

## **APA Award to Albert Ellis for Outstanding Lifetime Contributions to Psychology**

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For a man who almost singlehandedly revolutionised Psychology and Counselling in the mid-1950's the ultimate award was bestowed on him by The President of The American Psychological Association for Outstanding Lifetime Contributions to Psychology.

Dr Albert Ellis would have been 100 years of age this year; his wife, Dr Debbie Joffe Ellis who is continuing the man's great work accepted this posthumous award on his behalf.

Albert Ellis is accredited with laying down the intellectual foundations of cognitive therapy; his pioneering cognitive approach was eventually called rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT).

A Fellow of 12 Divisions of the APA, author of over 85 books and voted one of the most influential psychologists of the 20th century set the bar for many of us to follow. Many have copied his work and tried to give it another name, many have largely ignored his contributions, many have dismissed his work, however millions of ordinary people and therapists world wide are indebted to the genius and the ferocious quest of helping people, by one of the kindest persons I have ever met.



Dr Debbie Joffe Ellis with the President of the APA Dr Donald N. Bersoff

The American Psychological Association's 121st Convention, Honolulu, Hawaii  
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At the APA Award ceremony, Dr Albert Ellis' wife Debbie Joffe Ellis said: "My magnificent husband would have felt delighted to receive this honor from you. With this award you highlight his profound and historic role in the life and evolution of psychology. Al was an outstanding, extraordinary and unique man. His life was devoted to helping as many people as possible learn how to suffer less emotional misery, so that they could experience immense joy and happiness throughout their lives. Al lived his life intensely, with passion and full immersion in his work. This

vitality infuses the REBT approach – fuelled by Al’s conviction that while we may at times have to cope with circumstances we do not create and may not be able to change, we have the power to choose and control our emotional experience and reactions to those circumstances by thinking in healthy ways. He was able to put his theory and methods into reader-friendly language that was comfortably received by both academics and lay people. His whole life was devoted to helping people not only to “feel better”, but to “get better.” With their use of REBT, countless people have overcome debilitating anxiety, depression, rage, addictive behaviors and more”.

Today, some may take for granted cognitive approaches and their effectiveness, however it is worth remembering that Albert Ellis did not have an easy time when he first presented his groundbreaking therapy, his wife continues: “When Al first presented his REBT approach at the annual APA meeting in Chicago in 1956, he was booed and jeered. His approach was called simplistic, superficial, and worse. Yet he never gave up. He never diluted his approach in order to gain acceptance and – courageous maverick that he was! – Persevered in presenting it, writing about it, conducting research – and boldly heralded in the Cognitive Revolution in Psychology and Psychotherapy. His work, and the great work of others in the field who were influenced by Al’s contributions, continues to flourish”.

Robin Thorburn

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