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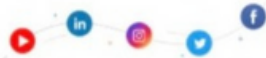


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# Instructor's Manual

for

# “My Kids Don't Appreciate me” REBT with a Single Mother

with

Janet Wolfe, PhD

Manual by

Megan McCarthy, PhD and Erika L.Seid,MA





The *Instructor's Manual* accompanies the DVD *"My Kids Don't Appreciate Me": REBT with a Single Mother* (Institutional/Instructor's Version). Video available at [www.psychotherapy.net](http://www.psychotherapy.net).

Portions of this manual were originally published in the *Albert Ellis Institute Master Therapist Series Study Guide for Woman Coping with Depression and Anger Over Teenager's Behavior*, edited by Stephen G. Weinrach, PhD and Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, and published in 1996 by The Albert Ellis Institute, New York.

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Megan McCarthy, PhD & Erika Seid, MA

*Instructor's Manual for "My Kids Don't Appreciate Me": REBT with a Single Mother*

Cover design by Michelle Barnhardt

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**Instructor’s Manual for**

**“MY KIDS DON’T APPRECIATE ME”: REBT WITH A SINGLE MOTHER**

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# Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD

## 1. USE thE trAnSCriPtS

Make notes in the video **Transcript** for future reference; the next time you show the video you will have them available. Highlight or notate key moments in the video to better facilitate discussion during the video and post-viewing.

## 2. FACiLitAtE DiSCUSSion

Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers' observations and reactions to the concepts presented. The **Discussion Questions** provide ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

## 3. LEt it FLOW

Allow the session to play out some, rather than stopping the video often, so viewers can appreciate the work over time. It is best to watch the video in its entirety since issues untouched in earlier parts often play out later. Encourage viewers to voice their opinions; no therapy is perfect! What do viewers think works and does not work in the session? We learn as much from our mistakes as our successes, and it is crucial for students and therapists to develop the ability to effectively critique this work as well as their own.

## 4. SUGgESt rEADingS to EnriCh ViDEo MAtEriAL

Assign readings from **Suggestions for Further Readings and Websites** prior to viewing. You can also schedule the video to coincide with other course or training materials on related topics.

## 5. rEFLEct on KEy PointS

Hand out copies of **Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy Treatment Sequence** before showing the video. This outline of REBT helps viewers recognize key points in the session and helps structure Dr. Wolfe's various interventions with this client.

## 6. ASSign A rEACtion PAPER

See suggestions in **Reaction Paper** section.

## 7. ConDUct roLE-PLAyS

After watching the video, assign groups to role-play a psychotherapy session following the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) Model. Organize participants into dyads, consisting of one psychotherapist and one client. If time permits, participants can switch roles.

Instruct those who role-play clients to present a problem or issue that is fairly specific. This makes it easier to hone their practice of the REBT approach. Encourage therapists to focus on assessing events that activate anger, identifying negative consequences and alternative goals, and disputing irrational beliefs. Using the **Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy Treatment Sequence** handout as a guide, therapists can practice efficiently identifying an activating event, explaining linkage among beliefs and consequences, and helping clients to independently examine and challenge irrational beliefs.

After the conclusion of the role-play, bring all the participants—therapists, clients and observers—back together to talk about their reactions to the session. Which aspects of REBT feel helpful for clients? What feels like a good fit for therapists’ personal styles? Are there ideas or areas of focus in the therapy with which participants have particular difficulty?

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one client; the entire group can observe, acting as the advising team to the therapist. Before the end of the session, have the therapist take a break, get feedback from the observation team, and bring it back into the session with the client. Other observers might jump in if the therapist gets stuck. Follow up with a discussion that explores what participants found useful and/or challenging about Wolfe’s approach.

## PErSPEctIVE on ViDEoS AnD tHE PErSonALity oF tHE thErAPISt

Psychotherapy portrayed in videos is less off-the-cuff than therapy in practice. Therapists may feel put on the spot to present a good demonstration, and clients can be self-conscious in front of a camera.

Therapists often move more quickly than they would in everyday practice to demonstrate a particular technique. Despite these factors, therapists and clients on video can engage in a realistic session that conveys a wealth of information not contained in books or therapy transcripts: body language, tone of voice, facial expression, rhythm of the interaction, quality of the alliance, and other aspects of *process* (as opposed to *content*) that are critical components of the therapeutic encounter. Because these process variables are so multidimensional, repeated viewings of the same session can help therapists of all levels of experience detect many different nuances of process and deepen their insight and learning.

Psychotherapy is an intensely private matter. Unlike the training in other professions, students and practitioners rarely have an opportunity to see their mentors at work. But watching therapy on video is the next best thing.

One more note: The personal style of therapists is often as important as their techniques and theories. Therapists are usually drawn to approaches that mesh well with their own personality. Thus, while we can certainly pick up ideas from master therapists, students and trainees must make the best use of relevant theory, technique and research that fit their own personal style and the needs of their clients.

#### PrIVACy AnD ConFiDentiALity

Because this video contains an actual therapy session, please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the client who has courageously shared her personal life with us.



# Wolfe's Approach to Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT; formerly Rational Emotive Therapy) was developed by Dr. Albert Ellis (1913 – 2007). Ellis, considered the founder of cognitive-behavioral therapies, believed that people's irrational cognitive appraisals of, or beliefs about, life events caused their unhappiness. REBT teaches that understanding the irrationality of such beliefs allows people to replace their beliefs with more rational thoughts and feel and thus behave in less self-defeating ways.

The ABC framework is at the core of REBT technique. "A" represents an external or internal *activating event*, about which a person becomes upset. "B" stands for a person's beliefs, or evaluative cognitions, about the event, which may be either *rational* (flexible) or *irrational* (rigid). *Rational beliefs* tend to reflect preferences or wishes, whereas *irrational beliefs* tend to assert absolutes, shoulds, or extremes. The emotional and behavioral sequelae of people's beliefs about activating events are called *Consequences* ("C"). The consequences of flexible, rational beliefs about negative events may be unpleasant, but they are typically functional, emotionally manageable, and lead to improved circumstances. The consequences of rigid, irrational beliefs are dysfunctional and lead to increased emotional distress, self-defeating behavior, and worsening circumstances.

As an REBT therapist, Janet Wolfe conducts therapy by identifying negative consequences (feelings and behaviors), the activating events for those consequences, and the beliefs that lead to the consequences. She disputes her clients' irrational beliefs and helps them develop and strengthen more flexible, rational beliefs. By challenging, and, ultimately, changing their beliefs, clients are able to react more adaptively to activating events. Wolfe encourages clients to take responsibility for challenging their beliefs and managing their feelings and behaviors outside of therapy sessions.

This section has been adapted from the Albert Ellis Institute Master Therapist Series Study Guide, edited by Stephen G. Weinrach, PhD and Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, which accompanied the original VHS edition of this video.



## **THE RATIONAl EMoTiVE BEhAVioR ThERApY TREatMEnt SEqUEnCE**

STEP 1: Ask for a problem

STEP 2: Define and agree on target problem

STEP 3: Assess C (emotional and behavioral Consequences)

STEP 4: Assess A (Activating event)

STEP 5: Identify and assess any secondary emotional problems

STEP 6: Teach the B-C connection (Beliefs – emotional & behavioral Consequences)

STEP 7: Assess beliefs

STEP 8: Connect irrational beliefs and emotional consequences

STEP 9: Dispute irrational beliefs

STEP IO: Prepare client to deepen conviction in rational beliefs

STEP II: Encourage client to put new learning into practice

STEP I2: Check homework assignments

STEP 13: Facilitate the working-through process

This section has been adapted from the *Albert Ellis Institute Master Therapist Series Study Guide*, edited by Stephen G. Weinrach, PhD and Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, which accompanied the original VHS edition of this video.





# Reaction paper for Classes and Training

## Video: *“My Kids Don’t Appreciate Me”*

- **Assignment:** Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the facilitator.

- **Suggestions for Viewers:** Take notes on these questions while viewing the video and complete the reaction paper afterwards, or use the questions as a way to approach the discussion. Respond to each question below.

- **Length and Style:** 2-4 pages double-spaced. Be brief and concise.

Do not provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief reaction paper that you write soon after watching the video—we want your ideas and reactions.

**What to Write:** Respond to the following questions:

**1. Key points:** What important points did you learn about Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)? What aspects of REBT were most salient to you?

**2. What I found most helpful:** What was most beneficial to your therapeutic work about watching this video? What techniques or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work? What challenged you to think about something in a new way?

**3. What does not make sense:** What principles/techniques/strategies did not make sense to you? Did anything not fit with your own style of working?

**4. How I would do it differently:** What might you have done differently than Wolfe in the therapy session in the video? Identify the different approaches, strategies and techniques you might have deployed in particular situations.

**5. Other Questions/Reactions:** What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the therapy in the video? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?



# Related Websites, Videos, and Further Readings

## WEB RESoURCES

Psychotherapy.net online interviews with Albert Ellis

**[www.psychotherapy.net](http://www.psychotherapy.net)**

The Albert Ellis Institute

**[www.rebt.org](http://www.rebt.org)**

Association for Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (AREBT)

**[www.arebt.org](http://www.arebt.org)**

National Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists

**[www.nacbt.org](http://www.nacbt.org)**

REBT Network

**[www.rebtnetwork.org](http://www.rebtnetwork.org)**

## RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT **WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY. NET**

*Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with Donald Meichenbaum, PhD*

*Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with John Krumboltz, PhD*

*Coping with the Suicide of a Loved One: An REBT Approach*

*Depression: A Cognitive Therapy Approach*

*“I’d Hear Laughter”: Finding Solutions for the Family*

*Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy for Addictions*

*REBT for Anger Management with Janet Wolfe, PhD*

*Reality Therapy with Robert Wubbolding, EdD*

*Reality Therapy with Children*

## Books

Ellis, A. (2001). *Feeling better, getting better, staying better: Profound self-help therapy for your emotions*. Atascadero, CA: Impact.

Ellis, A. (2001). *How to make yourself happy and remarkably less distressed*. Atascadero, CA: Impact.

Ellis, A. (2001). *Overcoming destructive beliefs, feelings, and behaviors: New directions for rational emotive behavior therapy*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Ellis, A. & Dryden, W. (2007). *The practice of rational emotive behavior therapy*. New York: Springer.

Ellis, A., Harper, R., & Power, M. (1975). *A guide to rational living*. Hollywood, CA: Wilshire.

Ellis, A. & Lange, A. (2003). *How to keep people from pushing your buttons*. New York: Citadel.

Ellis, A. & MacLaren, C. (2005). *Rational emotive behavior therapy: A therapist's guide*. Atascadero, CA: Impact.

Ellis, A. & Tafrate, R. (2000). *How to control your anger before it controls you*. New York: Citadel.

Wolfe, Janet L. (1993). *What to do when he has a headache: Renewing desire and intimacy in your relationship*. New York: Penguin.

# Discussion questions

Professors, training directors and facilitators may use some or all of these discussion questions, depending on what aspects of the video are most relevant to the audience.

## inTRoDUCTION

**1. Philosophy of Therapy:** What are your views of REBT's ABC framework, and its underlying assumption that how we think about events causes our emotional and behavioral reactions to those events? How does challenging our beliefs bring about more flexible and adaptive reactions to unpleasant situations?

## The ACTIVATING EVENT

**2. History:** Wolfe allows Janice to spontaneously report relevant details of her background, rather than formally interviewing her about her history. What do you find most interesting or helpful about this approach? What was it about Wolfe's style that helped Janice feel comfortable enough to open up so early in the session? For what kinds of clients might this approach impede therapeutic progress?

**3. Therapeutic Alliance:** How does Wolfe build a therapeutic alliance with Janice? In what ways do you see REBT technique lending itself to alliance building? How would you describe Wolfe's alliance with Janice at the beginning, middle, and end of the session? Discuss one example in the session in which Wolfe's interventions help build rapport, and one in which they seem to strain rapport.

## BELIEFS & ConSEqUEnCES

**4. Challenging Affect:** Why do you think Wolfe often questions, rather than deepens, Janice's affect when Janice becomes tearful at several points during the session (for example, when Janice talks about being a single mother)? What effects does this have on Janice? How do Wolfe's reactions help Janice identify the emotional and behavioral consequences of her beliefs?

**5. Prefer vs. Should:** Is Wolfe's framing of Janice's irrational beliefs as "shoulds" (for example, when Janice feels her children don't appreciate her enough) helpful for Janice?

Does Janice succeed in shifting her "shoulds" into rational preferences over the course of the session? What aspects of Janice's words and behavior support your view?

## **RATionAl & iRRATionAl BELiEFS**

**6. Cultural Competence:** How do you react to Wolfe's interventions with Janice on topics that are culturally laden and value driven, such as child rearing and saving vs. spending money? If you were Janice's therapist, how would you have handled these moments? How might a discussion of cultural differences between the two of them affect the session?

**7. Exceptions to Rational Beliefs:** How do you react to Wolfe's rejection of the traditional REBT approach for some negative activating events on the grounds that some events are inherently very upsetting (e.g., actually being a bad mother, or rape)? How would you make clinically sensitive decisions about distinguishing such circumstances from typical activating events?

## **ThE ABC MoDEl**

**8. Suitability:** For which types of clients do REBT techniques seem especially well suited? Are there people who might find it difficult to engage in REBT? How might you use REBT techniques to help clients who are antagonistic or emotionally dysregulated in session?

**9. Your Therapeutic Style:** Which aspects of REBT technique and Wolfe's style would you like to incorporate into your own therapeutic work? Which aspects seem most challenging for you to adapt, and why?

**10. Your Therapy:** Based on this session, do you feel REBT would be a helpful therapy for you? How so? How would you feel having Wolfe as your therapist? Would you feel comfortable problem solving with her? Why or why not?

# Complete Transcript of *“My Kids Don’t Appreciate Me”*

## inTRoDUCTION

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD: Hello. My name is Ray DiGiuseppe, director of professional education at the Albert Ellis Institute and professor of psychology at St. John’s University. Welcome to one of our Master Therapists series.

In these tapes, we will be showing live sessions of master therapists doing rational emotive behavior therapy. We have found over the years that therapists learn much more from watching the therapy session and modeling the behavior of the therapist rather than just watching workshops and reading books.

Many trainees who watch therapy tapes want to know why the therapist made some of the decisions that they’ve done. They almost would like to get inside the therapist’s head and think and listen to the conversations about why choose one intervention over the other.

To help facilitate learning how to do therapy, we’re going to have conversations with the therapists after each therapy session where we watch the therapy session and at key decision points ask each therapist why they made the decision that they did. Then the observer can see not only what the therapist did but the ideas and the feedback and the information that they used in making those clinical decisions.

We hope this series will be helpful for you in treating your patients and learning to make difficult clinical decisions and following through on the right therapeutic strategy.

## ThE ACTiVATing EVENt

**Janet Wolfe, PhD:** So, so what... the thing you’re feeling most bad about that, give me an example of what happened recently.

**Janice:** It’s like, like, well, I was talking to my babies—he’s 13, Chris,

he's 13, and Travika [ph], she's 16. Now since I've been, I've been working almost two years. I just, I got my GED maybe two and a half years ago. My first job that I, I was an intern at this job; I work at The Family Learning Circle.

And, but I mean, you know, I went there. I really tried. I was tired of public assistance. I felt like I had raised them.... My oldest is 21. I realized I couldn't, didn't give them a whole lot, but I did the best I could. And I've always....

**Wolfe:** And you were alone the whole time?

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** Father is just not on the scene.

**Janice:** No father for them. I just did it, you know. They're mine. And I felt that was a privilege in itself.

They had went, my oldest son, he got locked up after I was going to school for having a gun on him. They called the police on him. He was with his friends. They called me. I had to stop going. But I eventually got back on the right track after I got him out of that. Then it's like, I've been working now, and I try so hard. I pay the rent myself. I'm off public assistance. I felt that would make a difference in their life. And for them to stand up and tell me that I don't do nothing for them, whereas I did everything myself mainly because I wanted to give them something better, but for them to say that, it destroys.

### ***Assessing the "A" (Activating event)***

**Wolfe:** Well, we want to keep it from destroying you. You've survived this long.

**Janice:** You know, it just hurts. And it's....

**Wolfe:** Sure. And that's pretty darn disappointing.

**Janice:** Yeah.

**Wolfe:** To put it mildly. But now, when they say this to you, because from what you say, it's really not true. Right?

**Janice:** Not to me, it's not, but....



**Wolfe:** No, and objectively speaking.

**Janice:** Just for them to say that to me.

**Wolfe:** Well, but let's look at the reality. The reality is, it sounds like, you have, you've been mother, father....

**Janice:** I have. I have.

**Wolfe:** Counselor.

**Janice:** And I think I've done a good job of it, too.

**Wolfe:** Cook.

**Janice:** Yes. All that.

**Wolfe:** Tutor. I assume, the whole business, and that's a fact, right?

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** Now, how does it follow that if they say, "Oh, no, that's not a fact. You just imagine that you've done things for us. You haven't done nothing."

**Janice:** But I know I have.

**Wolfe:** How does that, how does that erase that fact?

**Janice:** I know I have.

**Wolfe:** You do know that.

**Janice:** I know I have. But for them not to appreciate what I have tried to do for them.

**Wolfe:** That would be very disappointing.

**Janice:** It, it, it....

**Wolfe:** To put it mildly.

**Janice:** It.... Really.

**Wolfe:** Okay. Now, the question is, are you feeling more than disappointed? You look like you're feeling more than disappointed.

## ***Assessing the "c" (eMotionAl AnD BehAviorAl consequences)***

**Janice:** Well, I cry very easy. I'm, I'm very....

**Wolfe:** Oh, that's okay.

**Janice:** You know, but...

**Wolfe:** But it looks like more than disappointment.

**Janice:** Well, I wonder sometimes, you know, if it would have made a difference if maybe they had had their father in their lives.

**Wolfe:** So is there any "shoulding" going on here?

**Janice:** What do you mean? What do you mean?

**Wolfe:** Telling yourself, "I should have...."

**Janice:** No, because I feel like I'm better off without him.

**Wolfe:** Okay. So, so you're saying to yourself, "Maybe they would have been better with a father," but the fact is, they wouldn't have, not with, not with this one.

**Janice:** I mean, I know what I went through with their fathers. I was beat on, and it took a lot for me to leave that situation, okay.

**Wolfe:** Right. I'm sure.

**Janice:** And I promised myself once I did leave after the last time, I would never go back.

\*\*\*

## Discussion

**DiGiuseppe:** Janet, this is a first session and you haven't, you know, gone through the traditional history, and you're asking her about how she feels about these practical issues that are going on in her life, and she's really revealed quite a lot of information about her son, about the leaving the husband because of the physical abuse, and you've really got her crying very early in the session. She's really upset.

What do you think of the advantage of the strategy you've taken rather than the more traditional approach of doing a more formal history taking?

**Wolfe:** In a sense, I'm almost going backward. I'm starting with the thing she's most upset about now and as she talks it through, she's

pulled in herself, as clients frequently do, the relevant things in her past. I might do a little bit more probing, and I might do more probing as therapy progressed and I do have some written background information, but I find that the relevant stuff will come up in the course of processing the current problem.

**DiGiuseppe:** And it really has her experiencing the problem right now. I mean, you really have her, you know, really emotionally upset and in tears—not that you got her in tears—but she’s really experiencing the problem right now.

**Wolfe:** And by getting her really in touch with her feelings, I think all of this other surrounding stuff that’s relevant is really coming up. She’s feeling guilty that maybe she’s failed as a parent because she split from the father, and therefore they don’t have a male role model. Or maybe she’s not being a good mother because she herself was an abused child and all this relevant stuff...

**DiGiuseppe:** Has really come out.

**Wolfe:** ...that we need to know for now is coming out.

**DiGiuseppe:** So do you think that this might be a better strategy to really get people in touch with their feelings rather than the more, you know, cautious and drawn out history taking?

**Wolfe:** Absolutely. Because particularly if you’re thinking of you have a fairly limited amount of time with some people. You may have one or two or three sessions, and if you’re busy collecting history, you may never actually get to helping them with the real life problem they’ve come up with, come in with.

**DiGiuseppe:** Let’s watch some more.

\*\*\*

## **BELIEFS AND CONSEQUENCES**

**Wolfe:** So on a rational level, you know having an abusive person like that is not...

**Janice:** Is not good for me or them.

**Wolfe:** ...is not good for them. Okay.

**Janice:** I know that.

**Wolfe:** But when you're not thinking so rationally, what are you thinking?

**Janice:** Well, maybe if they had had one that, they would be, they would feel better about themselves a little bit, you know.

**Wolfe:** No, then they'd have two people to tell that they didn't do anything for them.

**Janice:** Well, sometime I think they wouldn't tell...

**Wolfe:** Instead of one.

**Janice:** They wouldn't, they wouldn't tell, they wouldn't say that, maybe, if it was a father figure there. You know, like a lot of things that fathers do. I've got three boys, let's face it. And it's hard to try to raise them and then, but they have, people that sees them, that knows them, that have watched me raise them: "Janice, you've done a good job." But I would rather—

**Wolfe:** Okay. So you've done a good job, but....

**Janice:** But I want them to see that I've, my children to see it.

### ***Assessing the rAtional-Belief-to-consequence connection***

**Wolfe:** "I want them to." Now that's a very rational wish. I certainly wish that my kids whom I've given my life to would appreciate it.

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** That's a very rational thought. Now if you only thought that, "Gee, I wish these kids weren't so ungrateful and would really appreciate what I've done for them," how would you feel? If you only thought that?

**Janice:** How would I feel?

**Wolfe:** Yes.

**Janice:** That maybe I had really accomplished something.

**Wolfe:** Yeah, you'd feel okay about yourself, but maybe disappointed

that they weren't giving you the recognition.

**Janice:** I know they're, I know they're children. I know they're going to do things. But I mean, I've been there. I've been there.

**Wolfe:** Now, in order to feel more than disappointed, what other thoughts are you having? "I wish they weren't saying these things, which I don't think is true."

**Janice:** Basically, that's basically all they'll really say to me, and it really just hurts.

**Wolfe:** And they never say positive things.

**Janice:** Well, they'll say, they'll tell their friends that I'm a good mother and that, they don't never say, tell me.

**Wolfe:** Oh. I see. Why do you suppose they do that, by the way?

**Janice:** Well, I think sometime they're comparing their friends' mothers to me, so then that's maybe when I do overshadow them.

**Wolfe:** Maybe they're doing that. What's another reason why they might not give you credit and want to keep complaining about you not giving them enough?

**Janice:** I've made my mistakes, too.

**Wolfe:** I'm sure you have. You are human.

**Janice:** You know, and maybe I've made them with them. You know, because I'm not an affectionate mother. I don't, I tell them I do love them; they know I do.

**Wolfe:** That's affectionate.

**Janice:** But no, you know, as far as the hugging and all that touching and stuff

**Wolfe:** The physical....

**Janice:** I just can't do that.

**Wolfe:** And you feel guilty about that?

**Janice:** Sometimes.

## ***Assessing the consequences (cs)***

**Wolfe:** That's what it sounds like. So on some levels, it sounds like part of the time you're thinking, "I did a damn good job under difficult circumstances," and the rest of the time it sounds like you're saying, "I should have done more. I should have done more."

**Janice:** Yeah.

### ***Disputing iB (irrAtionAl Belief)***

**Wolfe:** Now why should you have done more? We can prove it might have been preferable in an ideal world if you had done more: been mother, father, hugger, you know, provided them all with their own cars, whatever.

**Janice:** They will never get that.

**Wolfe:** We can prove it might have been preferable but where is it writ you should have been any better than you were? Where is that written?

**Janice:** It's not written nowhere. It's just the way I feel.

**Wolfe:** It's the way you think. It's written in your brain.

**Janice:** Yes. I've, you know, we, it's just been us five. At some points, I've had to raise, take my sister's children and raise them. I've had as many as seven children living with my other, my four children from time to time, so I know that maybe that wasn't right, but there was nobody else to do it.

**Wolfe:** And you did the best that you could.

**Janice:** I did.

### ***estABlishing the rAtionAl-Belief-to-consequence connection***

**Wolfe:** Now, if you were to remember that when your kid says to you.... Kid may not remember because kids have a real knack for being ungrateful and never thinking that the world has given them enough. But if you were to think, "I did the best I could," the next time your 13 year old says to you, "You haven't done anything for me," what could you say to your son?

**Janice:** No, he hasn't said it yet, because I told him he can never say

that.

**Wolfe:** Well, let's suppose one of them....

**Janice:** You know, but 16, 19 and the 21 year old said it...

**Wolfe:** Oh, I see.

**Janice:** You know, and it makes a difference. You know, it's like they're planting it in his mind: "You can say this to Mommy, too."

**Wolfe:** Yeah. But let's suppose one of your kids does say it. But you remember that even though they're saying that I didn't do enough, I did the best I can, could and I did a phenomenal job.

**Janice:** I tell them that.

**Wolfe:** No, you tell yourself that.

**Janice:** No, I tell them that when it goes like that, and I just start crying, you know, and it really, because it, it just, like somebody's there....

**Wolfe:** And then what happens?

**Janice:** Well, then they go on in their bedroom or else sometime they'll leave, you know.

**Wolfe:** So they back off when you start crying.

**Janice:** Yeah, they'll back off. They'll back off on me, and then maybe two or three days later, they come back and they'll be like, "Mommy, we're sorry. I'm sorry." "What, sorry don't mean nothing. You done said it, and it's not right. You shouldn't have said that to me."

**Wolfe:** Oh, shouldn't have said it. Can you rewrite history?

**Janice:** No.

**Wolfe:** Okay.

**Janice:** But I guess [INAUDIBLE]

**Wolfe:** So let's, let's see if we can figure out a different way of responding. Do you like to continue to feel as upset when they say things like this?

## ***estABlishing session goAl***

**Janice:** Well, I don't get over it just as easy.

**Wolfe:** Would you like to feel less upset about it?

**Janice:** Yes, I would.

**Wolfe:** And is there any chance that none of them is ever going to say this to you again?

**Janice:** I wouldn't say that.

**Wolfe:** We hope.

**Janice:** But I would hope they wouldn't.

**Wolfe:** You hope they wouldn't.

**Janice:** I would hope they wouldn't.

**Wolfe:** But.

**Janice:** Because they see what it does to me.

**Wolfe:** Teenagers—That's right. And by the way, when they see what it....

**Janice:** But they, I think they use that as a pressure point, also. They know, well, "We can say this to Mommy and then she'll just leave us alone," because usually it's at a point when I have reached it, you know. **Wolfe:** And you're trying to get them to do something.

**Janice:** I'm trying, no, well, see, I'm going to get them to do what I want them to do, but it's just the amount of force that I have to use to get them to do it. And I feel like I should really, I mean, they're old enough to know what needs to be done. I shouldn't have to fuss and go on with them.

**Wolfe:** I hear a lot of "shoulding" going on here.

**Janice:** I really, I don't feel that I should.

**Wolfe:** It would be preferable.

**Janice:** Yes, it would. But I know I'm the parent.

**Wolfe:** But let's look at the difference between "it would be preferable



if kids did what they wanted once they know what their chores are.”

**Janice:** No, they can't do whatever they want. They don't know what they want.

**Wolfe:** And “it would be preferable if they could express gratitude toward their parents.” We can prove that it would be preferable, right?

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** It would be better for them; it would be better for you. Now, as soon as you go from “it would be preferable” to “they should do it, their chores without being told” and “they shouldn't tell me I've been a bad mother,” then what happens? Now we're out of the realm of truth into fiction.

**Janice:** Well....

**Wolfe:** Because why is it a nutty idea that they should be different from the way they are?

### ***Disputing irrAtionAl Belief (iB)***

**Janice:** Because I just, I feel that they was raised, they was raised knowing these things. They see what I had to go through. I want better for them.

**Wolfe:** Well, but, again, you're proving why it would be preferable if they learned their lessons, but you haven't proved why they must.

**Janice:** Why would they, they should....

**Wolfe:** What law of the universe says that kids must learn from their parents, be cooperative members of the household and be grateful for the sacrifice?

**Janice:** I have no answer for that.

**Wolfe:** Is there any, have you noticed that this universe is very unfair?

**Janice:** Yes, I have.

**Wolfe:** And have you noticed that all kinds of teenagers are spoiled and, you know.

**Janice:** Brats.

**Wolfe:** Brats and whine that their parents have never done enough, so when I say, when you say, "they shouldn't be this way," why is that a crazy idea?

**Janice:** I just think back to when I was, when I was small, I knew I wouldn't. I was, I was....

**Wolfe:** You were okay.

**Janice:** I wouldn't. I was scared.

**Wolfe:** Okay, but then, but aren't you saying then, "Because I didn't, they shouldn't"?

**Janice:** That's what I'm saying.

**Wolfe:** And is, why is that a nutty idea?

**Janice:** It's not a nutty idea to me.

**Wolfe:** Should? Oh, wait. Let's try a different one. Let's try a different example. If I say it shouldn't be rainy, so rainy and cold outside.

**Janice:** That's the way nature planned it.

### ***Disputing irrAtionAl Belief***

**Wolfe:** Ah. Now you're getting on it. Now let's take it back to the kids. The kids shouldn't act like kids; they should be cooperative and grateful.

**Janice:** No, that's the way nature planned it. That's the way nature planned it. They're going to try. They're going to do their little things. I know that.

**Wolfe:** They're going to try to act out, because part of growing up, part of the process of growing up is opposing your parents, staking out your own individuality. And the process of being a parent is a pain in the neck. Because you're trying to run a household. You'd like them to help with the housework. They're all eating and....

**Janice:** Well, they do that. Basically, they're pretty good kids. I won't take that away from them.

**Wolfe:** So what are you complaining?

**Janice:** But they just, they just, they just push buttons, and it really runs me up a....

**Wolfe:** If you, if you, if you let them. Okay. So let's see now. Is our goal then to try to let your button get less pushed?

### ***functionAl vs. DysfunctionAl eMotions***

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** Okay. In order to do that, in order to feel only disappointed when your kids make these cracks, what attitude would you have to have?

**Janice:** I think I just have to try to learn to grin and bear it rather than to cry.

**Wolfe:** Well, you don't have to grin. You don't have to grin.

**Janice:** You know, I know not grin. I know not grin. You know.

**Wolfe:** Not get so upset.

**Janice:** Just learn not to try to get so upset, because when I get like that, I'm really no good to them or myself, and I know that.

**Wolfe:** Right. So you, you understand that it would be, that there's definitely more of a payoff to not getting upset than to getting upset. You really do understand.

**Janice:** I do understand that.

**Wolfe:** That's a good start. But let me ask you something else: do you see any advantage to your continuing to get upset? Is there any advantage?

**Janice:** Not really.

**Wolfe:** Do you think that at the time that you might see?

**Janice:** At the time, they'll back off and just go, you know.

**Wolfe:** So temporarily....

**Janice:** That's the temporary thing because see then I'm going to leave out, I'm going to get upset, I'll get more upset because I'm worried about what are they doing, what are they thinking about the way I'm

feeling. All of those things are going to run across my mind, then it's going to even make, make me even worse. And when they come back in, I'm going to be on their case again. So see, it's not really....

**Wolfe:** Okay. So temporarily getting upset gets them to back off for the moment, but it creates a whole new barrel of problems.

**Janice:** Yeah.

**Wolfe:** Okay. So then we agree that the goal would be to try to get less upset when they push the button. And a real button pusher is: "You don't do nothing for me."

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** Okay. Now let's see if we can figure out how to do that.

### ***clarifying Belief-to-consequence connection***

Now, if I say to myself, "It shouldn't be raining outside. I can't stand it. It's spring. When are we going to have good weather. This is awful. I just can't deal with it." How am I going to feel?

**Janice:** You would feel probably aggravated, but see, I like the rain. I think it's nice.

**Wolfe:** Which all goes to show that it isn't the rain that upsets people; it's the way you think about it.

**Janice:** Yeah.

**Wolfe:** Okay. Now let's suppose there's another mother out there, same situation as you, and her kid says to her, "You don't do anything for me," and she doesn't cry. She doesn't get upset. What do you suppose is different in her head?

**Janice:** You know, I deal with something like that on my job. And when I do, I sit there and I listen and I tell them, I said, "You know, don't even worry about it because you know in your heart what you have done and that's what makes the difference."

**Wolfe:** And now suppose....

**Janice:** But I can't live, you know.

**Wolfe:** Oh, yes, you can. Now suppose you said that same thing

to yourself. Your, your, one of your kids says to you, “You don’t do anything for me,” and you feel the tears welling up. You take a deep breath. You say to yourself, “Calm.” Now what can you say in your, now what do you say in your head that you’d tell this friend of yours?

## ***reinforcing rAtionAl Beliefs***

**Janice:** “Janice, Janice, you know you have done the best, the very best you can. That’s all, that’s all to me that God asks from you and that’s all that the world asks from you: the very best you can. If you know you have done that, you should be at peace with what your, with yourself regardless of what anybody says.”

**Wolfe:** Hallelujah.

**Janice:** But sometimes, I just can’t get at peace with myself.

**Wolfe:** Now let me, now let me play devil’s advocate. I’m going to be your, I’m going to be your irrational voice, and I want you to argue against it. Don’t you dare agree with me, okay? So I’m going to say, “Yeah, I say this, but it’s terrible. They should be more grateful.”

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## Discussion

**DiGiuseppe:** Janet, at this point, you’ve gotten the client to identify her beliefs and taught her the distinction between preferences and demands and got her to see why it’s better to do preferences. However, at this point, you’re actually role playing the irrational beliefs in her head. What’s the purpose of this strategy? Does it seem contrived? And what do you hope to accomplish by it?

**Wolfe:** We frequently hear clients say things like, “Well, I understand it intellectually but emotionally I really don’t get it,” and I was anticipating that that in fact had happened to her because she, I think she had just even said, “Yeah, but you know, I wonder if I could really do it then.” So I again was anticipating the irrational voices coming back and drowning out the rational ones...

**DiGiuseppe:** The rational ones you taught her.

**Wolfe:** ...and wanting to see her, see if she could really win this debate

where I took the role of her irrational voices and she had to keep beating them down, because that's, in a sense, what she'll have to be doing on her own, is continuing to beat down the irrational voices that she's no good as they keep creeping back up.

**DiGiuseppe:** And do clients sort of find this a contrived exercise or they sort of get into it?

**Wolfe:** Well, they get into it, but it's amazing how many of them start agreeing with me right away because I've clearly unearthed the irrational beliefs that they're still holding, so they say, "Yeah, that's how I think." So I say, "Wait a minute. That's against the rules. You're not, the only thing you're not allowed to do is agree with me. I want you to really argue against them." Sometimes I suggest argue against them as though I were your best friend or as though I were your daughter putting herself down for something. Really argue me out of it.

**DiGiuseppe:** Right. Because that's what they're going to have to do in their head anyway.

**Wolfe:** Yes. Yes.

**DiGiuseppe:** Okay. Let's watch some more.

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## **RATionAl ANd irrATIOnAl BELIEFS**

### ***rAtionAl role reversAl***

**Wolfe:** "But I can't stand it that they're not." Knock that irrational voice down.

**Janice:** Okay. If that's the way you feel.

**Wolfe:** "They shouldn't, they shouldn't.... No, it's true. It's a fact. They shouldn't treat, they should be more grateful."

**Janice:** But that's the way you feel.

**Wolfe:** "That's the way I think. Isn't that true? They should be more grateful?"

**Janice:** No. They should be more grateful, but you know.

**Wolfe:** “Isn’t that right?”

**Janice:** You’re right, we know that children are going to be children, don’t we?

**Wolfe:** So children should act like children.

**Janice:** Yes, they should.

**Wolfe:** And how do children act frequently?

**Janice:** Bratty.

### ***reinforcing rAtionAl Belief***

**Wolfe:** That’s right. So maybe it would make more sense to yourself, to say to yourself, “He’s acting just like he should be, like a bratty kid. I don’t like it but I can stand it. I prefer that he be a little bit more grateful for all that I’ve put out and sacrificed for them all these years, but tough. He’s not.”

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** In fact, maybe he really is actually grateful deep down.

**Janice:** Deep down inside.

**Wolfe:** But he likes to get my goat and he knows this is the greatest way to do it, so just because he says this, I’m not going to take it so seriously. I’m not going to let it get my goat. I’ve got enough on my plate without walking around being miserable because my kids are, you know, acting ungratefully.

**Janice:** That’s true.

**Wolfe:** Now do you think you could work on that?

**Janice:** I will try. I won’t, I’m, I’m not going to say right off the bat I can do it, but I will definitely try. It makes a difference to know that somebody else may be going through the same thing and that maybe you could really always [INAUDIBLE]. A neutral party’s always the one that can help rather than a person that’s right there in the, in the situation. So.

### ***reinforcing rAtionAl Beliefs***

**Wolfe:** But ultimately, you need to be your own therapist, though, so that you can get ideas from outside people. You can get the ideas, "Hey, wait a minute. Just because he tells me I'm a rotten mother doesn't make it true. I did the best I could. I'd prefer that my kid acted more grateful, but he's not. Too bad."

**Janice:** And just keep on going from there and trying to improve.

**Wolfe:** "And I'm not going to make my life anymore miserable, you know, and overstressed than it already is."

Do you think you could do that? It will take a lot of work, though, wouldn't it?

**Janice:** Yes, it will. I know that.

**Wolfe:** Let's test it out. I think I'll put you to the test. Who's the one that pushes your button the most of all your kids?

**Janice:** They all three there together.

**Wolfe:** I see. Well, it's a little unfair, too, isn't it? Four, three against one.

**Janice:** I've told them: "It is me against y'all. That's the way it seems, rather than being a family." At times, we're a good family. We're a loving family. We're there for one another all the time. But it's just when they get this.

**Wolfe:** So what makes you say that you don't give them love?

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## Discussion

**DiGiuseppe:** Janet, throughout this session, the client has reported an automatic thought that she thinks she's a bad mother. And the traditional RET approach would be to say, "Well, let's suppose you are a bad mother. Why is that awful?" And you really don't choose that intervention here. You really try to reassure her that she's a good mother and at this point you just say, "Gee, you know, look at all the loving things you're doing here. How could you think of yourself as an unloving parent?" And you're getting her to reassess this automatic thought.



This is not a classic RET intervention. What's your rationale for using it here?

**Wolfe:** My rationale is that I think you need to be clinically sensitive, and there are certain cases in which the classic, elegant dispute is just not called for. One thing I can think of is, you know, disputing the rape victim's idea that this is terrible and awful and shouldn't have happened. You know, I don't think I'd start off doing that, and similarly with her, this woman could use some TLC here. She's done a hell of a lot despite the most....

**DiGiuseppe:** She really is a good mother. She really has done a lot for these kids.

**Wolfe:** Yeah. Despite the most, you know, abysmal circumstances that she came from, and I think it's important to just do a little, you know, inelegant positive reinforcement of her parenting skills here.

**DiGiuseppe:** Okay.

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**Wolfe:** They're loving. They know they're loved. You've got some, some, you know, TV version of what families are supposed to do. They're all supposed to be, you know.

**Janice:** Well, I tell everybody we're dysfunctional.

**Wolfe:** Well, maybe you're not so dysfunctional. Sounds like a pretty normal family to me, you know.

**Janice:** Some, some people have said, "Janice, you don't know what, what, what is a real family?" That's what I've been asked.

**Wolfe:** This is a real family: kids that act like brats some of the time.

**Janice:** You know. But I don't.... Yes. Yes.

### ***reinforcing rAtional Belief***

**Wolfe:** Okay. And if you wanted to be, instead of it being one against three you can be, you can have your, you can be your own best friend and you can make it three against three. You can have a rational voice in your right ear and a rational voice in your left ear saying, "Just cause these kids are trying to push my buttons and whine to get a new

pair of shoes and to tell me I'm not a good enough mother doesn't mean I have to take it seriously. I wish they weren't doing this, but tough, they are."

**Janice:** They are.

**Wolfe:** Now I'm going to put you to the test. I'm going to be two of your kids.

**Janice:** Okay.

**Wolfe:** When will they, when are they likely to do this? When you're trying to get them to do something or say 'no' to them?

### ***Identifying An Activating event (A)***

**Janice:** Not really. It's just, it all depends. Like now and then, I come home, and the thing that I get really upset with is that the house is not.... I get up every morning. I clean up my room. I come in the door: dishes all in the sink. They're not in, they don't bother the living room because they know how I am. I go in my room; they don't bother it, they don't be in my, they don't go in my room. I look in their room: their beds is unmade and there's, it's just a total mess.

And I'm like, "You're home. You go, Travika, you go to school at 12:00. Shegall, [ph] you are not in school. If you're not working, it wouldn't kill you to clean up, you know. Cameron, you are in there with Shegall. Chris, your job is to take out the garbage. You don't even, every day you've got to be reminded to do this one little thing. It is not right."

**Wolfe:** So you're getting angry at them, and then they say things like, "You, you...."

**Janice:** "Oh, you ain't getting nothing from me. Why should I have to do that?" Excuse me? I am out and I'm working.

**Wolfe:** And what do you call that, by the way?

**Janice:** I call that being really lazy.

**Wolfe:** That's right. It's being lazy and rationalizing: "Oh, I can't make my bed because I'm a poor neglected child."

**Janice:** No, you're not. No, you're not.

**Wolfe:** “Because you’re working all day.”

**Janice:** You know, excuse me, I’m getting up. I go to work when I don’t even feel like it, and you, y’all stay home. You all are here, all four of you are here together at one time or another. When I come home, I shouldn’t have to go through all of this with you.

**Wolfe:** Now, does that help, when you talk to them that way, by the way?

### ***functionAl DisputAtion***

**Janice:** It all depends on how they feel, it seems like.

**Wolfe:** But has it worked very well in general?

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** It has?

**Janice:** From time to time, it will.

**Wolfe:** From time to time.

**Janice:** But most of the time....

**Wolfe:** It doesn’t.

**Janice:** I come home the next day and it’s still not, it’s the same way. Now they’ll get up and do it long as I’m, like I asked them, I said, “You know what, I get off at 5:00.” Now Thursday and Fridays I get off at different times. Okay. I come home. I said, “You know, y’all just don’t get it, do you? You don’t get it, do you?” I said, “What is it?”

**Wolfe:** Right.

**Janice:** I mean, when I come home, it’s like they’re waiting just for me to, if I come in the house and just go in my room and lay down, it’s all right. But still, I still have that other part of me that says, “This is supposed to be done. That’s supposed to be done. That’s supposed to be done. Why should I have to come home and argue with them about it?”

**Wolfe:** Okay, but let’s, let’s look at the anger now. Because when you get that angry, does that, is that the way you want to be able to feel?

**Janice:** No.

**Wolfe:** How would you like to be able to feel?

### ***estABlishing goAl (reDucing rAge)***

**Janice:** I would like to feel that I ain't got to come home and just argue at them. And that's getting to be a everyday pattern.

**Wolfe:** Well, you'd prefer they did the work.

**Janice:** Yeah.

**Wolfe:** But my question, actually, my question was how would you like to be able to feel when they haven't done their chores?

**Janice:** I'd like to feel, be able to feel the same way that I feel when they have done them. I really would.

**Wolfe:** Like what? Calm?

**Janice:** Yes. Calm. And go in the house and be able to smile and feel good about that.

**Wolfe:** Or at least maybe mildly disappointed and annoyed. I don't know how you're going to....

**Janice:** You know, yeah. I might not be smiling at that child, but I would like to at least know, at least I can still walk around with a peace of mind, a little small peace of mind.

**Janice:** Okay. Good. Because this is a little bit like the other situation, too. You're going to have the disappointment of the kid not being grateful or doing their chores or you can have the disappointment plus emotional disturbance: hurt, depression, anger.

So now let's assume that you come home and the kids don't do their work. If you've, you're thinking to yourself, "They should do this. How could they be so lazy? How could they be home all day and know that these are the chores and not do them?"

You're going to feel angry. You're going to feel disturbed. That's not how you want to feel?

**Janice:** No, I don't want to, not to the length that I go. Because I get....

**Wolfe:** Not very upset.

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** Maybe mildly frustrated.

**Janice:** Yeah, I mean, because once, once I start, it look like it's no quitting, you understand.

**Wolfe:** Okay. Now, in order to feel only disappointed or mildly frustrated and not enraged, what attitude would you have to have?

**Janice:** I guess an 'easy come, easy go' attitude.

**Wolfe:** "I wish they were...." You know, just like the other. "I wish they would express more gratitude. I wish they would be more cooperative around the house, but they're not. Too bad. I'm not going to add insult to injury and let myself get bent out of shape, make myself, give myself ulcers because they are acting, unfortunately, like normal teenagers.

**Janice:** Oh no, oh no.

**Wolfe:** Are they having other problems outside?

**Janice:** No, not really. My daughter, she's, she's a honor roll student. I'm very proud of that. I mean, of all the years, like, she's in the ninth grade and for her to be just.... I had to transfer her last year from one school to another because of some girl was threatening to cut her up and stuff. So I, she was, she would go to school but she wouldn't go inside because she was scared, and she wouldn't tell me.

So, I'm like, "I couldn't go watch you all day. If you had told me then I could have did something about it." But the school year wound up coming in, and she got left back. So I had, I dealt with that very rational. I just told her, "Look, I'm your mother. I'm here. I'm always going to be here for you if you need me. Even if you don't need me, if you've just got a problem, come to me and tell me. I might rant. I might rave. But know that I will always be here and I'm always on your side." That's all I could tell her.

**Wolfe:** That's fabulous. Now, that's great. Now do you think you could be that kind of friend to yourself when you're, when you're being treated badly by your kids? Do you think you could be the kind of friend to yourself that you were to your daughter?

**Janice:** I don't know. I think sometime I'm my own worst enemy.

**Wolfe:** Okay. How can you be a better friend to yourself next time the kids disappoint you in some way?

**Janice:** Well, I'll tell you what I did this time when I, when they hurt my feelings like that. I went out....

**Wolfe:** When you let them hurt your feelings.

**Janice:** When I let them hurt, when they told me that, when she told me I didn't do nothing for her, I waited. The next day I got paid, and I went out and I bought me a pair of shoes, a pocketbook and an outfit.

**Wolfe:** That's nice. Good for you. No, it's good for you. Unless it's, unless you're not going to have enough money to pay the rent.

**Janice:** No, I paid the rent. I did all that. I did all that.

**Wolfe:** [INAUDIBLE] Good for you.

**Janice:** But whereas, see, I usually don't do nothing like that for me, I just said, no. I was, I felt really depressed, you know. So I just said it's time for me to treat myself to something to make me feel a little bit better.

**Wolfe:** So instead of abusing yourself and saying, "Oh, they shouldn't be this way. This is awful," making yourself cry and be angry, you decided to treat yourself nicely.

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** Great.

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## Discussion

**DiGiuseppe:** Janet, at this point, you have elicited from Janice some, some ways in which her upset empowers the kids to pull her buttons and control her, and she's talking about an event here where she didn't let it happen, where she actually went out and said, "They think I don't do enough for them? Well, I'm going to do something for me." And you sort of chose to reinforce that. What was going through your head when you, when you made this intervention?

**Wolfe:** I guess that living well is the best revenge, and that by nurturing herself was a much more adaptive response than torturing

and upsetting herself and fighting with the kids and wrecking her whole evening.

I also pointed out, though, that we can't always reward ourselves and nurture ourselves—

**DiGiuseppe:** All the time.

**Wolfe:** —when people mistreat us and that this offers her a no-cost approach to calming herself down and making her feel better if she doesn't have the time or money to go out and buy herself a present.

**DiGiuseppe:** When I was watching the tape so far, I sort of got the impression that this woman really does everything for her kids and may not take enough time to pleasure herself and to do for herself and that she may feel overwhelmed, and then when she's not appreciated, it's devastating. And I got the sense that you could teach her how to reward herself and not just count on her children's appreciation.

**Wolfe:** Because I think she has the abilities that a lot of women do, that my worth and my happiness depends on turning out perfectly adjusted kids and I'm sort of showing her, to redefine her sense of herself, not just based on how her kids turn out, but on doing the best possible job she can and how to increase her happiness, not merely as a function of her children's happiness and growth, but doing things to please herself that are independent of all the nurturing that she puts out.

**DiGiuseppe:** There's a clear message: It's okay for you to do something for you, which is sort of like new to her almost.

**Wolfe:** Yes.

**DiGiuseppe:** Yes, okay.

**Wolfe:** And was very grateful. I mean, she even gave me this hug at the end of the session, even though she says somewhere in the session that she has difficulty expressing affection. I guess she's just not used to being nurtured, and so she's, she's just walled up a lot of these feelings, and when somebody shows her a little understanding and support, she's definitely there.

**DiGiuseppe:** Okay.

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**Janice:** That's the first time I ever did that, though.

**Wolfe:** Now let me ask you this. That's a good start. Just so that you don't run out of money in the course of nurturing yourself....

**Janice:** No, I never would do that. I wouldn't go overboard, you know. It's just, it's just I hadn't been in so long, and it just felt like, you need something to give yourself a boost, Janice, and let you know.

**Wolfe:** Good for you. Good for you.

**Janice:** Because usually I just pay the bills and give them and make sure that I have a few dollars on me, then, you know, I just didn't feel like it this time. I paid the bills and I didn't feel like giving them. I just felt like giving me something to let me know that I was worth the effort.

**Wolfe:** Well, it sounds like you were saying to yourself, "Well, if they think I'm selfish, I might as well be selfish." Right?

**Janice:** That's, that's just about the attitude I took.

**Wolfe:** Now next time, next time, let's suppose you don't have that extra money to spend. What are you going to do to nurture yourself? What are you going to say to yourself?

**Janice:** I'll usually eat. Go on a binge. I just eat until I feel that I can't eat no more.

**Wolfe:** And is that what you want, how you want to be able to handle it?

**Janice:** No, because I know that's not good for me.

**Wolfe:** Right. So if we're not going to comfort yourself with clothes, and you're not going to comfort yourself with food, what does that leave? How to make yourself....

**Janice:** Let's, try and talk, well, I do that a lot of times. I talk to myself to rationalize a lot of stuff.

**Wolfe:** And in this case, and in this case, what would you need to say to yourself? You come home....



## ***reinforcing rActional Beliefs***

**Janice:** “Janice, you are a good mother. You are a good person, regardless of what your friends say. But do yourself a favor: please believe it.” You know, but...

**Wolfe:** Good. That’s so great. Could you say that again?

**Janice:** “Janice, you are, you are a good mother. You are a good person. Don’t just say it, just put it in your head and really do believe it, you know.”

**Wolfe:** Great. That’s fabulous. Now I’m going to play devil’s advocate again.

**Janice:** Okay.

## ***rActional role reversal***

**Wolfe:** “But those kids should be more grateful. I mean, how good a mother can I be if I’ve got four kids who can’t even make their own bed. They shouldn’t be this way. I can’t stand it.”

**Janice:** “Janice, you are a good mother. Don’t let them get you down. They’re just saying in the heat of the argument.”

**Wolfe:** “I can’t be a good mother if my kids don’t even make their own bed after all this time.”

**Janice:** “Oh, yes, you can. Oh, yes, you can.”

**Wolfe:** “Oh, really. Oh, no. I mean....”

**Janice:** “Yes, you can.”

**Wolfe:** “Anybody whose kids keep, keep their rooms messy, whose teenage kids keep their rooms messy must be a bad mother.”

**Janice:** “It might not should be that way but that’s the way it is, so you’re going to have to learn to live with it, okay.”

**Wolfe:** That’s right. That is right. Amen. But the trick is, of course, remembering that at the time.

**Janice:** Yes, it is.

**Wolfe:** You’ve come home from a hard day’s work and you’re saying,

"Look, kids, you know, could you have made the beds? Could you have put the food on to reheat?" And they say, "Oh, you're just a bitch, and you're a no good mother and you don't want to do anything."

**Janice:** "Oh, you just don't feel like coming home. You want us to do everything."

**Wolfe:** Then what are you going to say? Then what are you going to say?

**Janice:** "Well, excuse me, I do go out of here. I do work."

**Wolfe:** "No, you don't. You don't do anything."

**Janice:** "Now, well, if you don't..." I took my daughter to be with me. She knows I work. "Therefore, if you don't want to do it, don't do it. You just don't eat."

**Wolfe:** Well, that would be one way of handling it, by the way.

**Janice:** I think it's a good way to handle it.

**Wolfe:** That's, that's, see, so when you're not busy being hurt and upset, then you administer consequences, because that is about the only thing that seems to work with kids.

**Janice:** That I can do.

**Wolfe:** That you could choose to do these chores. You can choose not to. However, if you do do them, you'll eat.

**Janice:** If you don't...

**Wolfe:** If you don't...

**Janice:** ...you won't.

**Wolfe:** ...you won't. Or you won't get your allowance or whatever.

**Janice:** You won't eat what you're supposed to do. I'm not, like I have to tell them sometimes, I'm not going to give you my money to disobey me. I'm paying you to disobey me.

**Wolfe:** Right. But on the other hand, if you're getting hurt and angry, upset, are you likely to be able to handle them in that way?

**Janice:** No. When I get upset, I'm going to holler. I'm going to scream.

I'm going to rant, and I'm going to rave, and I just pray that I don't get to a point where I have to hit them. Because I know at that point I will hurt them.

**Wolfe:** And which will hurt you. Which will hurt you. Yeah.

**Janice:** So at the point, I go in my room and I close my door and just stay in there.

### ***BrAinstorMing BehAviorAl strAtegies***

**Wolfe:** Now that you have another new bag of tricks, what could you do instead?

**Janice:** Well, if you don't do it, you don't eat. You don't get no allowance; you won't get my money.

**Wolfe:** And in order to say that....

**Janice:** "Janice, you're not being a bad mother."

**Wolfe:** That's right.

**Janice:** "You're being a good mother that is showing them that you are the responsible one. And don't feel bad about it, please."

**Wolfe:** Okay. But the real key is to make sure that your emotions don't knock you off.

**Janice:** Always remember it.

**Wolfe:** Because if you get too depressed or too angry, then you're not going to be able to communicate with them clearly and the situation is just going to get worse. And then they'll say, "See? You are a bad mother. You just called us names. You just hit us. It just proves you're a bad mother who doesn't love us." And then you're nowhere. So the key to responding effectively to them is...

**Janice:** Stay calm.

### ***reinforcing rAtionAl Beliefs***

**Wolfe:** ...reminding yourself that even though I would prefer that they act better... what?

**Janice:** Learn to live with it. They're being children. They're

expressing themselves.

**Wolfe:** Right. Don't expect a teenager to act like not a teenager.

**Janice:** Like a grown-up.

**Wolfe:** Like a responsible member of the family team. I can hope, and I can set up behavioral contingencies like not giving them their allowance or their supper if they don't, but getting myself bent out of shape, screaming and yelling at them....

**Janice:** It's not good for me or them.

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## Discussion

**DiGiuseppe:** Janet, at this point, you've just sort of reviewed for her other things that she could do with the children if she weren't so emotionally upset. And you've sort of pointed out that when she's no longer emotionally upset, there's lots of other options. And some of those options are to set firmer limits and actually be in more control as a parent. Was that your intent, then, to drill that information out that way?

**Wolfe:** Exactly. To show her that she again has other options. She doesn't either have to lash out at them and get upset or go in a room and shove the upset down. She has a third alternative, which is that once she cools herself down a little bit, then she can, and she did it so quickly here. You could see once her level of upset was reduced, she says, "Okay, kids. Do the chores or not, but you get your dinner when you do."

**DiGiuseppe:** So the parenting....

**Wolfe:** The problem solving strategy just comes in very naturally once you get your level of rage and arousal down.

**DiGiuseppe:** So the lack of demanding has led to better problem solving.

**Wolfe:** Yes.

**DiGiuseppe:** Okay.

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## **The ABC Model**

**Janice:** And it runs to my blood pressure.

**Wolfe:** That's right. Then you have more problems. And they probably know it on some level that the way to get Mom to back off is to tell her what a rotten mother she is, and she'll go away and leave us alone.

**Janice:** I think they do. I think they do.

**Wolfe:** "We'll watch her lose her cool and that's fun, too."

**Janice:** Yes, because then she wants to get rid of us. She'll do anything we want her to do just to let her, leave her alone.

**Wolfe:** So has this been helpful to you?

**Janice:** Yes, it has.

**Wolfe:** What's been helpful to you?

**Janice:** I'm just sorry I cried so much.

**Wolfe:** Don't you think that somebody who's got as much on her plate as you deserves to ventilate her feelings every once in a while?

**Janice:** I'm always, I'm always mental like that, though. Even other people's problems get to me.

**Wolfe:** But at least this was constructive...

**Janice:** Yes, it was.

**Wolfe:** Because if you weren't expressing your feelings, how we would we able, been able to begin....

**Janice:** See, that's a lot that I didn't really know how to do that I just learned to do by sitting here talking with you.

**Wolfe:** What did you learn that's been most helpful?

### ***reinforcing rAtional Beliefs***

**Janice:** I learned, I really learned that I'm not a really bad person. I learned that they're just being teenagers. That maybe I expect a little bit too much from them as far as being children.

**Wolfe:** Well, you can hope. You can.... But....

**Janice:** Maybe... I can hope, but.... Just I should always know I'm not going to always get what I hoped for.

**Wolfe:** Exactly.

**Janice:** Be realistic.

**Wolfe:** And that if you can keep it on the level of a preference and not let it go up to a 'should,' you'll be much calmer.

**Janice:** Then I'll be all right.

**Wolfe:** Because if you say, "I wish they would. Too bad they're not," then you'll feel disappointed. If you say to yourself, "They should. It's awful. I can't stand it." Then how are you going to feel?

**Janice:** Then I'm going to feel all tensed up and everything and I'm not good for that, I'm not good being, at that point, I won't be a good parent and then I won't be even be any good to myself at that point.

**Wolfe:** So now you've learned a new way to nurture yourself that doesn't take money out of your bank account or add inches to your hips.

**Janice:** True. True.

**Wolfe:** Would it help if I wrote some of this stuff down for you?

**Janice:** You can, yes.

**Wolfe:** Okay. Why don't I do that? Because this is an approach to therapy where we really, you know, we assume that we all came from pretty screwed up families, some of us worse than others, but that we continue to upset ourselves in the present because we just never learned to have good philosophies to manage anger and frustration.

### ***reviewing the ABC MoDel***

So what I'm going to write down here is the activating event is that your kids ignore chores and accuse me of being a bad mom. That's the button.

**Janice:** That's the one.

**Wolfe:** Okay. And the emotional response you want to get rid of is what?

**Janice:** The anger. The hurt.

**Wolfe:** The anger and the hurt and the yelling and the hitting.

**Janice:** Yes. Yes.

**Wolfe:** And what would you, what would be appropriate to be able to feel instead?

**Janice:** To feel that I am a good parent.

**Wolfe:** Self-acceptance.

**Janice:** And I'm, I'm all right. And that they are being just....

**Wolfe:** Those are the thoughts, but what feelings?

**Janice:** I want to have the feeling that I'm a good parent.

**Wolfe:** Self-acceptance.

**Janice:** And that I am, that it's, it's not, that they're, that they're being what, what they are supposed to be. Children.

**Wolfe:** Okay, so even though they're acting brattily....

**Janice:** That I should, I should try to understand that they're being children. That, that it happens.

**Wolfe:** It doesn't make them horrible, defective people.

**Janice:** Yes. And I also need to learn to let them know that it's not, that they're not being as bad as I seem to think.

**Wolfe:** So then wouldn't the appropriate feeling to have to be somewhat disappointed, maybe somewhat annoyed.

**Janice:** For me, it would be.

**Wolfe:** Okay. And somewhat frustrated. Because you're not going to feel happy.

**Janice:** But not to the point where I am just yelling, carrying on, ranting and raving and all that with them. It's not fair.

**Wolfe:** So if you were only frustrated and disappointed, you'd be in a much better position to say, "Look, kids...."

**Janice:** "This is the way it is. I can tell...."

**Wolfe:** "We'll have supper when your beds are made."

**Janice:** Yes.

**Wolfe:** "It could be now. It could be at 7:00. It could be at 10:00. It could be tomorrow night. The choice is yours."

**Janice:** Yes. Well, yeah.

**Wolfe:** But if you're feeling hurt and angry?

**Janice:** If I'm feeling hurt and angry, I'm not going to do it.

**Wolfe:** It's not going to go like that. Right. Okay. Good. So the rational beliefs here, help me out again.

**Janice:** The rational beliefs?

**Wolfe:** Even if they're acting brattily, it doesn't make them horrible, defective people.

**Janice:** And it doesn't make me a bad parent.

**Wolfe:** Great. You're a good student.

**Janice:** I try to be.

**Wolfe:** You are. I bet you were, I bet you were good at school.

**Janice:** I tried to be.

**Wolfe:** Yeah. That's good. And you also see the value of learning this kind of philosophy.

**Janice:** I really need to.

**Wolfe:** Now it doesn't happen overnight.

**Janice:** And that was.... I know that. But see, I can use this evaluation in so many other aspects of my life.

**Wolfe:** Like what?

### ***generalizing to other situations***

**Janice:** Like I have two sisters that they get on my nerves. I've just given up being around them.

**Wolfe:** Okay, so another button pusher would be your sisters saying what?



**Janice:** Yes, my sisters, they know how to push my buttons too.

**Wolfe:** What do they say?

**Janice:** “Oh, Janice.” They want me to be at their beck and call, see.

**Wolfe:** So, sisters....

**Janice:** They’re like my, they’re like my, they’re like my little, they’re like my children also, so, you know.

**Wolfe:** So the sisters.

**Janice:** The sisters is just as bad as the children, but thank God they don’t live with me.

**Wolfe:** And do you get the same feelings when they....

**Janice:** Yes, I feel inadequate around them even though I’m the oldest.

**Wolfe:** And what thoughts do you have to make yourself feel inadequate?

**Janice:** Well, I feel like sometime that, you know, I know that I was the oldest, I’m the oldest, and I think I’ve, I expect more from me as being the oldest, I think I might, I think sometime I feel like I do know a little bit more than them, but I know they are more streetwise than I am, so therefore, you know, whereas I should give them credit that they are adults. They are entitled to make their own mistakes just like I make mine, I don’t know how to cut the string since my mother died. I really don’t know how to cut that string.

**Wolfe:** So in a way it sounds like you’re feeling like you’ve got to be mother to them and then if they’re not happy, you’re a bad mother.

**Janice:** But I’ve learned to stop that, too.

**Wolfe:** Good.

**Janice:** I just don’t be around them too much. I let them go on and live their lives without me calling every day, butting into it, trying to get into their business. I just let them live.

**Wolfe:** Okay, and that may be the best approach with them. Unfortunately, you can’t do that here with your kids.

**Janice:** Yeah, it is. I can’t do that with my children, so therefore I’ve

learned, I've really learned a lot over the past two or three years, especially since working.

**Wolfe:** And if your sisters say, "You're really neglecting us. You don't care about us anymore."

**Janice:** Well, what I let that do, I know different. I know different on that case.

**Wolfe:** What are you going to say to your sisters?

**Janice:** When they call me, I tell them, "Look, I'm here if you need me. But just to call me, just to be, I can't deal with it." I hang up the phone and just go on about my business. Do something.

**Wolfe:** But you don't take it personally.

**Janice:** I used to. I used to just cry, but I stopped that.

**Wolfe:** Because you were thinking what when you were crying?

**Janice:** I was thinking that maybe they was telling the truth.

**Wolfe:** Right. "They think I'm a bad sister. Maybe they're right." You see how powerful the thinking is? Now you're already ahead of the game because you've learned to think differently about your sisters.

**Janice:** Yeah, but I had to start work, get into the force of working and learn to try to deal with myself and others in order for me to start opening the gap like that.

**Wolfe:** And now you've got the biggest challenge of all: how to manage your anger and your frustration with teenage kids and, believe me, it's hard. If you have problems with that, you won't be the first or the last person. I mean, I think that is the biggest, the hardest job in the world is raising teenagers. It's got to be.

**Janice:** I know. I thought it got better, though, as they grew up. I really did. I really, really did. I just fooled myself.

**Wolfe:** Well, welcome to planet earth. Planet earth teenagers very commonly think that their parents never do enough and they don't clean their rooms.

**Janice:** I really thought that they'd get better as time goes on.

**Wolfe:** And if they don't, doesn't that prove you're a bad mother?

**Janice:** No, it doesn't.

**Wolfe:** Why not?

**Janice:** Because it, I mean, they, it takes time for them to grow into grown, adults.

**Wolfe:** And isn't it awful if they tell you're a bad mother?

**Janice:** It is awful. It can be down, it can be hurting towards me.

**Wolfe:** Is it awful?

**Janice:** It's not awful, it's one of the things they'll say as time goes on.

**Wolfe:** It's very unpleasant.

**Janice:** But as time goes on, I also have learned that they learn to appreciate that person that they say was a bad parent.

**Wolfe:** Hopefully.

**Janice:** Hopefully.

**Wolfe:** But right now, when they tell you you're a bad mother, are you going to tell yourself, "This is awful," or are you going to tell yourself, "This is a pain in the ass"?

**Janice:** Well, that's what I'm going to tell myself, they're just being a pain in my ass.

**Wolfe:** Right. Because awful is like watching your children tortured to death or, you know, being blown up in a nuclear explosion.

**Janice:** No, no, no.

**Wolfe:** Awful isn't having your teenagers say these, you know, kind of spiteful things.

**Janice:** No, it's just a growing up thing.

**Wolfe:** It's unpleasant.

**Janice:** Yes, it is.

**Wolfe:** It's uncomfortable. I don't like it. But I can stand it.

**Janice:** I'm so glad I came.

**Wolfe:** And I can execute, calmly execute consequences which is the best, it can give me the best shot at shaping their behavior.

**Janice:** Yes. The ranting and raving does not.

**Wolfe:** Okay. Are there situations at work where you could see where these kinds of things might apply to if somebody treats you unfairly?

**Janice:** Oh, yeah. I can see, like you know, I deal with like 80 women in the run of a week, like two weeks. We got, each, these 80 women is there for two weeks in orientation. I'm an orientation specialist; I do intake. So a lot of them have, I've had to learn to adjust.

If they come in with an attitude problem, which means, you know, we'll, we're AFDC is the begin program, so it's like, "Excuse, I'm sorry. I will call my supervisor down and let her speak to you."

If they have problems and they really feel that they need to talk to somebody and they feel that they've been there long enough to trust me, I tell them I'm always available.

**Wolfe:** And how do you manage your anger when they, when you put yourself out for them and they're just not giving back like they're supposed to do?

**Janice:** Oh, well, I've had, I've ran into that problem.

**Wolfe:** How do you manage your anger?

**Janice:** I've had a student come in and she was, told my supervisor a lot, a lie on me, and I was standing there, and it hurt me to my heart. I ran out the office and I cried.

**Wolfe:** Because you were thinking what? See, this is very similar...

**Janice:** I wasn't thinking rational.

**Wolfe:** What were you thinking?

**Janice:** I was, I was, I was feeling like I tried to help this lady.

**Wolfe:** And she should...

**Janice:** And she really should have appreciated it.

## ***generAlizing to other situAtions***

**Wolfe:** And now what would you tell yourself differently so you wouldn't be so hurt?

**Janice:** Well, that's the way she is. Because I know that I did put myself out on the line and that does not make me a bad person. It makes me a human being, a compassionate person at that.

**Wolfe:** Great, great, great.

“So therefore, Janice, just step back and let her feel what she wants to feel right now. Maybe in the long run she'll eventually realize what you did [INAUDIBLE] help.”

**Wolfe:** And I don't like the fact that she's ragging on me, but....

**Janice:** And I really don't like it, but you'll learn to deal with it.

**Wolfe:** Good. That's great. Good for you.

**Janice:** And I've had to learn to really deal with it.

**Wolfe:** So you see how a good rational philosophy could serve you in good stead in a lot of situations.

**Janice:** Yes. Yes.

**Wolfe:** But it's hard. You literally have to remind yourself. That's why I'm writing some of this down.

**Janice:** I'm going to live, I'm going to have to have that piece of paper with me at all times to make sure I can look at it and know what it is, what I do need.

**Wolfe:** I hope you can read it.

**Janice:** Oh, I'm sure I can.

**Wolfe:** I don't have the greatest handwriting. What I didn't write down is the irrational beliefs, but that would be...

**Janice:** I'm a bad mother.

**Wolfe:** ...they shouldn't act badly. They shouldn't say these things. And....

**Janice:** I am, I am a bad mother, is one.

**Wolfe:** I'm a bad mother. And this is the antidote for this. These are

the bad ones. These are the good ones. Great. Okay. Good.

**Janice:** Okay. Thank you.

**Wolfe:** Thank you.

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## Discussion

**DiGiuseppe:** Janet, a little while ago in this session, you sort of asked her what has she learned, and you sort of asked her to summarize, and she sort of gave you lots of information. She said that, she apologized for crying, and she sort of said that she learned things she had never thought about before. And you sort of Socratically brought her through the steps of identifying the beliefs and, and challenging them.

How typical of this, is this for a final segment of a session? And what's the purpose of doing that?

**Wolfe:** I think it's really crucial because we think we've had this brilliant session and the client is nodding and they really seem to have gotten it, and then, you know, they go home and most of it is out of their, out of their head. You know, and there's research that's validated that, that people forget a tremendous percentage of what's gone on in the session. So I thought it was very important to just ask her on an open ended basis first, "What are the most important things that you got out of it?" and then to gradually debrief her as to, again, the steps that she could take the next time these particular buttons are pushed.

**DiGiuseppe:** And she actually then applies it to a couple of new areas.

**Wolfe:** Yes. She spontaneously was able to generalize.

**DiGiuseppe:** Work, the sisters, yeah. So that she was able to do that, so this would be something you would do on a regular basis.

**Wolfe:** Yes. Crucial.

**DiGiuseppe:** Okay.

**Wolfe:** If it's going to translate to the real world.

**DiGiuseppe:** Okay. Thank you.

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