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Chapter 1.

The Use of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in Sport and Exercise:

An Introduction.

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This book marks a significant development in studying the application of REBT within sport and exercise settings. Enclosed, across fourteen chapters, practitioners generously share their work using, and in many cases adapting, REBT within challenging but rewarding sport and exercise domains. The chapters that comprise *The Use of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy in Sport and Exercise* demonstrate authors working across many psychological and performance related issues, across a variety of ages, abilities, and cultures, within an assortment of sport and exercise settings. As readers will discover, using REBT within sport and exercise environments has various challenges, some of which are predictable, and others that are unforeseen. Using REBT flexibly in these environments is paramount, because most practitioners do not have 50-60 minutes for a one-to-one session, and in most cases do not have the luxury of a private and dedicated consulting room. However, many practitioners do have the advantage of being able to consult with clients in the actual performance setting in which their clients toil, which alongside many challenges, presents unique opportunities to apply and integrate REBT into a performer's environment more effectively.

The Use of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy in Sport and Exercise was conceived due to the lack of published reports of the use of REBT in sport and

exercise settings. Whilst practitioners probably quite frequently use REBT in sport and exercise settings, the presence of literature describing this usage is sparse. This presents a number of problems, such as lack of awareness about the utility of REBT, lack of evidence for the use of REBT in sport and exercise, and also a lack of guidelines for the how REBT can be integrated into sport and exercise environments. In other words, how can practitioners use REBT in these contexts, and how might the mechanics of REBT be adapted to fit the unpredictable, constantly changing, and dynamic milieu of sport and exercise? This book aims to answer these important questions, whilst meeting a need within sport and exercise psychology literature for more reports of REBT being applied with athletes and exercisers.

The fact that there is a dearth of literature on the use of REBT in sport and exercise is curious, because REBT is not novel. We will comment in some detail on what REBT is (and what REBT is not in the next chapter), but it is important to realize that REBT was conceived by Dr. Albert Ellis in the 1950s, with the publication of “Rational psychotherapy and individual psychology” in 1957. Therefore, REBT (or RT as it was first called) is 60+ years old. Therefore, REBT is not a new discovery, and furthermore even in sport and exercise, the use of REBT is not new. Although the use of REBT in sport and exercise has only recently begun to garner *significant* research interest, the first reported use of REBT in sport occurred in a book chapter by Professor Michael Bernard in 1985. In his chapter, Bernard describes his application of an REBT program with professional Australian Rules Football players. After the work, Bernard reports that the athletes were better able to control their thoughts to directly influence performance. Bernard’s chapter had a major influence in the development of this volume, as it was essentially a detailed

case study that captured the mechanics of using REBT in sport; a chief aim of *The Use of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy in Sport and Exercise*.

The reader can engage with the extant literature that reports the use of REBT in sport and exercise independently, as a full review is not the focus of this introduction. Since Bernard (1985), around 20 papers have been published. Much of the research is covered in Turner (2016), but new research is emerging frequently. Notably, in most research papers, due to publication restrictions and the understandable focus on contribution to length, the intricate details of REBT interventions are often omitted from research articles. The current book addresses this omission by permitting authors to go into greater detail about how they applied REBT with their clients, including facets of the work that might be less glamorous or more difficult, contributing to an on-going narrative about how REBT can and “should” be used. In other words, the authors of the chapters in this book have been encouraged to take a balanced view of what they did, in the interest of self-reflection and transparency.

One notable consequence of REBT being written about and talked about in sport and exercise domains is the increased number of sport and exercise psychology practitioners and trainee practitioners becoming trained in REBT. Similarly, those who are already trained in REBT, and who typically work in clinical environments, are becoming more interested in how their skills may apply to athletes and exercisers. This represents a fascinating cross-pollination of skills and ideas across very different domains that can only serve to enhance our understanding of REBT, and more broadly, the psychological health and well-being of athletes and exercisers. With the current book, we hope to further engage and interest practitioners across domains, and

hope to encourage those using REBT in sport and exercise to write about and publish their experiences.

Considering this brief introduction, it can be seen that REBT in sport and exercise is gaining research interest, is becoming more popular with practitioners, and is beginning to inspire performance-specific developments (e.g., the measurement of irrational performance beliefs). This book builds on the research to date by offering fourteen diverse, and in many cases pioneering, chapters that illustrate how, and importantly why, REBT has been applied in the sport or exercise setting the practitioner found themselves in. For the first time, a book brings together the expertise and experiences of practitioners applying REBT in sport and exercise settings from around the world. This book will appeal to established REBT practitioners who are curious about the various applications of REBT in sport and exercise, and sport and exercise psychologists who are curious about REBT. This book will appeal to neophyte and experienced practitioners, researchers and academics, athletes, and students who wish to understand more about REBT and how it can be used in sport and exercise settings.

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