



**Oppositional, Defiant, and Anger Issues:
Promoting Positive Behaviour to Empower
Children and Adolescents**

Day 2 – Practical Interventions and Therapeutic Approaches

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Agenda & Objectives

- Collaborative strategies with caregivers, schools, and clinicians
- Emotion regulation tools: STOP, TIP, thermometer
- Real-world behavior planning
- Case study integration (Jordan)
- Group reflection and wrap-up

Objectives:

- Apply DBT-informed skills to oppositional behavior
- Create individualized intervention plans
- Strengthen trauma-informed collaboration

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What Stuck With You?

- What shifted for you yesterday?
- What do you see differently in your work?
- What defiant behavior do you now understand more deeply?

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Optional Share or Journaling

- Turn to a partner and share one thing that stuck
- Or, jot down a few notes for yourself
- Online: use chat or type quietly to reflect

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Menti Poll: **What do you currently use when defiance shows up?**

Instructions:

1. Go to <https://www.menti.com/alu9an47a786>
 2. Enter the code: 3462 2382
- Answer the poll: **What do you currently use when defiance shows up?**



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Collaboration First: Adults Who Work Together

Defiance decreases when adults align.

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The Adult Ecosystem

- Caregivers and extended family
- Teachers and school staff (aides, administrators, counselors)
- Mental health professionals (therapists, case managers, behavior analysts)
- Systemic supports (probation, youth justice, child welfare, community advocates)

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When Adults Aren't Aligned

- Conflicting messages escalate dysregulation
- Youth learn to triangulate and control
- Adults lose trust in each other
- The system becomes reactive, not responsive

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What Does Effective Collaboration Look Like?

- Shared language for behavior and support (ex: "STOP skill," "take a break")
- Unified behavior expectations and response plans
- Agreed-upon consequences that are relational, not punitive
- Ongoing check-ins and plan adjustments among team members

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Guided Reflection – Your Team

- Think of a youth you support: are the adults aligned in their expectations?
- Who's holding the relationship? Who's holding the rules?
- What's one step you could take to support alignment?

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Building Trust Through Validation

"Defiance decreases when youth feel seen."

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What Validation Is... And Isn't

Validation IS:

- Acknowledging a youth's internal experience
- Naming the emotion without judgment
- Staying connected even in the middle of escalation

Validation IS NOT:

- Agreeing with poor behavior
- Letting go of boundaries
- Fixing the problem right away

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Linehan's Six Levels of Validation

1. Pay attention — be present and nonjudgmental
2. Reflect — repeat what you hear without interpretation
3. Read between the lines — validate unspoken emotions and body language without interpretation
4. Understand in context — acknowledge past learning and trauma
5. Normalize — show that the response makes sense
6. Show equality through radical genuineness — treat the youth as capable and deserving

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Trust Starts With Safety

- Predictable responses from adults
- Repair after rupture (especially after yelling, shutting down)
- Letting youth know, "You don't have to earn safety — it's your starting place"
- Consistent boundaries delivered with warmth

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Rebuilding the Bridge

- Begin with connection, not correction
- Use brief, specific affirmations ("I see you trying")
- Offer choices within boundaries
- Show up consistently — not just when behavior is good

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What Builds Trust With Your Youth?

- What have you done that helped a youth lower their guard?
- What's one thing an adult did that helped YOU feel seen when you were younger?

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Regulate Before You Redirect

Skills that build internal stability

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Why Regulation Comes First

- Youth in distress aren't thinking — they're surviving
- The brain needs calm to access logic, memory, and empathy
- Co-regulation helps them borrow your calm before they find their own
- DBT offers structured, teachable tools for this process

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DBT TIP Skills:
Rapid Reset for Emotional Storms

- T = Temperature:**
- Change body temperature (cold water on face, ice pack on neck)
- I = Intense Exercise:**
- Short bursts of vigorous activity (jumping jacks, sprinting in place)
- P = Paced Breathing / Paired Relaxation:**
- Slow, deep breathing
 - Muscle relaxation (progressive tension and release)
- Goal:**
- Calm the nervous system fast when emotions overwhelm the brain

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Building Emotional Awareness:
The Feelings Thermometer

Many youth with ODD jump from 0 → 10 without noticing in-between feelings

- Feelings Thermometer teaches emotional scaling:**
- 0 = Calm and relaxed
 - 5 = Starting to feel overwhelmed
 - 10 = Out of control, meltdown
 - Helps youth recognize early signs and intervene sooner



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Partner Activity:
Using the Feelings Thermometer

1. Turn to a partner
 2. Think of a recent frustrating moment (work, home, school)
- Share:**
1. What happened
 2. Where you would rate yourself (0-10) on the Feelings Thermometer
 3. Practice scaling emotions in real-life examples



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DBT Core Skill: STOP Before Reacting

S = Stop: Freeze. Don't act on impulse.

T = Take a Step Back: Breathe. Create space.

O = Observe: Notice your thoughts, feelings, urges.

P = Proceed Mindfully: Choose your next action wisely.

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Practice: STOP in Real Life

- Think of a moment when you recently felt reactive
- What would STOP look like in that situation?
- How could you teach it to a youth — visually, verbally, or physically?

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Menti Poll: Which DBT skill do you think would be hardest to teach or apply in your setting?

Instructions:

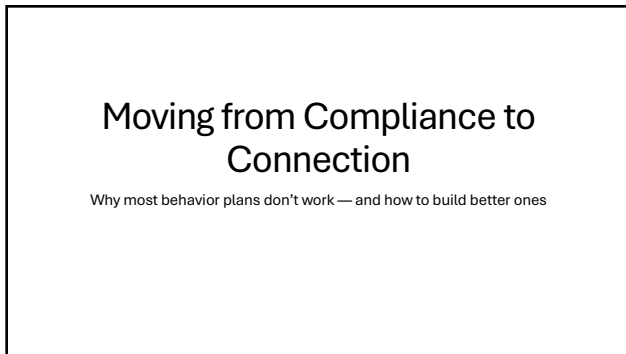
1. Go to <https://www.menti.com/alu9an-47a786>
2. Enter the code: 3462 2382
3. Answer the poll:
Which DBT skill do you think would be hardest to teach or apply in your setting?



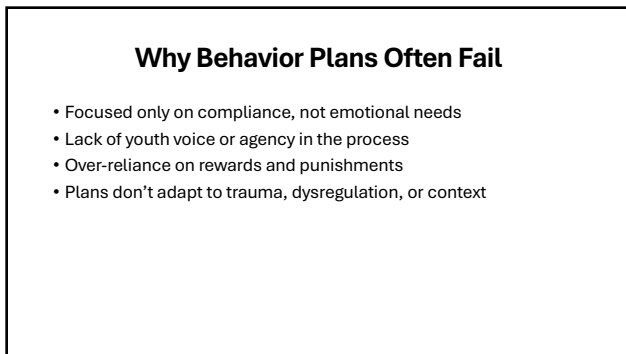
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Menti Poll: "What's a consequence or behavior plan strategy you've used that totally backfired?"

Instructions:

- Go to <https://www.menti.com/alu9an47a786>
- Enter the code: 3462 2382
- Answer the poll: "What's a consequence or behavior plan strategy you've used that totally backfired?"



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Planning for Behavior + Emotion

Identifies the **function** of the behavior (avoidance, control, connection)

Builds in **co-regulation and safety**, not just rules

Involves **youth voice** in expectation setting and coping options

- Uses **flexible structure**, not rigid control

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Core Elements of a Trauma-Responsive Plan

- 🔍 **Trigger Identification:**
 - Specific people, places, or transitions that escalate dysregulation
- 🎯 **Behavior Function Understanding:**
 - What does the behavior accomplish emotionally or socially?
- 📋 **Skills Matched to Escalation Stages:**
 - *Pre-escalation:* STOP skill
 - *Peak distress:* TIP skill
 - *Recovery zone:* Repair and co-regulation
- 👤 **Named Supportive Adults:**
 - Who can intervene without threat or shame
- 🔧 **Plan for Repair After Rupture:**
 - Reflection + accountability without humiliation

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Collaborative Behavior Planning – Youth as Partners, Not Projects

Ask directly:

- “What happens for you when you get upset?”
- “What helps you come back down?”

Build the plan together:

- “What should we try first?”
- “What kind of support feels helpful?”

Reinforce shared language:

- Use visuals (e.g., thermometer, STOP skill) to normalize discussion
- Frame interventions as support, not control

Set structure with flexibility:

- Clear expectations *and* space for trial-and-error
- Room to revise the plan with their input

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WAIT Strategy and Offering Limited Choices

WAIT = Why Am I Talking?

- Stay calm.
- Avoid power struggles.
- Allow time for youth to regulate and respond.

Offer limited choices:

- 2–3 clear, acceptable options
- Shifts focus from opposition to autonomy
- Keeps authority connected, not controlling


Example:

- Instead of “Clean your room NOW!” →
- Say: “Would you like to clean your room now or after dinner? You choose.”

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WAIT Strategy – Giving Space Without Disconnection

The power of the pause:

- Reactivity feeds reactivity
- Slowing down invites safety
-  WAIT = “Why Am I Talking?”
- Pause before correcting, explaining, or escalating
- Ask: “Am I responding or reacting?”

Regulate first, respond second:

- Use STOP skill yourself
- Co-regulation > correction

Offer limited choices when possible:

- “Do you want to take a break or stay at the table?”
- “You can come back to the group when you’re ready.”

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Distress Tolerance: Surviving Emotional Storms

Distress tolerance = surviving emotional overwhelm without making things worse

Focus is on **riding the wave**, not fixing emotions immediately


DBT teaches physical strategies to regulate the body:

- Change body temperature
- Use intense exercise
- Practice paced breathing
- Engage in muscle relaxation



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TIP Skills – Fast Tools for Fast Emotion




T = Temperature Change

 Splash cold water on the face or hold an ice pack
Triggers the dive reflex → slows heart rate, calms system

I = Intense Exercise

 30–60 seconds of jumping jacks, running in place, or wall push-ups
 Burns off adrenaline → resets arousal curve

P = Paced Breathing & Paired Muscle Relaxation

 Inhale for 4, exhale for 6 (or longer exhale than inhale)
 Tense muscles on inhale, release on exhale
 Signals safety to the body

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Menti Poll: Which TIP skill would you teach first?

Instructions:

1. Go to <https://www.menti.com/alu9an47a786>
2. Enter the code: 3462 2382
3. Answer the poll:
"Which TIP skill would you introduce first to a youth in distress?"



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Build a Crisis Kit: Tools to Survive the Storm

A **Crisis Kit** holds items that help regulate the 5 senses:

- **Sight** – calming image, photos, visual timer
- **Sound** – playlist, chime, noise-canceling earbuds
- **Smell** – essential oils, lotion, calming scent
- **Taste** – mints, sour candy, gum
- **Touch** – fidget, soft fabric, clay

Kits can be:

- Physical boxes or pencil cases
- Digital (on phones)
- Imaginary (guided visualization)

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Reflection: My Role in Co-Regulation

- Think of a time a youth escalated in your care:
 - What was your emotional state before the incident?
 - What helped you stay grounded (or didn't)?
 - What did you learn about your own nervous system?

Optional Prompts (on handout or journal):

- What DBT or behavior skill could have supported me?
- How does my presence impact youth regulation?

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Resilience Starts with Strengths: Finding Islands of Competence

Defiant youth are often seen **only through deficits**

Dr. Robert Brooks: Every child has “islands of competence” — areas of strength, interest, or resilience

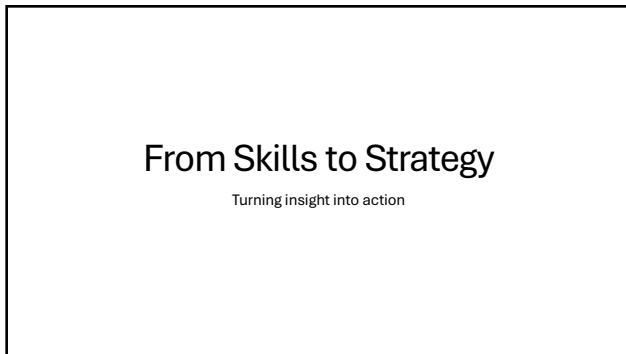
Strength-based planning begins with:

- What brings them pride?
- What calms or captivates them?
- Where have they shown perseverance?

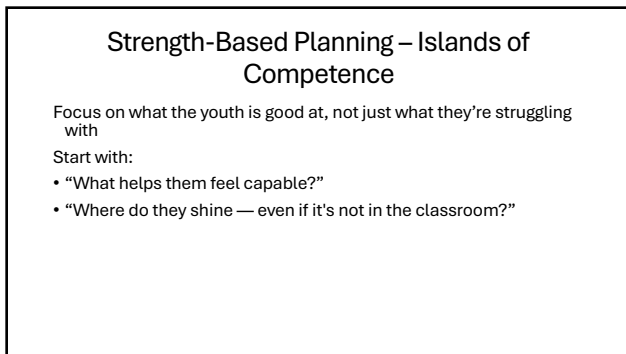
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Case Study: Meet Jordan

- 13-year-old youth male
- History of oppositional behavior across home and school
- Recently suspended for physical aggression toward a peer
- Angry, withdrawn, failing classes, avoids eye contact, recently threatened a teacher
- Lives with grandmother after removal from biological parents (neglect and exposure to domestic violence)

Strengths: Loves drawing, shows kindness to younger children, enjoys working with hands

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Jordan's Timeline – What We Know

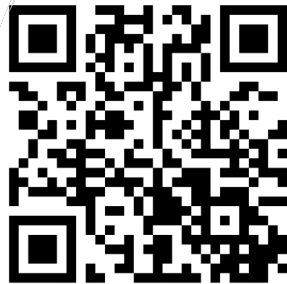
- Multiple school changes
- Removed from home at age 9
- Diagnosed with ADHD + possible PTSD
- Recently suspended for yelling and pushing

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Menti Poll: What part of Jordan's story stands out to you most — and why?

Instructions:

1. Go to <https://www.menti.com/alu9an-47a786>
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3. Answer the poll:
What part of Jordan's story stands out to you most — and why?



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Group Activity: Building Jordan's Intervention Plan

In your groups, discuss and create a basic plan for Jordan:

1. Identify **Jordan's strengths** (Islands of Competence)
 2. Choose **one emotional regulation skill** you would introduce
 1. (Example: STOP skill, breathing exercise, or feelings thermometer)
 3. Choose **one behavioral strategy** to support him
 1. (Example: Positive reinforcement, offering limited choices, clear and calm limits)
 4. Identify **one family or school support action** that would strengthen his environment
- **Goal:** Build a plan that supports safety, resilience, and relationship.

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What Would Success Look Like?

- Reduced intensity of outbursts?
- Use of a self-regulation tool?
- Trust in *one* adult?
- A single moment of co-regulation?

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Group Share-Out: Jordan's Plan Highlights

In your groups, choose a **spokesperson** to share:

1. **One of Jordan's strengths** your group identified
 2. **One emotional regulation tool** you would introduce
 3. **One behavioral or environmental support** you would prioritize
- Focus on practical steps that build connection and resilience!

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Individualized Planning: From Survival to Strategy

Effective plans are:

- **Strengths-based** — start with what works
- **Collaborative** — include family, school, and youth voice
- **Trauma-informed** — assume behavior has a reason
- **Behaviorally specific** — small, measurable goals
- The plan is the container — **relationship is the change agent**

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Take a Break
We'll resume shortly



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Jordan's Resistance Points

- - Doesn't trust authority figures
- Shuts down when plans are too structured or consequence-heavy
- Will test boundaries to confirm rejection is coming
- Interprets interventions as control or punishment

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How Systems May Reinforce Dysregulation

- - School: Zero tolerance policies escalate power struggles
- Family: Inconsistent discipline + emotional reactivity
- Therapy: Too much talking, not enough regulation support
- Youth services: Surveillance over support

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Jordan's Real Plan – Not the Fantasy One

- - TIP skill in backpack with a visual reminder
- STOP card taped to desk – can flip when he needs a reset
- One adult ally in the building with a 30-second script: "Want to breathe or walk?"
- Repair path: draw/write after escalation (no verbal processing at first)
- Weekly 5-minute check-in where he gets to suggest one plan edit

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Family Coaching Layer

Helping Adults Respond Differently

- - Teach parents: defiance = dysregulation, not disrespect
- Help them develop nonverbal signals and neutral tone responses
- Normalize cycles: rupture → retreat → repair
- Include youth in planning family recovery rituals (music, meals, shared time)

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Embedding Regulation in the IEP

- - Embed emotion regulation goals alongside behavior goals
- Integrate co-regulation breaks with trusted adults
- Include self-advocacy prompts ("What do you need right now?" cards)
- Allow opt-out points from overstimulating settings with return agreement

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Teach a Tool – Skill Pair Practice

- - Pair up: one person is the 'youth', one is the 'supporter'
- Teach a DBT skill (STOP, TIP, or Thermometer) in 60–90 seconds
- Then switch roles and try a different skill

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What Did You Learn Teaching the Skill?

- What surprised you?
- What felt awkward or empowering?
- What was easy to explain? What wasn't?

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Roleplay – Explaining a Plan to a Dysregulated Caregiver

- - One person is a youth-supporting professional
- One is a stressed or skeptical caregiver
- Use this script: 'I know this sounds like a lot, but this plan is about giving [youth's name] ways to stay in their body, not just follow rules.'
- Try redirecting the conversation toward co-regulation, not control

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Resilience Focus – Planting Seeds for Change

- Every small skill, every moment of connection, is a **seed**
- Youth may not show change immediately — growth often happens underground first
- Focus on:
 - Building trust
 - Reinforcing tiny steps
 - Staying consistent even when change feels slow
- Healing is relational, not transactional

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Where Will This Work Be Challenged?

- - Where in your system will this work be hardest to implement?
- What might pushback look like from peers, admin, or caregivers?
- What are you committed to holding even when it's hard?

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What Will You Try in the Next 7 Days?

- - What strategy, script, or tool are you committed to trying this week?
- Who will you need to loop in or prep in advance?
- How will you measure whether it helped — for you or for them?

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Menti Poll: What's One Word You're Leaving With?

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3. Answer the poll:
What's One Word You're Leaving With?



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"You can't punish the pain out of a child. But you can sit with them long enough for the pain to ease."
— Anonymous

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Key Takeaways

1. Behavior is a story – not a symptom.
2. Defiance is often a protective adaptation, not a personal attack.
3. Emotion regulation must come before behavior redirection.
4. Collaborative planning reduces resistance and builds ownership.
5. Tools like STOP, TIP, and the thermometer must be taught before they can be used.
6. Defiance often masks disconnection – repair is the intervention.
7. Planning must be relational, trauma-informed, and flexible.
8. You are not just teaching skills — you're creating emotional safety.

✨ You are part of the regulation plan.

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**You Are the
Intervention**

Thank You

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Thank-You for Attending!

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