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RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY AND THE MINDFULNESS BASED STRESS REDUCTION TRAINING OF JON KABAT-ZINN

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ABSTRACT: Important aspects of Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) are compared, point-by-point, with Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). There are some significant differences, since REBT does not advocate meditation as part of the therapy, and MBSR does not include disputing of irrational beliefs. But the similarities are even more striking, especially in the stress on self-acceptance, and in not judging people overall.

KEY WORDS: commitment; self-discipline; self-esteem; compassion.

Jon Kabat-Zinn is the founder and director of the stress reduction clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. He is not a Buddhist but has studied with Thich Nhat Hahn and worked with and been influenced by many Buddhist thinkers. He practices mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), which he has taught for many years, and which has, as he notes, been called "the heart of Buddhist meditation."

Kabat-Zinn is probably the most influential teacher of mindfulness meditation in America and has greatly influenced its use by American psychologists because he writes so clearly and authoritatively about it. I think he has done a remarkably fine job of presenting some of the main elements of Buddhist meditation in plain, highly understandable English. I discuss his program in this paper and show how it relates to Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) teachings.

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All my quotations and adaptations of Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness meditation in this chapter are from his book, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress and pain* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Quotations and paraphrases are in italics and my comments are in regular font.

> *"Meditation is really about paying attention" (p. 21)*

Yes, mindfulness meditation, as taught by Jon Kabat-Zinn, helps you pay attention to your thinking, to observe it and analyze it. REBT also shows you how to pay attention to your thinking, to observe when it is rational and leads to healthy feelings and behaviors, and to see when it is irrational and leads to destructive feelings and behaviors. It adds to meditation and disputes your irrational beliefs (IBs) and strengthens your rational beliefs (RBs). MBSR clearly observes your thinking and implies its inaccuracies, but doesn't actively dispute your dysfunctional beliefs as REBT does.

> *In mindfulness meditation, you watch your breathing but don't try to control it. Be fully aware of it (p. 22).*

With REBT you may or may not meditate.

> *Mindfulness meditation enables you to be more familiar with your own actual moment to moment experience, and relaxation comes automatically with continued practice (p. 23).*

Maybe so; but you may also unconsciously be telling yourself to relax. If you want to relax with REBT, you usually specifically tell yourself, "Relax, Relax, Relax."

> *If you experience you can just take in your experiencing. If you think about it, you disturb your direct experience of that moment and you enjoy the sunset in your head rather than the sunset that is actually happening. The direct experience that thinking makes you miss is more important than you realize (p.24).*

REBT wonders whether there is such a thing as direct experience of a sunset (or anything else) without some thought, purpose, and intention. It hypothesizes that experiencing includes, practically always, your thinking, feeling, and behavior. Thus, you think, "This sunset is fine!" You feel good about it, and you keep looking at it delightedly. All three. Your thinking and perception *influence* your feeling and

action; your feelings *influence* your thoughts and actions; and your actions *influence* your thoughts and feelings. They are all integrated with each other, and are not truly separate, although you may think they are. So your "direct" or "pure" experience of the sunset is not totally "direct" or "pure." Nor is it, as you may imply from Kabat-Zinn's language, a *sacred* experience in itself. It is just an experience.

> *When you think about the sunset (or anything else, you often are not aware of what you are thinking. You don't know you are doing it, since much of it is very swift and fleeting. And you probably don't know that you don't know. You also hypermentate, think this and that, and also want this and that (e.g., want to experience the sunset and want a better sunset). So your thoughts are frequently dominated by dissatisfaction and keep you from feeling calm and relaxed (p.25).*

REBT agrees that this description is largely true. Your thinking goes on incessantly and you hypermentate. Your desires also steadily change. So you rarely relax. Even when you sleep, you still think, desire, and are not totally relaxed. But is this bad, as Kabat-Zinn implies? It has its disadvantages, since you obviously have conflicting wants and you certainly can't get *everything* you want.

Correct. But relaxing, too, has disadvantages for many people. It may be dull and boring. It is not as pleasurable as, say, eating and having sex, not as exciting as loving and engaging in sports. It is clearly not productive—just relax while you're studying or relax at work and you'll soon see! Why deify your states of relaxing?

The answer seems to be it is not your hyperthinking and your changing wants that bother you, it is your *anxious* and *depressed* thinking that causes trouble; and it is not your desires that cause you real problems, but your *needs*, *cravings*, and *demands*. This is what Buddhism is largely about. It doesn't tell you not to think and not to desire, but tells you not to *obsessively* think and to raise your desires into *cravings*.

Kabat-Zinn holds that you can train your mind in MSBR to rest in awareness with a degree of calm and equanimity, which is unusually pleasurable and exciting; and there is much evidence that meditators find it so. Perhaps only non-meditators like myself find it boring—or, really, make it boring and unproductive, just as people *not* in love make their emotional state *non*-exciting.

REBT shows you that you can think continually and enjoy most of your thinking as long as you don't think, "*I must perfectly achieve*

what I want!" And you can steadily desire, as long as you don't feel, "I *absolutely must* gain everything I want and *must not* be deprived of any of my wishes!" If you think and feel that you *have* to perform well and *must* get your desires fulfilled, instead of thinking and feeling that it is *preferable* but not *necessary* to do so, you will often be *unhealthily* and *destructively* anxious and depressed, instead of *healthily* sorry and regretful when you have unfulfilled thoughts and desires.

Therefore—what? Therefore, some Buddhists warn against your constant thinking instead of your *intense worrisome* thinking, which you sometimes do. Kabat-Zinn is sensibly concerned with worrisome thinking, because he is the founder and director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. So practically all his patients are obsessively-compulsively stressed or anxious. Millions of other people in this stressful world are similarly afflicted. But not *all of us* are. So even though humans continually hypermentate and can therefore learn to relax with meditation, millions of other people do much less *worrisome* hypermentation and rarely put themselves in emotional trouble.

People like myself, for instance, thoroughly enjoy our constant thinking, feel that it makes our lives more exciting and interesting, and adds to our creativity and productivity. Therefore, we only use meditation or other forms of relaxation for special purposes. In fact, as I note in *REBT: It Works for Me, It Can Work for You*, I so thoroughly enjoy my steady mentation that I rarely get myself to thoroughly relax. In fact, I am relaxed *while* actively thinking and producing, and thereby experience the process of *flow*, which Mihalyi Czickmahali has researched and written so much about.

> *In mindfulness-based stress reduction, the whole point is not to judge or vilify the thought stream, the endless "proliferations" and "fabrications" (in Buddhist language) of the cascading thought streams, but to cultivate familiarity and intimacy with it so we can be free of its potential to observe or distort what is actually going on and perhaps respond more effectively in real-life situations moment by moment* (Kabat-Zinn, personal communication).

Ah, fine! Kabat-Zinn's MSBR looks for—as does REBT—mental (and emotional) distortions, examines them, sees how confusing they are, and seeks out methods to minimize them in real-life, practical solutions. I think that REBT seeks (1) to become aware of and (2) to *change* thinking, feeling, and behavioral distortions—or "illusions"

which the Buddhists pointed out 2500 years ago—more concretely than does MBSR. But this may be my REBT-biased view.

Kabat-Zinn notes that you normally take your body processes for granted, and automatically eat, drink, walk, and swim without paying much attention to your sensations. You would therefore experience your body more deeply and pleasurably if you deliberately focused on its reactions to some of the things you keep doing.

> *"Knowing what you are doing while you are doing it is the essence of mindfulness practice" (p. 28).*

This is a good point. At times, you may gain knowledge and experience from your uniquely bodily feelings if you mindfully eat, drive, and take out the garbage. You only have some moments to live and your focusing on these moments, instead of letting them carelessly go by, may distinctly add to your life. But watch it! You may also make yourself obsessively-compulsively and worrisomely upset about your body—as some body builders and devotees of Wilhelm Reich do. But both Buddhism and REBT would help you to desire to have a fine body and revel in its pleasure but not to escalate your desire to insensate cravings.

> *We practice mindfulness by remembering to be present in all your waking moments (p. 29).*

All? That sounds obsessive, leading to, "I must always be mindful!," and to the creation of anxiety. Being mindful all the time goes counter to the fact that our thoughts, feelings, and actions often are designed to switch themselves to non-mindful reactions and habits. If you really *had* to be mindful while driving a car, your mindfulness might well *interfere* with your smoothly driving it and with your feeling enjoyably relaxed while driving. Not to mention, interfere with your talking to companions while relaxedly driving. It sounds like you at times can run mindfulness into the ground!

> *In doing meditation, we are not trying to get somewhere, but only working at being where we already are and being there fully (p.31).*

Sounds great!—as does the title of another book by Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are,* and Ram Dass' book, *Be Here Now*. But *only* working at being where you are and being there fully could lead you to a *limited* life. Why shouldn't you at times want to get

somewhere else? Getting somewhere else is interesting and exciting—and helps make the world more absorbing. *Always* being where you are could be stultifying. You may be fully *aware* of your unfortunate habits—and not motivated to change some of them. The fact that you are fully aware of the sights, sounds, and smells of your smoking hardly means that you will stop smoking. You'd better *also* be fully aware of smoking's *harmfulness* and its keeping you from *harmless* pleasures.

> *Meditative awareness requires an entirely new way of looking at the process of learning—a new attitude. The main new attitudes you require are non-judging, patience, a beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go (pp. 31–32).*

This largely seems to be correct. To meditate mindfully, you *first* may have to acquire these attitudes—and perhaps a few others, such as optimism and hope. But if you *just* acquire the attitudes that Kabat-Zinn suggests—and that REBT usually espouses and teaches you to acquire—you may find that mindfulness meditation is redundant. And you may find that by acquiring these attitudes and virtues, you solve your emotional–behavioral problems merely by acquiring them. Why then spend time meditating? Kabat-Zinn might answer that the essence of MBSR includes and leads to the virtues mentioned in the previous paragraph.

That is one of my main hypotheses—yes, mindfulness meditation often works, because it abets and includes the seven attitudes that Kabat-Zinn endorses. But these attitudes can also be taught by REBT and several other forms of psychotherapy. REBT especially teaches its clients, among other things, non-judging, patience, noncompulsive striving, and acceptance, and has been doing so since the 1950s. In doing so, it has apparently helped many thousands of individual and group therapy clients and self-help participants; and it has led to scores of successful outcome studies published in reputable scientific journals.

In fact, MBSR includes the seven attitudes mentioned by Kabat-Zinn and it is these attitudes *themselves* that help people create significantly less anxiety and depression. If you achieve the seven attitudes with or without meditating, they help you; and perhaps MBSR is therapeutic *because* it helps you to acquire these attitudes. In REBT, you also acquire them—because REBT teaches you and

encourages you to have patient, non-judging acceptance; and then, voilà, you change.

Anyway, REBT closely resembles Kabat-Zinn's MBSR in several important respects, and both themselves may have common elements that work. This, of course, was Jerome Frank's hypothesis in the 1970s: that many therapy procedures work because they have common elements with other "different" therapies.

Kabat-Zinn specifically considers the virtues of the seven attitudes you tend to have when you do mindfulness meditation.

> *1. Non-judging. You, as a human, normally have a constant stream of judging thoughts—you judge events as "good" and "desirable" or as "bad" and "undesirable." These judgments tend to dominate your mind, making it difficult for you ever to find peace with yourself (p. 33).*

Always? They may also be helpful *by themselves*. Thus, if you judge Jack's kindness to you as "good" and Jill's hostility to you as "bad," you may help yourself stay with Jack and avoid Jill. That helps you function and be happy. But if you convince yourself that Jack *absolutely must always* keep acting well, you make yourself anxious and depressed when he doesn't—or even if you think that he *might* not act as well as he supposedly *must*, you create anxiety. And if you think that Jill *absolutely must not* ever be hostile, you worry about the fact that she may be and not only avoid her when she is hostile but perhaps also kill her. Your *desire* for Jack's kindness and your *aversion* for Jill's hostility turns into a *need* for them to behave as you *demand* that they do; and since you control what you do and not what they do, you disturb yourself.

Therefore: keep your *desires* but refuse to turn them into unrealistic, God-like *demands* and you can usefully judge Jack and Jill's behaviors. Even if you judge what they do falsely—say, judge Jack to be kind when he is actually nasty and judge Jill to be nasty when she is actually kind—you can undemandingly judge what they *do* and not demandingly judge who they *are*. You will then have little trouble relating to them. *Needing—not wishing*—them to do what you want gets you into trouble.

So Kabat-Zinn is really telling you to meditate and be non-judgmental about yourself, about others, and about life as a whole. But if you stopped all judging of your, other people's, and the world's *behaviors*, you probably wouldn't survive for very long!

> *2. Patience. This is a form of wisdom. Whatever is going to happen, will happen anyway, so why insist that it happen sooner or better? Why rush through some moments to get to better ones? (p. 34).*

Kabat-Zinn seems to be correct. You are having experiences and you may arrange to have "better" ones. Why not? Your goal is not merely to love, but often to improve your living. In fact, if you evaluate your present experiences as "good," you may still want to improve them; and if you evaluate them as "bad," you certainly may be motivated to change them. By all means, then, let yourself feel your experiences—and still try to modify some of them.

But what's the *rush?* To rush on to something new, often implies that you've got to change the present, that you *can't* stand it, that it's *awful*! Cavalier hyperbole! And it can easily help you rush into something *worse*!

So don't *just experience* your present moments. REBT says by all means *also* evaluate them to see if you want to improve them. That leads to your growth and development—to your creation of *new* and *different* experiences. But not so fast! Give yourself time to consider the pros and cons of your present experiences. If they are only bad, then you can easily push yourself to change them. But aren't many of them good *and* bad, advantageous *and* disadvantageous? Hold your horses. Think about this. Could changing them make them worse?

Haste often makes waste. Obsessively devoting yourself to change stops you from enjoying the moment at all! And, perhaps, doing much hassle-filled reorganizing. Is it worth the effort? Well???

Moral: don't think you have to rush. Full steam ahead may *sometimes* be desirable, but not *always*. *Balance* some of your possibilities of changing. Do a cost-benefit analysis. Don't merely stick in the mud; but don't obsessively-compulsively drive yourself—*yes*, drive yourself—to change. Buddhism warns you against compulsive striving and driving. So does REBT. *Consider*, often, changing your ways *un*frantically.

MSBR may perhaps be one of the best ways you can use to teach yourself healthy patience. But with REBT and other conscious methods, you can also teach it to yourself.

> *3. Beginner's mind. If you want to experience the richness of the present moment, you have to cultivate "beginner's mind," and be willing to look at everything as if it is your first time. This allows you to be receptive to new possibilities and prevents you from being stuck in the rut of your own "expertise" (p. 35).*

Cultivating "beginner's mind" may indeed be useful, and Kabat-Zinn urges you to experiment with taking a familiar person and forcing yourself to see them with fresh eyes, as they really are, and not as a reflection of your habitual thoughts about this person. You may see some surprising new things!

Indeed you may and this is a good method of interrupting your usual biased views—and often mistaken views—of people you "know" for a long time.

Right. But there may be no way of your seeing a person "as he or she really is." People are too complex—and too changing—for that. Immanuel Kant proved that we are limited in our perceptions and thoughts and never really see the "thing-in-itself"—the "essence of something." But by forcing yourself to use your "beginner's mind," you may see aspects of people—and important aspects—that you never realized before. So try it: let it *add* to your knowledge.

Once again: Insight meditation is one, but hardly the only, way to do this. Maybe it is the best way. But that would have to be experimentally proven. Meanwhile, practice doing it and see what results you get.

> *4. Trust. MSBR helps you to develop a basic trust in yourself and your own authority. It encourages you to trust your own intuition, even if you make mistakes (p. 36).* Yes, it probably does. Because you watch your own thoughts and refuse to judge yourself as a "good" or "bad" person while doing it. Therefore, if your intuition tells you to do something and it is risky to do, you know that you won't blame yourself if you make an error. So you can risk doing it.

The problem is that when you are intuitive, you often strongly feel that your behavior is "good" and that you will get "great" results. But you are using your feelings and guessing that they will not lead you astray. If your feelings turn out to be mistaken in their prediction, you learn by your mistakes and refuse to put yourself down. Fine. But your feelings are prejudiced and inaccurate, and may be accompanied by prejudiced thoughts. So they often—perhaps more often than not—lead you to act foolishly.

REBT says that intuitive feelings are great—but don't make them "superior" or "sacred." Don't let them usurp and take over your more realistic, more logical, and more practical thoughts. Give them *some* but not *total* consideration and sway. It is hard to estimate, but I sometimes guess that your regular thoughts are mostly practical and logical, while your intuitive thoughts are mainly emotional and not

too logical. Sometimes, too, your intuitive thoughts-feelings are very prejudiced in favor of what you'd *like* to see happen, and therefore wrongly predict that it will. Much wishful thinking can intrude on your intuitive decisions. That won't kill you (usually), but be cautious!

> *5. Non-striving. You do almost everything for a purpose; and you often strive—sometimes desperately strive—to fulfil your purpose. But ultimately meditation is a non-doing. It has no goal other than for you to be yourself (p. 37).*

I wonder! It seems to me that you are deliberately doing MSBR because you are stressed-out, anxious, depressed, or raging. Why, otherwise, would you go to the time, trouble and expense of going for several weeks or months to Kabat-Zinn's stress-reduction clinic? Because you are just curious about meditation? I doubt it.

So you have the desire to minimize your stress—to achieve your goals. But Kabat-Zinn and his associates realize that you'd better not strive *too hard* to reach it. Over your first 8 weeks at their clinic, while you are learning to meditate and discovering how you stress yourself, they tell you "not to try to make any progress toward" your goal. But obviously, you can't follow their procedures without *trying* somewhat to make progress.

So what Kabat-Zinn seems to mean is, don't try *desperately* hard. Don't tell yourself, "I *absolutely must* make some progress." Paradoxically, your *must* sabotages you. With it, you inevitably think, "If I don't make *some* progress—as I *must*—there's something radically wrong with me! I must be meditating poorly! I'll never be able to succeed in this program!" Et cetera. So you had better make yourself *only* prefer to make progress—not to need it! You can still *calmly* strive to work at the stress-reduction program. But you don't *frantically* strive and thereby sabotage your efforts.

So I wonder if Kabat-Zinn really means *non*-striving. He seems to mean non-compulsive, non-frantic striving.

If I am right about this, good. REBT helps you to strive, and strive energetically, to change your overly stressful thoughts, feelings, and actions—when, of course, they are harming you. But as usual, it teaches you to *un*desperately strive, so that you refuse to give yourself *more* stressfulness. Non-striving has elements of good mental health in it. But not when you take it to *extremes*.

> *6. Acceptance. Acceptance means seeing things as they actually are in the present (p. 58).*

Not exactly!—since Kabat-Zinn's *language* may be a bit off. You never know exactly what things "actually are," since you can't, as again Kant said, see their *essence*. But Kabat-Zinn's illustrations are good. If you are overweight and don't like being so, you still *accept* that the scales *seem* to tell you that you are, yes, *too heavy*. You therefore recognize and acknowledge your weight and accept *yourself* with it. You do not deny it; but you don't criticize *you*, your being, for having it. You "love yourself" *without* loving your *weight*. Otherwise, you'll have a hell of a time *losing* some weight. In fact, losing the weight becomes easier *because* you don't damn yourself for being heavy—and thereby destructively think, "An overweight person like me is so worthless that I am unable to lose the weight." You accept whatever you are thinking, feeling, and seeing "because it is here right now," as Kabat-Zinn says.

REBT would more specifically tell you to accept your excessive weight because although *it* is bad, it doesn't make you a *bad person*. You will then not only see it in the present as it is—yes fatness instead of slimness; but you will also realize that it won't go away *tomorrow* by itself. You'd better *do* something about it—e.g. diet and exercise. And even if you *never* lose weight, you *always* accept *yourself* with it and never berate *yourself*. So you accept its *reality*—for the *present* and for (if you are lax about it) the future.

REBT also clearly informs you that you don't have to be overweight. You *can* change and lose your extra weight, even if you've had it for many years. You can—and had *better—work* at changing it, and you can *choose*, being a constructivist, to do so.

REBT also, while encouraging you to view your overweight with unconditional self-acceptance (USA), encourages you to *choose* unconditional other-acceptance (UOA)—to accept *all* people who are foolishly overeating *with* their destructive behavior and to try to help *them* change it. And it encourages you to have unconditional life-acceptance (ULA)—to accept your life with its biologically and socially acquired tendency to make yourself overweight, to stop whining about this handicap, and to keep working at gaining high frustration tolerance, now and in the *future*, to work against your easily acquired weightiness.

Of course, Tibetan Buddhism promotes UOA and ULA as well as unconditional self-acceptance, too. But I would say that although MBSR helps you do so, helps you get started, it doesn't *by itself* foster USA, UOA, and ULA. Buddhism adds other *teachings* to help you

achieve and retain these important *goals* and *philosophies*. REBT strongly *teaches* you all these accepting philosophies whether you meditate or not.

> *7. Letting go. To practice mindfulness, you can cultivate the attitude of letting go, which is a fundamental attitude—of letting things be, of accepting things as they are. Since you have a tendency to hold on to "bad" thoughts, meditation helps you to accept them and to drop them.*

This seems to be okay, and mindfulness meditation is *one* way of looking at your present thoughts non-judgmentally. However, if you *just* do that, they are likely to return. Not so good! So, using REBT, you look at the thought, "Things are pretty bad right now. I have to change them!" and you tell yourself, "So they're bad—as they *should* be, because they are. I'd like to change them, but I don't have to. I can live with them, and perhaps improve them later. But even if I don't improve them, it's not *awful*, not the end of the world!"

Mindfulness-based stress reduction accepts your "bad" thoughts, but REBT also does so—and adds, "and maybe I can change things by doing this or that; and if I can't, too bad!" So it accepts destructive thoughts, but also actively disputes them. In doing MBSR, you may implicitly dispute your destructive beliefs. But I am not sure that you consciously and actively do so.

I again want to stress the similarities taught by MBSR and REBT though the methods of teaching these philosophies are different. MBSR, like other Buddhist-oriented teachings, helps its practitioners to be considerably more non-judging, patient, cultivate beginner's mind, develop a basic trust in oneself, be non-striving, accept things as they actually are in the present, and let go—that is let things be. REBT uses its own forms of mindfulness stress reduction—including active challenging and questioning of dysfunctional thoughts, feelings, and behavior—to also teach these uncommon human attitudes.

Both these therapeutic—and philosophic—systems seem to work. Richard Davidson and Jon Kabat-Zinn, for example, have published a study showing that in a clinical trial of MBSR in a worksite setting, biotech workers and managers in a high stress environment showed significant changes in specific prefrontal cortical regions as a result of MBSR training—from a greater right activation before training to left activation after 8 weeks of MBSR, both at baseline and in response to laboratory stressing; and that this shift in the ratio of

left/right activity was maintained at 4 months post MBSR. Pretty impressive findings!—showing that MBSR can have a potentially significant positive effect on the regulation of emotion under stress through various underlying brain mechanisms.

Now my hypothesis is that if a similar study of REBT stress reduction showed similar impressive results, it would be because REBT teaches its practitioners the same kind of basic philosophies as MBSR teaches them in the seven attitudes listed two paragraphs above. Like REBT—and unlike many other forms of therapy—MBSR stresses fundamental philosophical change, which seems to be crucial to stressed individuals feeling better, getting better, and staying better. Even conventional CBT—such as that done by Aaron Beck and Donald Meichenbaum—is distinctly cognitive, but not significantly philosophic, as are MBSR and REBT.

COMMITMENT, SELF-DISCIPLINE, INTENTIONALITY, SELF-ESTEEM, AND COMPASSION

> *When you use MBSR, especially in Kabat-Zinn's stress reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Center of Mindfulness, you commit yourself "to working on yourself and have enough self-discipline to persevere in the process" (p. 41). Indeed you do; and anywhere you do mindfulness meditation you tend to commit yourself to its disciplined process.*

REBT fully agrees with such commitment methods—as also does Steven Hayes' *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)*. REBT is disciplining yourself and it specifically teaches you, again, that only *work and practice* at it will get you good results.

Kabat-Zinn's program is taught by therapists and staff members who *themselves* have years of meditation training and practice meditation daily. This probably helps Kabat-Zinn's trainees to model themselves after their trainers and thereby benefit. REBT does not require its therapists to use REBT on themselves but of course encourages them to use it in their own lives. It also trains them to do so in its certification process.

> *Kabat-Zinn's MBSR teaches conscious intentionality to practice, whether you like it or not, "with the determination of an athlete" (p. 46).*

Excellent! REBT directly teaches you conscious intentionality to practice REBT whether you like it or not.

> *If you take some time to just be, you will improve the quality of life and enhance your self-esteem (p. 46).*

Watch it! Kabat-Zinn seems to be falling into the *conditional* self-esteem trap here. I'll bet that many mindfulness meditators tell themselves, "Now that I devotedly and persistently practice my meditation, despite its difficulties, that is great and that makes me a good and better person!" If so they *conditionally* accept themselves and are still disturbed. Kabat-Zinn doesn't seem to warn them against doing this—as, fortunately, did Chogyam Trungpa, who warned his Buddhist followers against "spiritual materialism." He told them to give up "possibilities of being the greatest person in the world by means of your training." Kabat-Zinn is less cautious and allows his followers to sneak in the ever-present dangers of "winning" self-esteem by accolading themselves for their discipline in doing mindfulness training.

This, perhaps, goes to show that conditional self-esteem, as I have said for many years, is an insidious, real sickness, so much so that even Buddhist therapists carelessly sneak it in and sometimes encourage their clients to achieve it.

> *Kabat-Zinn now realizes that meditation practice alone will not cause you to grow and change: "time has taught me that some kind of personal vision is necessary" (p. 46). So he says you can have a vision of what or who you might be if you stop plaguing yourself.*

Very good! REBT since 1961, in *A Guide to Rational Living* (Ellis & Harper 1961), has recommended that if you want to minimize your disturbances and be self-fulfilled and happy, you'd better take responsibility for disturbing yourself and not blame all of your troubles on your environment and your heredity. Then you can use your constructivism to minimize your neuroses. But also, to lead a happy and fulfilling life, you had preferably better develop some *vital absorbing interests*—some major goals and purposes that you can intrinsically enjoy just because you select and revel in them. And, as I keep emphasizing in that and other more recent books, your interests can well be devoted to enjoying yourself, helping other people, and helping to improve the world. Kabat-Zinn is not merely hung up on REBT for your own sake; he also endorses the Tibetan Buddhist

teachings of compassion for others and the world. As he notes later in his book, "When practiced regularly, loving kindness meditation has a softening effect on the heart. It can help you to be kinder to yourself and to others in your own mind" (p. 184).

This is also the theory of Carl Rogers, of Richard Enright, the forgiveness specialist, of REBT, and of many therapists who do not advocate meditation: USA helps UOA—and *vice versa*. Why? Probably because ego-centeredness is universal among all people all over the world and easily leads non-acceptance of others when they do the "wrong," "immoral," or "unfair" thing. It tends to make you (and others) almost paranoid about *finding* "wrong" behavior in others. Seek and ye shall find! You therefore condemn others for their "bad" deeds and make yourself angry, damning, and combative.

When, on the other hand, you go out of your way to respect and aid others' interests, and you replace fighting them with helping them, you feel compassionate and easily see the virtue of self-acceptance. Not necessarily!—for you can compulsively put others ahead of yourself and unduly sacrifice your own goals. This, ironically, can give you an ego-trip, create conditional self-esteem, and work *against* USA. But, using REBT, you can *pragmatically* realize that you will always be much of a social creature, and *had better* try to save the world from destroying peaceful social life. If you adopt UOA, you tend to endorse the ideas and feelings of *acceptance*, and similarly, if you adopt USA, you tend to endorse UOA. Acceptance *means* non-damning anyone and everyone—even when they behave badly.

Kabat-Zinn's MBSR, then, though often showing you how to cope with your own undue stress, can also encourage you to be other-directed as well. Like REBT, it can serve to promote your having a *generally* accepting philosophy, feeling, and action.

Although Kabat-Zinn states that "meditation is really a non-doing" *(p. 60)*, he specifically tells you how to do it and how to apply it to almost any conceivable emotional or physical problem that you may have. Paradoxical? Yes, somewhat. But in another book, *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (Kabat-Zinn, 1994), he tells you to enjoyably use MBSR even if your life may or may not be dominated by immediate problems of stress, pain, and illness. So he covers practically everything—clearly and often charmingly. Read him and see!

I could go on agreeing and disagreeing with Kabat-Zinn's Buddhist oriented formulations, but enough is enough! Let me summarize by saying that his presentation of Buddhistic MBSR is remarkably close

to REBT theory and practice in many ways, because although the techniques of these two systems seem to be far apart, the *philosophies* that they teach through their methods have much in common. REBT and Kabat-Zinn's MBSR both heavily favor USA combined with UOA and ULA. What more can I ask?

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