

Sample Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy Syllabus With Embedded Deliberate Practice Exercises

This appendix provides a sample one-semester, three-unit course dedicated to teaching rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT). This course is appropriate for graduate students (master's and doctoral students) at all levels of training, including first-year students who have not yet worked with clients. If offering a limited REBT course, aspects of the syllabus and associated exercises can be adapted for use in such a course, in a practicum, in didactic training events at externships and internships, in workshops, and in a continuing education program for postgraduate therapists.

Course Title: Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: Theory, Clinical Activities, and Deliberate Practice

Course Description

This course teaches beginning practitioners the theory, principles, and core clinical skills of REBT. The course has both didactic and practical elements; it reviews the theory and research on REBT to formulate and understand client problems and employs the deliberate practice approach to guide students to acquire 12 key REBT skills.

Course Objectives

Students who complete this course will be able to

1. Describe the core theory and clinical skills of REBT
2. Apply the principles of deliberate practice for career-long clinical skill development in REBT
3. Demonstrate key REBT skills
4. Evaluate how practitioners can use REBT skills in their work with clients' presenting with several disturbed clinical emotions
5. Employ REBT with clients from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds

Format of Class

Classes are 3 hours long. Course time is split evenly between learning REBT theory (lecture/discussion) and acquiring and practicing REBT skills.

Lecture/Discussion: Each week, class focuses on one lecture/discussion topic for 1.5 hours explaining an aspect of REBT theory and intervention activities.

Date	Lecture and Discussion	Skills Lab	Readings
Week 1	Introduction to rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT): history, theory, and research	Exercise 1: Psychoeducation About REBT's ABC Model The ABCs as a case conceptualization model	D. David et al. (2018); O. A. David et al. (2021); DiGiuseppe & Doyle (2019); Hollon & DiGiuseppe (2011); Oltean & David (2018); Vlslă et al. (2016)
Week 2	Basic and current philosophy of REBT, the philosophical foundation of REBT and REBT as a philosophy of life	Exercise 2: Psychoeducation About Dysfunctional Versus Functional Negative Emotions and Behaviors	DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapter 1); A. Ellis (1994); Matweychuk (2022)
Week 3	Common, shared, and unique aspects of REBT; how REBT differs from other forms of cognitive behavior therapy; REBT's place in modern psychotherapy	Exercise 3: Agreement on the Session Goals	DiGiuseppe (2022); DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapter 2); Dryden (2019); Matweychuk et al. (2019)
Week 4	Training in psychotherapy: introduction to principles and advantages of deliberate practice	Exercise 4: Clarifying Inferences From Irrational Beliefs	Rousmaniere (2016); Rousmaniere et al. (2017); Tracey et al. (2014)
Week 5	Teaching clients the ABCs of REBT	Exercise 5: Assessing Irrational Beliefs About the Activating Event	Cristea et al. (2016); DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapter 4); DiGiuseppe and Doyle (2021)
Week 6	Teaching clients about adaptive and maladaptive emotions	Exercise 6: Prioritizing Which Irrational Beliefs to Target for Change	DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapter 8)
Week 7	Establishing the alliance: attaining agreement on the goals of therapy	Exercise 7: Teaching the Belief–Consequence Connection	DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapters 5 & 6); Eubanks et al. (2019)
Week 8	Midterm paper due, self-evaluation, skill feedback	Mock Sessions (beginner profiles)	
Week 9	Distinguishing and assessing beliefs and cognitions	Exercise 8: Functional Disputation of Irrational Beliefs	DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapters 3 & 9)
Week 10	Teaching clients the relationship between beliefs and emotions	Exercise 9: Empirical Disputation of Irrational Beliefs	DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapters 7 & 8)
Week 11	Teaching clients to dispute irrational beliefs	Exercise 10: Semantic Disputation of Irrational Beliefs	DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapters 10, 11, & 13–15); Overholser (2018)
Week 12	Teaching clients to change irrational beliefs; rational replacement beliefs	Exercise 11: Constructing Full Rational Alternative Beliefs to Replace Irrational Beliefs	DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapter 12)
Week 13	Where change happens: the work between sessions	Exercise 12: Collaborative Homework Development	DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapter 16); Kazantzis et al. (2005)
Week 14	Organizing the skills into a whole session	Mock Sessions (intermediate and advanced profiles)	DiGiuseppe et al. (2014, Chapters 17 & 18); Dryden et al. (2010)
Week 15	Final paper due, final exam, self-evaluation, skill feedback	Exam	Annotated therapy transcript

REBT Skills Lab: Each week the students engage in the rehearsal of one REBT skill across several clinical problems typically presented by clients seeking psychotherapy for 1.5 hours. The skills labs primarily focus on practicing REBT skills using the exercises in the REBT deliberate practice book. The exercises use therapy simulations (role-plays) that are designed to accomplish the following goals:

1. Build trainees' skill and confidence for using REBT skills with real client problems
2. Provide students the opportunity to engage in highly structured and repetitive deliberate practice exercises that rehearse the REBT skills
3. Provide a safe space for experimenting with different therapeutic skills and interventions, without fear of criticism for making mistakes
4. Provide opportunities for beginning therapists to explore different styles of therapy so that they can discover their own personal, unique therapy style

Mock Sessions: Twice in the semester (Weeks 8 and 14), trainees will do a psychotherapy mock session in the skills taught in the REBT skills lab. The psychotherapy mock sessions are unstructured role-played therapy sessions. Mock sessions allow trainees to

1. Practice using REBT skills accurately
2. Experiment with clinical decision making concerning which skill to employ in an unscripted context
3. Discover their personal therapeutic style
4. Build self-efficacy for working with real clients

Homework

Homework will be assigned each week and will include reading, 1 hour of skills practice with an assigned practice partner, and occasional writing assignments. For the skills practice homework, trainees will repeat the exercise they did for that week's REBT skills lab. Because the instructor will not be present to evaluate performance, trainees should complete the Deliberate Practice Reaction Form, as well as the Deliberate Practice Diary Form, for themselves as a self-evaluation.

Writing Assignments

Students are to write two papers: one due at midterm and one due on the last day of class. The first paper will explore one aspect of REBT theory or the empirical literature on REBT. The second paper will involve the completion of an REBT case formulation and in accordance with the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (American Psychological Association, 2017), students are **not required to disclose personal information**. Because this class is about developing both interpersonal and REBT competence, following are some important points so that students are fully informed as they make choices to self-disclose:

- Students choose how much, when, and what to disclose. Students are not penalized for the choice not to share personal information.
- The learning environment is susceptible to group dynamics much like any other group space, and therefore students may be asked to share their observations and experiences of the class environment with the singular goal of fostering a more inclusive and productive learning environment.

Confidentiality

To create a safe learning environment that is respectful of client and therapist information and diversity and to foster open and vulnerable conversation in class, students are required to agree to strict confidentiality within and outside of the instruction setting.

Evaluation

Self-Evaluation: At the end of the semester (Week 15), trainees will perform a self-evaluation. This will help trainees track their progress and identify areas for further development. The "Guidance for Trainees" section in Chapter 3 of *Deliberate Practice in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy* highlights potential areas of focus for self-evaluation.

Grading Criteria

Students will be evaluated on the level and quality of their performance in

- the lecture/discussion,
- the skills lab (exercises and mock sessions),
- midterm and final papers, and
- a final exam.

Required Readings

- Cristea, I. A., Stefan, S., David, O., Mogoase, C., & Dobrea, A. (2016). *REBT in the treatment of anxiety disorders in children and adults*. Springer-Nature.
- David, D., Cotet, C., Matu, S., Mogoase, C., & Stefan, S. (2018). 50 years of rational-emotive and cognitive-behavioral therapy: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 74(3), 304–318. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22514>
- David, O. A., Cîmpean, A., Costescu, C., DiGiuseppe, R., Doyle, K., Hickey, M., & David, D. (2021). Effectiveness of outpatient rational emotive behavior therapy. *The American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 74(4), 157–164. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.psychotherapy.20200009>
- DiGiuseppe, R. (2022). REBT's place in modern psychotherapy: Similarities with all psychotherapies, with other forms of CBT, and unique characteristics. In W. Dryden (Ed.), *New directions in rational emotive behaviour therapy* (pp. 33–54). Routledge/Taylor & Francis.
- DiGiuseppe, R., & Doyle, K. (2021). Commentary chapter on "How B-C connection and negotiation of F allow the design and implementation of a cooperative and effective disputing in rational emotive behavior therapy": REBT's B-C connection and negotiation of F. In G. M. Ruggiero, G. Caselli, & S. Sassaroli (Eds.), *CBT case formulation as therapeutic process* (pp. 89–97). Springer-Nature.
- DiGiuseppe, R. A., & Doyle, K. A. (2019). Rational emotive behavior therapy. In K. S. Dobson & D. J. A. Dozois (Eds.), *Handbook of cognitive-behavioral therapies* (4th ed., pp. 191–217). Guilford Press.
- DiGiuseppe, R. A., Doyle, K. A., Dryden, W., & Backx, W. (2014). *A practitioner's guide to rational emotive behavior therapy* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Dryden, W. (2019). The distinctive features of rational emotive behavior therapy. In M. E. Bernard & W. Dryden (Eds.), *Advances in REBT: Theory, practice, research, measurement, prevention and promotion* (pp. 23–46). Springer-Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93118-0_2
- Dryden, W., Beal, D., Jones, J., & Trower, P. (2010). The REBT competency scale for clinical and research applications. *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy*, 28(4), 165–216. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10942-010-0111-3>
- Ellis, A. (1994). *Reason and emotion in psychotherapy: A comprehensive method of treating human disturbances* (Rev. & updated). Carol Publishing Group.
- Eubanks, C. F., Muran, J. C., & Safran, J. D. (2019). Repairing alliance ruptures. In J. C. Norcross & M. J. Lambert (Eds.), *Psychotherapy relationships that work: Evidence-based therapist*

- contributions (pp. 549–579). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/med-psych/9780190843953.003.0016>
- Hollon, S. D., & DiGiuseppe, R. (2011). Cognitive theories of psychotherapy. In J. C. Norcross, G. R. VandenBos, & D. K. Freedheim (Eds.), *History of psychotherapy: Continuity and change* (2nd ed., pp. 203–241). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/12353-007>
- Kazantzis, N., Lampropoulos, G. K., & Deane, F. P. (2005). A national survey of practicing psychologists' use and attitudes toward homework in psychotherapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 73*(4), 742–748. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.73.4.742>
- Matweychuk, W., DiGiuseppe, R., & Gulyayeva, O. (2019). A comparison of REBT with other cognitive behavior therapies. In M. E. Bernard & W. Dryden (Eds.), *Advances in REBT: Theory, practice, research, measurement, prevention and promotion* (pp. 47–77). Springer-Nature.
- Matweychuk, W. J. (2022). Rational emotive behavior therapy as a philosophy of life. In W. Dryden (Ed.), *New directions in rational emotive behaviour therapy* (pp. 161–180). Routledge/Taylor & Francis.
- Oltean, H.-R., & David, D. O. (2018). A meta-analysis of the relationship between rational beliefs and psychological distress. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 74*(6), 883–895. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22562>
- Overholser, J. (2018). *The Socratic method of psychotherapy*. Columbia University Press.
- Rousmaniere, T. G. (2016). *Deliberate practice for psychotherapists: A guide to improving clinical effectiveness*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315472256>
- Rousmaniere, T. G., Goodyear, R., Miller, S. D., & Wampold, B. E. (Eds.). (2017). *The cycle of excellence: Using deliberate practice to improve supervision and training*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119165590>
- Tracey, T. J. G., Wampold, B. E., Lichtenberg, J. W., & Goodyear, R. K. (2014). Expertise in psychotherapy: An elusive goal? *American Psychologist, 69*(3), 218–229. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035099>
- Vișlă, A., Flückiger, C., Grosse Holtforth, M., & David, D. (2016). Irrational beliefs and psychological distress: A meta-analysis. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, 85*(1), 8–15. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000441231>

Supplemental Readings

- Bernard, M. E., & Dryden, W. (Eds.). (2019). *Advances in REBT: Theory, practice, research, measurement, prevention and promotion*. Springer-Nature.
- David, D. O., DiGiuseppe, R., Dobrea, A., Pășărelu, C. R., & Balazsi, R. (2019). The measurement of irrationality and rationality. In M. E. Bernard & W. Dryden (Eds.), *Advances in REBT: Theory, practice, research, measurement, prevention and promotion* (pp. 79–100). Springer-Nature.