

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy Trust and Forgiveness

In the previous session we talked about the enabling behaviours we might be unaware of in our recovery journey. In this final edition on REBT, we will be looking at trust, acceptance, and forgiveness, and we will be exploring what it takes to work through these issues should you be experiencing concerns about your loved ones activities in the wake of a declaration of recovery.

Throughout this series, we have explored a number of ways to work with the extreme emotions that come with a life enmeshed in the world of addiction. These emotions can often interfere with our ability to function in life as we normally would, because we are consumed with what the loved might be doing at any given time.



Trust is something that, over time, will return given a consistent stream of recovery behaviour from your loved one, along with acknowledging our tendency to follow catastrophic thinking patterns that lead us to a world of overwhelming anxiety.

Lets face it though, most people in your situation have developed reasons not to trust due to previous behaviours that left you feeling hurt, disappointed, rejected, or scared. Usually, as part of our protection mechanisms, we will hold off on trusting our loved one until they have "earned our trust", and here in lies a problem.

By asking someone to "earn your trust", and sticking rigidly to the requirements of this request, leaves little to no room for mistakes on the part of your loved one. And often you're left with that uncomfortable feeling you've been trying so hard to avoid in the first place.

There is never a guarantee in life, I wish I could tell you differently, but we are always going to be dealing with feelings of hurt, sadness, disappointment, and sometimes despair. These are all part of the human experience, and without experiencing the sour, you can never appreciate how wonderful the sweet can be.

Rebuilding trust is an area where good, positive communication on an ongoing basis is required. Your loved one cannot read your mind, they will not know what it is that you need to begin to feel confident and trust them again unless you communicate that. The more specific you can be the better the results will be.

Remember to acknowledge the behaviours of truthfulness, integrity, and reliability as this will go a long way to rebuilding the trust in your relationship. Attached to this session is an additional worksheet to help you in building trust with your loved one, entitled The Trust Building Worksheet.

Working through our feelings of mistrust can often lie in two critical areas of self-awareness, these areas involve our ability to practice acceptance and forgiveness for things we once believed to be unacceptable or unforgivable.

Acceptance is a powerful tool for improving our ability to function and be happy. Often we stay stuck in emotional distress because we cannot let go of our belief about a set of circumstances, or we are getting something out of holding on to what may seem like a self-defeating conviction.

Acceptance does not mean we approve of the situation at hand, or allowing a behaviour to continue as a part of your life. Once we learn how to accept a situation we are in a much better position to deal with it effectively, and a rational decision making process is more likely to follow.



Acceptance, more often than not, lies in the expectation we have placed on any given situation. When we expect that things are going to be a certain way, and they are not, we fall into patterns of black and white, or catastrophic thinking, that have us believing the worst possible outcome has already taken place.

Don't get me wrong, I am very aware that there are catastrophic consequences involved in this process, and jumping to this conclusion is sometimes a natural thing for us to do. However, this will only lead to an increase level of distress in the long run, so dealing with anxiety, along with physical and emotional well-being becomes paramount for your recovery.

Attached to this session is an addition worksheet, entitled Radical Acceptance, which is designed to help you in the development of acceptance as a behaviour in your life. This worksheet is an adaptation of the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy technique also known as Radical Acceptance. For more information on DBT as a form of recovery see our section of sessions on the subject.



Forgiveness, or a lack there of it, can be built upon mounds of anger and resentment. We may blame others for our harbouring of negative emotions, and these thoughts keep us trapped in the role of the victim, leaving us powerless to move forward on our own recovery journey.

Over time, Our failure to resolve these feelings of anger and resentment, have a very definitive impact on our mental and physical health as high levels of emotional arousal is a major contributor to serious medical problems. Learning to let go of the past is not an easy thing to do, but then again neither is living your life stuck in anger and resentment.

Like any behaviour change, the act of forgiveness is a process not a singular event. It starts with a conscious decision, followed by intentional action to change your thinking about the past. Attached to this session is a worksheet, entitled [The Forgiveness Worksheet₁](#), which is designed to assist you in the act of forgiveness. Take the time to consider your answers to the questions in the exercise, and decide if forgiveness is something you would like in your life.

Hanging on to the past not only interferes with your ability to be happy, but it can be detrimental to future relationships and toxic for your very own physical well-being. Forgiveness is not about giving up on working to make things better, it involves giving up our desire to have a different past.

Forgiveness is the act of letting go of anger and resentment which, when done completely, leaves us able to think about past events without experiencing the negative impact that sometimes comes with anger. Letting go of the past means it no longer defines who we think we are, and stops the requirement for behaviours that are detrimental for our recovery.

Forgiveness is hard work, sometimes your anger may seem to be justified, but ask yourself the following question; what kind of person am I, and what is my anger doing today? Do you want to remain a bitter, angry victim, spending your time thinking about how hurt you were and how unfair it was?

Work on developing new ways to think about your loved one and their actions in the past. Recognise their point of view, their actions made perfect sense to them at the time, given what was going on in their life.

Forgiveness means changing your mental, emotional and behavioural reactions. Forgiving means you think in completely different ways about the past and, over time, you begin to feel less anger in your life when you contemplate your previous experience.

Hopefully, you will attempt to develop ways to practice what we have discussed in our series on Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, and that you have found the series useful in your own recovery journey. Please feel free to contact The Liberation Place for any suggestions or requests for the future, we look forward to hearing your insights on this and any other subject.

