

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE
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As a counselor, I come across many people who feel out of control in their lives. Whether it's a physical, emotional, spiritual, relational or vocational, all problems can be traced back to lack of self-care. One very easy way to turn this downward spiral around is to monitor and change the way you think.

In the 1950's, a psychologist named Albert Ellis became frustrated with the way psychotherapy was conducted. He felt that clients needed a way to become more empowered instead of lying on a couch, passively accepting interpretations from their analysts. Ellis developed the first formal therapy to demonstrate thought processes and their effects on behavior. He called it Rational Emotive Therapy (RET).

Ellis's inspirations dated back to the Stoic philosophers, who believed that the key to a clear head was self-control and detachment from powerful emotions. Philosopher Epictetus wrote in *The Enchiridion*, "Men are disturbed not by things, but by the view which they take of them." Ellis translated this into a modern view using the formula of A (activating event) + B (beliefs or thoughts about the event) = C (conscious feelings). Since Ellis's first work, many other theorists have added to and changed this core idea, some adding a D, which represents **behaviors**.

To illustrate this theory, consider the following:

Sam and Max are going to work on the same morning at the same time to the same office to do the same job. They drive the same kind of car and get to work using the same freeway. They are the same age and have similar life situations and histories.

This particular morning, a tanker truck tipped over and spilled oil all over the freeway, shutting it down completely during rush hour. Neither Sam nor Max was aware of this, and both of them got stuck in the traffic jam that resulted from the spill.

Sam became angry immediately. He started honking his horn and yelling out the window at the emergency personnel who were trying to clear up the situation. He called his secretary and yelled at her as well, commanding her to reschedule his morning meetings. His wife called in the middle of all of this and Sam accused her of not telling him about the accident on purpose. When the road was finally cleared, Sam sped to work, thinking about how these circumstances had ruined his whole day.

In the next lane, Max assessed the situation. When he saw what had happened with the tanker truck, he realized that he'd be stuck for a while. He felt grateful that no one had been hurt. He called his secretary and explained what was going on. They were able to deal with a few issues over the phone, and Max asked her to reschedule the meetings he was going to miss. His wife called in the middle of all of this, and they were able to have a lengthy chat while the emergency crews worked. When the road was finally cleared, Max drove to work and was able to enjoy the rest of the day.

As you can probably tell, the only differences between Sam and Max in this instance were their attitudes toward, or thoughts about, the traffic jam. Sam saw the situation as a total inconvenience, a waste of his precious time and a general negative event. He even found ways to spread his anger around to his assistant and his wife – two people that he counts on to help him on an almost-daily basis! Furthermore, he enabled that *one* event to set the tone for his whole day.

Max, on the other hand, was able to remain calm. He was concerned about the people involved in the accident, and felt relieved when he found out that no one had been hurt. He was able to pause to count his own blessings. He used the time to get some things done for work and to have a long conversation with his wife, which he usually wasn't able to experience during the workday. Even though the traffic jam was inconvenient to Max, he used his time wisely, remained relaxed and was able to enjoy the rest of his day.

All of the drama in this example was created in the minds of the people who experienced it. The same applies to your life every day! How you think about something determines how you feel. You can choose how and what to think. In other words, *you have the ability to have absolute control over how you feel every moment of every day!*

Of course, knowing that you have this ability and developing it are two different things. If it were easy to control our feelings, everyone would be doing it! But the point is, it can be done. You just need to dedicate yourself to nurturing this natural skill.

For more information, contact me! I'd love to help you get started in turning your life around. Stacey Glaesmann, LPC, 2225 CR 90, Suite 221, Pearland, TX 77584, 713-417-0749; staceyglpc.com.