

## LOOKING AFTER ADOLESCENTS' WELL-BEING: REBT GROUP MANUAL FOR REDUCING ADOLESCENTS' CAREER INDECISION

**Maria Cristina J. Santos\***

### **Abstract:**

*College students face a barrage of challenges in fulfilling their different life roles. Aside from being a student, they also have different responsibilities as a son or daughter, a friend or as a student leader. Young adults experience many changes in all aspects of their lives (Schulenberg, Bryant, & O'Malley, 2004). Moreover, it is the transition or adjustment period to adulthood when ethical values acquired in childhood are compared with the set of values gained as they were growing (Ozbay, 1997). This developed manual intends to help Filipino adolescents who are faced with career indecision. The aim of this manual is for this population to learn and apply **Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)** to dispute irrational beliefs and replace them with rational ones. With the intention of disputing irrational beliefs that the members hold about themselves in relation to career indecision, various activities (Mastering Ellis' ABCDE Model, scheduling worry time, refocusing, tapping social support, assertiveness training and goal-setting) were prepared. The implication of this would be for these adolescents to identify and modify their irrational beliefs to battle career indecision. It is important for this population to develop personal coping strategies that would enable them to focus and work on their rational beliefs with the end goal that eventually they could have clarity on their career choice/s and be comfortable with their career decision.*

*Keywords: adolescents, career indecision, REBT, group manual, Career Decision Profile*

*\* Assistant Professorial Lecturer, Counseling and Educational Psychology Department, De La Salle University – Manila*

## 1. Purpose

The aim of this Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) intervention is to provide a venue for adolescents to dispute their irrational beliefs in relation to career indecision. Graduating students can tap their potentials by reflecting about their career choice by evaluating how decided they are; how comfortable they are with their decision and their possible adjustments to accommodate those career decision needs. The main objective of this manual is to develop the members' emotional resiliency to career-related concerns by equipping them with cognitive and behavioral skills that will make them dispute irrational thoughts or beliefs and accept themselves unconditionally. This could be done once an individual recognizes irrational beliefs and disputes it by applying Ellis' ABCDE Model. It shows how clients can move from helplessness to optimism by changing the way they think, and it presents the REBT model by Ellis.

## 2. Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)

*“People are disturbed not by things, but by their view of things.”*

*---Epictetus*

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is a form of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT). The goal of REBT is to assist people in minimizing emotional disturbances, decreasing self-defeating behaviors, and becoming more self-actualized so that they can lead a happier existence (Ellis, 2005). In Ellis' ABCDE Model, A represents the activating event; B stands for irrational belief/s; C represents the emotional and behavioral consequences largely determined by the individual's beliefs about this event; D stands for disputing the irrational beliefs and E represents an effective rational outlook accompanied by emotional and behavioral changes. According to Ellis' model, a major role of the therapist is to teach clients to dispute these irrational beliefs. Hopefully, in the future the client will learn to become his own therapist or life coach by learning to dispute irrational beliefs and change them to rational ones. Ellis was greatly influenced by Epictetus' belief that “people are disturbed not by things, but by their view of things.” In this vein, if people learn how to have rational thoughts regarding their view of things then they would see events differently.

## 3. Group Goals

The objective of this intervention is to pave the way towards self-clarity and decisiveness towards their career paths. The developed manual includes activities that will make group members aware of their irrational beliefs about career exploration and more importantly what they can do to dispute these irrational beliefs and modify them to rational ones. Specifically, the following are its goals:

1. To become aware of irrational beliefs that relate to themselves as well as their career exploration.
2. To recognize how these irrational beliefs affect them negatively or cripple them from being decisive in making career choices and make them comfortable with their career decisions.
3. To dispute irrational beliefs in relation to career exploration and their career decision-making process.
4. To become decided about their career choice or decision.
5. To become comfortable with their career decision.
6. To help participants realize that they are not alone.
7. To provide support to others who are also in the same situation.
8. To focus on what they “can do” rather on what they “cannot do.”
9. To allow time to share one’s concern with others.

#### 4. Format Considerations

The format will be structured following the modules (assigned topic/s per session in the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) group manual. There will be a minimum of 6 and maximum of 10 participants. The session will be 2 hours once a week with a total of six (6) sessions.

The primary goal of the session is to reduce the members’ level of indecisiveness in making career decisions, thus the Career Decision Profile (CDP), a 16-item inventory that intends to gauge career indecision will be administered. There will also be a pre-group screening interview to be done by the group facilitator to check if there is a match or good fit among the potential members of the group and its group goals.

## 5. Outline of Six REBT Group Sessions

The format will be structured following the modules (assigned topic/s per session) in the developed Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) group manual. This REBT intervention consists of 6 weeks (1 session /week = 2 hours/session), involving a maximum of 10 participants every weekend.

### 5.1 Session 1

#### 5.1.1 Purpose

The objective for the first session is to build a therapeutic relationship; to explain group therapy meetings (expectation setting and ground rules and providing a rationale for doing so) and to introduce themselves to each other.

#### 5.1.2 Theme

The theme for the first session will revolve around identifying their problems and setting their goals for therapy. The clients would be asked about what career exploration problems would they like to focus and work on; what their goals for therapy are and what are their expectations from this group therapy.

#### 5.1.3 Activities

To ensure the success of this intervention the ground rules such as : coming on time and doing the homework; being supportive of each other and respecting the group's confidentiality will be discussed. The members will be encouraged to share their reasons for joining this particular group. Also, problem identification (as to what problems they would like to work on) and goal setting will be done. The members will be assigned to fill out an emotional diary or journal pertaining to their career indecision for 1 week or until the next session, this will serve as their homework.

#### 5.1.4 Process

As the initial session of this group intervention, the set of activities are in a way laying the foundation for the members to identify their problems that they would be working on for the 6 sessions with the group and by establishing their goals for this therapy. This is a venue for members to realize that they are not alone in this journey, that there are people feeling exactly

the same way as they feel (undecided with their career decisions) and that they could provide support to others who are also in the same situation.

## 5.2 Session 2

### 5.2.1 Purpose

The objective of the second session is to know Ellis' ABCDE Model. Specifically, to understand how thoughts influence how we feel; to identify rational and irrational beliefs and to dispute irrational beliefs.

### 5.2.2 Theme

The theme for the second session will revolve around how each member describes their problem/s pertaining to career indecision as emanating from their irrational beliefs. Possible career-related concerns may include parental involvement (since Filipinos are collectivistic), financial constraints and personal issues.

### 5.2.3 Activities

The members will be asked to share some of their unhealthy negative feelings related to career exploration (anxiety, fear, extreme stress). The therapist, based on the sharing, will cite common causes of career indecision which can be rooted from irrational beliefs. Members will then be asked to share their irrational beliefs that they hold about themselves in relation to career exploration and career decision-making. All members will be given an opportunity to share their irrational beliefs related to their career decision-making. The facilitator will then share Ellis' ABCDE Model. According to Ellis' REBT Model, people respond to an activating event (A) with emotional and behavioral consequences (C). The emotional and behavioral consequences are not only caused by the activating event but by the individual's belief system (B). When the events are not pleasant, irrational beliefs may develop. Irrational beliefs (B) often cause difficult and emotional behavioral consequences (C). A major role of the therapist is to dispute (D) these irrational beliefs (B) and to teach their clients to be their own therapist in the future by disputing their irrational beliefs. The participants will be asked to fill out the REBT Self-help form (for 1 week until the next session) as their assignment.

### 5.2.4 Process

The activities that are carried out for this session would allow the members to spot their irrational beliefs pertaining to their career exploration and for them to dispute or challenge these irrational beliefs. The participants will be asked to dispute their irrational beliefs by asking themselves the following questions: (1) Where is the evidence to support my negative belief? (2) Is it logical or rational? By disputing irrational beliefs, they will be learning to replace them with rational and more helpful beliefs.

### 5.3 Session 3

#### 5.3.1 Purpose

The objective of this session is to master Ellis' ABCDE Model, specifically to work towards the members' formulation of rational beliefs. The objective is to weaken the clients' irrational beliefs by disputing them then formulating positive, realistic counter-thoughts will follow.

#### 5.3.2 Theme

The theme for this session is to continuously practice Ellis' ABCDE model to help members modify irrational beliefs into rational ones in relation to career decision-making.

#### 5.3.3 Activities

There will be more practice with Ellis' ABCDE Model. The members will discuss their REBT Form Homework last week. The members will mention a specific example from their homework (REBT Form), the most memorable for them wherein the ABCDE Model worked. The facilitator will then share some techniques to dispute irrational beliefs. For example, for forceful self-statements the facilitator will ask members to give themselves forceful self-statements or positive self-talk every time they have irrational beliefs. The participants will be taught some techniques to minimize negative thoughts by applying a variety of skills (scheduling worry time, thought stopping and refocusing, imagery and making use of humor). The assigned homework for the members will be to make a self-esteem list. The members will be asked to make a list of all the things they like about themselves, all their positive qualities. The goal is to make the participants feel better about themselves, so that the happier and more confident they become. For their homework, the participants will still continue filling out the REBT Form until next week's meeting.

#### 5.3.4 Process

This session is an extension of the self-assessment procedure (through the REBT Form) that was executed the previous session and an educative means to promote awareness regarding their irrational beliefs. This in a way would pave the way for self-clarity regarding their career decision-making. The participants will also learn some strategies in order to stop and dispute irrational beliefs so they could be transformed to rational ones.

### 5.4 Session 4

#### 5.4.1 Purpose

The purpose of this session is to tap social support: (1) to keep social support system functional and healthy and (2) to value the importance of having a good support system.

#### 5.4.2 Theme

The theme for this session is recognizing the importance of staying connected to one's social support.

#### 5.4.3 Activities

The members will be asked to stay connected with the people who help or make them feel better through functional coping mechanisms. It is important to keep in touch with them in person or even just through phone or email or internet. The participants will share the importance of social support in their lives and they will be making a list of their support system for the exercise. For their homework, they will be asked to get in touch with them if not in person even through phone or email. The participants will be reminded to practice Ellis' ABCDE Model in disputing possible negative thoughts (just in case they will have irrational beliefs when trying to get in touch with friends who have been out of touch for sometime) like if a friend may not reply or they may not want to go out with them anymore. Participants will check if their thoughts are valid and logical and dispute irrational beliefs that would try to put them down. It is good to get in touch with real friends who maybe a source of sound advice during this time that the participants are being indecisive in their career exploration. Having a good support system will be helpful for these adolescents especially that Filipinos come from a collectivistic society (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

#### 5.4.4 Process

The activities that are carried out in this session place a premium on tapping social support. The importance of social support can be felt within the group intervention as well as outside this group therapy. Social support cannot be undermined especially in collectivistic societies wherein we value social ties. Moreover, Ellis' ABCDE Model will be practiced continuously for mastery.

## 5.5 Session 5

### 5.5.1 Purpose

The objective of this session is to work towards becoming assertive and developing a win-win attitude and as they dispute irrational beliefs pertaining to career exploration.

### 5.5.2 Theme

The theme for this session revolves around this Jewish Proverb: "Don't be too sweet lest you be eaten up; don't be too bitter lest you be spewed out." The theme for this session is continuously executing strategies that help members modify their irrational beliefs in relation to career decision-making and for participants to develop assertiveness especially during job hunting and interviews.

### 5.5.3 Activities

In this activity, participants will have role playing as part of honing assertiveness skills. As Ellis (in Sharf, 2008) pointed out repeated role playing of the situation gives the individual a chance to feel better about his her social skills and change inappropriate emotional self-statements. Participants will also have the chance to practice imagery. They will imagine themselves expressing themselves assertively and imagining the response they get. The members will also have some shame attacking exercises (although this therapy is normally done outside therapy like engaging strangers in conversations). Furthermore, in this session, members will also be able to practice assertiveness within the therapy group by giving and receiving feedbacks from others by asking them the following: (1) Are there things you would like to ask from others in the group? (2) Are there things you would like to say to others in the group? and (3) Are there things you would like feedback about? For this session's homework, participants will be asked to practice being assertive in dealing with others (family members, friends and job interviewers). The members will also be asked to continue with their REBT Form for their assignment.



#### 5.5.4 Process

There are times that we are just afraid to “rock the boat” that eventhough we hurt we just keep on accepting the blows (passive). At the extreme, there are moments that we become so insensitive that we just do not care about how others feel and we just carry on in releasing our emotions regardless of others’ feelings (aggressive). In the final analysis, it is important to treat others the way we would like to be treated—we respect ourselves and we respect others at the same time (assertive). This is when we express our emotions without hurting others. This is developing a win-win attitude. Having a win-win attitude is important in entering the workforce and during career exploration (for job hunting and facing job interviewers).

### 5.6 Session 6

#### 5.6.1 Purpose

For this last session, the participants are continuously being prepared to be their own counselor or coach. They would be setting reasonable goals pertaining to their career exploration and career decision. Moreover, specific career choices that members came up with during the session will be shared among the group members.

#### 5.6.2 Theme

The theme for the last session can be clearly expressed by this Chinese Proverb: “To get through the hardest journey we need to take only one step at a time, but we must keep on stepping.” The participants’ sharing of their goals both short term and long term pertaining to their career decision shows that life goes on. They may face doubts and uncertainties, but having a plan would show that their goals are worth living for and that they should just carry on or forge ahead to achieve them.

#### 5.6.3 Activities

The participants will be given an exercise pertaining to goal –setting. They will be asked to write down the following categories: work/career and/or school/academics and personal. They will be making a list based on their prioritized goals. The participants will be instructed to make their goal-setting activity more specific by categorizing or labeling their goals short term (within 6 months to 1 year) and long term (3-5 years) from now. For this goal setting activity, the members will make their goals specific, measurable, attainable, result-oriented and time-bound for them to be able to come up with reasonable goals. For their homework, the participants will

craft their Mission Statement (they will use their goals as their basis). By doing this, they will be able to establish self-clarity with their different life roles as well as their career decisions. Their mission statement keeps them grounded to their purpose of living (which covers both their professional and personal life).

#### 5.6.4 Process

This last session is their culminating activity wherein the members would get to realize that they have to continuously combat or dispute their irrational beliefs that cause them to have career indecision. This is an ongoing journey---a continuous process. Based from their experiences and insights from the previous sessions, they will be able to look at valid and logical evidences that would support rational thinking as opposed to being bombarded and ruled upon by irrational beliefs which only cripple them or cause them to have career indecision. Since this final activity is all about planning for their future, participants are motivated and encouraged to: live by their Personal Mission Statement; dispute their irrational beliefs; replace their irrational belief with rational ones; increase healthy thinking by applying a variety of skills to help them have self-clarity in terms of career-decision; connect with their social support; practice being assertive; set reasonable goals and do their best to be their own therapist. The members will be asked about their overall insights gained in the group sessions. The therapist will observe if members not only have changed feelings, thoughts and beliefs but also know how they have done so and why. Those members who may not be prepared to terminate will be processed for referral, with their consent.

## 6. Proposed Evaluation of Group's Effectiveness

### 6.1 Career Decision Profile

It is a 16-item inventory devised by Jones (1989) to measure an individual's level of career indecisiveness. The CDP can be used by counselors to (a) explore clients' career indecision, (b) screen for readiness, (c) determine the appropriate level of career services needed, and (d) evaluate counseling outcomes (Jones and Lohmann, 2012). It is a useful tool in career counseling. Upon completion of the group therapy, the Career Decision Profile taken at the beginning and at the end of the sessions will be compared to check if the members' career decisiveness has improved.

6.2 Group Counseling Evaluation Form

At the end of the 6-week session, the members will fill out the Group Counseling Evaluation Form to determine the effectiveness of the group therapy and its area/s for enhancement.

7. **Referral Procedures for Follow-up:**

The facilitator will have a follow up on all members after 1 month, either through phone or email. Those who have expressed unpreparedness to terminate the group therapy will be called for a meeting in order to discuss the next step. Two options will be considered, either individual or group counseling.

**References:**

Ellis, A. (2005). *The Myth of Self-esteem: How Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy Can Change Your Life Forever*. Prometheus, Amherst, NY.

Jones, L. & Lohmann, C. (1998). The Career Decision Profile: Using a measure of career decision status in counseling. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 6, pp.209-230.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological review*, 98(2), 224-253.

Özbay, G. (1997). *Developing a Scale aiming at Determining the Problem Areas of University Students: Study of Validity and Reliability*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon.

Sharf, R. (2008). *Theories of Psychotherapy and Counseling Concepts and Cases*. USA: Thompson Brooks/Cole.

Schulenberg, J. E., Bryant, A. L., & O'Malley, P. M. (2004). Taking hold of some kind of life: how developmental tasks relate to trajectories of well-being during the transition to adulthood. *Developmental Psychopathology*, 16, 1119-1140. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0954579404040167>