

Fostering Non-Cognitive Development of Underrepresented Students Through Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: Recommendations for School Counselor Practice



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The non-cognitive factors (NCFs) endorsed by Sedlacek (2004) appear to align with the core values of rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT). This article explores theoretical and empirical evidence that suggests REBT fosters the development of NCFs. School counselors can promote non-cognitive development by embedding REBT throughout direct and indirect student services. REBT-based strategies and interventions can aid school counselors in their efforts to close the achievement gap and foster college and career readiness among students, especially those from historically underrepresented populations. Recommendations for school counseling practice are provided.

Keywords: non-cognitive factors, REBT, school counseling, college and career readiness, underrepresented populations

Non-cognitive factors (NCFs) include strategies, skills, attitudes and behaviors upon which individual success is often dependent (Farrington et al., 2012). While knowledge and ability are important, NCFs are mediating factors that can either assist or hinder individual achievement in educational and career settings. These factors often determine college and career readiness as well as lifelong success. For example, positive self-concept (Brown & Marenco, 1980), grit (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007), growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) and social belonging (Walton & Cohen, 2011) are linked to positive outcomes for students and employees and typically lead to a better quality of life.

Sedlacek (2004) noted that NCFs are predictive of the success of students with non-traditional experiences. These students generally include students of historically underrepresented populations such as African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanic and Latino Americans. Students from these groups face higher rates of suspension (Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015) and are more likely to have lower GPAs and poorer attendance (Burke, 2015) as compared to their Caucasian counterparts. In the United States, 7% of African American students and 12% of Hispanic students fail to complete high school (Kena et al., 2015). American Indian students are three times more likely to drop out of school than Caucasian students (Burke, 2015). These disparities widen the achievement gap and serve as barriers to postsecondary credentials for students from these groups.

In an effort to close the achievement gap, increase college and career readiness, and promote postsecondary success, many educational organizations and institutions have invested in initiatives that promote NCFs. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA; 2014) endorsed the value of non-cognitive development in a set of standards titled “Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success.” Professional school counselors use these standards as guides to develop competencies that promote NCFs among students across academic, career and social-emotional domains. Squier, Nailor, and

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Carey (2015) recently developed a construct-based approach to developing, implementing and assessing school counseling programs based on several NCFs. Initiatives to develop non-cognitive skills continue to emerge in higher education as well (Sedlacek & Sheu, 2013). Through a series of conference calls, the College Access Affinity Group organized by the United States Department of Education (2015) also acknowledged the impact of NCFs on career and college readiness.

An assortment of interventions demonstrates the potential impact of NCFs on academic and career outcomes. Mentoring programs, service learning and social-emotional learning programs show positive effects, although the magnitude of these effects is relatively small (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). Gaps exist in the research when considering long-term outcomes and the transferability of NCFs across contexts (Farrington et al., 2012). Additionally, researchers often identify, describe and measure NCFs in different ways (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Dweck, 2006; Farrington et al., 2012; Goldberg, 2001; Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984; Walton & Cohen, 2011). Many of these factors are interrelated; some appear fixed, yet others are malleable (Gutman & Schoon, 2013). Concepts and terms that describe NCFs continue to emerge; however, those identified by Brown and Marenco (1980) and promoted by Sedlacek (2004) are of the most widely researched and linked to college and career success.

Ellis and Bernard (1986) outlined several core values of rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), a cognitive behavioral framework developed by Ellis (1962). When practicing the principles of REBT, individuals subscribe to a philosophy of life and an accompanying set of sub-goals. This set of sub-goals, based on a philosophy of life rooted in responsible hedonism and preferential, logical thinking, serves as a guide for individuals striving to maintain happiness and life success (Ellis, 1962). These sub-goals parallel the NCFs endorsed by Brown and Marenco (1980), Sedlacek (2004), Duckworth and Quinn (2009), and Dweck (2006). Dryden (2011) described how the REBT philosophy is broadly applied to increase motivation, tolerance and self-control, as well as other NCFs.

This paper highlights the core values of REBT and explains how they align with the NCFs endorsed by Sedlacek (2004). An overview of the philosophical tenets and the theory of REBT is provided. Theoretical and empirical evidence is explored which suggests that REBT can directly and indirectly promote non-cognitive development. Recommendations for school counselors supporting underrepresented students are presented and directions for future research are discussed.

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

Developed by Albert Ellis in the mid-1950s, REBT encourages self-actualization and seeks to minimize distress, lengthen life and maximize happiness during all aspects of human development (Ellis, 1962). These core values are woven throughout the philosophical tenets of REBT and serve as guides for rational thought, healthy emotions and functional behavioral outcomes. Several sub-goals, as described by Ellis and Bernard (1986), help facilitate these values: (a) self-interest, (b) social interest, (c) self-direction, (d) tolerance, (e) flexibility, (f) acceptance of uncertainty, (g) commitment, (h) self-acceptance, (i) risk-taking, (j) realistic expectations, (k) high frustration tolerance, and (l) self-responsibility.

Ellis (1962) proposed that humans are genetically predisposed to think in a rigid, irrational manner. Irrational beliefs (IBs) are the root of emotional disturbances according to REBT. While demanding is the core or primary IB, three secondary IBs exist: awfulizing, low frustration tolerance (LFT), and global evaluation (David, 2014; David, Lynn, & Ellis, 2010; Dryden, 2011).

REBT hypothesizes that extreme emotions such as anxiety, anger and depression stem from primary and secondary IBs. These unhealthy negative emotions (UNEs) lead to dysfunctional behaviors (Dryden, 2014). In turn, individuals often behave in ways that prohibit the achievement of desired goals and success.

In accordance with its values and goals, REBT promotes rational beliefs (RBs), or preferential thoughts, which are logical and realistic in nature (David, 2014). RBs are non-awfulizing, demonstrate a tolerance for frustration, and do not indicate global evaluations of self, others or life. Healthy negative emotions such as bother, concern or annoyance stem from these RBs. These emotions lead to functional behaviors and outcomes related to success.

The philosophy and values of REBT encourage lifelong happiness and responsible hedonism. It is at this place where the sub-goals of REBT and the NCFs promoted by Sedlacek (2004) appear to converge. Table 1 provides an overview of the conceptual relationships between these NCFs, the sub-goals of REBT and the IBs (evaluative schema) that impede success. Below, theoretical nuances and empirical evidence supporting the utility of REBT in promoting non-cognitive development are presented. It is important that school counselors are aware of the impact of REBT on NCFs as they strive to ensure that all students, especially those from underrepresented groups, are college and career ready.

Table 1

Conceptual Relationships Between NCFs and REBT Goals and Evaluative Schema

Non-Cognitive Factor	REBT Sub-Goals	Evaluative Schema
Positive Self-Concept	Self-Acceptance	Demands Global Evaluation
Realistic Self-Appraisal	Realistic Expectation	Demands Global Evaluation
Leadership Experience	Self-Interest, Social Interest, Self-Direction, Commitment	Low Frustration Tolerance Global Evaluation
Preference for Long-Term Goals	High Frustration Tolerance, Self-Responsibility	Demands Low Frustration Tolerance Global Evaluation
Successfully Handling the System	Tolerance, High Frustration Tolerance	Demands Low Frustration Tolerance
Availability of Strong Support Person	Flexibility, Acceptance of Uncertainty	Demands Awfulizing Global Evaluation
Community Involvement	Commitment	Low Frustration Tolerance
Knowledge in an Acquired Field	Risk-Taking, Self-Interest, Self-Direction	Low Frustration Tolerance Awfulizing

REBT and Non-Cognitive Factors

Many factors are critical to K–12 student achievement and postsecondary success. This section presents the NCFs Sedlacek (2004) identified as most valuable in predicting educational outcomes, especially for underrepresented students. These factors include: (a) positive self-concept, (b) realistic self-appraisal, (c) leadership experience, (d) preference for long-term goals, (e) successfully handling the system, (f) availability of strong support person, (g) community involvement, and (h) knowledge in an acquired field. Theoretical and empirical evidence demonstrates how REBT directly and indirectly promotes these factors (see Table 2). Given the role school counselors play in fostering college and career readiness for all students, this evidence may serve as a catalyst for delivering services rooted in REBT.

Table 2

Empirical Support for REBT as an Intervention that Promotes NCFs

Non-Cognitive Factor	Researcher(s)	Outcome of Study
Positive Self-Concept	Donegan & Rust (1998) Sapp et al. (1995) Sava et al. (2011)	Increases in SC Increases in SC and A Relationship between SE & SD
Realistic Self-Appraisal	Warren (2010) Warren & Dowden (2012) Davies (2008)	Relationship between EB & IB Relationship between EB & IB Causal link between USA & IB
Leadership Experience	Woods (1987) Filippello et al. (2014)	Reduction in discomfort & IB/ increases in assertiveness Relationship between LFT & distress when assertive
Preference for Long-Term Goals	Harrington (2005a, b) Morley (2014)	LFT predicts procrastination & self-control HFT associated with optimism, preferences, acceptance
Handling the System	Sapp (1996)	School success
Availability of Strong Support	Wood (2004) Chamberlain & Haaga (2001)	Increases in autonomy & control Relationship between USA & anxiety
Community Involvement	Ayodele (2011) Nicastro et al. (1999)	Increased IP behaviors IB related to lack of community
Knowledge in an Acquired Field	Harrington (2005b) Balkis (2013)	LFT predicts procrastination RB mediated procrastination & achievement

Note: A=Achievement, EB=Efficacy Beliefs, HFT=High Frustration Tolerance, IB=Irrational Beliefs, IP=Interpersonal, LFT=Low Frustration Tolerance, RB=Rational Beliefs, SC=Self-Concept, SD=Self-Downing, SE=Self-Esteem, USA=Unconditional Self-Acceptance.

Positive Self-Concept

Self-concept includes self-confidence and self-esteem (Sedlacek, 2004). Independence and determination also are aspects of self-concept. Positive self-concept is a determinant of success, especially among students with non-traditional experiences (Sedlacek & Sheu, 2013).

REBT promotes positive self-concept through unconditional self-acceptance (USA). Ellis (1962) emphasized self-worth and the importance of accepting the self regardless of faults or flaws. Self-worth is not contingent upon success or failure, as is often the case with self-esteem. London (1997) suggested self-esteem is problematic since the self is conditionally defined by attributes or behaviors. Attempting to constantly hold one's self in high esteem leads to perpetual damnation and anxiety. However, Kim and Sedlacek (1996) asserted that a relationship exists between the self-concept of students of color and their level of adjustment. This presents a conundrum for students experiencing difficulty adjusting. By practicing USA, students can develop an understanding that they have worth independent of external stimuli or variables. This shift in personal philosophy leads to a stable self-concept and likelihood for greater success (Dryden, 2014).

Studies exploring the direct impact of REBT are vast and stretch over the life span. For example, Donegan and Rust (1998) noted that self-concept among second graders improved as a result of an intervention based on REBT. Additionally, Sapp (1996) and Sapp, Farrell, and Durhand (1995) found that self-concept was a mediating factor between REBT and the success of African American students. Findings from other studies also have suggested that self-concept and self-esteem are associated with IBs (Burnett, 1994; Heppner, Reeder, & Larson, 1983). Sava, Maricutoiu, Rusu, Macsinga, and Virga (2011) described a negative relationship between explicit self-esteem and self-downing IBs of undergraduate students. REBT promotes self-worth and thwarts IBs associated with low self-esteem.

Sedlacek (2004) suggested a strong sense of self is a prerequisite for student success. REBT emphasizes a healthy sense of self by disputing self-downing IBs and promoting preferential, rational thinking. By addressing IBs that impact self-concept, REBT can promote student success.

Realistic Self-Appraisal

Students who accurately evaluate personal weaknesses and strengths demonstrate realistic self-appraisal (Sedlacek, 2004). Self-appraisal is often based on one's perceived ability to complete tasks, also known as self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986). Sedlacek and Sheu (2008) suggested that accurate assessment of strengths lead students, especially those from underrepresented groups, toward academic success.

REBT endorses the appraisal of strengths and weaknesses, but it discourages evaluating the self as a whole based on these attributes. As such, realistic expectations serve to ground individuals and promote happiness and success. When realistic expectations are maintained, IBs about the self are minimized.

Warren and Dowden (2012) explored the relationships between IBs, efficacy beliefs and UNEs. IBs were negatively related to efficacy beliefs as well as depression, stress and anxiety (Warren, 2010; Warren & Dowden, 2012). More recently, Warren and Hale (in press) elaborated on the implications that efficacy beliefs and the sources from which they are conceived (e.g., past performance, verbal encouragement) have on performance. Efficacy beliefs, whether accurate or not, can lead to IBs when expected outcomes fail to materialize (Warren & Hale, in press). These cognitive processes produce a host of emotional and behavioral consequences.

Several studies demonstrated how REBT directly promoted a realistic, functional philosophy of self and life. For example, Chamberlain and Haaga (2001) found that non-clinical university students who scored high on a measure of USA could more objectively evaluate their performance on tasks. Alternatively, McCown, Blake, & Keiser (2012) indicated that college students who procrastinated engaged more readily in global evaluations of self, others and life. Negative mood, stemming from irrational thought processes, was associated with procrastination. Similarly, a study conducted by Davies (2006) of a non-clinical sample of adults yielded findings that suggested IBs and USA are negatively related. Davies (2008) later found a causal link between these concepts. Participants exposed to IBs scored lower on a measure of USA, yet scored higher when exposed to RBs. These studies support the premise that promoting a preferential philosophy of life can enhance realistic self-appraisal. Through realistic self-appraisal, students are positioned for success and equipped to respond effectively to adversity and failure.

Leadership Experience

Students can develop abilities to lead through traditional and non-traditional experiences (Sedlacek, 2004). These experiences are often directly related to cultural and community affiliation. A degree of assertiveness is required to accept leadership roles and achieve related tasks. Assertiveness is a predictor of success (Sedlacek, 2003), while passivity and aggressiveness often hinder success.

REBT encourages self-direction by promoting rational thoughts and minimizing the need for support or approval from others. As such, the importance of assertiveness in leadership endeavors is emphasized in REBT. Rational thoughts lead to assertiveness; IBs tend to result in either passivity or aggression. When assertive, individuals are poised to promote self-interests and social interests in a functional and effective manner. Additionally, individuals often are happier when committed to a cause or invested in a social interest. By responding to challenges or adversity in rational ways, individuals will position themselves as leaders while developing cumulative skill sets adaptable to a variety of settings.

REBT is employed in a variety of settings to directly and indirectly promote leadership skills including assertiveness. In a model of leadership presented by Grieger and Fralick (2007), REBT principles were embedded to enhance training procedures. Murthy (2014) and Nottingham (2013) also described how REBT is used to develop effective leadership practices. Coaches and consultants frequently employ concepts rooted in REBT to establish effective leadership attributes among clients. For example, Woods (1987) found that basic REBT strategies and techniques taught during a series of workshops led to reductions in discomfort and increased assertiveness among participants. REBT also can address perfectionist tendencies, which are often seen as barriers to effective leadership (Ellam-Dyson & Palmer, 2010).

When effective leaders are emotional, they often garner the support of others through the development of interpersonal relationships (George, 2000). However, Filippello, Harrington, Buzzai, Sorrenti, and Costa (2014) found that emotionally intolerant individuals often become distressed when practicing assertiveness. When the principles of REBT are practiced, leaders are viewed as flexible, realistic and authentic in their aim and scope (Fusco, Palmer, & O'Riordan, 2011). Students, especially those from underrepresented groups, can benefit from learning strategies that enhance their ability to serve effectively in leadership roles.

Preference for Long-Term Goals

The establishment of long-range goals often precedes achievement and attainment of those

goals. A preference for long-term goals requires that students have the ability to plan and delay gratification. Sedlacek (2003) and Duckworth et al. (2007) suggested that perseverance and determination when striving toward long-range goals are prerequisites of academic achievement.

REBT encourages responsible hedonism, or enjoyment of life. This concept implies a delay of gratification while individuals behave in ways that lead to the attainment of goals. Self-responsibility and high frustration tolerance (HFT) are required to overcome obstacles that impede progress toward goals. Rather than giving up or blaming the self, others or life for these challenges, REBT recommends individuals take responsibility for their thoughts, feelings and behaviors (Dryden, 2014). HFT is promoted by REBT and lies in opposition to LFT, or the inability to persevere during difficult or challenging situations. Preferential thoughts related to challenges or discomforts are realistic and lead toward healthy emotions and functional behaviors. When ownership of thoughts and feelings are accepted and frustrations are tolerated, individuals are better positioned to work toward distal goals that lead to success.

Rodman, Daughters, and Lejuez (2009) described the positive relationships between HFT and distress tolerance (i.e., persistence) and the pursuit of goals despite potential discomfort. HFT is associated with optimism, preferences, non-awfulizing and acceptance—factors that support goal attainment and enhance the quality of life (Morley, 2014). Alternatively, Harrington (2005a, 2005b) found that frustration intolerance was a predictor of procrastination behaviors, including issues of self-control, among students. When working toward goals, especially ones that create discomfort, self-responsibility and HFT help move individuals forward and toward success. Responsible hedonism, a core value of REBT, appears to directly promote a preference for long-term goals rather than simple, rudimentary accomplishments. School counselors can assist students in developing and working toward distal goals such as completion of postsecondary credentials.

Successfully Handling the System

Students from underrepresented groups are not afforded the same benefits as those from privileged backgrounds. The educational system maintains barriers (e.g., racism) that impede the efforts of students from underrepresented groups. The manner in which individuals handle challenging circumstances within the system offers insight into their ability and potential for success (Sedlacek, 2004). Persistence and perseverance are crucial qualities for students who attempt to navigate or handle the system.

REBT can provide direct support to students navigating the educational system. Rather than placing demands on the system, which can lead to UNEs and unproductive responses, REBT encourages acceptance of system inequities through ULA. Additionally, HFT is fundamental to ULA when attempting to navigate the system. REBT promotes tolerance and an understanding that individuals experience difficult situations as a function of life. Tolerance is a key to self-advocacy efforts and helps students move forward productively without condemning others or life.

Responding to or interacting with the system can leave students, especially those from underrepresented groups, emotionally charged or drained and prone to respond in irrational ways. Harrington (2013) described how IBs play a central role for individuals who believe in a just or utopian world. When beliefs are rigid, individuals have difficulty adapting to adverse situations and may retaliate, thus prohibiting success (Veale, 2002). Dryden and Hurton (2013), however, acknowledged that individuals may not always act on their beliefs. When navigating the system, individuals who maintain rigid beliefs tend to be aware of their action tendencies yet refrain from responding in detrimental ways.

The tenets and practices of REBT provide a platform for restructuring students' cognitions related to systemic prejudice, racism and stereotyping. Gregas (2006) suggested that REBT-based skills are useful for students who face discrimination. Earlier, Sapp (1996) found that African American males who learned the principles of REBT were more successful in school. REBT guided students from beliefs associated with chance or luck (i.e., external locus of control; Rotter, 1966) toward beliefs of personal control over outcomes, which promotes empowerment (i.e., internal locus of control). Regardless of where an individual places responsibility (i.e., locus of responsibility; Jones, 1997), USA, UOA and ULA offer guidance when attempting to hold the self, others, or society accountable. REBT provides psychological resources for handling the system and demonstrating personal influence over outcomes. Students from underrepresented groups who acquire these tools and strategies will respond more effectively when faced with systemic barriers. Evidence also suggested that REBT can propel individuals to reap the benefits of other NCFs such as the availability of a strong support person.

Availability of Strong Support Person

Success is often contingent upon a support network and the use of personal resources. Underrepresented students with a history of supportive relationships perform better in college (Sedlacek, 2004). Individuals should engage with support persons in emotionally healthy ways and ensure that the relationship is mutually understood.

USA and UOA are critical for students seeking support or mentorship in achieving their goals. USA allows individuals to confidently seek support without feeling worthless. With UOA, individuals are accepting of others regardless of faults or failings. Acceptance of uncertainty propels students to take the necessary steps to reach out to others and attempt to form support networks.

Individuals who are self-directed readily seek healthy relationships and support networks. They engage in these relationships to complement their efforts rather than developing a dependency for the support. Reducing anxiety and achieving goals through the incorporation of REBT can lead individuals toward independence rather than maintaining unhealthy, dependent relationships (Wood, 2004). Chamberlain and Haaga (2001) found that USA is negatively related to anxiety, which can stifle autonomy and the confidence to reach out to others for support. Similarly, a study conducted by Davies (2006) revealed that IBs were negatively related to openness, a Big 5 personality dimension promoted by McCrae and Costa (1987). Students considered to possess openness typically have a wide range of interests, creativity and insight, which have implications for establishing a diverse system of support. As such, their relationships are likely to extend well beyond and across cultural boundaries and communities.

Maintaining a strong support system can benefit students navigating difficult tasks or tackling daily life obligations. REBT appears to directly provide the tools and resources necessary for establishing, maintaining and appropriately utilizing support persons. By fostering self-direction and unconditional acceptance, REBT promotes the development of strong systems of support as described by Sedlacek (2004). The availability of a strong support person is critical for students from underrepresented groups; community involvement also plays a key role in the educational success of these students.

Community Involvement

Community involvement encompasses a student's level of activity or interaction in groups within the larger society (Sedlacek, 2004). Students engaged in their community, or a subset of their community, are more successful than those who are disconnected or isolated. Through involvement

in the community, students from underrepresented groups can hone their self-concept, leadership skills and ability to navigate the system.

Ellis and Bernard (1986) suggested that individuals who are actively engaged in something other than themselves are happier. REBT directly promotes community involvement through UOA and ULA. When students are accepting of others and life and remain assertive, they become self-directed and often take interests in the welfare of others and their community. As noted by Sedlacek (2004), a commitment to community initiatives invokes the development and attainment of other goals and skills, which all foster happiness and success.

Warren and Dowden (2012) noted the negative relationships between IBs and depression, anxiety and stress. These psychological disturbances can often impede or debilitate individuals and prevent meaningful interactions within the community. For example, university students were found to moderate their anxiety levels by removing themselves from an activity common in communities of learning (Nicastro, Luskin, Raps, & Benisovich, 1999). Imperative or irrational thinking was related to the speed of the departure, thus demonstrating the influence of thought processes on community engagement.

REBT is effective in promoting social skills, which leads students to engage with society and build a sense of community. For example, Safdari and Hadadi (2013) utilized REBT-based group counseling to reduce symptoms among individuals with mild to moderate depression. The group experience led to a reduction in ruminations about consequences, which often paralyze and prevent a satisfying life. In a study of students enrolled in secondary schools in Nigeria, Ayodele (2011) found that two interventions based on REBT were effective in promoting interpersonal behavior. Students can develop social-emotional competence, a commitment to the community, and other interpersonal skills as a result of participating in REBT interventions. REBT also can position students to more readily acquire knowledge in a field.

Knowledge Acquired in a Field

Knowledge obtained from traditional and non-traditional experiences affords students the opportunity to gain valuable insights into their “place” or “degree of fit” within a particular industry or field (Sedlacek, 2004). While operating in a field, individuals should take full advantage of the opportunities to absorb knowledge and obtain as many skills as possible. These experiences are invaluable for underrepresented students attempting to navigate their chosen field of study or work.

REBT indirectly supports the acquisition of knowledge in a field or career path. For example, individuals must maintain self-direction in order to have varied experiences in a desired field. Drive and determination are required as well as self-interest. REBT suggests that happiness stems from one’s willingness to place personal interests before others (Ellis & Bernard, 1986). Although any experience may lead to benefits, knowledge obtained from a field of interest is gratifying and rewarding. Individuals also must take risks when seeking knowledge. Students who maintain positive emotional health will take appropriate risks when attempting to acquire field experience.

Using the REBT framework, Dryden (2000) described the manner in which procrastination related to work experience, interests, opportunities and advancement hinders self-development and knowledge acquired in a field. Procrastination is related to factors that impact the acquisition of knowledge, such as motivation (Klassen & Kuzucu, 2009) and stress (Stead, Shanahan, & Neufeld, 2010). Harrington (2005b) found that discomfort intolerance, a variation of LFT, was a predictor of procrastination. Students who experience discomfort intolerance will delay experiences that would

otherwise lead to knowledge acquisition.

Researchers have established that REBT can help individuals overcome barriers to taking risks and obtaining knowledge in a field. For example, during a demonstration session, Dryden (2012) explained how REBT can assist individuals in overcoming procrastination. More recently, Balkis (2013) found that RBs about studying were a mediating factor in the degree of academic procrastination and level of achievement among college students. It is important that school counselors consider the vast ways in which REBT promotes NCFs and prepares students for college and the world of work.

Recommendations for Developing NCFs Through School Counseling

The values of REBT align with many NCFs, including those endorsed by Sedlacek (2004). A variety of research studies demonstrate the impact REBT can have on NCFs. Through cognitive, emotional and behavioral support, REBT promotes NCFs in direct and indirect ways. When these factors or skills are developed and strengthened, students in elementary, secondary and postsecondary settings are more likely to experience positive educational outcomes.

Students from underrepresented groups are especially susceptible to barriers that impede their educational efforts and goal attainment. As such, disparities in graduation rates, disciplinary referrals and teacher expectations remain prevalent (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007).

In order to close the achievement gap, it is imperative for school leaders, specifically school counselors, to establish evidence-based strategies that support non-cognitive development and college and career readiness.

Through comprehensive programs, school counselors can deliver a variety of direct and indirect student services that enhance educational experiences and prepare students for postsecondary success. School counselors can use REBT-based student support services to help students, parents and teachers develop strategies that foster NCFs and lead to college and career readiness. It is important that these services are innovative, extend beyond modifications to the classroom and school environments, and offer all students, especially those from underrepresented groups, skills for lifelong empowerment.

Direct Student Services

School counselors deliver direct student services through the core curriculum, student planning and responsive services (ASCA, 2012). Direct interactions that target academic achievement, personal/social growth and career development occur between school counselors and students during the delivery of these services. Professional school counselors can promote non-cognitive development by incorporating the tenets of REBT into many aspects of direct student services.

Core curriculum. The core curriculum is delivered through instruction and group activities that advance the mission and goals of the school counseling program. School counselors advance knowledge, attitudes and skills that align with standards and competencies based on *Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success* (ASCA, 2014). Because these standards are based on non-cognitive research (Farrington et al., 2012), REBT appears to be a viable framework for delivering the core curriculum.

Rational Emotive Education (REE; Knaus, 1974) can promote NCFs while serving as a central

component of the school counseling core curriculum. This social-emotional curriculum is based on the philosophy of REBT and aims to foster rational thought, emotional awareness and functional behaviors among children and adolescents. REE lessons can empower students from underrepresented groups who are often subjected to beliefs and emotions related to their perceived inability to succeed (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007).

More recently, Vernon (2006a, 2006b) developed an REBT-based curriculum geared to promote emotional education across K–12 settings. This curriculum fosters non-cognitive development by helping students establish a positive self-concept, engage in realistic self-evaluation, and navigate difficult and challenging situations. REBT has failed to take root in educational settings and is often overlooked when considering evidence-based social-emotional curriculums. However, schools in Australia are beginning to demonstrate the effects of rational emotive behavior education (REBE) on the social-emotional development of children and adolescents (personal communication, G. Bortolozzo, April 15, 2015).

School counselors who utilize these or similar REBT-based curriculums have the opportunity to foster the non-cognitive development of all students. Opportunities for students to apply, practice and test the strategies they learn must accompany these curriculums. For example, school counselors can coordinate and encourage experiences that allow students to become involved in the community (e.g., food drive), acquire knowledge in a field (e.g., job shadowing), and gain leadership experience (e.g., class representative). These experiences, coupled with REBT-based instruction, are especially beneficial for students from underrepresented groups. Students in K–12 settings who develop knowledge, attitudes and skills based on the REBT framework and have guided opportunities for practice will position themselves for postsecondary success.

Individual student planning and advisement. This direct service affords school counselors the opportunity to help students develop, monitor and manage long-range goals and plans (ASCA, 2012). Student advisement is especially important for students from underrepresented groups who may require additional guidance and support (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Through planning and advising, school counselors assess and evaluate students' attitudes, knowledge and skills related to academic, personal and social, and career development.

Using an REBT framework, school counselors can assist students in uncovering IBs that may impede their goals of attaining a postsecondary credential (e.g., certification, degree). In some cases, students may not aspire to pursue postsecondary education due to IBs associated with unrealistic self-appraisal. School counselors can teach students REBT-based strategies that help establish healthy beliefs and emotions related to academic, personal and career planning. In turn, students are more likely to seek and acquire knowledge in a field or strengthen their support network, both keys to postsecondary success. By realizing the influence of thought, students from underrepresented groups become empowered as active participants of their educational pursuits and are positioned to “reach higher.”

Responsive services. School counselors can promote non-cognitive development through counseling and crisis response. Individual and small group counseling are often short-term and designed to address concerns that impact student success (ASCA, 2012). School counselors also assist students in overcoming crisis situations. It is important that interventions utilized during responsive services are evidence-based and promote academic achievement, personal and social growth, and career development.

REBT offers school counselors a framework for providing responsive services that are evidence-based, targeted, brief and solution-focused. School counselors can utilize cognitive, emotional and behavioral strategies to help students overcome irrational thoughts and extreme emotions that are often detrimental to student success. Non-cognitive development is promoted as students learn strategies to effectively navigate classroom, school and community experiences.

Most school counselors lack training in REBT and therefore do not fully understand its theoretical principles. However, resources are available that school counselors can use to promote the principles and philosophy of REBT during the delivery of responsive services. For example, Vernon (2002) developed a resource that offers a variety of individual activities based on the principles of REBT. This set of activities includes strategies and techniques that address issues related to self-acceptance, problem-solving, underachievement, relationships and transitions. More recently, Warren (2011) provided a variety of rational rhymes school counselors can use to promote the tenets of REBT. School counselors can help students memorize and rehearse these short songs in an effort to develop more preferential philosophies of life. These resources help school counselors equip students with tools and strategies that promote rational thought, foster NCFs and lead to empowerment. In addition to direct student services, school counselors also can provide a variety of REBT-based indirect student services. These services are complementary and aim to support non-cognitive growth in all aspects of student life.

Indirect Student Services

Indirect student services include referrals, consultation and collaboration. While often viewed as ancillary in nature, these services are an integral component of school counseling programs. School counselors should consider integrating the philosophy and principles of REBT throughout the delivery of these services. For systemic change to occur, school counselors must remain vigilant and not waiver in their efforts to close the achievement gap and promote student success. Indirect student services can advance this mission by promoting the development of NCFs.

Referrals. School counselors refer students and families to a variety of community based services. Prior to making a referral, it is important that school counselors have a clear understanding of the concerns and presenting issues. As such, school counselors who operate from an REBT perspective assess students for non-cognitive strengths and deficiencies that impact academic, personal and social, and career development. Using this framework, school counselors can more readily identify the root or underlying issues of concern and make appropriate referrals.

School counselors should consider making referrals to community agencies and organizations that understand the framework and philosophical principles used to determine the need for referral. For example, school counselors can refer students and families to mental health agencies that specialize in cognitive behavioral therapies since these frameworks promote NCFs. Local organizations that foster community involvement and establish supportive relationships with their clients also can serve as referral options. Community agencies and organizations that understand the mission of the school counseling program and the benefits of non-cognitive development are key partners in promoting the success of students from underrepresented groups.

Consultation. Consultation is a triadic interaction in which school counselors support teachers' efforts to promote student success (Warren & Baker, 2013). School counselors also provide consultation to parents, administrators and other educational stakeholders. Consultation is a highly effective means of evoking systemic change and positively impacting the educational experiences of students. Rather than relying on eclectic approaches, school counselors are strongly encouraged to

invest in the delivery of evidence-based consultation that promotes NCFs.

Rational Emotive-Social Behavioral (RE-SB) consultation, developed for K–12 teachers, fosters student-teacher relationships and quality instruction by promoting flexibility, acceptance and realistic expectations (Warren, 2013; Warren & Gerler, 2013). School counselors use this model of consultation to address IBs and UNEs commonly associated with teaching. RE-SB consultation also can address the biases and stereotypes that lead teachers to hold low expectations of students from underrepresented groups (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007).

Through RE-SB consultation, school counselors can promote the NCFs of teachers that directly impact the non-cognitive development of students. For example, students vicariously learn strategies that promote non-cognitive development from teachers who have positive self-concepts, demonstrate preferences for long-term goals and maintain strong support systems. Additionally, students are positioned to engage in realistic self-appraisal when teachers maintain high expectations.

School counselors also can utilize this model of consultation when working with parents. RE-SB consultation can promote NCFs that enhance the ways caregivers interact with and support their children. RE-SB consultation can assist parents in overcoming psychosocial barriers that hinder their child's growth and development. For example, consultation can target a parent's thoughts, emotions and behaviors that influence their child's decision regarding postsecondary education.

School counselors can deliver RE-SB consultation in large group, small group and individual sessions. Ideally, school counselors utilize large group consultation in an effort to advance the principles of REBT throughout the systems of the school. For example, school counselors can encourage teachers and parents to develop a common language that promotes rational thoughts and promotes NCFs. Establishing a common set of REBT-based classroom rules and parental guidelines can ensure that students are immersed in environments conducive to promoting NCFs. Small group and individual RE-SB consultation is typically implemented to address specific concerns expressed by individual teachers or parents. Students from underrepresented groups can benefit greatly from interacting with parents and teachers who model NCFs.

Collaboration. School counselors can collaborate with parents, as well as educators and community members, in many ways. These collaborative efforts are aimed at establishing equity and access for all students (ASCA, 2012). As a result of the relationships established through collaboration, members of the school community (e.g., parents) may reach out to the school counselor for consultation and other services more readily.

Through collaborative efforts such as parent trainings, school counselors can inform parents about the value of non-cognitive development and its role in determining postsecondary success. Efforts to engage the school community in initiatives that directly support student success can strengthen the relationships between the school counselor and parents. Collaboration establishes the school counselor as a leader, student advocate and partner in advancing NCFs and college and career readiness.

School counselors also can partner with local universities to promote a college-going culture and set high expectations for postsecondary success for all students. For example, university and school partnerships can establish mentoring programs that couple K–12 students with local college students from similar underrepresented groups. These relationships would reciprocate non-cognitive development for both the mentor and mentee. This experience can empower and create opportunities

for K–12 students from underrepresented groups.

It is equally important that university and college initiatives, with involvement from offices such as those responsible for enrollment, retention and diversity, engage school counselors in conversations that explore opportunities to streamline students' experiences from high school to postsecondary education. These partnerships can lead to collaborative efforts to develop and provide REBT-based transition programs that promote non-cognitive development. These programs can offer students, especially those from underrepresented groups, additional support as they navigate the nuances of postsecondary education. Universities are advised to build on the efforts of professional school counselors and promote non-cognitive development through evidence-based practices rooted in REBT.

Conclusion

The principles and tenets of REBT align and overlap with many NCFs, especially those promoted by Sedlacek (2004). The proposed recommendations for school counselor practice appear to support the aims of ASCA (2012) and the ASCA (2014) *Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success* standards and competencies. It is critical that researchers and educational leaders continue to explore ways to embed the principles of REBT throughout the educational experiences of all students in an effort to close the achievement gap, foster college and career readiness, and promote postsecondary success.

School counselors must evaluate the direct and indirect student services they provide. A variety of methods are available to help determine the outcomes of REBT-based services. Both formal and informal methods of data collection are useful in determining the impact of services such as core curriculum, small group counseling, consultation and collaboration. School counselors can attempt to directly measure non-cognitive development, including changes in students' patterns of thoughts, emotions and behaviors. However, it is critical for school counselors to track changes in achievement-related data including attendance, discipline referrals and homework completion. From a distal perspective, understanding the influence these services have on high school graduation rates and persistence in postsecondary education, especially for students from underrepresented groups, is imperative.

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