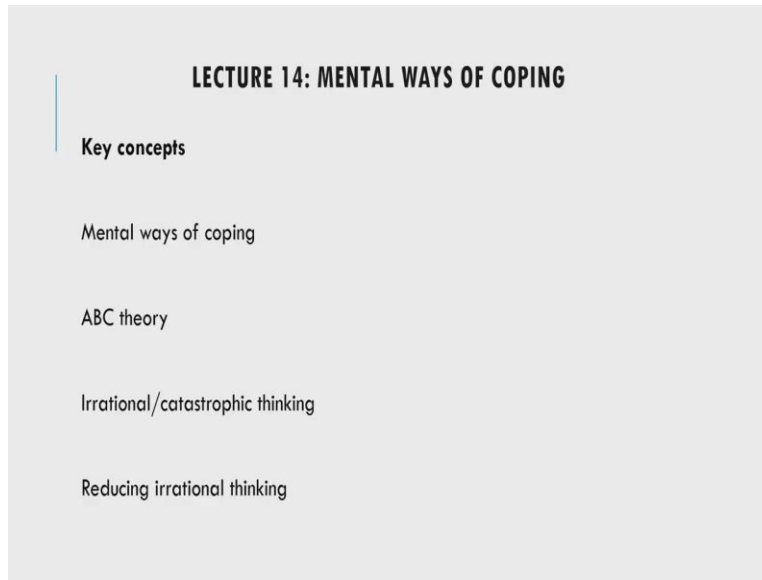


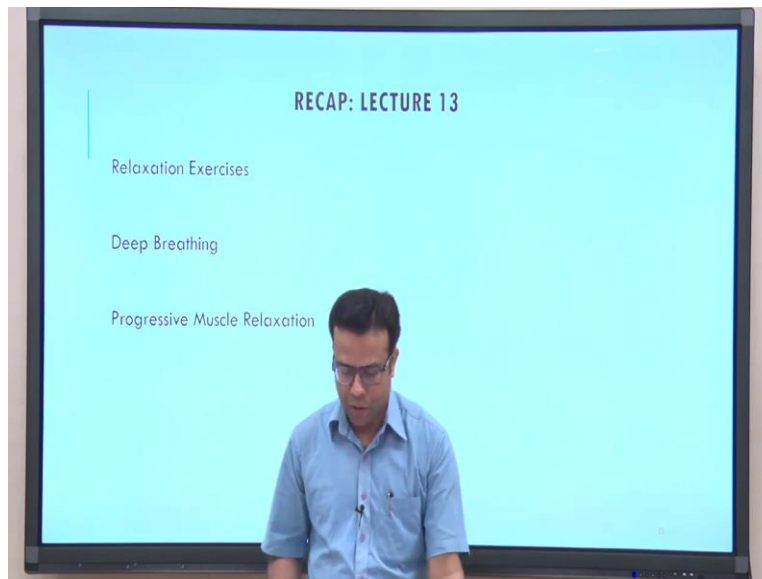
Psychology of Stress, Health, And Well-being
Professor. Dilwar Hussain
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati
Lecture 14
Mental ways of coping

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I welcome you all to the fourteenth lecture of the the course titled Psychology of Stress, Health, and Well-being. So, this is overall the fourteenth lecture but it is second lecture of Module 5. So, before we talk about today's lecture, let us have a brief recap of the last lecture, that is, lecture thirteen.

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So, in the previous lecture, we spoke about relaxation exercises as a technique for dealing with stress. We also spoke about how relaxation exercises are becoming more and more popular as a method or coping mechanism for dealing with stress and anxiety. There are a plethora of relaxation exercises to choose from. However, we have explicitly addressed two such strategies: one is deep breathing, and the other is progressive muscle relaxation.

So, in the case of deep breathing, it's also known as abdominal breathing or diaphragmatic breathing, as we've mentioned. In general, as we've mentioned, our breathing pattern is linked to our mental states. So, when we are stressed or anxious, our breathing patterns tend to become shallow and rapid, whereas when we are relaxed, our breathing patterns tend to become deep and slow.

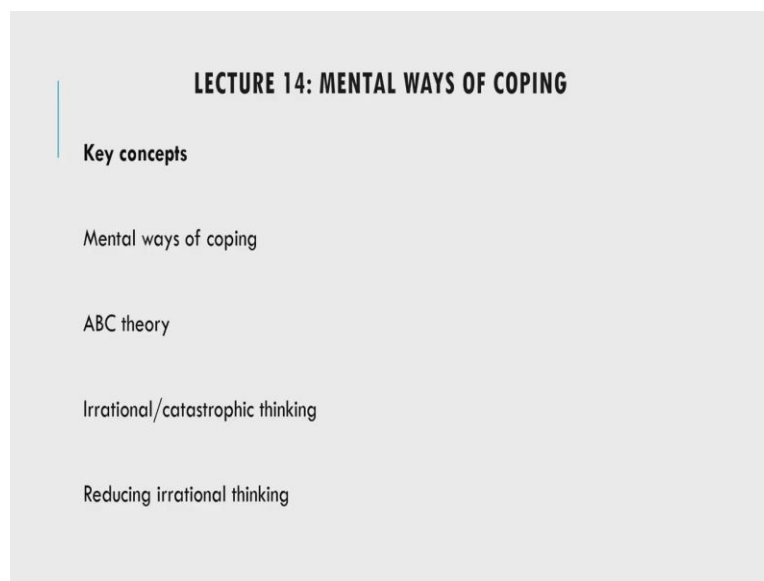
So, if you exercise or introduce deep breathing while we are feeling stress and anxiety, it will change our mental experiences or states from anxious to more relaxed.

In the last lecture, we attempted to see the processes and how they function. And we also, we've provided guidance on how to do such exercises, and we've kind of illustrated how to do such deep breathing exercises with one simple exercise.

Progressive muscle relaxation is the second concept that we explored in the previous lecture. As the name suggests, it causes a state of relaxation in the body by gradually relaxing one muscle

group after another in the body. And the fundamental concept behind progressive muscle relaxation is that we try to tense and then relax a muscle group. As a result, creating a contrast aids us in inducing a much deeper relaxation state in our bodies. Not only does it relax your mind, but it also relaxes your body's muscles. And the stress we feel in our minds is linked to the stress we feel in our muscles. It manifests itself in the form of aches and pains in our bodies. In the previous class, we also went through the step-by-step method of progressive muscle relaxation. So, there are a few main concepts that we covered in the previous lecture.

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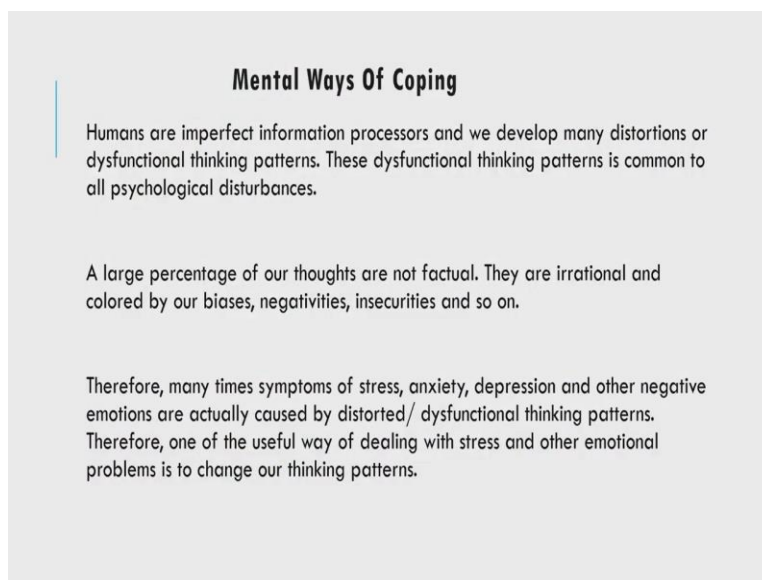
So today, we will talk about the mental ways of coping. So, we've been talking about different constructive coping strategies, and the last two lectures have been all about physical forms of coping, where we've talked about physical exercise as a coping strategy, followed by relaxation exercises as a coping strategy. Today, we'll discuss how to address and deal with stress at the mental level. So, what are the approaches to mental coping, and what are the aspects that we need to consider?

Since, as we discussed in our first lectures, the majority of the time, stress is largely subjective and dependent on our interpretation of the situation. As a result, thought processes play a critical role in the creation and experience of stress. Finding the causes at the mental level, or at the level of thought, is therefore important.

So today we'll look at, and try to understand, how the mind causes stress, and what we can do on a mental level to cope with stress, anxiety, and other emotional or psychological problems in general. As a result, it encompasses much more than just stress management. It's all about coping with psychological and emotional problems.

So we'll talk about Albert Ellis' ABC Theory in that context. We'll also go over the terms irrational and catastrophic thinking. We'll also talk about how to cope with stress and emotional disturbances by reducing irrational, catastrophic thinking. So, let's take a look at these ideas.

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Mental Ways Of Coping

Humans are imperfect information processors and we develop many distortions or dysfunctional thinking patterns. These dysfunctional thinking patterns is common to all psychological disturbances.

A large percentage of our thoughts are not factual. They are irrational and colored by our biases, negativities, insecurities and so on.

Therefore, many times symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression and other negative emotions are actually caused by distorted/ dysfunctional thinking patterns. Therefore, one of the useful way of dealing with stress and other emotional problems is to change our thinking patterns.

So, when we talk about mental ways of coping, the concept is that human beings are imperfect information processors, particularly when it comes to our own lives, our futures, and other people, all of which involve a lot of subjective elements. In this context, we don't process information in a really objective, factual manner. As a result, we often create distortions or dysfunctional thought habits in our daily lives.

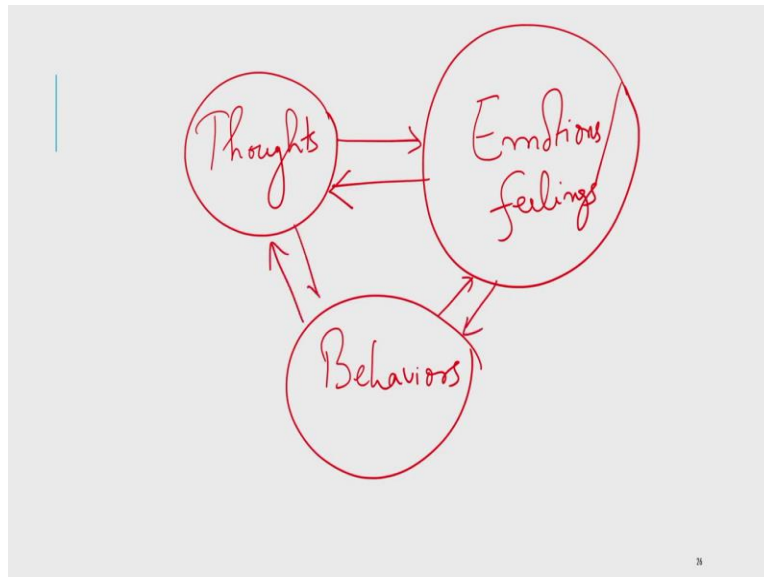
We usually pick them up from our surroundings or by conditioning, and most of us develop dysfunctional or distorted thought processes. As a result, when we consider different aspects of our lives, the future, or other subjective elements, we do not think objectively or factually, and we do not perceive circumstances objectively. In our thought systems, there are many dysfunctions and distortions. As a result, a significant portion of our opinions are not based on

facts. So, using a variety of instances, we will demonstrate how these are valid in certain cases. And many of our thought processes are irrational, colored by our prejudices, negatives, insecurities, and other factors.

As a result, the majority of our thoughts are not factual in the sense that they are distorted by our insecurities, perceptions, or belief structures that we pick up from our surroundings, cultures, and people around us. And these are reflected in everything we think in our daily lives. That is why many of our ideas are irrational and distorted in this way. As a result, many of the psychological and emotional disturbances that we encounter in our lives, such as stress, anxiety, and depression, can be primarily triggered by such distorted or dysfunctional thought processes. As a result, in order to cope with difficult situations or different emotional and psychological disturbances, it is important to resolve our thinking process, to examine our thought processes, and to consider how we process information.

It is important to look at our thought processes because we only produce emotions, stress, and anxieties in our minds. There are physical ways that we have addressed, and these are also really important ways of coping with, but it is also important to look at our thought processes because we only generate emotions, stress, and anxieties in our minds. So, though processes play very important role. So, when we discuss coping with thought processes, the basic premise is that our thoughts and emotions are closely intertwined.

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So, if you notice, I'll simply draw it here. Thoughts emotions and behaviour are interconnected with each other and influence each other. As a result, these are all interconnected aspects of our experience. As a result, the way we think affects our emotions, or our emotions when activated by something influences our thoughts, and our thoughts and emotions influence our behaviour. As a result, actions are often influenced by our thoughts and emotions. As a result, they are all connected to one another. As a result, we must discuss the causal factors, which in certain cases are our thought processes. As a result, we must consider what causes certain emotional disturbances, including our stressful experiences.

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ABC Theory

Albert Ellis (1957) developed Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) that focus on changing the thinking or beliefs pattern to reduce maladaptive emotions and behavior.

According to Ellis, you feel the way you think. Therefore, feelings can be changed by changing our thinking patterns.

Problematic emotional reactions are caused by negative self talk which Ellis called as irrational/catastrophic thinking. Ellis used ABC sequence to explain this idea.

So, let's take a look at the various mechanisms or processes of thoughts and emotions, as well as their interconnections, using one important model or theory suggested by Albert Ellis, known as the ABC Theory. And this is a well-known theory whose ideas are used in a variety of psychotherapies, especially cognitive therapies, which focus on our thinking processes and attempt to resolve psychological and emotional problems by addressing them.

As a result, the ABC Theory is widely used in multiple psychotherapies, and these concepts are used to address a wide range of psychological problems. So, let's take a look at what the ABC model is all about. So, around 1957, Albert Ellis developed Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, or REBT for short. The main goal of this therapy is to change our thinking or beliefs, as well as our belief patterns and thought processes, in order to minimize maladaptive emotions and behaviour.

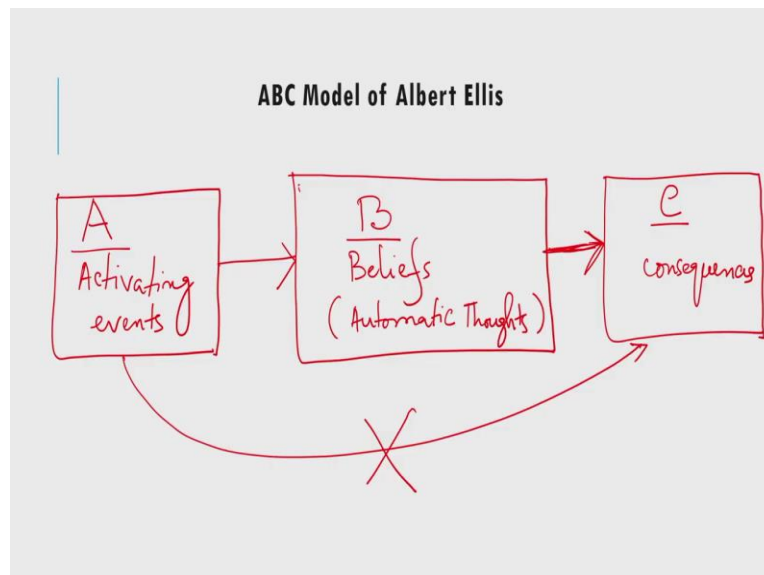
So, in order to change our emotions and behaviors, thought processes should be changed. Therefore, by altering our thought patterns, we can alter our feelings, as well as our behaviors and actions. So according to Ellis, we feel the way we think. e feel the way we think, according to Ellis. So, in a nutshell, our thoughts and emotions are in certain ways synchronized. As a result, if we have positive thoughts, we would have positive emotions. Negative emotions lead to negative thoughts, and negative thinking leads to negative emotions, and vice versa. Positive emotions can lead to positive feelings, whereas negative emotions can lead to negative thoughts. As a result, thoughts and emotions are related in some way, and each may influence the other.

So, whatever feelings we experience, we will experience similar thought patterns, both positive and negative. As a result, shifting our thought patterns will alter our emotions.

So the theory is that you can't change your feelings directly, and it's generally very difficult to do so. So, one better way to change our emotions, especially negative and upsetting emotions, is to change our thinking processes, since changing our thought processes is much easier than changing our emotions. As a result, intervention at the level of thought is more effective.

According to Ellis, negative self-talk or negative thought patterns, which Ellis refers to as irrational or catastrophic thinking, trigger the troublesome emotional reactions. According to him, irrational or catastrophic thought stimulates or causes most negative emotions. As a result, we'll try to figure out what constitutes irrational, catastrophic thinking. So, what is it about thinking that causes this? Using the ABC sequence, he attempted to describe the entire phenomenon of how thought affects emotions. Let us try to understand what the ABC sequence is.

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So, the ABC model essentially discusses, so A is basically activating events, so A, any event that occurs in your life is an activating event that causes certain emotional reactions. B stands for beliefs, which are largely unconscious and automatic in nature. The letter C stands for consequences.

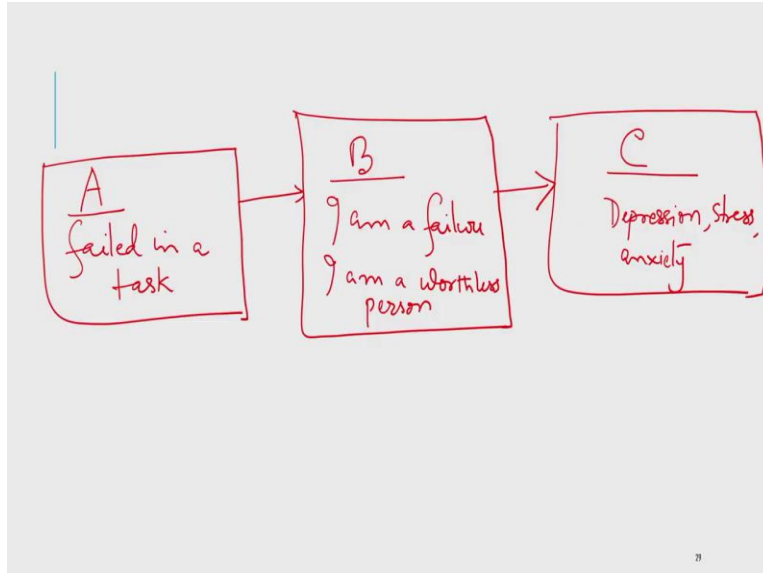
So, according to Ellis, this is the sequence by which we can describe how an event causes emotional reaction. So, let's assume something happens, which is called an activating event, and you feel any negative emotions, such as depression, tension, or anxiety. Between the event and the consequence, there is something called the B factor, which is also known as belief.

So, A triggers B, or beliefs, events trigger certain belief systems in us, or certain thought processes, largely which are automatic, and B eventually causes C, or consequences, emotional consequences, or whatever.

So some case, some negative event occurs in your life, and you become distressed, nervous, stressed, or whatever it is. So, in general, people assume that the event is what triggers C; this is a common assumption. So, I said that I am depressed or anxious as a result of a failure or inability to perform in an event. As a result, we associate A with C. As a result, we commonly believe that the A is to blame for all of the emotional effects, such as anxiety, depression, and so on.

This, according to Ellis, is incorrect; A never triggers C. This is not the way to go. Rather, A causes B, and B, in turn, causes C. So, what does it mean that if a negative event occurs in your life? It will induce some beliefs in us, some beliefs, that is, the way you think about the event. One may say my life is doomed or what will happen to me? Some kind of thought processes will kind of stimulated by this event. So, what are your thoughts on the event? And, as a result of these thought processes or belief systems, emotional effects such as stress, anxiety, and depression can occur. As a result, it is the belief system that is triggered by the incident that is responsible for the consequences, rather than the event itself. But, in general, we believe that the incident is the source of all emotional effects, which is incorrect. As a result, this is the model. So, to help you understand, here's an example.

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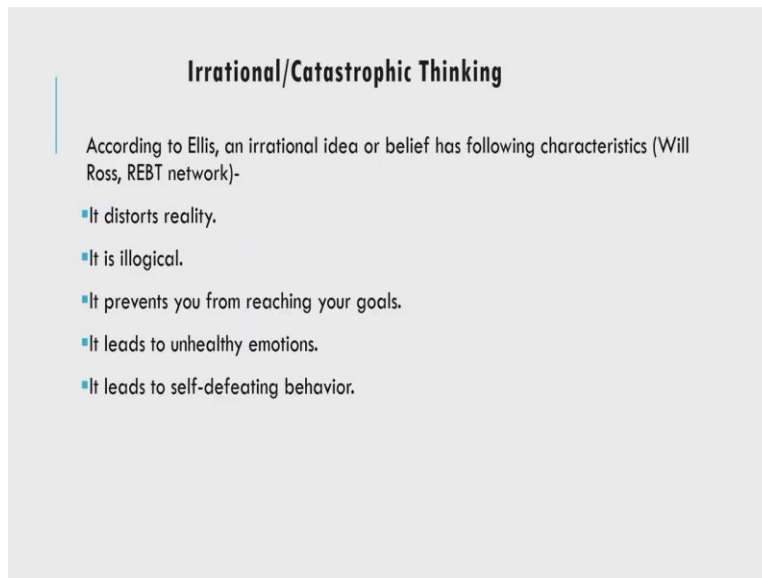


So let us say, A an event happens in life which is, you failed in a task. So, this is the A, activating the event. Whatever event, let us say you appeared for an interview and you failed in it you did not, you could not perform well, and you could not get selected there, whatever it is, it could be anything. You failed in a task. So that is the event. And this event, causes, let us say C. So generally the consequence of this event could be let us say, it could be whatever, depression, stress, anxiety, etc. Depending on your situation, you may experience various kinds of emotions. Now, Ellis says, it is not this failure in a task that is causing depression or anxiety or stress. Failure itself is not causing. What is happening, when you failed in a task, it stimulated certain beliefs. Beliefs such as, it could stimulate certain automatic, unconscious beliefs, such as I am a failure, I am a worthless person etc., etc. There can be many such thought processes may be stimulated by failure in a task. Many times it may happen very automatically, unconsciously. You may not even be aware of it. You fail in a task and automatically, you feel I am a failure in life, you make it, exaggerate it and think very negatively. And you may feel, I am a worthless person or I may never be able to get success in life. So many thought processes can come up in your mind. Mostly very automatic and unconscious. Depending on your conditioning and learning experiences in your past.

So this, this thought processes are actually causing stress and depression. Not the failure in an event. So, this is actually causing the C, C part or consequences of the event. So because, there may be many other individuals who might have failed in the same task and they might not be influenced by it simply because they are thinking about it in a very different way.

So, it is how you think about the event that is causing the emotional consequences, not the event itself. So, the event never actually causes anything; it is how in between the events and consequences, your beliefs and thoughts. So, this is the meaning of ABC sequence or ABC model to understand how our thought processes influence emotions.

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Irrational/Catastrophic Thinking

According to Ellis, an irrational idea or belief has following characteristics (Will Ross, REBT network)-

- It distorts reality.
- It is illogical.
- It prevents you from reaching your goals.
- It leads to unhealthy emotions.
- It leads to self-defeating behavior.

Ellis says irrational and catastrophic thoughts cause all the negative emotions and various psychological disturbances. So, he kind of collectively called them irrational or catastrophic thought processes. So generally, because of these irrational thought processes, all these negative emotional and psychological disturbances and disorders happen. At least, one of the main reasons for that. So, let us see what is this irrational, catastrophic thinking occurs at the B part in the ABC model, which causes negative emotions.

So, according to Ellis, an irrational idea or belief has specific characteristics. One of these characteristics is irrational beliefs or ideas distort reality. For example, in our earlier example, where we say somebody failed in a task and thinking that I am a failure in life. So, this is a distortion of reality. Why is this distortion? Because this is not the truth. Failing in one task cannot make you a failure as such in the totality of your life.

So, this person is distorting reality. Objectively, if you see, it is failing in one particular task, but if the person thinks that it is a failure of my life as such, then it is distortion, distorting the

situation, or the perception is distorted. It is illogical simply because failing in one task cannot lead to failure in whole life as such. So, it is an irrational thought.

Irrational thoughts also prevent you from reaching your goals. So generally, when you exaggerate negative aspects of a situation and other things, you will not try to act proactively in the future. So, it will kind of prevents you from reaching your goals. So, you will not do things required to reach your goals simply because you are too pessimistically thinking about it. And it will decrease your motivation level. And it leads to unhealthy emotions; we have already seen emotions are directly related to our thought processes. So, the moment you say, I am a failure in life, I mean, it is bound to cause many emotional disturbances. You are bound to experience depression and sadness in your life. And it leads to self-defeating behavior. So, behaviors that will create obstacles in reaching your goals. We have already discussed that. Because once your motivation is decreased and you see things pessimistically, you will not do the right things to reach your goals. So you will avoid things, avoidance strategies will be used, and they will be kind of self-defeating behaviors. So, these are some of the important characteristics of irrational or catastrophic thinking.

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We have many irrational ideas and beliefs. However, Ellis found out that there are three main and core irrational beliefs. Others are variations of these beliefs. They are based on a demand – about ourselves, others, or the environment. These are-

1. "I must be outstandingly competent, or I am worthless."
2. "Others must treat me considerately, or they are absolutely rotten."
3. "The world should always give me happiness."

Can you think why are these thoughts irrational?

So, Albert Ellis was a therapist. From his experiences with the patients, he found many such irrational thought processes prevalent among human beings with psychological issues and disturbances. However, some thought processes are very common, and they are based on

demands about ourselves, about others, about the environment. So, based on what we do, what we expect from our own selves, from other people around us, from the environment around us, he said these three important irrational beliefs are most common. Obviously, there are many variations to that can happen, there may be many other irrational beliefs but he found these three are more common among people.

One is, I must be outstandingly competent or I am worthless. This is one common irrational belief prevalent among human beings. So, people have assumptions that they want to be outstandingly competent or otherwise they feel that they are worthless person. Second is, other must treat me considerably or they are absolutely rotten. So, people have a lot of expectations from other people around them and assume that they should always treat you with considerable approval and love etc.

Third, the world should always give me happiness. So, it is a kind of implicit belief that one should always get happiness from the world. So, if I ask someone whether you subscribe to this kind of thought processes, many may consciously think they do not subscribe to these kind of thought processes. However, if you see human behavior, it reflects, they kind of dwell on this kind of thought process. For example, if somebody experiences some rejection from somebody whom they care and love, many people will experience devastating emotions, negative emotions. Why that person rejected me? So indirectly what is happening, you believe that people around you should always accept you, approve you with love and affection. People may not consciously believe these thoughts, but it is evident from human behavior that they believe in these irrational thoughts unconsciously. So, this may be very unconsciously rooted in our mind. So little bit of failure, rejection, sufferings disturb people so much, simply because they have this kind of deeper belief systems which many people may not be aware of them consciously.

So there are a few examples of irrational beliefs, but one thing to notice about them is that they are really absolute statements; you constantly want something to happen in your life or something should never happen; something should always happen. As a result, absolute statements like this are typical of irrational beliefs and thought processes.

So can you, for example, think why are these very irrational thoughts? Why these thoughts are called as irrational thoughts? Let us say, the second thought which is very common among

people that others must treat me considerably. Here, must indicate an absolute statement. So why do you think this is an irrational thought? What could be the reason behind it?

So, if you think little bit logically, you can find such thoughts are irrational simply because it is impossible to be liked by all people around you. It is simply not possible. And nobody is liked by all people around them. There will always be some people who may not like you and some will like you. It is because people have different tastes and likings. As a result, some people may like your qualities while others may dislike them. Even if you are highly famous and decent in nature, some individuals simply do not like good people. So, what are you going to do about it? So, in a nutshell, it's simply impossible. The great people we worship may be worshiped after death, but while they were alive, they faced many oppositions, criticisms, and disapproval from society.

So, it is simply not in the nature of things for everyone to like or approve of you at all times; it is simply not possible. As a result, it is irrational to anticipate that everyone around you would always approve of you and would always treat you affectionately. Furthermore, there is nothing wrong with becoming famous and impressing other people, but if you strive too hard all the time to please other people, you will not have time or energy to do things that you enjoy. You'll be constantly striving to keep up with other people and impress them, which may not be a good thing in the long run. And people also get tired of you, if you try too much to impress them. So, in that sense, such thought processes are illogical and irrational.

So, we have a lot of such irrational thoughts that are producing a lot of emotional disruptions while a lot of these sufferings are truly self-created. We noted in the stress characteristics section that many stressful and negative emotional experiences are self-created. When we say that, we are attempting to communicate it through these types of cognitive processes. Many times, there is an objective reason for being disturbed by something, but it is often exaggerated by such ideas.

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These catastrophic thinking are based on irrational assumptions, are automatic habitual and unconscious.

These beliefs take the shape of absolute statements and has many thinking errors such as-

- ignoring the positive,
- exaggerating the negative, and
- overgeneralizing.

So, as we have tried to demonstrate, these catastrophic thoughts are based on irrational assumptions, which are mostly automatic, habitual, and unconscious. It can even be conscious at times. So something happens, and your mind is automatically activated as a result of your previous conditioning. These are completely automatic and unconscious thinking. As a result, you may be unaware that they are operating in your mind. As a result, this view usually takes the form of an absolute statement and contains many cognitive errors, such as ignoring the positive side of things. So, if some one negative thing happens then you simply are exaggerating it so much that you are not seeing that there are many positive aspects to your life also.

So, in our previous example, if you fail at one task and declare that your life is a failure, you are emphasizing the negative aspect of your life while disregarding the many wonderful events that have occurred in your life. As a result, you're disregarding the positive, magnifying the negative, and overgeneralizing.

So you failed in one domain, facet, or area of your life, and you're equating that to every other facet of your life. That is the definition of overgeneralization. As a result, you are generalizing it to other aspects of your life where it is unrelated. So, these are some of the additional aspects or features of irrational thinking.

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Reducing Catastrophic/Irrational Thinking

The major aim of the REBT is to reduce the irrational thinking using our logical and rational faculties. In this way we will be able to change our emotional experiences in the positive direction. There can be two major steps in the process-

- (1) Detecting irrational thoughts

- (2) Disputing the irrational assumptions

So, obviously, the crucial question is, now that we understand that such irrational beliefs are producing a lot of emotional disturbances in us, in many instances where our sufferings may be self-created by such thinking, what is the crucial question? Where we should not be suffering so much objectively, but are exaggerating them and suffering, how sufferings are blown out of proportion. So it is critical to understand how to limit such thought processes, such irrational thought processes, in order to lessen our bad emotional experiences. So, because such thoughts will exist, we cannot entirely eliminate them, but we may lessen them. So that's the plan.

So, the main goal of Ellis' Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, is to reduce such irrational thinking. So, in treatment, a professional mostly assists you in detecting and reducing them.

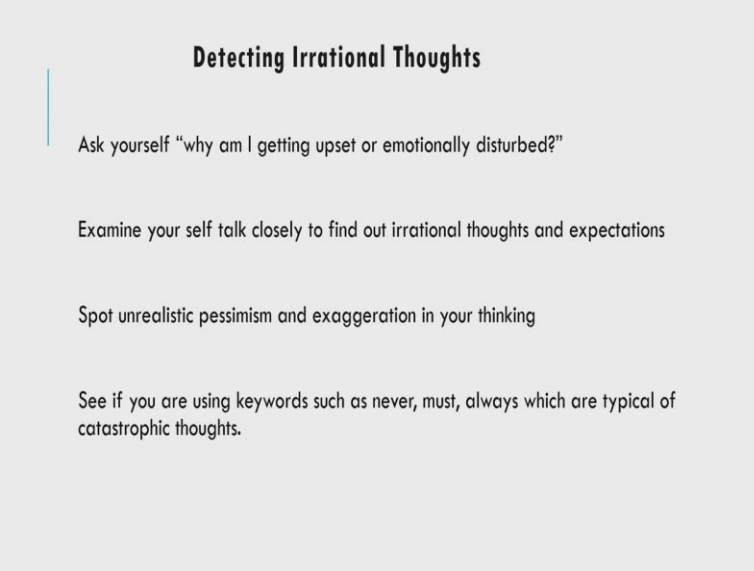
So, using our logical and rational faculties, we can eliminate illogical thinking. So, when you know something is irrational, the only thing you can do to remove it is to apply your logical abilities. Make use of our logical abilities. Only then can we perceive that anything is unreasonable. So, using our rational faculties, logical faculties to reduce irrational thinking is the purpose of lot of therapies, particularly, rational emotive behavior therapies and other cognitive therapies.

So in this way, we will be able to change our emotional experiences in the positive directions. So, this is how emotions are changed by changing our thinking processes. So generally, there are two steps involved in it, in terms of reducing catastrophic or irrational thoughts. So these steps,

professionals can also help you in that way, and we may sometimes utilize these processes on our own to deal with our irrational thinking.

So first step is, detecting irrational thoughts. So, before we can do anything about something, we need to detect it, we need to understand that it is there. So, detection is very important. Half of our task is actually the detection part. Many people are not able to detect it, as they are not even aware that such thoughts are there. So, detection is very important. If you become aware that such thoughts are there and such thoughts are causing problems, then most of our problems will be automatically solved because you know these are the issues. So, detection is very important. So, detection is the first part of it. And the second part is disputing them. Once you know that such thoughts are there, the next important thing is to dispute them by using our rational faculties and logical faculties. So, let us see in a more detailed way as to how these can be done.

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Detecting Irrational Thoughts

- Ask yourself “why am I getting upset or emotionally disturbed?”
- Examine your self talk closely to find out irrational thoughts and expectations
- Spot unrealistic pessimism and exaggeration in your thinking
- See if you are using keywords such as never, must, always which are typical of catastrophic thoughts.

So, detecting irrational thoughts is very important. The first thing is, we need to try to find out a thought. How do we detect any thoughts? How do you know that certain thoughts are there in your mind? How can we detect our thought processes?

So, if you observe your mind, you will see that our thoughts are mostly manifested in the form of self-talk, in terms of language, so it represents in terms of talking, in terms of, most of the time, we are talking to ourselves. If you observe yourself, you will notice that even when no one is around, we are constantly talking to ourselves. So, this self-talking are basically thought processes that are going on in your mind.

As a result, language is crucial in mental development. We cannot have advanced mental processes unless we have language. As a result, language is a key instrument for communicating complex thinking processes. So that is why human beings have evolved language systems as they have evolved thought processes. So, detection of any thought is primarily looking at how you talk to yourself. So, this is one important way. Another way our thoughts are expressed in terms of images by which we imagine things and events. But mostly, our thought processes are expressed in terms of self-talk.

So, you observe how you are basically talking to yourself. What are the contents of that talk? This is the way to detect a thought. So, for detecting an irrational thought, it is important you ask

yourself, why are you getting upset. So, let us say something happened and you are getting upset. So, ask yourself why are you getting upset?

So, by asking this question, you trace back to the thoughts that are creating that emotion from emotion. So, let's say you're feeling depressed, sad, or stressed about something. If you ask yourself, "Why am I getting anxious about it?" or "Why am I getting sad about it?" you'll be able to identify the thought that's generating it. As a result, we'll provide more examples to help you comprehend. So, ask yourself why you're so upset.

So, if you can trace the thoughts that are producing these emotional disturbances utilizing that question, it will be lot easier. Then closely examine your self-talk to uncover irrational thoughts and expectations, or, as I put it, how you're talking and what the content of your self-talk is that you're talking to yourself. Irrational thoughts can be detected from there.

Examine your thinking for exaggerated pessimism and exaggeration. You can tell if you're exaggerating things based on your self-talk. Is there any proof of this, or is it just my own mental make-up? Or am I making them up on my own? Am I exaggerating it, I am too much exaggerating this or are there any objective truth in it?

If you use keywords like "never," "must," or "always," these are major signs of irrational thoughts. The majority of irrational thoughts are absolute statements. It must happen, it must always happen, thus absolute claims are important elements of irrational ideas.

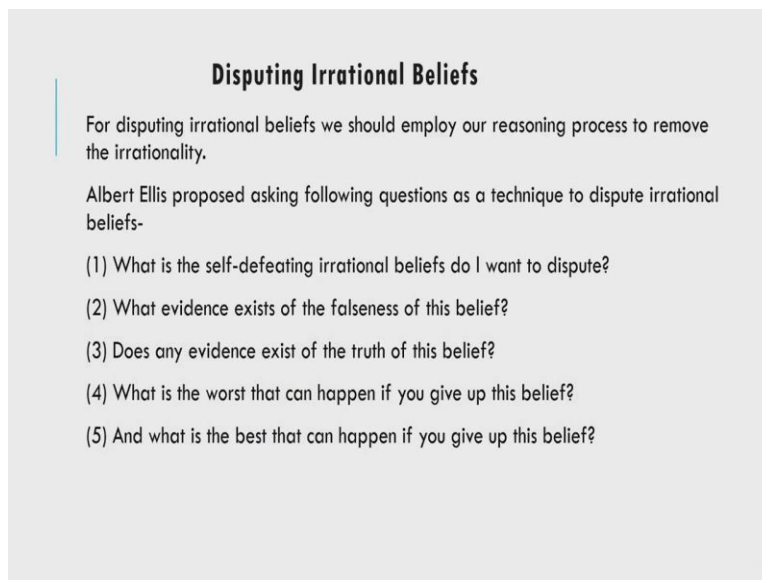
So you can check in, look at these, and try to figure out if you're truly thinking in terms of absolute statements. Are you being overly dramatic? So, try to trace your emotions back, notice your self-talk, observe it, and attempt to detect whatever thinking processes are going on.

Detecting such thoughts might be challenging at times, especially when we are overwhelmed by emotions. As a result, our support system frequently works brilliantly. Other individuals can immediately detect it. You can say certain things and others will quickly reply no, this isn't the appropriate way to look at things, why are you thinking that way?

So, what people around us will help us detect, which is why social support is so crucial. And, of course, if you go to a professional, he or she will be able to assist you in detecting it as well.

However, if you are sufficiently motivated, you can detect it on your own. So, these are some of the things that you can do to detect irrational thoughts.

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Disputing Irrational Beliefs

For disputing irrational beliefs we should employ our reasoning process to remove the irrationality.

Albert Ellis proposed asking following questions as a technique to dispute irrational beliefs-

- (1) What is the self-defeating irrational beliefs do I want to dispute?
- (2) What evidence exists of the falseness of this belief?
- (3) Does any evidence exist of the truth of this belief?
- (4) What is the worst that can happen if you give up this belief?
- (5) And what is the best that can happen if you give up this belief?

The next section is about disputing irrational beliefs or thoughts. So, now that you've discovered something irrational in yourself, how do you challenge it? Or do you reject them and replace them with healthier thoughts?

So, according to Albert Ellis, while disputing irrational views, we should use our reasoning process to remove the irrationality. So, Albert Ellis recommended at least these five crucial questions that you might ask to dispute, reject, or challenge such unreasonable views.

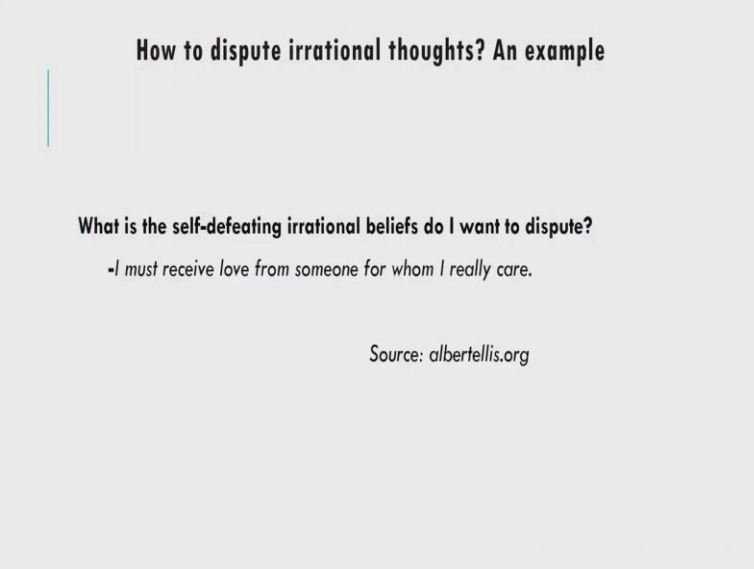
One question is, what is the self-defeating irrational belief I want to dispute? So that's what detecting is all about. First, you must determine what thought is causing you to be disturbed. You can detect and track it back to your emotions.

The second question you should ask is whether there is any proof that this belief is false. Is there any evidence to support this belief that I am always thinking about, or is it just my own mental creation? You can try to figure out what the evidences for falsehood are.

Or another way of looking at it is the third question, does any evidence exist for the truth of this belief? It is kind of looking at the same thing from two different angles. Is it true or is it false? Both ways, you look at it.

The next question is, what is the worst thing that can happen if I give up this belief? So, I am so disturbed by it; what will happen if I just simply reject this belief. Since it is disturbing so much, what is the worst thing that will happen? Ask yourself. You can also ask, what is the best thing that can happen if I give up this belief. So, these are some of the important questions that you can ask to dispute your irrational beliefs. So, let us see an example to understand this process.

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How to dispute irrational thoughts? An example

What is the self-defeating irrational beliefs do I want to dispute?

-I must receive love from someone for whom I really care.

Source: albertellis.org

So, I took an example from albertellis.org website. So, they gave an example from there we can understand. So, the first question that Albert Ellis proposed is, what is the self-defeating irrational belief that I want to dispute? So, let us say here we take an example that a person is disturbed by rejection from someone whom that person cares for or loves. So, when he traces back the thoughts, he finds that he is disturbed because he believes that I must receive love from someone I really care about because I really care about this person and, love this person, but this person is not kind of returning back. So, this person has the belief that I must get approval and affection from that person. So, this is the irrational thought that person is having. So, this is a way one can detect irrational thoughts.

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What evidence exists of the falseness of this belief?

- No law of the universe exists that says that someone I care for must love me (although I would find it nice if that person did!).
- If I do not receive love from one person, I can still get it from others and find happiness that way
- If no one I care for ever cares for me, which is very unlikely, I can still find enjoyment in friendships, in work, in books, and in other things
- If someone I deeply care for rejects me, that will be most unfortunate; but I will hardly die!

Source: albertellis.org

Next question one can ask, what evidence does exist of the falseness of this belief. One can ponder about it and dispute using logical evidences such as, no law of the universe exists that says that someone I care about must love me. We do not have control over others' behavior.

You may love or dislike someone, or you may care about someone, but you have no idea how that person will act. Because you have no control over that individual, it is not required for that person to always return with the same level of affection and love.

If I don't get love and affection from one person, I can still get it from others and find the happiness. I mean, being upset by it may not be the best approach in the sense that it is only one person and you have many other people around you and in your life from whom you can get a lot of love and affection.

If no one I care about ever cares about me, which is unlikely, I can still find happiness in companionship, employment, reading, and other activities. If someone I genuinely care about rejects me, it will be the most unfortunate; it may be something you don't like about it, and there may be sadness around it, but I won't die, and it won't be the end of my life or anything.

So, if you logically and objectively think about it, one can detect such thoughts' irrationality. So, you can see some of these arguments in terms of disputing them.

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Does any evidence exist of the truth of this belief?

No, not really. Considerable evidence exists that if I love someone dearly and never am loved in return that I will then find my-self disadvantaged, inconvenienced, frustrated, and deprived.

I certainly would prefer, therefore, not to get rejected. But no amount of inconvenience amounts to a horror. I can still stand frustration and loneliness.

Source: albertellis.org

The next question, does any evidence exist for the truth of this belief? No, not really. Considerable evidence exists that if I love someone dearly and never am loved in return, that I will then find myself disadvantaged, inconvenienced, frustrated, and deprived. Not necessarily, I certainly would prefer, therefore, not to get rejected, but no amount of inconvenience amounts to horror. I can still stand frustration and loneliness. So, these are some of the statements that show it is not a very true thought process that you are dwelling on.

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What is the worst that can happen if you give up this belief?

I would get deprived of various possible pleasures and conveniences.

I would feel inconvenienced by having to keep looking for love else-where.

Source: albertellis.org

What is the worst thing that can happen if you give up this belief? So, maybe you may think that I would get deprived of various possible pleasures and conveniences. So, you had certain expectations about that person, so if that relationship does not work, one may experience some inconveniences and issues in life. That is okay. But you can always find newer relationships in your life. This is not the end of the road. So, the kind of emotion you generate might be very exaggerated, which may not be true.

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What is the best that can happen if you give up this belief?

I could devote more time and energy to winning someone else's love—and probably find some-one better for me.

I could devote myself to other enjoyable pursuits that have little to do with loving or relating, such as work or artistic endeavors.

I could find it challenging and enjoyable to teach myself to live happily without love.

Source: albertellis.org

What is the best that can happen if you give up this belief? If one gives up this belief, there may be some advantage to it also. For example, one could devote more time and energy to winning someone else's love and probably find some other, someone better. One could devote time to some other enjoyable pursuits that have little to do with loving or relating, such as work and artistic endeavors. So, there can be so many other ways of looking at the same thing, which you are thinking as a kind of problems and disadvantage but there may be so many other aspects which may be positive also. So, by this, you can dispute an irrational thought and find out why it is false and irrational.

And it might not be all that horrible. Finally, if you spend some time when your emotions have calmed down and the intensity of your emotions has subsided, you may discover that whatever you thought was a disadvantage in your life has actually turned out to be an advantage or has opened up further prospects in your life. As a result, we don't know. So, all of these possibilities are possible.

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A simple exercise

Try to detect and dispute irrational thoughts and beliefs whenever you experience emotional disturbances. You can use a simple chart for the purpose.

So, I mean, these are some of the questions you can use to dispute an irrational thought. So you can do these kinds of basic exercises in your life anytime you are disturbed, you can find out, trace out whether, am I getting this just because of some irrational thinking?

Obviously, you may be worried because the situation is objective or actual. That's OK; there's no problem. We are discussing disturbances generated by irrational thoughts, illogical notions that are amplified and self-created. As a result, we can reduce them. There are many objective situations that bother us and are very valid. However, many of them are magnified by irrational thoughts. As a result, we must intervene at certain stages. So, to accomplish this activity, we can utilize a basic chart.

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A Simple Chart

Activating event	Consequences
failure in a task	Sadness, anxiety, stress
Beliefs	Dispute
I am a failure I am a worthless person	How do I become a total failure, if I don't succeed in one task?

So, we can take just an earlier example to make it more simple. So, you can do similar exercises. An activating event could be a failure in a task. Consequences could be sadness, anxiety, stress. You can trace out your beliefs. Beliefs, as I said, I am a failure, then you can kind of dispute them by detecting, once you have detected them, you can dispute by asking questions such as, how do I become a total failure if I do not succeed in one task?

So similarly, you can use many other questions that we have discussed. You can use all these questions to kind of dispute your irrational thoughts. So, you can use simple charts like that to do this exercise.

And it is also true that many times we are unable to come out on our own; when you are emotionally engrossed in something, it is always better to seek help from those around us, our near and dear people, our friends, our family members, and many times professional intervention is required, and they can also assist. As a result, they are critical considerations. So, you may incorporate these basic exercises into your daily life. Most of the time, you can accomplish it on your own. However, in extreme instances, we certainly require the assistance of others.

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Final Thought

Ellis reported that it takes time and practice in changing our beliefs. We need to continually work on recognizing our irrational beliefs, disputing them, and transforming our negative emotions into positive emotions.

So, in summary, Ellis noted that changing our beliefs may require time and effort. As a result, it is not so simple. It could take some time and practice. We must constantly focus on recognizing and refuting our irrational beliefs, as well as shifting our negative emotions into positive emotions. As a result, it may take some time.

Understanding this entire process is critical because we frequently focus on simple, irrational thoughts that give us great distress. And it is critical that you replace them with more healthy thoughts. For example, just somebody rejects you, and you simply start believing that everybody hates me. And it is actually rejection from one person. And that person starts thinking that nobody likes me, everybody hates me. And that person isn't aware that there are so many other people who express affection to that person. As a result, we obsess over such insignificant details, causing a slew of problems. As a result, it is critical that we engage in greater self-reflection and self-observation, as well as be alert about our cognitive processes.

This is a significant and distinct human quality that we can observe ourselves. One of the gifts of human beings is the ability to observe oneself. We can examine ourselves and determine what is wrong and what is right. And we must make use of this talent, aptitude, and gift that has been bestowed upon us. Do more self-reflection, pay attention to your thought processes, observe how you think and how it affects you, and by changing our thoughts, because many of them are easily changed, and replacing them with more healthy thoughts, we can change our emotions and make our lives more full of positive emotions and happiness. So, there are some of my opinions on

mental coping strategies. We can comprehend these, use them in our daily lives, and benefit from them. So, with that, I'll conclude today's lecture. Thank you very much.