

Calming the Emotional Storm:
DBT Core Mindfulness Skills

Sheri Van Dijk, MSW, RSW
sherivandijk@rogers.com

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Objectives

Participants will learn:

- The Core Mindfulness skills taught in DBT:
 - States of Mind
 - "What" Skills
 - "How" Skills
 - Ideas for teaching these skills to clients
 - How these assist in emotion regulation

Types of Practice

Two types of practice:

1. Formal: requires devoting a specific amount of time to focus all of your attention on the exercise (e.g. breathing exercise, body scan, Zentangling)

Formal exercises help you to become more aware of internal experiences, increasing self-awareness and your ability to manage yourself more effectively.

Types of Practice

2. Informal: can be practiced at any time during your day; incorporating mindfulness into your daily activities such as walking, driving, eating, etc.

Informal exercises help you to live your life more mindfully and to be in the present moment on a regular basis. Both types of practice are extremely important.

Types of Practice

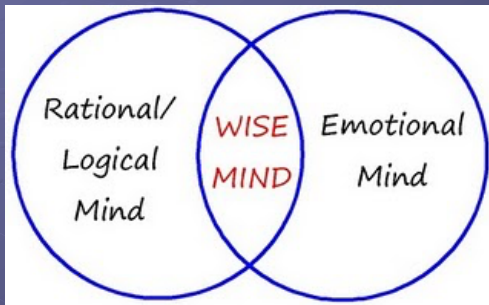
While ideally we want our clients to be practicing both types of mindfulness activities, DBT focuses more on the informal practices – living our lives more mindfully

Remember the importance of practicing yourself!

Core Mindfulness Skills

This is a set of skills that teach people to be more aware of what is happening in the present moment, in a nonjudgmental way. Many of our clients spend a lot of time ruminating about the past and/or having anxiety about the future; Core Mindfulness emphasizes living in the here and now with acceptance which reduces the amount of painful emotions.

Core Mindfulness Skills: States of Mind



Core Mindfulness Skills: States of Mind

- Reasoning Mind:
- Logical, practical, intellectual, rational, straight-forward thinking
 - No emotions involved (or very minimal)
 - E.g. making a grocery list; following instructions to bake a cake; balancing your chequebook (as long as there's no anxiety involved!)

Core Mindfulness Skills: States of Mind

Emotion Mind:

- This is the part of us that often gets us into trouble!
- You know you're in emotion mind when your *emotions* are controlling your *behaviors*
- E.g. you're feeling anxious so you avoid; your mood is depressed so you withdraw and isolate yourself; you feel angry and you lash out at the people around you
- Emotion mind also includes pleasant emotions

Core Mindfulness Skills: States of Mind

Wise Mind:

- It's not that RM and EM are *bad* and we want to get rid of them; rather, we want to be able to find a balance more often: this is Wise Mind
- Wise Mind = RM + EM + Intuition
- You're in WM when you're thinking about the consequences of your behavior, and *choosing* how you want to act rather than reacting.

Core Mindfulness Skills: States of Mind

Exercises to help clients grasp these states:

- What's an occupation that might represent each of these states?
- Who is a famous person that represents each of these states?

Core Mindfulness Skills: States of Mind

Differences between EM and WM:

- Both involve an element of emotion, so clients often confuse the two
- In EM, the feelings are more intense, and are *controlling behavior*; there's usually an uncertainty and going back and forth between two choices
- In WM, there's a feeling of peace or calmness ("rightness") about a decision
- EM can often "trick" us into thinking it's WM – we have to go *within*; this usually takes practice

Core Mindfulness Skills: States of Mind

Exercises to help clients get to Wise Mind:

- "What does your Wise Mind tell you?"
- Turning inward exercises – e.g. Stone flake on a lake; going down a spiral staircase within yourself
- Breathing exercise: breathing in "Wise", out "Mind"

Core Mindfulness Skills: States of Mind

Often just identifying what state of mind is there can help someone take a step back if they're in EM or RM

Help increase awareness of these states by having clients notice regularly

Mindfulness and many of the DBT skills will help people access WM

Core Mindfulness Skills: STRONG Skills

Teach the STRONG acronym to help clients make lifestyle changes to help them reduce vulnerability to EM:

- S – Sleep
- T – Take meds as prescribed and treat health problems
- R – Resist using drugs and alcohol
- O – Once daily, build mastery
- N – Nutrition
- G – Get exercise

The “What” Skills...

1. Observe: just notice the experience without getting caught up in it; just sense what’s happening without reacting to it (e.g. no pushing away, no ruminating – Teflon Mind vs. Velcro Mind).

e.g. observe sounds around you, observe body sensations as you sit in your chair, etc.

The “What” Skills...

2. Describe: put words on your experience, nonjudgmentally labeling whatever you’re noticing in the moment (sometimes describing can help provide some clarity about our experience).

e.g. describe what you see around you, the thoughts, feelings and sensations you’re experiencing, etc.

The "What" Skills...

- The importance of observing and describing to help in relationships
- Reducing personalizing
- Client examples: Lauren; couple work

The "What" Skills...

3. Participate: become one with your experience; be mindful, letting go of ruminating and worry; entering completely into the activities of the current moment

- e.g. become the count of your breath, sing in the shower, dance to music
- Experience the sense of connection to others, and to the universe
- How do you connect to others/the universe? Can you share these with clients?

Core Mindfulness Skills: Nonjudgmental Stance

Judgments often increase the intensity of emotions – we need to watch for the judgments that stick to us! reducing these judgments will help us to reduce the painful emotions we're experiencing

**Note that this isn't about stuffing emotions or opinions, but rather helps us express these things more assertively

Core Mindfulness Skills: Nonjudgmental Stance

This skill is about semantics!
Think "inflammatory language" – if you can reduce the use of this language, you can reduce the intensity of emotions

The "How" Skills...

1. Nonjudgmentally:
 - Takes the short-form out and says what we really mean
 - Won't make the pain disappear, but will prevent extra emotions from arising
 - Will be more effective in interpersonal situations

Core Mindfulness Skills: Nonjudgmental Stance

- Judgments versus Evaluations
- What about positive judgments?
- The challenge of self-judgments
- Non-verbal judgments
- Sometimes judgments are hard to catch
- Awareness = Choice – this isn't about eradicating judgments!

Core Mindfulness Skills: Nonjudgmental Stance

Examples:

“I’m lazy” versus “I didn’t get everything done I wanted to today and I’m feeling disappointed in myself”

“He’s an idiot” versus “He hurt me and I’m feeling angry with him”

Core Mindfulness Skills: Nonjudgmental Stance

What nonjudgmental stance isn’t:

- It’s not rationalizing or excusing behavior (e.g. “I didn’t get everything done that I wanted to because I didn’t sleep well last night” or “he said hurtful things because he had a hard day at work”)
- It’s not providing reassurance (e.g. “it’s okay that I didn’t get everything done today, I can work on it tomorrow”)

Core Mindfulness Skills: Nonjudgmental Stance

Some helpful (nonjudgmental) words to consider:

- Helpful versus unhelpful
- Effective versus ineffective
- Safe versus unsafe or dangerous
- Satisfying versus unsatisfying
- Healthy versus unhealthy

The "How" Skills...

- 2. One-Mindfully: do one thing at a time; multi-tasking is overwhelming and draining, slows us down - like having too many tabs open on the computer!

The "How" Skills...

- 3. Effectively: focus on what works; use your wise mind; using skillful means. Do what you need to do in order to get your needs met.
 - Don't cut your nose off to spite your face!
 - Is it better for you to be right, or to get what you need or want?

The "How" Skills...

- Effectively (continued):
- Often what gets in the way of us being effective is that we act according to how we think things *should* be, rather than acting in accordance with reality as it is. Being effective means you stop focusing on what you think is "fair" or "right", and focus instead on what IS.
 - Need to put aside the short-term satisfaction in order to reach our long-term goals

Overview of DBT Skills

There are four modules in DBT:

1. *Core Mindfulness Skills*
2. Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills
3. Emotion Regulation Skills
4. Distress Tolerance Skills

The CM skills are the first taught in group as they're the foundation for the other modules; remember flexibility and adaptability of DBT!

Thank You!!!
