

**THE EFFICACY OF GROUP COUNSELING
INTERVENTIONS EMPLOYING SHORT-TERM
RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY IN
ALTERING THE BELIEFS, ATTITUDES, AND
BEHAVIORS OF AT-RISK ADOLESCENTS**

by

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(Abstract)

An experimental, randomized, control-group, pretest-posttest design was employed in this study to examine the efficacy of the use of two short-term group counseling interventions employing Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy with at-risk adolescents in changing their beliefs, altering their attitude toward school, and moderating behaviors that are problematic in an educational setting.

Forty-eight subjects were included in this study from an alternative evening high school setting and were assessed in the initial stage of treatment using The Idea Inventory and The Majoribanks Attitude-To-School Inventory. The School Social Behavior Scale was employed at this beginning point to observe these students by teachers and administrators with regard to social competence and anti-social behaviors. Subjects were selected from a pool of regularly attending students in an alternative high school program and randomly assigned to three groups, one employing REBT concepts and techniques alone, one using REBT concepts and techniques in conjunction with the therapeutic board game, Let's Get Rational, and a control group. The treatment and control group designations were also randomly assigned to the counseling groups. Ten weekly 50 minute group counseling sessions were conducted by two master's level counselors employing the tenets of REBT with adolescents. Group participants had the opportunity to learn new interpersonal skills and behaviors that may be helpful to them in staying in school. At the conclusion of the 10 week treatment group sessions, the subjects in the three groups were re-assessed employing the same instruments mentioned before to determine if the activities in the group sessions made significant differences in the rational thinking, attitude to school, and school social behaviors of these at-risk students in an alternative setting.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in addition to a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) to measure the pretest and posttest performance and understanding of the subjects. Results revealed that the differences in the scores of the treatment groups were significant the REBT group employing the game, Let's Get Rational, contributing to students learning and understanding of the tenets of REBT at the .05 alpha level on the four dependent variables. There were no significant differences between genders regarding the four dependent variables, and there was a lack of a significant interaction between the intervention approach taken and the gender of the group member. There was no significant interaction between the gender of the subject and the treatment group placement. The results from both REBT groups support the efficacy of using the tenets of REBT with school aged populations who are at risk for failure. Appropriate conclusions and recommendations based upon the study findings were made. Implications for secondary school counselors and those counselors working with at-risk students were delineated.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my friend, C. Michael Sweeney, who lit the flame of interest in counseling for me in 1984. His encouragement and support over the years has been very valuable in my finding myself and finding a mode of helping people like I could only have imagined before. I have moved toward the completion of this project with the knowledge that he approved of what I was doing so that I could bring closure to this important chapter in my life. He has heard my complaints and frustrations about completing this, and he was there to celebrate with me the achievement of my interim goals along the course of this journey. His sublime gift of caring support to me remains a vital part of my life as this project closes and will continue to make my life happier and more joyful as a person and a professional. No one has ever had a friend like he is to me. No one has ever breathed into me the breath of professional life as a counselor as he has. As long as I am privileged to live this life, I will always feel that my professional life has been made complete by knowing a counselor like Mike Sweeney.

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