



## Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in Supporting Substance Abuse Recovery

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### DESCRIPTION

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) provides a structured framework for addressing the psychological components of substance abuse. Substance dependence often emerges from a combination of environmental stressors, learned behaviours and maladaptive thought patterns. REBT targets the cognitive aspect, emphasizing that irrational beliefs contribute significantly to the persistence of addictive behaviours. Individuals struggling with substance use frequently hold thoughts that justify consumption or exaggerate the perceived inability to cope without substances. By addressing these beliefs, REBT aims to create a foundation for more adaptive decision-making and emotional regulation. REBT begins by assisting clients in identifying thought patterns that encourage substance use. Common irrational beliefs include the conviction that certain situations must be perfectly managed or that one cannot endure emotional discomfort without using a substance. Therapists guide individuals to question these assumptions and consider alternative interpretations. For instance, a person may believe that any social setback requires alcohol to cope. Through structured disputation exercises, they learn to examine evidence supporting or refuting this belief, exploring healthier strategies to manage discomfort. This cognitive restructuring forms the basis for reducing reliance on substances.

Behavioral interventions complement cognitive exercises in REBT. Clients are encouraged to gradually confront situations previously associated with substance use while employing coping strategies that do not involve chemicals. Such exercises help them experience firsthand that challenging circumstances can be navigated without resorting to addictive behaviour. Over time, repeated practice strengthens

confidence and reinforces the connection between rational thinking and adaptive behaviour. This experiential component distinguishes REBT from purely cognitive approaches, emphasizing practical skill-building in real-life contexts. Another essential element of REBT in substance abuse recovery involves addressing self-defeating beliefs about personal control and self-worth. Many individuals struggling with addiction internalize messages of helplessness, guilt or shame. REBT helps reframe these perceptions by encouraging a distinction between personal responsibility and self-blame. Acknowledging past behaviour without adopting a defeatist mindset enables clients to focus on actionable steps toward recovery rather than being overwhelmed by negative self-evaluations. This approach fosters resilience and enhances motivation to maintain positive changes.

The application of REBT also emphasizes anticipating and managing triggers that might provoke substance use. Clients are trained to recognize early warning signs of craving or emotional distress and employ disputation techniques to counter irrational impulses. For example, if a person feels compelled to drink after a stressful day, they are guided to analyze the underlying thought, evaluate its accuracy and consider healthier responses. By integrating cognitive awareness with behavioral choices, REBT promotes a proactive strategy for relapse prevention. Empirical studies support the effectiveness of REBT in substance use interventions. Research suggests that individuals who engage in REBT demonstrate improvements in coping skills, reductions in cravings and lower rates of relapse compared to those receiving standard counseling alone. The therapy's focus on teaching lifelong skills contributes to sustained recovery, as clients are equipped to address new stressors without automatically resorting to substance use. Moreover,

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the self-reflective exercises embedded in REBT encourage long-term monitoring of thought patterns, ensuring that progress is maintained beyond the therapy sessions. The adaptability of REBT makes it suitable for diverse populations within substance abuse treatment programs. Techniques can be customized for adults, adolescents or those with co-occurring mental health concerns. While the structure of the therapy remains consistent identifying, disputing and replacing irrational beliefs the specific exercises can vary according to developmental stage, cognitive style and severity of dependence. For instance, role-playing scenarios or visual aids may be used to enhance understanding for younger clients, while adults may benefit more from reflective journaling or discussion-based exercises.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy offers a comprehensive approach to addressing the cognitive and emotional factors that contribute to substance abuse. By focusing on the identification and modification of irrational beliefs, the therapy empowers individuals to regain control over their decisions and emotional responses. The combination of cognitive restructuring, behavioral experimentation and self-reflection allows clients to reduce dependence on substances and develop sustainable coping mechanisms. Through REBT, recovery extends beyond symptom management, providing tools that enhance resilience, self-awareness and long-term emotional well-being.