

The Appeal of Albert Ellis: Why the Media and Millions of People Couldn't Get Enough of Him – Invited Address, Presented at the 117th Annual Convention.

Dr Debbie Joffe Ellis (www.debbiejoffeellis.com)

APA Convention Toronto, Saturday, August 8th, 2009, 11-11.50am

"Thank you Stan for your gracious introduction. It is very meaningful to me to be introduced by someone who was such a close friend and colleague of my husband.

Dr Ryan Niemec and Dr Danny Wedding – my Sincere Thanks to you for inviting me to give this address.

It is an honour and true pleasure to be here to do so today.

And to all present – Thank you.

Albert Ellis appealed to the media and millions of people because they got something they wanted from him.

And I hope that in our time together that you too will feel you've learned or heard of something of value that you can benefit from.

What I am about to share with you will not simply be a serenade of love about my husband, Albert Ellis.

Though it easily could be if I allowed myself to do so.

I am here with you, for you, to contribute some or much that may be of benefit to you in your lives.

And if my dedication, love and utter amazement about the greatness of Albert Ellis comes through as I speak – so be it.

My goal is to share with you

- * Some of his actions, experiences and qualities that made him so appealing to the media and to so many of the people who came across his work.

- * I hope to share what it was about his approach that so effectively changed millions of lives for the better – in large part due to the effectiveness of his "Spreading his Gospel".

- * I'll be sharing lessons that he learned along the course of his life that, if you apply in your lives, may help you enhance your effectiveness in your work, with the media, and in every aspect of your life.

* I will also talk briefly about who he did NOT appeal to, and what you might learn from that.

* I will share some of the main REBT principles – particularly in the context of our topic, and describe how applying them can help you succeed in attaining your goals.

* I will share some of what Al experienced in his later years – experiences which may surprise, or inspire, or touch your hearts – and can be sources of motivation for you in the future when you think of them.

* Finally, I would love to answer any questions you ask me.

The media in all its forms – screen, sound and print – found in Albert Ellis a most unique and colourful personality with strong definite views, often controversial stands on issues of the day – striking, stimulating, non-boring.

And countless huge numbers of people, who heard, read or saw him, were more than entertained. They were informed. They were given realistic insights into what they were doing to create problems and unnecessary suffering in their lives, and they were given the how-to's of un-creating such tendencies.

His message was strong, definite and clear.

His approach, theory and philosophy offered tools that were, for most, uncomplicated and do-able, reminding people that they were the creators of their own emotional destinies, and encouraged a greater acceptance of themselves, others and of the process of life itself.

His great exposure to great numbers of people through the vehicle of the media was what made it possible for so many to discover, hear and contemplate his views and theories. Countless people wrote to him over the course of his working life, saying that he and REBT had changed their lives for the better, and many wrote that they believed, thanks to him and his approach, that their lives had been saved.

Albert Ellis – for anyone here who knows little or nothing about him – was the Brilliant

Pioneer in Psychology – Grandfather of Cognitive Psychology and creator of his specific Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) approach.

*He was a tireless speaker, writer, teacher, supervisor, therapist and rare wise soul. Countless numbers whose lives he entered – felt understood by him, and felt refreshed by his straightforward honesty with them.

*He was a revolutionary, a maverick in the true sense of the word, a defender of the underdog and of victims of discrimination and injustice.

*He was a philosopher, humanist, and healer; creator of verse, rhymes and poems, composer of songs, humorist – outrageous at times, and a passionate lover of life.

*Compassionate and kind.
Humble – incredibly so.

*He was husband, partner, soulmate to me. The best.

*He was dedicated to helping people suffer less and enjoy life more – encouraging them to accept the inevitability of loss and suffering – inspiring them to choose to experience as much happiness as possible despite, and including, the reality of suffering and loss.

*He was honest, authentic, reliable.
Did not waste time.
One-pointed and focused. Consistent.

*His deep masculine rich voice, charisma, brilliant smile and daring personality engaged millions.
His courageous nature and strong ethical beliefs were evident throughout his life.
He was himself – no frills – whether approved of or not.

*And very importantly – he practiced what he preached. No hypocrisy.

If we embody or practice even some of the qualities I have just mentioned – it is to our great advantage, and our potential greater appeal to the media, to members of the public, and those around us is – in all likelihood – significantly increased.

In Terms of Media Exposure –

Al's popularity was increasing from the 1940's onwards, as his work and views were being heard on important radio – and later TV – shows.

He was already very active in the fields of sex liberalism, mental health and other popular and unpopular causes. He was often on the famous John Nebel show, at times in active conversations with prominent psychiatrists and celebrities. (Anne Meara and Jerry Stiller were 2 of the latter who used to appear with him on occasion). He did "live" therapy sessions – showing people how they upset themselves, and how they could stop doing so. He debated the famous anthropologist Margaret Mead on radio. More recently, in 2003, a marvellous story about and including him was heard on National Public Radio.

He appeared on numerous television shows, including those with round table discussions and interview-type talk shows. He was interviewed by Barbara Walters, Phil Donohue, Merv Griffin, Dick Cavett – and many prominent journalists.

Countless newspapers, journals and magazines from all around the USA and the world printed articles about him and his views, reviewed his books and interviewed him.

In the special November 2005 Gold Anniversary edition of Variety magazine Al was named one of the Icons of the past 100 years.

In his final 5 years, from 2002 to 2007, the year of his passing, stories about Al, or referring to him, or interviews with him, appeared in – The New Yorker magazine (10/13/03)

The New York Times (5/3/04; 10/11/05; 1/31/06; 12/10/06)

Time Out NY (7/21/05)

New York Magazine (11/7/05)

Village Voice

Psychology today (Apr, 2007)

Forbes magazine (4/9/07)

... to name only some.

A significant tribute to Al is heard in a play called "Trumbo" – based on the letters of Dalton Trumbo, eminent Hollywood writer and director, who was black-listed during the Joseph McCarthy era. The play was performed in 2004/2005 to packed houses on Broadway, in L.A., Philadelphia and Connecticut (with Paul Newman in the lead role there!) – and is now in a documentary of the same name, with smash reviews. A famous line in it is "Ah – Albert Ellis – the greatest humanitarian since Gandhi..."

His autobiography “All Out” – due out later this year, goes into detail about every stage of his life, which I don’t have time to do now, with some surprising and never-before-revealed revelations! I strongly encourage you to read that when it comes out.

Very briefly on his early years – Born Sept 27th, 1913, he was a highly gifted child who taught himself to read at the age of 3 with the help of a friend about a year older than he – he endured many illnesses and some parental neglect – but even then found ways to make himself feel less sad and undepressed when times were tough. He would distract himself by reading, or inventing grand schemes in his head, or imagining pleasing scenarios.

In college he overcame intense shyness about speaking with females – and about public speaking – by forcing himself to do what he was afraid of. He often would say: “When I was a student at College I was president of a political group, but scared shitless of making speeches. I forced myself to make them, telling myself that I would do my best, however uncomfortable, to do what I wanted to be more comfortable at – if I died, I died! Not only did I survive, but I discovered that I had a talent for talking in public, and once I was over my fear of it, I enjoyed doing so”.

He would also recount his determination to overcome his shyness with women by forcing himself to talk to 100 females during August in the Bronx Botanical Gardens. He managed to make one date – and she didn’t show up!

Yet he overcame his fear!

That, in-vivo desensitisation, along with the distraction and beneficial thought selection he practiced as a young boy, became part of REBT.

In his adult years, he completed his PhD in Psychology at Columbia and after a short period practicing psychoanalysis in his work, he abandoned it – observing that it was too long-winded and inefficient – and instead used his more active-directive approach. He presented his new controversial Rational Therapy (as it was then called) at the APA convention in Chicago in 1956 – to the criticism, jeers and boos of many present. He was called superficial in his approach, and worse.

At panels at national conferences, including those of the APA, he was attacked by Fritz Perls and others. Al gave back as good, or better, than what he got! He debated with Skinner and Rogers and Eysenck.

And he persisted and persisted in talking about his approach, writing about it, demonstrating it in public, and doing the on-going radio, newspaper, magazine and later television interviews. In the 1980’s the Canadian Psychological Society named him the most influential psychologist ever, a similar survey around that time by the APA named him the second most influential one – with Carl Rogers first, and Sigmund Freud

third.

Today, many psychologists, and non-psychologists, agree that no individual has had a greater impact on modern psychotherapy.

Albert Ellis was one of very few who dared – from the early 1940's onwards – to support racial equality, economic equality, equal rights for women, gay rights, sex before marriage, and interracial relationships and marriage.

When articles or interviews in newspapers appeared in which he expressed his views on those issues – readers responded with torrents of letters – many of which described him as a wrecker of society – and worse.

He was a core part of the sexual revolution.

His REBT is at the heart of a secular approach to group work for addicts that is an alternative to AA – it is called SMART Recovery, a revolutionary approach – more appropriate for many than the AA paradigm.

In the 1970's he had a school called the Living School – which aimed at teaching children rational and healthy tenets. He pushed for having REBT taught in all schools.

REBT was revolutionary as a pioneer Self-Help approach.

Many “nice neurotics” (as he described well-functioning people who were never-the-less creating their unnecessary emotional disturbances) could use it successfully on themselves, without therapists – and more severe “neurotics” and people with certain psychoses were given homework and encouraged to do on-going self-work in addition to working with a good therapist and/or attending group therapy.

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) emphasizes working in and with the here and now, not dwelling overlong on the past.

It teaches the difference between rational and irrational thinking – and about the unnecessary suffering that the latter creates.

It teaches that we have the choice to think in either rational or irrational ways, and reminds us to be aware of our thinking and to choose the life-enhancing rational way. (More about that shortly).

It is a profoundly wholistic approach – taking into account the interconnectedness of mind/body/feelings, ie. cognition/perception/behaviour/emotions.

More than any other Cognitive Therapy it has a philosophical emphasis – particularly on the importance of acquiring USA, UOA and ULA.

It is non-judgmental of the person (self and others) – only of any self-defeating

behaviours.

It emphasizes self-responsibility.

It is encouraging, and gives realistic hope.

It recommends bibliotherapy, and related supplemental support aids – educational tapes, CD's, DVD's etc.

It includes regular references to the helpfulness of humour for giving healthy perspective in our lives.

In 2003 Al was scheduled to give a number of presentations at the APA convention held here in Toronto, but months before had to have life-saving abdominal surgery. At the hospital when I told him the surgeons would have to urgently remove his entire large intestine – without blinking an eye he responded “At least they're not taking my balls!” (Incidentally – doctors would not allow him to travel to Toronto that year, but he still presented at that APA meeting – via phone!)

Al wrote 100's of Rational Humorous Songs.

He would speak about his approach, give workshops and presentations, as often as possible. All over the country and the world.

His books (80 so far – more to be published) and articles (over 800) kept coming. His famous Friday Night Workshops, which he gave for 46 years, educated and helped inestimable numbers of students, professionals and members of the public. For \$5 – or as he would say – “a mere 5 bucks including free lousy coffee!” they would enjoy seeing REBT demonstrated live with volunteers from the audience who brought to Al real problems they wanted help with. Few, if any, other therapists gave such regular education for the public, and for so many years. The study by Al and I, “A Study of Volunteer Clients Who Experienced Live Sessions of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy In Front of A Public Audience” published in the Journal of Rational-Emotive and Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy, Vol 20, no.2, Summer 2002, describes that 97% of the respondents found the live sessions helpful.

In addition to the one-to-one demonstrations, audience members were invited to ask questions and share their observations. – It was often a life-transforming evening for many.

The former Governor of Texas – Ann Richards – attended a Friday Night Workshop in 2004, and called it “the best, most entertaining, and cheapest night out in NYC!”

Entertaining because of Al's down-to-earth language and humour at times.

But also profoundly illuminating to attendees.

Albert Ellis moved with the times.

He was non-rigid.

He was constantly pushing for more research to be done.

He was learning more about the internet, and was intending to do web broadcasts, and interactive events, and to take advantage of this new means of further Spreading his Gospel and helping more people.

He read the NYT's daily, and scores of journals each month, and incorporated relevant news or research into his talks and writings.

He read numerous newly published books on psychology that were sent to him.

He read the various books I gave him on Buddhism, Meditation and the like.

He was aware of the popular Self Help and New Age books that were around, and would look at some so that he could make informed criticisms and observations of aspects of them he disagreed with.

In presentations he would choose his emphases according to the audience, and the current affairs of the time.

And in the final years of his life, many who had heard him over decades noticed his increasing reference to the importance of compassion, kindness and unconditional acceptance. Doing so wasn't a departure from his past views and assertions – but perhaps some extra emphasis was given to these three states of being more frequently.

He presented and wrote about the similarities between REBT and Buddhism.

He spoke about mindfulness and on "spiritual" themes, where to him spiritual meant helping others, and in that way he was one of the most authentically spiritual people around.

In his final years he suffered greatly, and he used that experience and the way he coped with it using REBT, to help others prevent and/or cope with their difficulties.

What are the some of Main Principles of REBT – and how can applying them help YOU have more impact, appeal and effectiveness in your work (and in other areas of your life)? Briefly... Here are 5 of them:

1. Thoughts, Not Events, Create Emotions.

Example, Al's use of stories – Monk story, and the way Al would tell a story in his unique style!

Monk Story: Two austere Eastern Monks – a wise elder and a young novice – were

walking by a stream on a warm and lovely day. As they reached a shallow part where they were to cross the stream, they saw a beautiful young woman approach them – a fearful expression on her face. “Oh revered ones,” she said,

“Please could you take me across the stream? – I am terrified of water”.

The young monk was about to refuse (since their order was very strict on celibacy, contact with temptation etc), when the elder monk lifted the woman, placed her over his shoulder (the way Al would tell it would go something like – “with her beautiful large breasts pressing against his skin”!) – and when he reached the other side – gently placed her on her feet on the path there.

She bowed and thanked the 2 monks, and went on her way, as the monks turned and continued on their way. The young monk was livid, his face crimson with agitation, and after about 20 minutes could contain his words no longer. “Master” he said “in our order contact with females is strictly prohibited – yet you lifted that woman, held her, her breasts against your skin – that is against our principles!!! How could you!!!!”

“Young boy”, the wise one said, “I set the woman down over 20 minutes ago – You are still carrying her with you!”

2. Secondly – Humans are born and reared to think both Rationally and Irrationally

- With awareness we have choice, we can think about our thinking, and choose the healthy way.

What is the difference between Rational and Irrational thinking? –

Rational Thinking

- Creates appropriate and healthy emotions and behaviours,
- includes preferences rather than demands,
- encourages flexibility
- encourages the healthy perspective
- prescribes high frustration tolerance, unconditional acceptance and non-damning.
- rates behaviours, not the self
- removes the Tyranny of the Shoulds and Musts

Irrational Thinking

- Creates unhealthy emotions and self-defeating behaviour
- it includes rigid and dogmatic demands
- it includes awfulizing and catastrophizing (Al’s great expressions!)
- it creates low frustration tolerance
- it rates the worth of self/others/life

Some common Irrational Beliefs (and which of these do you have?!!) are:

I must always do well and be loved and approved by all people

You must treat me well

I shouldn't have to work so hard
Life should be easier
Life should be fair

And about 10 billion more...!

3. A third main REBT principle is

The A B C D E Approach for Emotional Disturbance –
Where one clarifies:

A – Activating Event

B – Beliefs – Rational, Irrational

C – Consequences – Emotions and/or Behaviours

D – Disputing of the Irrational Beliefs:

i) Realistic Disputing – “Where is it written, where is the evidence...?”

ii) Logical Disputing – “Does it follow that...?”

iii) Pragmatic Disputing – “Where will it get me to maintain this irrational belief...?”

E – Effective New Philosophies... and for lasting change it is important to go over them often and regularly.

SO THEN ONE DOES – No.4:

4. Self-Help and Homework –

Cognitive – Disputing; Cost/Benefit Analysis; Distraction; Modelling;

Reading/hearing/viewing useful material

Emotive – Rational Emotive Imagery; Shame-Attacking Exercises; Strong Coping Statements; Role Play, forcefully disputing one's Irrational Beliefs which one has recorded on tape or CD

Behavioural – Risk-Taking (safe) – DOING what one is afraid of; Staying in a difficult situation (if it is safe) in order to develop HFT; Skill Training; Relapse Prevention; Reinforcement; Humour; Rational Emotive songs

5. A fifth principle is – Remembering that lasting change takes Work and Practice.

Recommendations for Increasing YOUR Effectiveness and Impact.

1. Be clear about your message and what you want to communicate and contribute to

others. If you have any style and manner that is unique to you – all the better (in most cases!). Be Discerning!

2. Use appropriate personal examples – they often have good impact.

3. Do your own press releases, send numerous letters, emails etc about you and your work to as many as possible.

Persist.

Take every appropriate opportunity, and create opportunities, to communicate your message – radio, TV, web, print, public presentations.

Watch that afterwards you rate only your performance – and learn from it – never rate yourself or make your worth dependent on how well or poorly you performed.

4. Do the best you can to Practice What You Preach. Hopefully you believe in what you communicate, and authenticity comes from walking your talk as much as possible. Authenticity will increase the impact you have on others... eg. Dr “X” – is well known – radio, TV etc – and has promoted the ideas of tolerance and of the importance of we humans treating one another with respect and equality. The subject of Relationship Issues is one of this person’s areas of so-called expertise. At a recent APA convention, students – who were assisting in the setting up and technical needs of a panel this person was part of – reported that this person had been bossy and offensively rude to them. Apparently many people have experienced rude attitude from Dr “X” over the years... So if these students and others hear this person’s slick interviews and presentations, yet have experienced coming from him/her the opposite of what he/she recommends – well, that is not having as broad a positive impact as would be desirable. Authenticity is important and empowering if you want to significantly impact others.

5. Healer – heal thyself. Constantly work on acquiring solid Unconditional Self Acceptance, Unconditional Other Acceptance, and Unconditional Life Acceptance. Change any needs you might have into preferences. Your equanimity and steady calm may be as powerful and impacting a quality as the words you speak.

6. Be ruthlessly honest with yourself. Admit your self-created limitations and restrictions, and work on removing them (or at least reducing them). If you want to maximise your reach out and impact – search for what is limiting your potential to do so – and work on un-limiting yourself. Do you avoid speaking in public due to stage fright or fear of being criticized? – use REBT, or whatever works best for you, and GET OVER IT. If you think you MUST be perfect before you get yourself out there or accept invitations to present or to be interviewed – work on eliminating that harmful NEED to be perfect.

7. Keep things in perspective... where possible take a humorous view, Don't Take Things TOO Seriously.

8. Remember you Can Stand What You Don't Like. Keep working and practicing what you want to develop – even if at times it feels hard. In all probability it's not TOO hard, just hard. You can stand it – remember it can help you to better attain your goal. And DO it!

9. Don't demand that others like, love, or approve of you. MAKE YOURSELF IMMUNE TO CRITICISM AND HATRED. Just keep learning from any criticism that is constructive – and ignore the rest. It won't kill you.

10. Don't compare yourself to others, and then put yourself down. Learn and apply what you can from what they do that is helpful. But be yourself. We don't have the genius, pioneering brilliance or forthright personality of an Albert Ellis, but we can use him and others we admire as role models, and utilise their techniques, to help us express more fully, sanely and honestly as ourselves.

11. Remember that if you fail at something – YOU ARE NOT A FAILURE. You simply failed at that. Learn from it, and keep going. Al would frequently refer to the work of General Semanticist Alfred Korzybksi – You can't be good or bad, a failure or success. You simply – fail-at – or succeed-at. Take care NOT to overgeneralize.

12. If you can – be original in some aspects of your expression. It can help people remember you more.

For example, Al came up with terms that were unique and stuck in minds of people in a useful way – Some of his expressive words and phrases were:

- Push Your Arse
- You're not a schmuck, you just acted schmuckily
- Don't should on yourself
- Stop musterbating, and go back to being a happy masturbator
- Love Slobbism
- If you don't change that self-defeating behaviour, you'll be dead for the rest of your life
- Face It – the truth that no-one can hurt you but you unless they hit you with a baseball bat – and Stop Hurting Yourself
- It's Too Damned Bad – but it's not the end of the world.
- All humans are out of their minds – especially Psychologists and Therapists.

IS ANYONE HERE ALLERGIC TO THE “F” WORD?

*If not – There was an original line that one of his client's – the famous comedian Lenny

Bruce – used in his act... “Don’t tell someone you don’t like “Fuck You” – cos then you are wishing them something pleasurable. Better say “Unfuck you”!

Al did not use his colourful expressions indiscriminately. His intention when using them was to shock people out of their complacency and rigid thinking. And to bring humour to the conversation to give it a more healthy perspective. I’m not suggesting you use any expressions that you are uncomfortable about – but remember to work on being bold enough to be willing to stretch your current comfort boundaries if it may be for a good purpose.

13. A final recommendation is – Be willing to accept that there are no guarantees that any new ventures or approaches you take and communicate about will be successful. Take thought-out risks at times, and accept that uncertainty is a part of life. Keep going, trying your best, and keep your creativity alive.

Now – A Few Words About Who Albert Ellis Did NOT Appeal To, - and Why!

Al’s particular style and direct manner often did not appeal to people with the following tendencies:

Rigid

Judgemental

Puritanical

Easily Offended

Fearful of facing the facts and truth about their harmful tendencies

Fanatically strict Freudians

Fanatics in general

Those of Narcissistic tendencies.

Whilst on the topic of Narcissists - *** I would like to now sing you one of Al’s rational humorous songs, which represented well the attitude of the Narcissist... Sing The Song...

YOU ARE NOT THE GREATEST.

Tune: Funiculi, Funicula! By Luigi Denza; Lyrics by Albert Ellis.

Some think that you are NOT the goddamned greatest –

And so do I, and so do I!

Some think that you come in the very latest – and so do I, and so do I!

For I, I really hate your self-inflation and find it odd that you are God!
I try to pry apart each indication that you suggest still makes you best!
I can't stand your grandiosity!
I demand that you more humble be!
How can I ever think you're God when it's clear as clear can be
All the earth and sun is really run
By me, me, me!

Some people did not prefer the style of Albert Ellis, or agree with all of his views, but were open to hearing his message.
Fine.

When attacked – Al did not allow rejection or dismissal to upset or stop him.
He kept on.
There is a song – “You can't please everyone (overgeneralization) but you've gotta (a demand) please yourself.”
In REBT language it would be – “You may not please everyone, but it would be highly preferable to please yourself”.

Now, as I near the end of my presentation, I'd like to relay Three Final Incidents and Lessons from the Life of Albert Ellis.

I share these with you in the hope that they may touch you in some ways, and contribute to your not only having more effectiveness, appeal and impact on others in your work life, but also for your personal life.

As I mentioned earlier, Al used his life experiences – especially the difficult and challenging ones – to learn from, grow from, to validate the effectiveness of his REBT – and then he would share what he learned with others so that they might benefit.

I recommend that you too use any personal challenges you faced and overcame, or dealt with successfully, to help others with similar difficulties.
They can be very powerful, and add credibility and human-ness when used in any interviews, presentations and writing you do.

1. An important truth that he learned, something that I am sure he would want to tell

you, or remind you of, is the importance of discernment and wise discrimination. The importance of, whenever possible, choosing the people around us, in work and personal life, to be the ones who are trustworthy and who share similar values. Not easy. But very important.

This was particularly reinforced for him in his final years.

Be mindful of the importance of, when possible, separating from people who act in destructive ways, who are abusive in any ways, and who are people who only take, and don't give – or give back too little.

Though he was in so many ways enlightened, and an enlightener, he also had human fallibility.

Like many gifted people – Al attracted to him many who wanted his help, who wanted to benefit from him in some ways, and whose self-interest was greater than their interest in contributing to him or to his work mission in the way he preferred if his goals conflicted with theirs.

Once a person entered his life in some way, he demonstrated great loyalty – at times far more than was necessary, and sadly at times to his detriment.

As a result of his loyalty, and perhaps due also to his great absorption of his work with less time, or in later years less ability in practical terms, to notice negative happenings around him till it was too late – he at times put up with very bad behaviour from others. Sometimes he thought putting up with them might be the lesser of evils – that the outcome of getting rid of them might be worse than putting up with them. Maybe this was true at times – but not always.

As a result, various people at various times in his life acted in ways that did end up causing him great harm – harm, which in retrospect, was in all probability preventable.

There is no changing the past.

But he would want to prevent any harm like that from happening to you.

In order to enhance your goals, and to minimise complications in your work and personal lives – Choose the people around you carefully and well.

2. Don't give up, even when circumstances are dire.

In May 2006 – the morning after a powerful and standing-room-only Friday Night workshop, I rushed Al to hospital.

He had aspiration pneumonia, and doctors tried to prepare me for his imminent death. There is no time to go into details now – read more in his autobiography! – But what I want to share with you is that he did not give up. He wanted to live.

More than anything, he said, he did not want to leave me, and he did not want to leave me without him.

He also wanted to regain control of his Institute.

He did not achieve those wishes.

But he did miraculously survive for another 14+ months.

And in that time -

- He gave interviews to journalists and professors
- He attended to correspondence, worked on his autobiography, and started prep for an opera about love, based on Romeo and Juliet... as much as his energy and physical condition would allow.
- He had students come to the rehab facility and he gave workshops there (a story with photo of that appeared in NYT, Dec. 2006).
- He met with students in the trauma room of the ER in January 2007. Why the ER? – Students, weeks earlier, had pre-arranged to meet at the rehab home, but Al had to be rushed to the ER earlier that morning (feeding tube came out – he was in danger of coma. He was attended to and stabilised, and the ER social worker amazingly allowed the students who were waiting across the road at the rehab to come to the ER).
- On an occasion three and a half months before his passing Al spent close to 3 hours teaching from his hospital bed (as we later found out – this was only hours after he'd had a heart attack). The people he taught on this occasion were psychology and counselling students from Belgium – again this had been arranged months earlier – and he refused to cancel. A student asked why – he answered – “In order to keep spreading the gospel according to St Albert. So that I can teach you REBT, and if you use it – you will not only have better lives – but you can be better at helping many more people – clients, family and friends – to have better lives too”.
- He showed compassion to people around him, such as one of the regular nurses, George, whose brother was killed in a car accident. Al said to him, when he returned to work after the funeral – “I am very sorry your brother died. It is very sad, and you will be deprived of him. But you will still be able to experience some happiness in your life again”.

George wept with gratitude.

Unlike many others in that stage of life of declining health – Al was remarkably un-self absorbed. He still cared about others and helping them.

- He continued to contribute and contribute, despite enduring unimaginable physical suffering and the deepest sadness and disappointment that he had ever felt. This was regarding what had happened with his Institute. So his life still had meaning – as he pursued his intention to keep helping others – even though he did not get all that he wanted at the end.

- He continued to practice what he preached, he did not make himself enraged or depressed – and though he hated things done against him and his mission, he did not hate the individuals who did them. He felt compassion for them.
- He didn't dwell on the pain in his life.

Every day we cherished the fact that we had one another.
Our love was the most important thing in our lives.
Every day we expressed our love to one another, constantly.
Every Day.

The point of this for you – No matter how severe a difficulty may be – as much as possible – bear it, do what you can to change it (if anything), and strongly pay attention to what there still is to be glad of.
Be grateful.
And keep going.

3. Don't Allow Yourself To Lose Hope.

Reminding your public, clients and friends of that – will help them tremendously during tough times they are having, and will add to your appeal and the positive impact you can contribute.

The media likes encouraging messages.
It's an important message.

I don't have time now to share with you the details and incredible nature of our relationship, which is a mighty good example of an unexpected treasure happening in life.

All I'll say is that in his 80's, as Al used to say, he found the greatest love of his life (me!).
Though if he were here he might say "I didn't find her – she found me!"

Conclusion.

My heartfelt hope is that the experiences and example of Albert Ellis that you have heard today contribute, and inspire you, to make the most of yourself and what you have to offer and share, that the REBT approach and recommendations may also add to that, and that you use any platform that the media or any other medium offers as an opportunity to help as many as possible to live lives of less suffering and more joy.

My wish is that there will be more and more of us psychologists who do our best to

practice what we preach as well as we can, and demonstrate ethical and helpful behaviour in our professional and personal lives.

May you relish the privilege of helping others, and cherish the satisfaction which that can bring to you.

I suspect that Al might have closed by saying-

- * Life is brief – don't waste it
- * Be yourselves
- * Accept yourselves
- * Help yourselves
- * Help others
- * Keep getting your message out there

- * And have a fucking ball!

Thank you".

*** Question and Answer Time ***

Note – The autobiography of Albert Ellis – “All Out – An Autobiography”, published by Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York, is expected to be available late 2009.