



## From Self-Defeat to Rational Living

### Twelve Self-defeating Beliefs

- I need love and approval from those significant to me – and I must avoid disapproval from any source.
- To be worthwhile as a person, I must achieve, succeed at whatever I do, and make no mistakes.
- People should always do the right thing. When they behave obnoxiously, unfairly or selfishly, they must be blamed and punished.
- Things must be the way I want them to be – otherwise life will be intolerable.
- My unhappiness is caused by things outside my control – so there is a little I can do to feel any better.
- I must worry about things that could be dangerous, unpleasant or frightening – otherwise they might happen.
- I can be happier by avoiding life's difficulties, unpleasantness, and responsibilities.
- Everyone needs to depend on someone stronger than themselves.
- Events in my past are the cause of my problems – and they continue to influence my feelings and behaviors now.
- I should become upset when other people have problems and feel unhappy when they're sad.
- I should not have to feel discomfort and pain – I can't stand them and must avoid them at all costs.
- Every problem should have an ideal solution, and it is intolerable when one can't be found.

### Twelve Rational Beliefs

- Love and approval are good things to have, and I'll seek them when I can. But they are not necessities – I can survive (even though uncomfortably) without them.
- I'll always seek to achieve as much as I can – but unflinching success and competence is unrealistic. Better I just accept myself as a person, separate from my performance.
- It's unfortunate that people sometimes do bad things. But humans are not yet perfect and upsetting myself won't change that reality.
- There is no law which says that things must be the way I want. It's disappointing, but I can stand it – especially if I avoid catastrophizing.

- Many external factors are outside my control. But it is my thoughts (not the externals) which cause my feelings. And I can learn to control my thoughts.
- Worrying about things that might go wrong won't stop them from happening. It will, though, ensure I get upset and disturbed right now!
- Avoiding problems is only easier in the short term – putting things off can make them worse later. It also gives me more time to worry about them!
- Relying on someone else can lead to dependent behavior. It is OK to seek help – if I learn to trust myself and my own judgment.
- The past cannot influence me now. My current beliefs cause my reactions. I may have learned these beliefs in the past, but I can choose to analyze and change them in the present.
- I cannot change other people's problems and bad feelings by getting myself upset.
- Why should I not feel discomfort and pain? I don't like them, but I can stand it. Also, my life would be very restricted if I always avoided discomfort.
- Problems usually have many possible solutions. It is better to stop waiting for the perfect one and get on with the best available. I can live with less than the idea.

Material adapted from: SMART Recovery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Handbook Workbook. Abbott, W., Brasstad, J., et al., 2013.