

DBT Skills Training for Mental Health Professionals

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Skills Training

Mindfulness

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Distress Tolerance

Emotion Regulation

Dialectics

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Skills

1  
Provide a common language for effective behaviors

2  
Help clients label, remember, and use effective behaviors

3  
Teach new behaviors to reinforce (one of the most benevolent ways of changing behaviors)

4  
Forms a "safety net" in session...therapist and clients can almost always "fall back" on skills

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Skills Training Approaches

Interactive lecture (good for conveying a lot of information quickly)

Socratic questioning techniques

Assigning teaching to Students

Learn/do/teach model

Experiential exercises

Using media

Read about and explore teaching techniques

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Tips to Improve Skills Training

- Be strengths-based (often we think of skills deficits and forget to identify what is working)
- "Catch" and label skill use continuously
- Reinforce anything and everything that is not a problem behavior
- Shape emerging behaviors
- Orient to purpose and goal of skills taught
- Assign individualized homework and get commitment to follow-through
- Consider your audience and their needs

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*"The mind will always lie to you, but the body never will."*

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The Biosocial Model  
of Emotional Dysregulation

Dr. Eboni Webb, PsyD, HSP  
Village of Kairos

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Learning Objectives



Understand DBF in the context of the biosocial model regarding pervasive emotional dysregulation disorders



Understand the impact of trauma on the developing mind



Develop a conceptualization plan that focuses on key biological and attachment factors within the framework of DBF

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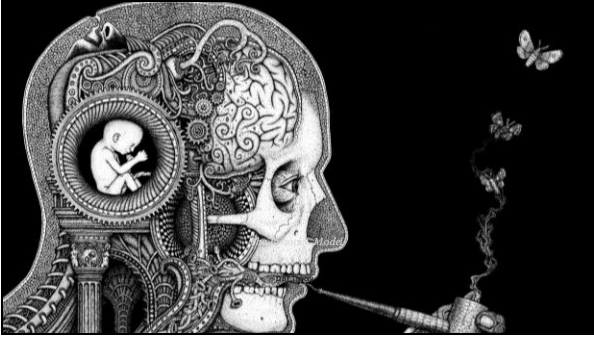
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## Borderline Personality Disorder

### Key Characteristics

Pattern of impulsivity

Instability in life

Unstable self-image and emotions

### Attachment Disturbances

Instability in interpersonal relationships

Hypersensitive to abandonment

Pattern of undermining success in relationships

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### Types of Dysregulation

Emotional  
Interpersonal  
Self  
Behavioral  
Cognitive



IQ drops 17 points in a state of emotional dysregulation

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### Overview



- Clients suffer from emotional vulnerabilities
- Emotional vulnerabilities can come from many sources (e.g., attachment issues, loss, trauma), but is often assumed to be biological
- Chronic and consistent invalidation exacerbates emotional vulnerabilities
- An ongoing, reciprocal relationship exists between emotional vulnerabilities and environments

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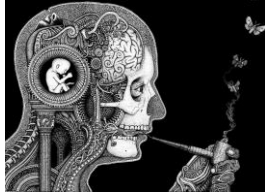
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- Emotional vulnerabilities are characterized by:
  - Emotional sensitivity
  - Emotional reactivity
  - Slow return to emotional baseline
- Over time emotions get sensitized, leading to a "kindling" effect
- This emotionality (and associated invalidation) is associated with many problems (disorders)
- Emotionality leads to escape and avoidance that leads to chronicity




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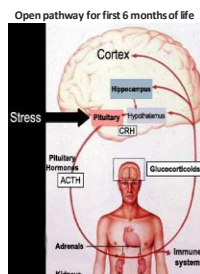
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#### Hypothalamic Pituitary Adrenal Axis



#### Excessive Cortisol Effects

- Neurotoxic to the Hypothalamus
- Neuron Death
- Clogging of the corpus callosum connecting the left and right hemispheres
- Suppression of the immune system

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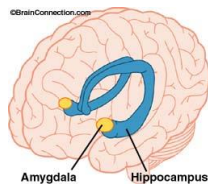
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#### Amygdala: Fight, Flight, and Freeze



#### Features

- Reactionary
- Triggers Sensory System (Smell and Touch are the most direct pathways)
- Controls autonomic responses

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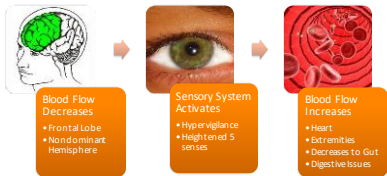
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What Happens During a Stress Response?



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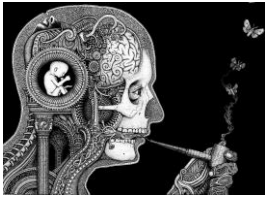
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- Abuse and neglect
- Open rejection of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Making "normal" responses "abnormal"
- Failing to communicate how experience "makes sense"
- Expecting behaviors that one cannot perform (e.g., due to developmental level, emotionality, or behavioral deficits)



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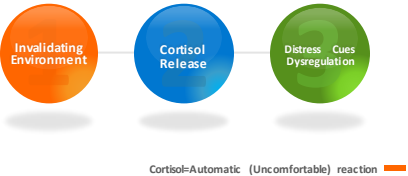
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**Dysregulation: Learned Behavior**



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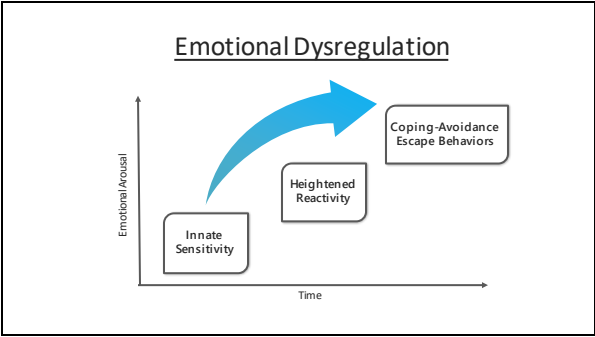
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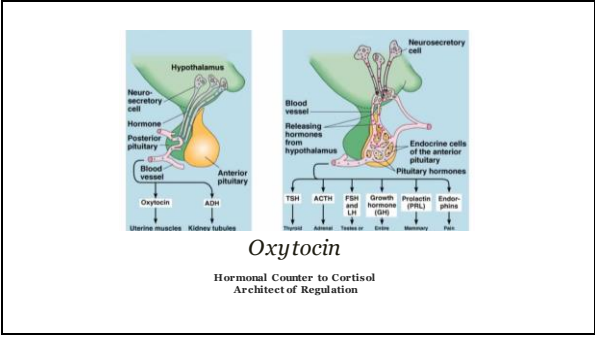
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**How Problematic Self-Regulation is Learned**

Oxytocin=Responsive release (calming)

Problem Behaviors=reinforced as a method to regulate emotions

Invalidating Environment

Cortisol Release

Problematic Behaviors

Oxytocin Release

Reinforcement of Problem Behaviors

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**Treatment Targets to Increase Oxytocin Without Problem Behaviors**

**Activities**

- Hugs
- Sing in a choir
- Give a back rub/foot rub
- Hold a baby
- Stroke a dog or cat
- Perform a generous act
- Pray
- Make positive eye contact
- Breath work
- Listen without judgment
- Positive touch
- Proximity
- Laugh/Dance

**DBT Skills**

- Build Positive Experiences
- Self-Soothe
- IMPROVE the Moment
- DISTRACT
- Nonjudgmental Stance
- Mindful Breathing
- GIVE



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Mindfulness

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Body Scan Mindfulness

- Sit and breathe
- Begin to scan your body from the top of your head to your feet
- Note any areas of the body that register pain or discomfort
- Try not to attach to the discomfort but notice it and breathe
- Note any areas of the body that do not register pain or discomfort
- Try not to attach to the painless areas but notice it and breathe
- Try to hold both states in your body equally, breathing and just noticing

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Mindfulness Objectives

Feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and behavior being noticed and accepted

Awareness of environmental information and cues

Decreased impulsive behavior

Decreased passive and "stuck" behavior

Increased emotion regulation and decreased ineffective mood, cognitant behavior

Improved connection to experience, enjoyment, and peace

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States of Mind

Wise Mind

Reason Mind

Emotion Mind

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What Skills: What is Mindfulness?  
How Skills: How do I know that I am being mindful?

What: Observe



How: One-Mindfully




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## Observe

("What Skills")

- Observe (watch and become aware)
  - Feelings, thoughts, urges, physical sensations, behaviors, information from senses, etc..
  - Environment...what information is around me?
  - Experience integrated (i.e., life here and now)




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## One-Mindfully

("How Skills")

- **One-mindfully**
  - Choose, direct, and focus your attention and concentration on one thing
  - Gently let go of distractions, refocusing over and over




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What: What is Mindfulness?  
How: How do I know that I am being mindful?

What: Describe



How: Nonjudgmentally




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## Describe

("What Skills")

### • Describe (Factual and Observable)

- Put your experience into words (and vice versa)
- Words make it clear for you and others




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## Nonjudgmentally

("How Skills")

### • Non-judgmentally

- Describing without attaching a label or opinion
- Being open to continued evaluation, based on facts
- Focus is on "what is" not the "goods," "bads," "shoulds," and "should nots"




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## No One Has Ever Observed....

- Others' Thoughts
- Others' Intentions
- Others' Emotions
- Causes
- Concepts
- Meaning




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What: What is Mindfulness?  
How: How do I know that I am being mindful?

**What: Participate**



**How: Effectively**




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### Participate

- Make a mindful choice about what you are doing
- Practice your skills until they are a part of "you"
- Immerse yourself and be one with your experience

### Effectively

- Focus on what the situation or moment requires
- Remember your goals and do what "works" to meet them
- Play by the rules
- Do not "cut your nose to spite your face"

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**Mindfulness  
Practice and  
Application**

- Must practice daily (multiple times)  
Goal: Twice daily, 20 minutes
- Beginning and end of each session helpful
- Address barriers to mindfulness (e.g., judgments, environmental, etc.)
- Make it relevant, interesting, and enjoyable
- Adaptation: Centering Prayer
- Mindfulness is essential to effective skill use...it is a "gateway skill"
- When skills lack effectiveness, often concurrent mindfulness is what is needed

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See You Next Module!  
Next:  
Dialectics  
And  
Emotion Regulation

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Dialectics:  
Finding the  
Middle Path



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### Origin

- Dialectics originated with early philosophers
- No position is absolute; each position has its own wisdom or truth (if only a kernel at times)
- Opposite tensions are interconnected, interrelated, and defined by each other
- The synthesis of opposites, through understanding varying contexts and seeking a workable balance, leads to change
- Change is continual, so dialectics require fluidity

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### A Tale of Two Truths

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### Dialectical Dilemmas

Athena



Arachne



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### Dialectical synthesis

Athena-  
manage a threat to the gods



Arachne-  
maintain her craft




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### Dialectical synthesis

Athena-  
manage a threat to the gods



Arachne-  
maintain her craft




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### What Are Dialectics?

- Opposites, extremes, or polarities (e.g., each thesis has an antithesis)
- Neither position is absolute, and in fact, are interconnected
- Each position has a wisdom or truth
- Movement toward a synthesis is sought
- Movement (and conflict) produces change
- Change (e.g., working the dialectic) is constant and continual




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CBT Balanced With Client-Centered Is A Natural Dialectic

“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.”  
—Carl Rogers

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Dialectics In Therapy

- Most Fundamental Dialectic in DBT is the fluid movement between **Acceptance and Change**
- Use **Validation** to move toward acceptance and **CBT techniques** to move toward change
- Remember that context will suggest how to balance these strategies

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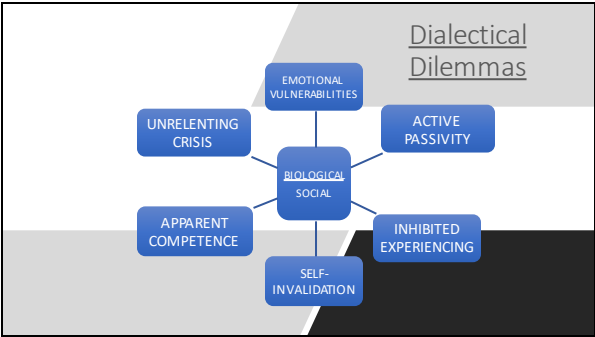
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What to Look For

Self-Invalidation

Emotional Vulnerability

Inhibited Experiencing

- Self-hate/criticism
- People-pleasing
- Perfectionism

- Anger, Bitterness Towards Others
- Fragility, Vulnerability

- Active avoidance
- Passive avoidance, dissociation

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How to Help

Self-Invalidation

Emotional Vulnerability

Inhibited Experiencing

Modeling failure  
Communicating validation

Model self-care  
Create a safe home environment

Model emotions  
Display authentic reactions without exaggeration

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What to Look For

Unrelenting Crises

Active Passivity

Apparent Competence

- Uncontrollable Events
- Crisis-Generating Behavior

- Willfulness, Demandingness
- Helplessness

- Disconnect between verbal and non-verbal behavior
- Contextual Competence (mood/situational)

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## How to Help

### Unrelenting Crises

- Control the Controllable in the Home
- Practice/Model Delayed Gratification

### Active Passivity

- Cheerlead
- Encourage problem-solving
- Set Personal Limits

### Apparent Competence

- Highlight effective behaviors observed
- Lose the assumption of how the loved one "should" behave in all contexts based upon one.

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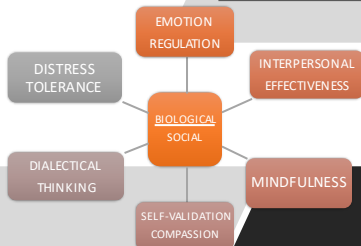
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## SKILLS MODULES VS. DIALECTICAL DILEMMAS




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## Ways Clients Can Practice Dialectics

- Balance of "old" self with "new" self
- Balance of "want-to's" with "have-to's"
- Balance of your wants/needs with others' wants/needs
- Activating Wise Mind
- Considering alternative viewpoints and opinions
- Weighing pros and cons
- Choosing "middle path" behaviors
- Engaging willingness to shift from "stuck"

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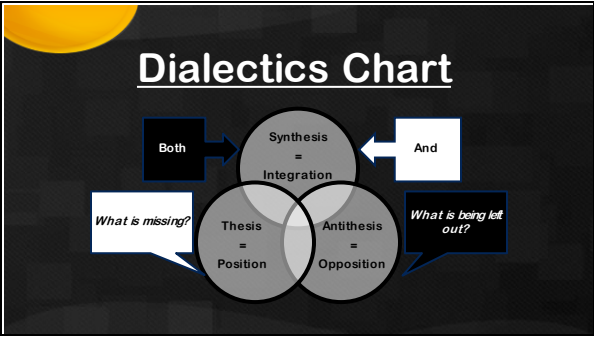
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**Skills Group**  
**Experiential**

A family decides to take a trip to Costa Rica. The roads are notoriously hazardous and the family has agreed that everyone will watch the roads and a group consensus will be made before passing anyone on the road. At a certain point, they are trapped behind a truck and the wife does not want her husband to go around the truck for fear of a wreck. As time progresses, the husband becomes more agitated and wants to pass. What do they do? What is the dialectical middle?

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Emotion regulation

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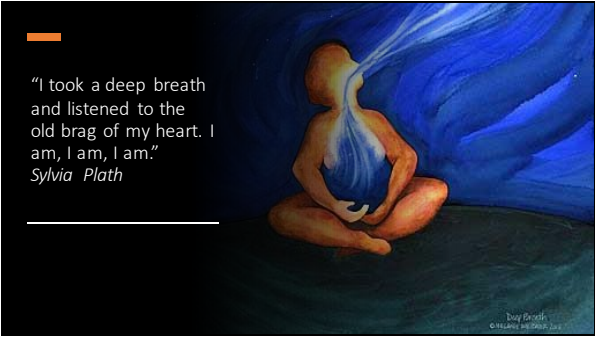
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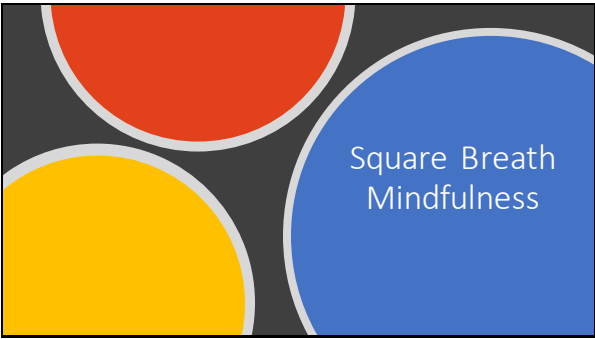
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Emotion Regulation:  
Learning the Language  
of the Body



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Goals

- Proactive skills
- Short and long term skills
- Understand how emotions work
- Reduce emotional vulnerability
- Increase events to create positive emotions
- Step out of ineffective mood congruent behaviors
- Develop and maintain emotional balance



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Universal Emotions

Emotion	Action Urge
• Anger	• Attack, Defend
• Disgust	• Reject/Separate
• Envy	• Desire/Obsess
• Fear	• Avoid Harm
• Guilt	• Repair/Make Amends
• Happy	• Maintain
• Jealousy	• Protect/Possess
• Love	• Connect
• Sadness	• Isolate/Withdraw
• Shame	• Hide/Conform



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### Opposite-to-Emotion Action

- Break ineffective emotional cycles by acting opposite to behaviors that are mood congruent
- Opposite action may also create a different emotion
- Often a “gateway” skill
- Examples include activity when depressed, approaching when anxious, and being kind when angry

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### Let’s Practice!

Recall	Recall an event that you emotionally charged for you.
Close	Close your eyes and see yourself in the situation without the emotions and all the details.
Wrap	Wrap your arms around yourself, head down and allow whatever emotions you have to flow in until you hear the bell chime.
Sit up and place	After you hear the chime, sit up and place your hands palm up on thighs.
Practice	Practice holding shallow breaths.
Release	Exhale and release.
Let	Let your arms and head rise fully.
Continue	Continue reading the emotionally charged event until you hear the chime again.

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### PLEASED SKILLS

- Physical health
- List resources and barriers (each area)
- Eat three healthy, balanced meals
- Avoid mood altering drugs
- Sleep between 7 to 10 hours
- Exercise at least 20 minutes
- Daily
- Address Barriers
- Develop a plan/track on diary card



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### Build Positive Experience

- Must be planned/scheduled
- Must include mindfulness skills
- Address distractions that interfere with BPEs
- Address judgments that interfere with BPEs (e.g., not deserving, etc.)
- Address concerns about expectations



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### Build Positive Experience

- Short term
  - Do pleasant things that are possible now
- Long term
  - Invest in relationships (Attend to Relationships-A2R)
  - Invest in your goals
  - Build a satisfying life
  - Take one step at a time



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### Build Mastery

- Engage in activities of daily living
- Accomplish tasks that need to be done
- Take steps toward a challenging goal
- Build a sense of control, confidence, and competence
- Give yourself credit!



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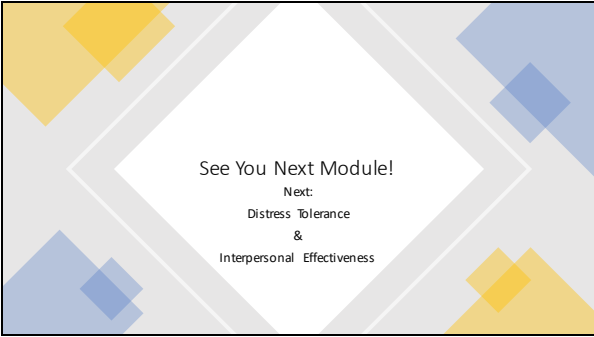
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### Effective Distress Tolerance

- Less emotion-based coping (might work short-term, but often does not long-term)
- Fewer impulsive behaviors
- Decreased self-injurious urges/behaviors
- Decreased suicidal urges/behaviors
- Decreased crisis orientation to life AND
- Decreased chronic distress avoidance

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### When to Use Distress Tolerance

- Am I able to solve the problem (Y/N)?
- Is now a good time to solve it (Y/N)?
- Am I in Wise Mind enough to solve it (Y/N)?
- If "yes" to all three questions, solve the problem
- If "no" to any of the three questions, distress tolerance may help

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### Dealing with Distress Before...

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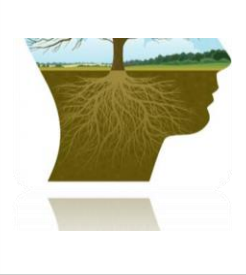
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### Problem-Solving Assumptions

- Clients have difficulties defining problems
- Clients struggle to identify options for solving problems
- Clients attempts to solve problems are sometimes emotion-based, haphazard, or otherwise ineffective
- Clients benefit from a mindful approach to problem-solving based on values

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### S.O.L.V.E.D

- **S**tep back and be objective (define the problem)
- **O**bserve available options
- **L**imit barriers (emotional and environmental)
- **V**alues driven (what's important?)
- **E**ffectiveness first (what will meet your prevailing goal?)
- **D**ialectical thought and action



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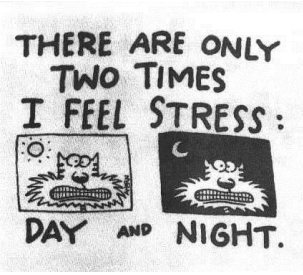
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Practicing Daily Distress Tolerance



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More About  
Distress  
Tolerance..

- Practice skills when NOT in distress
- Skills tend to be short-term...must have many skills listed
- Skills must be connected to specific behaviors
- Coach clients to change strategies when a skill does not work
- Evolve skills plans (written down) consistently...treat like a "living document" and USE PROACTIVELY



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Self-Soothe

- Mindful engagement of the senses to comfort:
- Vision
- Hearing
- Smell
- Taste
- Touch
- Balance



Five  
Senses

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Distract: Wise Mind  
ACCEPTS

- A Activities
- C Contributing
- C Comparisons
- E Emotions
- P Pushing away
- T Thoughts
- S Sensations



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## IMPROVE the Moment

I    Imagery  
M    Meaning  
P    Prayer  
R    Relaxation  
O    Onething at a time  
V    Vacation (mini)  
E    Encouragement

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Pros and Cons (P&C) Application Example	
We have chosen how to live our lives, so we must make a choice.	
Short-Term PROS of Self-Injury	Short-Term CONS of Self-Injury
• Reduced my feelings? • Worked • Most powerful we have	• More chance to see pain • worried about upcoming group • Had to hide it
Long-Term PROS of Self-Injury	Long-Term CONS of Self-Injury
• None really	• Lost trust • Lost self respect • More worry • Shame over me up
Notes	
Short-Term PROS of Skill Use	Short-Term CONS of Skill Use
• No need to be so close up • Just good if I make it • No harm with blood and stuff • NO CHANCE OF INJURY??	• Hard and might not work • Don't know • Really more emotional pain
Long-Term PROS of Skill Use	Long-Term CONS of Skill Use
• RESPECT? • Learn to handle life and get something	• More expectations? • Pressure, I don't have

## Pros and Cons

- List positive consequences
- List negative consequences
- Weigh short-term vs. long-term consequences
- Is it worth it?
- Make a decision
- Pros and cons are dialectical and activate Wise Mind

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“Acceptance must come from deep within.”

Marsha Linehan

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Acceptance  
Mindfulness

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Mindfulness  
Practice  
Acceptance

- "Everything is as it should be."
- Focus on an object in the room.
- Breathe.
- As any area of thoughts, emotions, sensations, and/or feelings emerge, silently repeat the phrase above.
- 3 minutes

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Radical Acceptance  
Self-Compassion

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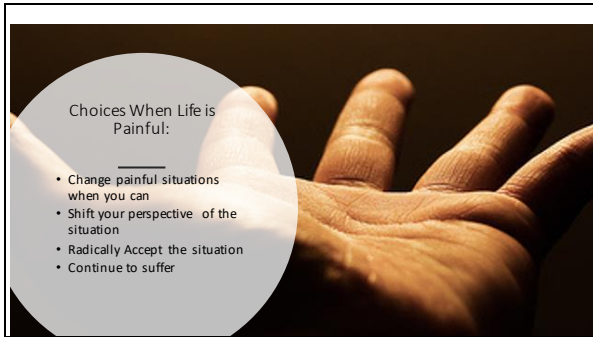
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Choices When Life is Painful:

- Change painful situations when you can
- Shift your perspective of the situation
- Radically Accept the situation
- Continue to suffer

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### Accepting Reality Skills

- **Radical Acceptance**
  - Freedom from suffering requires acceptance of "what is" from within. Letting go of fighting reality ends suffering
  - Acceptance may still mean tolerating pain
  - Acceptance frees psychological and emotional resources to move forward
- Turning the mind
  - Continuously recommit to accepting reality...over and over again

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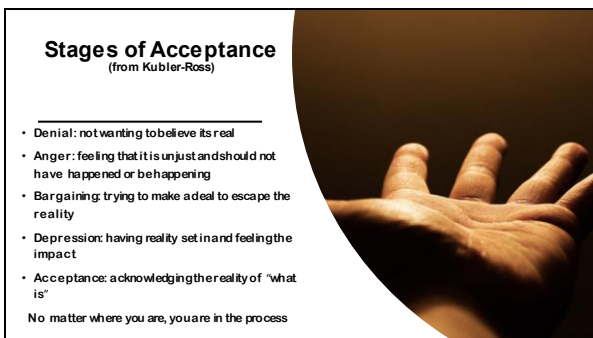
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### Stages of Acceptance

(from Kubler-Ross)

- Denial: not wanting to believe its real
- Anger: feeling that it is unjust and should not have happened or be happening
- Bargaining: trying to make a deal to escape the reality
- Depression: having reality set in and feeling the impact
- Acceptance: acknowledging the reality of "what is"

No matter where you are, you are in the process

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### Everyday Acceptance

- We meet everyday realities (i.e., hassles) with resistance, creating unneeded suffering and exhausting our psychological and emotional resources
- Examples:
  - Being stuck in traffic
  - Having a crabby significant other
  - Forgetting something at home
  - Having to wait for something
  - Making a mistake (or dealing with someone else's mistake)
  - Etc., etc., etc.
- These are all opportunities to practice acceptance
- Acceptance of these realities does not mean being passive, giving in, or giving up: many of these realities require problem-solving
- Acceptance frees up our resources to be responsive and effective

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# Willingness



### Vs. Willfulness

- Willingness is doing what is needed, not sitting on your hands
- Willingness means dealing with reality, not what you wish it would be
- The concept contrasts our Western philosophy of "when there's a will there's a way"
- "Where there is willingness, there is a way" is the message
- What are you willing to do given the situation?

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## Interpersonal Effectiveness

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Effective Interpersonal Skills lead to:

- Increased ability to meet wants and needs
- Increased ability to set effective boundaries (limits)
- Increased ability to say “no”
- Increased ability to make and maintain positive relationships (including resolving conflict)
- Help clients to build self-respect because interactions are grounded in values

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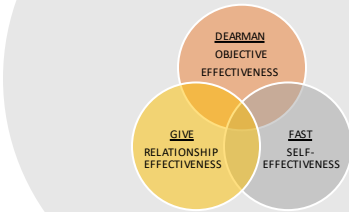
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Core Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills



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**Dialectic Balance Of Interpersonal Skills**

D.E.A.R.M.A.N.  
Objective Effectiveness

G.I.V.E.  
Relationship Effectiveness

F.A.S.T.  
Self-Respect Effectiveness

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### Self-Respect Effectiveness F.A.S.T.

- **Fair:** be fair to self and to others
- **Apologies:** no unnecessary apologies or apologies for your beliefs, opinions, or for being you
- **Stick to your values:** know your values and what is non-negotiable. Resolve value conflicts effectively
- **Truthful:** Avoid exaggerations, excuses, and lies. Be accountable to yourself and others




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### Relationship Effectiveness: GIVE

- **Genuine:** be authentic and real, and act from your true self
- **Interest:** make eye contact, show interest to be interested, allow reciprocity in interactions
- **Validate:** acknowledge what you heard without judging or fixing. Focused on the other person
- **Easy manner:** use humor, smile, and be easygoing




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### VALIDATION

- **Value Others:** Seeking the inherent value in others is essential to validation.
- **Ask Questions:** Use questions to draw out others' experience.
- **Listen and Reflect:** Listen to others' answers to your questions and reflect back the major themes.
- **Identify with Others:** Work to see the world through the eyes of others.
- **Discuss Emotions:** Talk about others' feelings and how they affect them from their perspective (not how it affects you).
- **Attend to Nonverbals:** Notice others' nonverbal communication to give you information about their experience.




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## VALIDATION

- **Turn the Mind:** Validation does not mean that we agree with others. Turning the mind is especially important when it is difficult to relate and during conflicts.
- **Encourage Participation:** Validation can be a difficult process at times, so we need to encourage ourselves and others to be engaged with each other.

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## Levels of Validation (Linehan, 1997)

- Level 1: Being acutely attentive
- Level 2: Reflecting verbal communication
- Level 3: Describing non-verbal communication
- Level 4: Expressing how experience makes sense given history or biology
- Level 5: Expressing how experience makes sense in the present moment and context
- Level 6: Being in genuine, human contact

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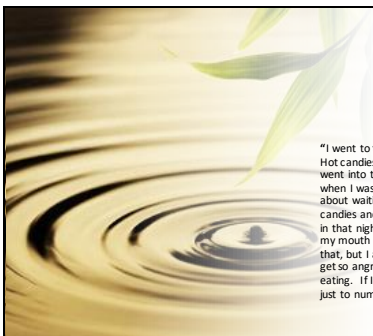
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## Validation Practice

"I went to the store yesterday and I saw these Red Hot candies. I completely lost it and forgot what I went into the store to get. It reminded me of when I was little and my mom wanted to teach me about waiting. I had asked for some of those candies and she said no, but when she tucked me in that night, she forced me to eat a huge bag until my mouth and eyes burned. I thought I was past that, but I am having urges to cut myself again. I get so angry with myself. I keep myself from eating. If I had any pills, I'd take them...you know just to numb out."

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### **Objective Effectiveness:** **DEAR MAN**

**D**escribe the details of the situation  
**E**xpress your emotions and thoughts  
**A**ssert by asking for what you want (or saying no)  
**R**einforce by rewarding, not punishing

**M**indful: Stay focused on the issue  
 • Avoid attacks, distractions, and side tracking  
 • Broken record: assert again and again and again

**A**ppear confident  
 • Talk, walk, and act with confidence (act "as if" if needed)

**N**egotiate  
 • Be willing to offer an alternative  
 • Be willing to ask for an alternative  
 • Turn the tables

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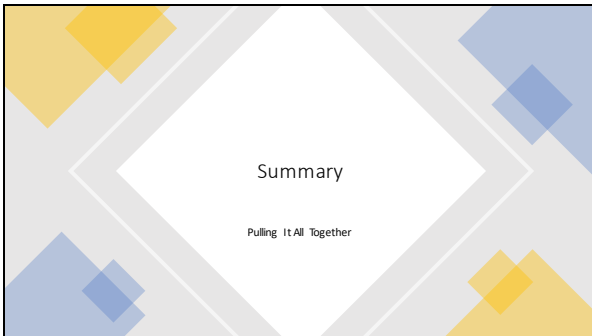
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### Summary

Pulling It All Together

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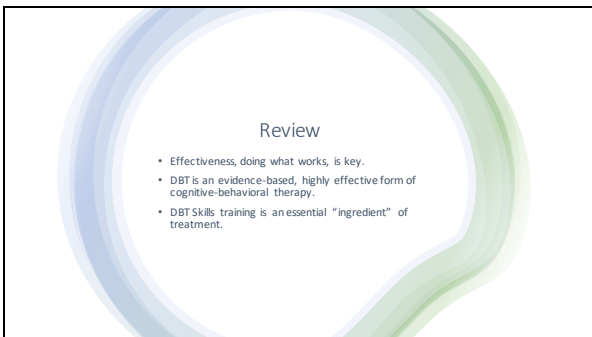
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### Review

- Effectiveness, doing what works, is key.
- DBT is an evidence-based, highly effective form of cognitive-behavioral therapy.
- DBT Skills training is an essential "ingredient" of treatment.

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### Next Steps: Continuing Your Development as a DBT Therapist




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### Resources

**Marsha Linehan, PhD**  
[www.behavioraltech.org](http://www.behavioraltech.org)  
**Self-Validation Module (Alan F. Fruzzetti, PhD)**  
 Associate Professor & Director, DBT Program  
 Department of Psychology 298  
 University of Nevada  
 Reno, NV 89557-0062  
 Email: [aef@unr.edu](mailto:aef@unr.edu)  
**Self-Compassion Module (Kristen Neff, PhD)**  
<http://www.self-compassion.org>  
**The Expanded Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Training Manual**  
 by Dr. Lane Pederson, PsyD, LP, DBTC

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### Resources Continued...

- Behavioral Tech, LLC-Marsha Linehan's website:  
<http://behavioraltech.org/index.cfm?CFID=54493378&CFTOKEN=48711039>
- Loving Someone with Borderline Personality Disorder: How to Keep Out-of-Control Emotions from Destroying Your Relationship-Shari Manning (2011)

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Thank-You

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