

Events Log

This is a great exercise to help you see the connection between events and your emotional reactions or consequences to those events. Many people mistakenly believe that they just have feelings out of nowhere. It just happens to them. But most of the time, of course, the event that happens triggers a cognitive response; that is a thought or belief to which one attaches an emotion. But the occurrence is so fast that most of us are unaware of the thought or belief; we focus on the feeling. So we think the event caused the feeling directly. Hardly!

John is cut off by a speeding driver on the expressway. He yells, "Hey Jerk! Learn to drive!" John knows he is angry, but he doesn't realize he believes what he yelled. That is, that the other driver is a *jerk*, not just a fallible person who happens to be driving dangerously. In yelling, "Learn to drive!" John implies that he believes the driver shouldn't drive like that—not just sort of shouldn't—but strongly shouldn't, like *must not drive that way*.

Now if John says and strongly believes these things, how is he going to *feel* emotionally? It isn't the other driver that made John feel anything. It is John's strong, convinced, absolutistic, commanding, demanding beliefs that made him feel so angry. The other driver is wrong, of course. He could have caused an accident. He could have killed John. But he couldn't have made John *feel* anything.

What if John had not been paying any attention at the moment to the road; but instead was reaching over to the back seat to swat his noisy child? He wouldn't have seen the other car at all. Would he have gotten angry? No? Why not? If the other driver could make John *feel* angry by his dangerous driving, what kept John from feeling it even though he didn't see it? Feelings don't just happen. What about the other drivers on the road that witnessed the bad driver at work? What did they *feel*. Doesn't that depend on where they were in relation to the bad

driver? And more importantly, wouldn't that likely effect how they thought about that driver? And wouldn't that affect how they felt?

In REBT we call these Activating Events; that is, those events about which we think irrationally, believe strongly what we think, then act on the irrational belief. This belief disturbs us about the event. A log of these events may help you see the connection between the events and your disturbed emotions so that you can then use 24-7 Help effectively to overcome your disturbances.

Keep a record of those events in your day about which you become disturbed. Note the day you experience the event. Note clearly and completely the event as you perceived it. Then name the emotions you felt. Emotions have names, like "sad," "glad," mad," "happy," and "joyful." But the *good, pleasant* feelings don't cause you any problem, so don't record them. Work on the stuff that's tearing your stomach up.

Here is a form to use for one experience:

Day	Time	Events	Emotional Consequences
_____	_____	_____	_____
		_____	_____
		_____	_____

Return to the Homepage to select an item from **SOME PROBLEMS OF EVERYDAY LIVING** about which you would like additional help.