

Assess the Contributions of a Historical Figure in Psychology

Albert Ellis, Ph.D.

Martin CJ Mongiello

John F Kennedy School of Psychology and Social Sciences

National University

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Doctor Amanda Gibson

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Introduction

Allow an introduction to one of the boldest, most brilliantly unfiltered minds in the history of psychology—Dr. Albert Ellis, the no-nonsense father of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). If Freud smoked cigars and spoke in metaphors, Ellis stormed the stage with a microphone, a sailor's vocabulary, and a deep, relentless desire to free people from their own mental traps. "The trouble with most therapy," said therapist Albert Ellis (1913–2007), "is that it helps you to feel better. But you don't get better. You have to back it up with action, action, action" (Myers & DeWall, 2019).

Why do I love his REBT methods so much? Because they do not sugarcoat a damn thing. Ellis taught that it is not the events in our lives that disturb us—it is our beliefs about those events that cause us distress. Furthermore, he was not afraid to say, loudly and proudly, "You are screwing yourself over—and here is how to stop." That blunt honesty? It is healing. It is freeing. It is Ellis. This man did not just lecture—he lit fires.¹ He wrote over 80 books and published more than 1,200 articles, making him one of the most prolific psychologists of all time (Martin, 2023). He did not hide behind jargon or ivory towers. He stepped right onto center stage—sometimes literally—and unleashed hilarious, filthy, therapeutically offensive tirades against irrational thinking. It was not for shock value—it was a wake-up call wrapped in profanity and truth. Moreover, let us not forget the songs. Yes, Dr. Ellis would burst into bizarre, goofy tunes about "shoulding on yourself" and other psychological sins. The man turned group therapy into a comedy cabaret where breakthroughs came with belly laughs.

¹ During a late-evening workshop at his Upper East Side institute, Dr. Ellis interrupted a volunteer's story, once, with a loud, profanity-laden interjection—remarking bluntly, "It's not okay ... it's a pain in the ass!"—underscoring his aggressive, "no-bullshit" REBT style. Not only did the crowds often laugh but the guest roared also – about themselves. Almost everyone found him hilarious.

In a world of fragile egos and filter-heavy therapists, Ellis was the cannonball through the glasshouse. And I love him for it. Here, I pose three hypothetical questions to him, as if he were still alive, and then have him answer them for a National University project assignment.

Questions for Doctor Ellis

1. Dr. Ellis, you famously used unfiltered, often filthy language during your lectures, especially when discussing emotional hang-ups and irrational beliefs. Did you find that profanity and your funny songs² helped break through repression faster, or was it just a reflection of your frustration with humanity's self-sabotage? Aren't you a discredited fake and fraud, and students like me who enjoy your teachings with the doctors that work at the Ellis Institute in New York are also jerks needing a grade of "F" from real Doctors? Answer: What the fu*k are you laughing about – you could barely get the question out, and that's not being very scientific in your approach towards challenging me. I'll give you your grade of F., I don't need to wait for Doctor Gibson, you little b*stard (laughs and snorts, losing control of his bodice). Your implicit bias towards my books and papers is obvious, but yes, I did curse on stage in front of tens of thousands of people worldwide. Often, my conferences were sold out, and the reality is that my humorous approach doesn't mean it's okay to curse everywhere. Only with people who say it is okay to do so. I found that my outrageous methods loosened people up. They howled inside about their catastrophizing, shoulding on others, and musturbation (I must be loved, I must be treated a certain way, musting...), while they physically laughed out loud (snickers and chuckles lightly).

2. In your work and public talks, you were open about the dysfunctions of traditional

² Dr. Ellis often broke into “rational humorous songs” during his workshops—parodying popular tunes to poke fun at irrational beliefs and help participants laugh at themselves and gain perspective. They are now .mp3's.

marriage. Do you believe that the institution of marriage itself breeds irrational expectations—or is it simply the people who drag their unresolved neuroses into the bedroom that make it explode? Answer: One of my acolytes, like you, Leonard Citron (2014) poses a compelling question central to relationship dynamics and I feel like a proud papa seeing it, Martin: "Do you want to be married or do you want to be right?" (para. 1). He published some information on this and said, "Many couples come to therapy because they believe that their partner does not understand them, but often both individuals are not making decisions based on the best interest of the relationship, but rather in their own interest. Considering your partner's perspective is important, as is considering what is right for the relationship" (Citron, 2014, para. 6).

3. You often challenged puritanical thinking (Dredze, 2020) with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer. In hindsight, do you feel your stage profanity and bluntness helped normalize healthy views on sex and relationships, or did it just get people's knickers in a twist for no good reason? In a 2015 feature, *Our Town New York* portrayed you, Dr. Ellis, as "hard of hearing and given to foul language" during his REBT workshops, describing his style as a "no-bullshit approach" (Albert Ellis, Feisty Shrink, 2015). Answer: I'm sure many find me crass, uneducated, uncultured, filthy, disgusting, dirty, punishable – having committed criminal acts needing arrest and imprisonment in an orange suit. These fears are inside their minds, trapped in prisons. I shall not be their tower guard. They can be released at any time and do not need to post bail.

Conclusion

Dr. Albert Ellis revolutionized the field of psychology by unapologetically confronting irrational beliefs with humor, candor, and unfiltered realism. His work continues to challenge therapists and clients alike to embrace personal responsibility, emotional resilience, and a therapeutic process that values honesty over comfort.

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