C What Has Happened

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