

# Inner/outer voice coaching and addictions

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Cognitive emotive behavioral therapy is a popular evidence based therapy approach that is widely practiced in the so called 'addictions' field. Cognitive restructuring, a key aspect of this educational approach to therapy is a form of **inner voice** coaching where the therapist who is positioned as a coach/teacher helps the client modify/dispute (and sometimes learn to accept) the cognitions that influence the problematic addictive behavior.

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According to Albert Ellis (1962), Human beings are not their behavior and USA (unconditional self acceptance) helps the individual to accept themselves as fallible humans, but *not* accept the behaviors that impede their life goals. This **externalizing** behavior from the person can help the individual avoid **internalizing** the problem that they bring to therapy and encourage them to own the solution NOT the problem.

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Michael White (2007) one of the originators of the Narrative therapy approach has written extensively about encouraging **externalizing** conversations and empowering clients to speak out and reclaim their lives from the influence of the problem. This speaking out or gaining personal agency is a form of outer voice coaching (although the Narrative therapist is positioned more as *a co-author in the client's preferred story*, rather than as an educator).



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- Inner voice coaching can help the client gain responsibility for the self-sabotaging cognitions that influence the addictive problem.
- Outer-voice coaching can help the client speak out about the factors outside of the person that impact on their response-ability.
- It is hypothesized that inner/outer voice work increases the chances that the client feels heard.

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- Greenberger and Padesky (1996) offers a five part CBT model that encompasses the head (cognitive) heart (affective) and hand (behavioral) determinants of the addiction problem - as well as the biology and the outer world that the person lives in.
- Much of this 'outer world' (family we grew up in, the culture we live in, the wealth or lack of wealth etc.) and biology, individuals are not responsible for. BUT these factors influence the ability to respond.

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‘Speaking out’ or gaining personal agency may help the client counteract the enfeebling aspect of having a so called addiction. Talking about the way that addictive behaviors are promoted and advertised, talking about how our ‘norms’ were acquired from our upbringing and surroundings can compliment the inner voice (stinking thinking that leads to drinking) work that the CBT approach focuses on.



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When incorporating outer voice coaching with inner voice work certain questions may be worth considering:

- Does the therapeutic dyad position the problem as something the client **has** or something that the client **is**?
- Does the client want to own the **solution** rather than owning the **problem**?
- Is the client positioned as a sinner in need of saving or a saint in need of recognition? ) (Tutu and Tutu, 2010)
- Is this session about solving a problem, or solving the client's solution?

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Although a CBT approach such as the original R.E.T (rational emotive therapy) of Albert Ellis (196 ) and Narrative therapy come from seemingly different paradigms , combining the inner voice coaching (R.E.T) with outer voice work (Narrative Therapy) can enrich the therapy session. Strengthening the **inner** and **outer** voice during a narRETive (Schreuder 2012) session can encourage some co-creation with the therapist and client united against the addictive problem, in search of new possibilities.



# Responsibility and response ability!

**responsibility**  
**re·spon·si·bil·i·ty** (ri spän'sə bil'  
the condition of being responsible  
*responsibility* for the error.) 2. a th  
that one is supposed to look after,  
[Her education will be my *responsi*  
**spn'si·bil'i·ties**, *pl.*  
**re·spon·si·ble** (ri spän'sə b'l), *adj.*  
or expected to take care of something

**RESPONSE**  
**ABILITY**



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