

Disputing Irrational Beliefs

Beliefs and Thoughts have an impact on how you feel and how you feel influences what you choose to do. If the thoughts are irrational, they can trigger, amplify and maintain uncomfortable emotions.

Beliefs → Thoughts → Feelings → Experiences

Rational beliefs distinguish between “wants” and “needs”. They are based on facts, help protect us from probably harm, help us achieve short term and long term goals, help us avoid significant conflict with other people and help us feel the emotions we want to feel. It is not the event, but rather it is our **interpretation** of the event that causes our emotional reaction.

The process of Disputing Irrational Beliefs (DIBs) consists of challenging a belief by asking the following questions:

1. Can I rationally support this belief? Are these ideas logically connected? Who supports this idea and what is their authority?
2. What evidence exists of the falseness of this belief? Are there exceptions?
3. What are the worst things that could actually happen if I don't get what I think I want?
4. What good things could I make happen if I don't get what I think I want?

In other words: Question your view of reality. Question your perspective. Is it working for you or is it working against you?

“Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them.”

- Epictetus, 1st century A.D.

Challenging Questions Worksheet

The following are a list irrational beliefs and challenging questions. These beliefs will lead to thoughts that support feeling mad, sad, angry, hopeless, etc. The challenging questions will help in stopping these irrational beliefs in their tracks. The next page contains a worksheet you can use to put the challenging questions into practice.

Common irrational beliefs:

1. I am only as good as what I achieve.
2. If he/she doesn't love me then I'm worthless.
3. Other people should follow the rules I know to be right.
4. It's not okay to have this feeling. I should just be happy.
5. The problems in this relationship are all my fault/their fault.
6. This situation is hopeless; nothing will ever improve.
7. If this person doesn't like me then other people must feel the same way.
8. I must be able to do it all; if I can't then there's something wrong with me.
9. My life is too hard. Life shouldn't be this difficult and frustrating.
10. Anger is not safe; I must not let myself get angry about this.

Challenging Questions:

1. What is the evidence for or against this idea?
2. Am I confusing habit with a fact?
3. Are my interpretations of the situation too far removed from reality to be accurate?
4. Am I thinking in all or nothing terms?
5. Am I using words or phrases that are extreme or exaggerated like always, forever, never, need, should, must, can't and every time?
6. Am I taking selected examples out of context?
7. Am I making excuses? I'm not afraid; I just don't want to go out. The other people expect me to be perfect. I don't want to make the call because I don't have time.
8. Is the source of information reliable?
9. Am I thinking in terms of certainties instead of probabilities?
10. Am I confusing a low probability with a high probability?
11. Are my judgments based on feelings rather than facts?
12. Am I focusing on irrelevant factors?

Challenging Questions Worksheet

Questioning your beliefs and thoughts can be helpful in undoing irrational beliefs. Pick one of the beliefs from the previous page. Write it in the belief line below. Then select four challenging questions and write them below along with your answers using a new perspective.

Belief: _____

Challenging questions and answers:

Question 1:

Answer using new perspective:

Question 2:

Answer using new perspective:

Question 3:

Answer using new perspective:

Question 4:

Answer using new perspective: