

The 3 Irrational Beliefs at the Core of Your Suffering

#1: APPROVAL: I must be approved of by others to be worthy.

Need: acceptance, belonging

Fear: judgment, rejection

Demands: I expect myself to perform well and win approval from all significant others at all times, and if not I am a failure, unworthy, and deserve to suffer.

Symptoms:

- Places unrealistic expectations on oneself
- Over-concern with what other people think
- Achievement and popularity determine self-worth
- Self-critical, lack of self-acceptance

Emotional Consequences

- Depression, feeling not good enough, unable to express or embrace true self
- Anxiety, worry about what others think, being judged
- Low confidence, feeling bad about yourself, others disapproval means we are bad, can't be yourself

Behavioral Consequences

- Risk-avoidance, for fear of being judged for failing or being different
- Shyness, for fear of being embarrassed
- Procrastination, for fear of failure, judgment, risk
- Unassertiveness, for fear of rejection or criticism
- Workaholism, in order to gain approval

REPLACE WITH THIS RATIONAL BELIEF: I have value as a human being simply by being my authentic self, and I desire love only from those who appreciate me and recognize the good in me.

#2: JUDGMENT: Other people must do "the right thing" and meet my expectations in order to be worthy.

Need: importance, superiority

Fear: unfairness, disappointment

Demands: expect all significant others to treat you kindly and fairly, as well as act appropriately, and if they don't they are unworthy, rotten people who deserve to be punished

Symptoms:

- Unrealistic expectations on others, including expecting them to be infallible, perfect
- Assuming you are the sole authority on what is right and wrong
- Assuming you have authority over others
- Believing everyone else is responsible for catering to your needs

Emotional Consequences

- Anger, rage or fury when others intentionally or unintentionally treat you poorly or unfairly or don't meet your expectations
- Impatience with others who make mistakes or aren't perfect
- Bitterness against others for not meeting your needs
- Resentment toward others for being imperfect and especially for treating you unfairly or not meeting your needs

Behavioral Consequences

- Aggression and violence as a way of punishing others for being inappropriate or not meeting expectations
- Bigotry and intolerance of anyone who does not meet your definition of right and wrong
- Bullying others to enforce your belief of the way others should behave or be
- Nagging others to elicit the right action you expect and require

REPLACE WITH THIS RATIONAL BELIEF: All people, including myself, are imperfect, have value to offer, and have a unique perspective of the world.

#3: COMFORT: Life must be easy, without discomfort or inconvenience.

Need: certainty, comfort, justice

Fear: adversity, uncertainty, discomfort

Demands: expect all external conditions to be pleasant and favorable at all times and when they're not it is awful and unbearable.

Symptoms:

- Unrealistic expectations about life being perfect
- Belief that living a trouble-free life is a birthright
- Lack of belief in your ability cope with adversity
- Complete rejection of all life problems as unacceptable

Emotional Consequences

- Low frustration tolerance
- Self-pity and "poor me" attitude
- Depression, hopelessness
- Discomfort anxiety

Behavioral Consequences

- Procrastination
- Shirking
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Overindulgence in "feel good" behaviors (e.g., overeating)

REPLACE WITH THIS RATIONAL BELIEF: It is perfectly natural for life conditions to not be ideal or perfect and it's okay if situations do not exist the way I would prefer because I am capable of finding solutions to problems and making changes that bring me happiness and opportunity regardless of the situations that happen around me.