

Applying Teachings from the Bible to Improve Self-Talk and Self-Forgiveness

TABLE 10.2
Examples of Religiously Integrated Rational–Emotive Behavior Therapy Disputation Techniques

Disputation style	Disputation strategies				
	Theological	Religious evidence	Religiously functional	Religious dissonance	Religious alternative
“Self-rating” beliefs					
Didactic	Look, if you’re God’s creation, it just doesn’t make sense for you to call yourself a basket case or a weakling . . . or some other insulting name.	Christ said, “If you have done it to the least . . . you’ve done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). That means that He considers all people to be of equal value with <i>Him!</i>	You know, when you call yourself names it <i>de</i> -motivates you where right and wrong are concerned. You feel <i>less</i> like going to church and <i>more</i> like breaking commandments.	You forgive Peter for denying Christ—and remember, Peter saw miracles. So apply that kind of forgiveness to yourself. Be fair with yourself!	I suggest that you memorize and tell yourself, over and over again, what Peter said, “God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28).
Socratic	If the Bible says “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), help me understand how <i>you</i> are especially deserving of damnation when <i>you</i> sin?	What did Jesus say about the worth of sinners? The lost sheep? The prodigal son? What do these parables (all in Luke 15) say about your worth?	What does it do for you or for God when you down-rate yourself? Does it help you help others or pray or go to church or repent? Does it do any good for His works?	Do you believe what Christ said, “He who is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone” (John 8:7)? Why are you so set on clobbering yourself?	Instead of the unbiblical notion that you are no good or less human when you err (sin), what is a more truthful and biblically correct thing you could tell yourself?
“Awfulizing” beliefs					
Metaphorical	The death of Jesus on the cross was first viewed as catastrophic, but we now see it as an important gift! What seems awful at first may not seem awful later.	Martyrs of the early church welcomed suffering if it brought God glory. Perhaps they would view what you call “terrible” as an opportunity or privilege.	When the Jews were enslaved in Egypt, some probably said “this is awful,” and others said “The Lord will deliver us.” Who do you imagine felt better?	If an earth-covering flood was not a catastrophe but part of God’s plan, how likely is it that this thing you face is a true catastrophe?	In the lion’s den, what might Daniel have said (and to God) instead of “this is awful!”
Disputation style	Theological	Religious evidence	Religiously functional	Religious dissonance	Religious alternative
“Awfulizing” beliefs					
Therapist Self-Disclosure	I used to say that various things were terrible or awful until I realized that God may have designed them that way for His purposes.	Practically nothing is 100%, bad and nothing is more than 100% bad. No matter what is wrong, I could be facing it without God. That would be worse!	When I tell myself something in my life is awful or catastrophic, I find it only helps me to become immobilized, angry, and distant from God.	When I start believing something is awful, I close my eyes and imagine walking through it without God. Suddenly, whatever it is seems less bad!	When anything seems awful to me, I imagine Christ putting a nail-pierced hand on my shoulder and smiling kindly and I realize nothing I face is especially awful!
Humorous	During the “awful” storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus slept peacefully while the disciples fretted. Might your own “catastrophe” make Jesus sleepy as well?	Yes, I’m certain the martyred saints of the church would agree that your situation is the worst <i>any</i> Christian has <i>ever</i> faced. You win the Holy All-time Awful Award (HAAA!).	How exactly does your catastrophizing chant (“This is awful, this is awful”) help your spiritual walk and promote your faith in God?	If <i>this</i> is awful, then it could not be worse, so I guess that means this is worse than roasting in hell for eternity?	Lord, I know things could be worse, much worse, but how about no more “opportunities” for growth like this one for awhile?

Note. Adapted from *Counseling and Psychotherapy With Religious Persons: A Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy Approach*, by S. L. Nielsen, B. W. Johnson, and A. Ellis, 2001, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Copyright 2001 by Erlbaum. Reprinted with permission.