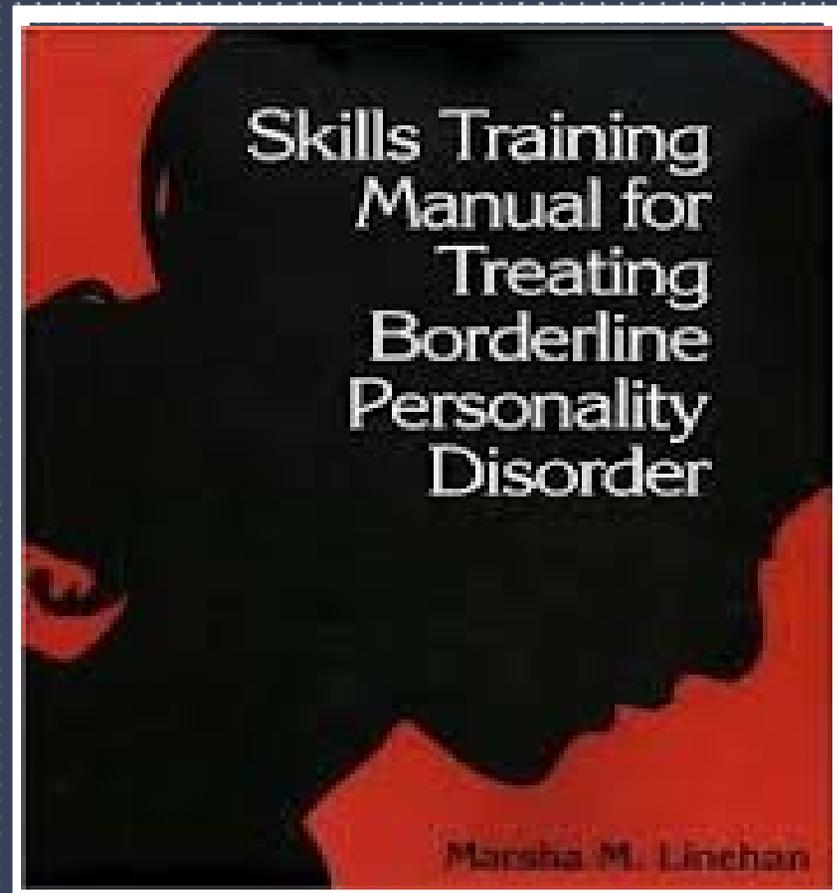


APPLYING ASPECTS OF DIALECTICAL  
BEHAVIOR THERAPY  
TO INCREASE ADAPTIVE FUNCTIONING  
IN THE COLLEGE POPULATION

JESINE XAVIER, PSY.D.

\*all of the material, handouts, and information disseminated in this presentation originate from Marsha Linehan and have been learned through her book, skills training manual, or trainings given through her company, Behavioral Tech\*



# WHAT THIS PRESENTATION WILL COVER

- ▶ When and when not to use DBT skills with your clients
- ▶ An overview of DBT, including what it is designed to treat, what a full outpatient model entails, the approach, core concepts, and the skills modules
- ▶ How the skills have been modified for this presentation
- ▶ Ways you might weave skills into 10 sessions with a client: The skills are presented in the order I think you are most likely to use them based on having a 3, 6, or 10 session model

# WEAVING SOME SKILLS INTO COLLEGE HEALTH CENTER SESSIONS

- Focus of seminar is to learn how to use DBT skills as first line of intervention for students reporting some difficulties with regulating their emotions, tolerating distress, and interpersonal conflicts.
- This is appropriate for students who seem like they may be healthy enough to stay in school as long as they can get a bit more skillful **and** continue to receive additional support through some mental health services.

## ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- This is for students who have concerns, at least to some degree, about the behaviors they are using, how upset they are getting, and how alone they are feeling (behaviors are ego dystonic)
- It is for students who want to TRY to make school work, even if that seems really hard to do and/or impossible
- Even if both of these factors are present, do careful assessments to check the severity of their symptoms. They might need a higher level of care, even if they do seem motivated to change.

## THIS IS LIKELY NOT THE ANSWER...

- Very depressed or extremely anxious (to a degree that causes significant functional impairment)
- **Routinely** using maladaptive behaviors like self injury, purging/binging/restricting, binge drinking, etc. It is likely the behaviors are too entrenched for them to use skills without a full DBT model
- Students expressing active suicidal ideation

# DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY: AN OVERVIEW

- ▶ Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a comprehensive treatment approach that was developed by Marsha Linehan and has demonstrated its efficacy in clinical trials.
- ▶ DBT was originally designed to ameliorate the disruptive behaviors experienced by individuals with suicidal behavior and Borderline Personality Disorder.
- ▶ However, it is now being used to work with a range of disruptive experiences and diagnoses....

# GENERALLY, DBT TREATMENT TARGETS INCLUDE:

- Suicidality
- Self injurious or impulsive behavior
- Extreme emotions or mood swings
- Chaotic interpersonal relationships
- Cognitive disruptions and rigidity
- Dissociation
- Other behaviors used to regulate mood (shoplifting, binge/purge, gambling, etc)

# TREATMENT COMPONENTS FOR FULL OUTPATIENT MODEL

## 1. Individual DBT Therapy

- ▶ Weekly individual session where therapist and client review the clients use of behaviors and how they could have used skills to function more adaptively

## 2. Telephone Skills Coaching

- ▶ Client has access to therapist outside of session for help implementing skills instead of using maladaptive behaviors

## 3. Therapist Consultation Team

- ▶ Weekly team meeting of DBT Treatment providers who offer consultation, problem solving, and support for each other

## 4. Group DBT Skills Training

- ▶ Weekly psychoeducation group that solely teaches the four DBT Skills Modules

# THE APPROACH

- DBT's primary premise is that you are doing the best you can (and it's not always working), so you need to do better (but you don't know how).
- DBT offers a compassionate approach, recognizing disruptive behaviors as understandable because they are/were probably effective in some way.
- The main emphasis in DBT is to hold a dialectical stance which encompasses both acceptance and change.

# CORE DBT PRINCIPLES

- ▶ Validation & Self-validation
- ▶ Dialectical thinking and acting
- ▶ Right vs. Effective
- ▶ You may not have caused the problem, but it is still your responsibility to fix it
- ▶ The goal is to build a life worth living



# VALIDATION

- *Validation communicates to another person that his or her feelings, thoughts, and actions make sense and are understandable to you in a particular situation. It is **describing** instead of **judging**.*
- Validation *does not* necessarily mean that you like or agree with what the other person is doing, saying, or feeling

\*\*\*Don't validate something that is invalid. You can validate the emotions without validating the behaviors: "I can understand why you felt angry when your friends excluded you. We have to work on ways other than purging to manage those feelings"

# SELF-VALIDATION

- *Self-validation is communicating to yourself that your feelings, thoughts, and actions make sense and are acceptable.*
- *It is describing instead of judging.*
- Signs of **Invalidation**:
  - telling yourself that you shouldn't feel a certain way
  - describing your thoughts, feelings or behaviors as "stupid"
  - comparing yourself negatively to others
  - ignoring or denying how you feel

# DIALECTICAL THINKING AND ACTING

## What are Dialectics?

- Rather than thinking along the lines of **either-or**, dialectical thinking uses **both-and** approach.
- The easiest way to think about dialectics is to consider the idea of *balance*.
- Dialectics seeks to take what seem to be opposites and find the kernel of truth in all sides.
- The goal in dialectical thinking is to achieve a synthesis of oppositions, *instead* of focusing on which side of an argument is "right."

➤ **This perspective helps...**

Expand your thoughts and ways of considering life situations.  
Create alternative solutions  
Unstick standoffs and conflicts.  
Be more flexible and approachable.  
Avoid assumptions and blaming.  
Be understanding while sticking to your values

➤ **Examples:**

You are angry about your partner cheating AND you also feel sad that the relationship is over

You are doing the best you can, AND you need to do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change.

## DBT SKILLS ARE DIVIDED INTO FOUR PRIMARY MODULES:

- ***Mindfulness*** skills: enhance a patient's ability to non-judgmentally observe and describe their current emotional, cognitive, and physical state.
- ***Emotion Regulation*** skills: teach patients how to understand their emotions, decrease vulnerability to distressing emotions, and how to change or modify the intensity of their emotions

➤ *Interpersonal Effectiveness* skills examine how to build and maintain positive relationships by making effective requests, setting appropriate limits, and engaging actively in the relationship.

➤ *Distress Tolerance* skills focus on strategies clients can use in moments of distress to tolerate a situation, without making it worse

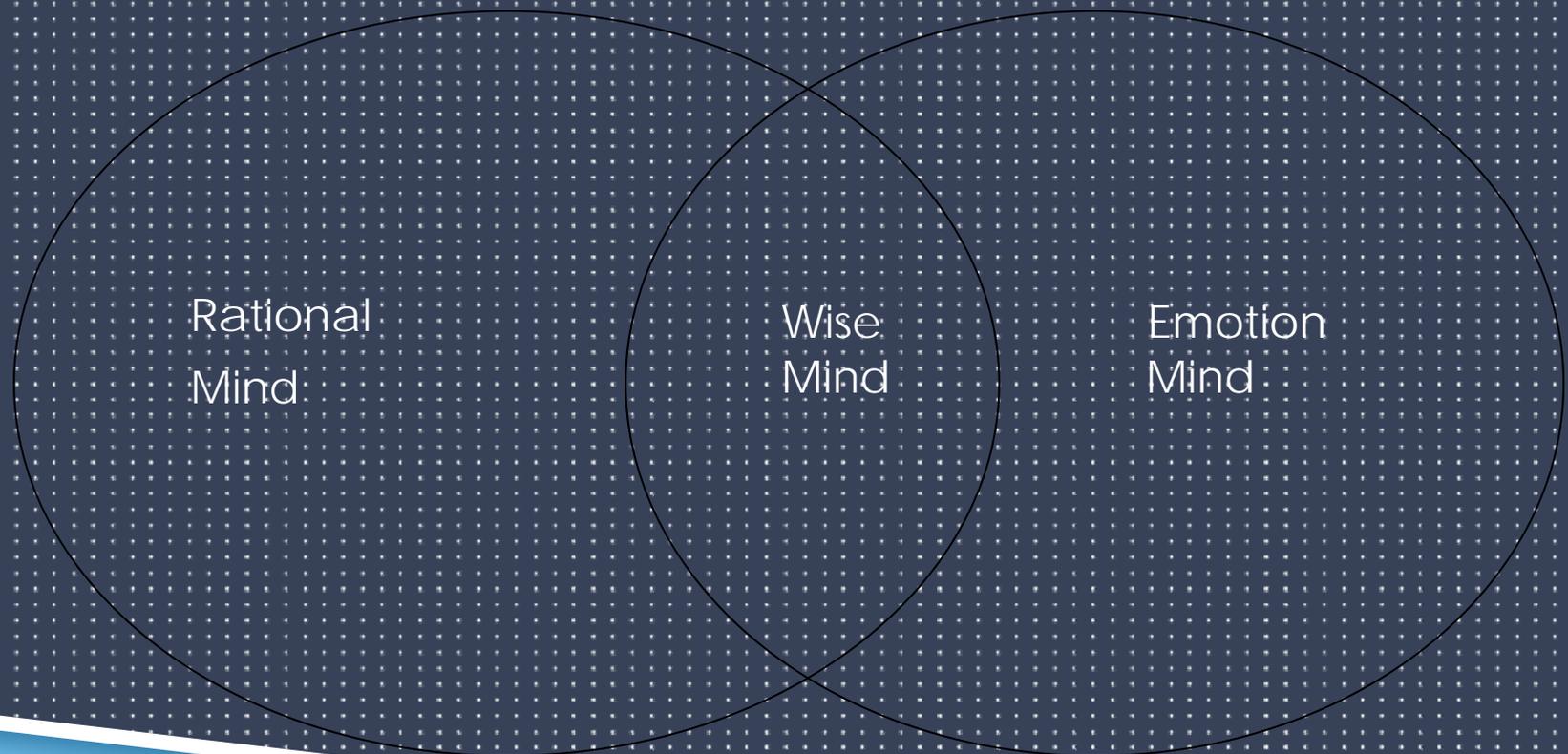
# HOW THE SKILLS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED

- I am teaching only parts of certain skills
- The handouts have been abbreviated in some ways
- The skills are being taught in a progression to be most useful for clients who are struggling with access to a limited number of therapy sessions vs. how the skills are taught in an outpatient 6 month group model
- I have slightly changed the language on certain handouts to reflect how I personally teach the skills

**\*For the skills in their original form, please see  
Linehan's Skills Training Manual**

# SESSION 1, FIRST SKILL:

## IDENTIFYING EMOTION MIND AND HOW TO SHIFT



Rational  
Mind

Wise  
Mind

Emotion  
Mind

# ONE WAY TO ACHIEVE WISE MIND

## DO A DESCRIBE

*Wordful Watching*: Describe what you observe with words.

Describe ONLY what you observe, without interpretations or opinions (this is dumb, why am I doing this, this feels nice...)

When you find your mind has wandered, gently bring it back to the observe

# SESSION 1, SECOND SKILL: TIPP

For Short Term Managing Extreme Emotions.....

You are at your personal **skills break-down point** when:

- ▶ You are completely caught in "emotion mind"
- ▶ You are so overwhelmed that your brain is not processing information
- ▶ You can not problem solve or use any complicated skills
- ▶ You feel like you are "losing it", "out of control", "a mess"

# TIPP: CHANGE YOUR BODY CHEMISTRY TO BRING DOWN YOUR AROUSAL

## ▶ Temperature Change

Place ice pack on or splash icy water on your cheek bones  
Do this for at least 30 seconds while holding your breath  
\*buys you a ten minute window\*

## ➤ Intense Exercise

Exercise rigorously for 20 minutes  
\*about 20 minutes to re-set, feel more regulated for hours\*

## ➤ Paced Breathing

Breathe in for a shorter amount of time then you breathe out

Ex: Breathe in for the count of 4 and out for the count of 6

## SESSION 2: FIRST SKILL IDENTIFYING YOUR FEELINGS

### ➤ Anger Words

upset, frustrated, confused, annoyed, irritated

### ➤ Prompting events or interpretations of events that can lead to feeling anger

having an important goal blocked or prevented  
you/someone love is attacked, threatened, or  
insulted

believing you have been treated unfairly

believing you are right or things should be different

➤ **Biological changes and experiences of Anger**

muscles tightening, hands clenching, feeling hot, feeling like you are going to explode

➤ **Expressions and Actions of Anger**

physically or verbally attacking the cause of your anger, throwing things, being sarcastic, complaining

➤ **Aftereffects of Anger**

attending only to the situation that made you angry, ruminating about the situation, thinking about anything else in your life that is also making you angry

# IDENTIFYING YOUR FEELINGS

## ➤ Sad Words

upset, depressed, disappointed, homesick,  
lonely

## ➤ Prompting events or interpretations of events that can lead to feeling sad

losing a relationship

being separated from people you care about

not getting what you've worked for

feeling isolated

things are not what you expected them to be

being rejected or excluded

➤ **Biological changes and experiences of Sadness**

Feeling tired, low in energy, wanting to stay in bed all day, nothing is pleasurable, can't stop crying

➤ **Expressions and Actions of Sadness**

Avoiding things, acting helpless, moping, staying in bed, withdrawing from social contact

➤ **Aftereffects of Sadness**

Remembering other times you were sad, feeling hopeless that things will get better, blaming yourself

# IDENTIFYING YOUR FEELINGS

## ➤ Fear Words

Anxious, worried, panic, upset, nervous, stressed, tense

## ➤ Prompting events or interpretations of events that can lead to feeling fear

having your life or well being threatened

being in a new situation

being alone

believing others might criticize you

believing you may fail

having to perform in front of others

➤ **Biological changes and experiences of Fear**

Breathlessness, fast heartbeat, "butterflies", muscles tensing, feeling cold, nausea

➤ **Expressions and Actions of Fear**

Running away, avoiding, screaming, frozen stare, shaking, sweating, talking yourself out of doing the thing you fear, fast talking

➤ **Aftereffects of Fear**

Inability to focus, vigilant to threats, numbness, remembering other scary times, dissociation, fear of future losses

## SESSION 3: CHECK THE FACTS

- We often get dysregulated because we have some actual information, but then make assumptions that are bigger than the facts. In addition, we then sometimes make future predictions on this limited data (catastrophizing, fortune telling, etc.).
- When we get dysregulated, the first thing we should do is check the facts, to make sure our emotions are warranted and the intensity fits what is actually happening.

# HOW TO CHECK THE FACTS

- **1. Ask:** What is the event prompting my emotional reaction?

Describe the facts that you observed through your senses.

Challenge any judgments, extremes, and absolute black-&-white descriptions.

- **2. Ask:** What are my interpretations and thoughts about the facts?

Think of other possible interpretations.

Practice looking at all sides of a situation/all points of view.

If possible, test your interpretations to see if they are correct.

- **3. Ask:** What about this event or situation is worrisome to me?

Assess the possibility that the threatening event will really occur

Generate as many other possible outcomes as you can.

- **4. Ask:** What is the worst case scenario?

Identify the worst possible outcome for the situation

Realistically imagine how you would cope with this

- **5. Ask:** Now, does my emotion and emotional intensity fit the facts?

## SESSION 4: OPPOSITE TO EMOTION ACTION

- ▶ Every emotion we experience has physiological sensations that help us know what we are “feeling”.
- ▶ An incredibly effective way to shift the intensity of our feelings is to “act opposite” to these “action urges”.
- ▶ However, this can be very difficult to get ourselves to when what we want to do is avoid, withdraw, attack, sleep, ruminate on the negative, etc.

# WHEN TO USE OPPOSITE TO EMOTION ACTION

## Opposite action works when:

- The emotion or the intensity or the duration of the emotion is NOT WARRANTED by the facts of the situation
- The emotion or the intensity or the duration of the emotion is NOT EFFECTIVE for the situation.

# HOW TO DO OPPOSITE TO EMOTION ACTION

There are 5 steps...

**Step 1: Check the Facts** to be sure your emotional reaction is not warranted or is not effective for the situation.

**Step 2: Identify Action Urges** associated with your emotion.

**Step 3: Act Opposite** to your urges

**Step 4: Continue Opposite Action** until your emotion goes down at least enough for you to notice.

**Step 5: Repeat** . . . over and over, every chance you get. Keep repeating until your emotional sensitivity to that prompting event decreases.

**Examples:**

**Action Urge for Sadness:** withdraw, get in bed, mope, wear sweatpants, watch tv all day

**Opposite:** GET UP!, make some tea, shower and put on jeans, take a walk, call a friend, DO ANYTHING

# MORE EXAMPLES OF OPPOSITE ACTION

**Action Urge for Fear:** avoid, procrastinate, withdraw, back away from

**Opposite:** Take steps towards doing the thing you are afraid of, prepare, practice, do over and over until it no longer makes you as fearful

**Action Urge for Anger:** Attack, criticize, yell, argue with

**Opposite:** Be loving, walk away from, focus on something else, do something nice for someone else

## SESSION 5: RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

- Pain is a part of living. It can be emotional or physical. Pain is nature's way of telling us something is wrong, or that something needs to be done.
- Suffering comes when people are unable or refuse to accept pain. They cling to what they want to be true or refuse to accept is happening.
- Freedom from suffering requires acceptance from deep within of what is. The pain cannot possibly subside until you accept the reality of what has caused the pain.

*SUFFERING = PAIN + NON-ACCEPTANCE*

## Principles of Radical Acceptance:

Let go of fighting reality

Acceptance is the only way out of pain

Deciding to tolerate the moment is Acceptance

Acceptance is acknowledging what is

Acceptance does not equal "liking it" or  
"condoning it" or "agreeing with it"

# HOW DO WE RADICALLY ACCEPT THE THINGS WE DON'T WANT TO BE TRUE?

**TURNING THE MIND:** Choice and Commitment

Acceptance of reality as it is requires a CHOICE.

It is like coming to a fork in the road. You have to *turn your mind* towards the acceptance road and away from the "rejecting reality" road.

You have to make an inner COMMITMENT to accept.

The COMMITMENT to accept does not itself equal acceptance. It is the first step on a path. You have to turn you mind and commit to acceptance **OVER and OVER and OVER** again. Sometimes you have to make the commitment many times in just a few minutes.

# WILLFULNESS VS. WILLINGNESS

## WILLFULNESS

- Willfulness is sitting on your hands when action is needed
- Refusing to make changes that are needed.
- Willfulness is GIVING UP.
- Willfulness is doing the OPPOSITE of "Doing what works," of being effective.
- Willfulness is trying to FIX every situation.
- Willfulness is refusing to TOLERATE the moment.

# WILLINGNESS

Cultivate a WILLING response to each situation

- Willingness is doing what is needed in each situation.
- Willingness is keeping the focus on being *Effective*.
- Willingness is being open to doing something differently.

The goal is to be effective and let go of having to be **right**...do you want to be right, or do you want to be effective?

This is a choice, there ARE options.

## SESSION 6: PROBLEM SOLVING AS A WAY TO REGULATE EMOTIONS

- Often times, our clients will be feeling “overwhelmed” because of something going on in their lives.
- Generally, we start by figuring out all of the feelings that are combined into “overwhelmed”.
- Often times, part of feeling overwhelmed is in response to some real or imagined problem.
- Thus, solving the problem often helps the emotional intensity decrease and the client will no longer report feeling “overwhelmed”.

# HOW TO PROBLEM SOLVE

There are 7 steps...

**Step 1:** OBSERVE and DESCRIBE the problem, just the actual facts

**Step 2:** Check to make sure everything you are considering to be a "fact" has actual evidence to support it

**Step 3:** If you have made assumptions or are missing data, redefine the problem using JUST THE FACTS



**Step 4:** Identify your GOAL for solving the problem. Double check if this goal is actually achievable

**Step 5:** Brainstorm all different possible solutions, both realistic and even silly. Don't immediately discount a solution just because it might be daunting in some way.

**Step 6:** Choose a solution that is **most likely** to work

**Step 7:** Put the solution into action. If it works, great! If not, try another option from your original brainstorming.

## SESSION 7: TOLERATING YOUR DISTRESS WITH "ACCEPTS" AND "SELF-SOOTHE"

- The goal of these two skills is to tolerate painful events and emotions when you can't make things better **right away**.
- The primary function of these skills is not to "feel better", but to **not make the situation worse!**
- Often times, even after we have made a plan to solve a problem, we still have to tolerate waiting until we can put it into action.
- Thus, problem solving and distress tolerance are often used together.

# THE "ACCEPTS" SKILL

Distract with ...

Activities

Contributing

Comparisons

Emotions (*be sure the activity creates different emotions*)

Pushing Away

Thoughts

Sensations

# TOLERATE DISTRESS BY SELF SOOTHING

What does it mean to feel soothed? How do you know when something is soothing for you? How can you use your five senses, separately or by "stacking the deck", to tolerate your distress?

Vision

Hearing

Smell

Taste

Touch

## SESSION 8: HOW TO *INCREASE OUR CHANCES* OF GETTING WHAT WE WANT WITH OTHERS

We often experience distress in our lives because of an interaction we have had, or need to have, with another person. If we can increase the likelihood these interactions will meet our goals, we should experience less distress.

In interpersonal interactions, most situations fall into one of three categories:

- 1. We need to make a request AND are willing to negotiate

Skill: DEARMAN

- 2. We need to set a limit, say no, preserve our self-respect  
Skill: FAST
- 3. We want to create or maintain a good relationship  
Skill: GIVE

In order to have the best chance of being effective, we first have to figure out what our PRIMARY goal is for an interpersonal situation. This directs us to the appropriate skill.

# MAKING A REQUEST AND BEING WILLING TO NEGOTIATE...THE DEARMAN

- Describe Describe **only the facts**.
- Express Express your feelings and opinions  
*\*People often listen better if you **first** validate their possible feelings/experiences/worries of a situation*
- Assert Ask for what you want clearly, with no hesitation.
- Reinforce Reward the person ahead of time by explaining the positive effects **for them** of you getting what you want. Why is it in their best interest to do what you are asking?

# YOUR DELIVERY

- **Mindful** Keep your focus on what you want, avoid distractions. Come back to your assertion over and over; be a “broken record.” Ignore attacks; keep making your point.
- **Appear Confident** Make (and maintain) eye contact. Use a confident tone of voice and body posture.
- **Negotiate** Be willing to “give to get.” Offer alternative solutions to the problem. If you can’t come to an agreement, “turn the tables” and see if they can offer a solution. Some people need the resolution to come from them.

# SESSION 9: FAST AND GIVE

To set a limit, say no, preserve our self-respect...use the **FAST** skill

(be) **F**air     Be fair to YOURSELF and to the OTHER person.

(no over) **A**pologies     Do not OVER apologize. If there is a need, sincerely apologize once. If you over apologize, it is often interpreted, by the other person, as you NOT having a firm line.

**S**tick to Values     Stick to YOUR OWN values.

(be) **I**ruthful     Don't lie, act helpless when you're not, or exaggerate. Don't make up excuses. When we do this, it is often conveyed as us being hesitant about the limit we are trying to set.

When your primary goal is to create and/or keep a good relationship, use the **GIVE** skill

(be) **Gentle** Be courteous and open-minded in your approach.

(act) **Interested** Listen and be interested in the other person.

**Validate** Validate or acknowledge the other person's feelings, wants, difficulties, and opinions about the situation.

(use an) **Easy Manner** Use a little humor. Smile. Ease the person along,

# SESSION 10: THINGS WE CAN DO ALL THE TIME TO BE LESS EMOTIONALLY VULNERABLE

Use **Cope Ahead** to more effectively manage a future problem

Describe a situation that is likely to prompt skills-interfering emotions

Decide what coping or problem solving skills you want to use in the situation

Imagine the situation in your mind as vividly as possible

Rehearse in your mind coping effectively

## Taking Care of Your Mind by Taking Care of Your Body...the **PLEASE** skill

Treat **Physical LIllness**. Take medication, so see a doctor, don't allow yourself to suffer from physical symptoms unnecessarily

**Eating**...eat balanced meals and snacks at regular intervals throughout the day to reduce fatigue and blood sugar swings

Avoid mood-**Altering** drugs...stay off non-prescribed drugs if they make you vulnerable to emotions

**S**leep...try to get adequate sleep. Design and practice better sleep hygiene if you have difficulty sleeping.

**E**xercise...moderate exercise on a regular basis has been shown to be as effective as a low dose anti-depressant.

*\*Remember how emotionally vulnerable you become when you are not taking care of your body's basic health needs*

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# VALIDATION

*Validation communicates to another person that his or her feelings, thoughts and actions make sense and are understandable to you in a particular situation. It is describing instead of judging.*

Remember: Validation ≠ Agreement

Validation *does not* necessarily mean that you like or agree with what the other person is doing, saying, or feeling. It means that you understand where the other person is coming from.

**WHAT** should we validate?

- Feelings
- Thoughts
- Behaviors

**WHY** should we validate?

- It improves relationships!
- Validation can show:
  - We are listening
  - We understand
  - We are being nonjudgmental
  - We care about the relationship
  - We care about the person
  - Conflict is possible with decreased intensity

It's about being effective, not about being right!

## How to Validate Others

- PICK A GOOD TIME - LIMIT DISTRACTIONS - PAY ATTENTION - BE GENUINE

\*\*\*Don't validate something that is invalid. You can validate the emotions without validating the behaviors: "I can understand why you felt angry when your friends excluded you. I wish you hadn't chosen to then binge and purge."

Adapted from: *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder* By Marsha Linehan, Guilford Press, 1993

# Self-Validation

*Self-validation is communicating to yourself that your feelings, thoughts, and actions make sense and are acceptable. It is describing instead of judging.*

- Signs of Invalidation:** - telling yourself that you shouldn't feel a certain way
- describing your thoughts, feelings or behaviors as "stupid"
  - comparing yourself to others
  - ignoring or denying how you feel

## How to Validate Yourself

1. Be kind and honest with yourself.
2. Acknowledge that this is hard work and you are doing the best you can.
3. Identify your thoughts and feelings without judgment.
4. Give yourself some space and time to think and reflect.
5. Give yourself time to decide what you want to do with your thoughts and feelings. Focus on *responding* instead of *reacting*.
6. Answer this: "If a friend was having this problem, how would I respond to them?" Practice treating yourself how you would treat someone else.
7. Notice when you make an invalidating statement. Say something to yourself like, "There goes my critical voice again," and then keep practicing self-validation. Don't invalidate yourself for being invalidating!
8. Reach out. If you are struggling to validate yourself, ask someone you trust for help.

# DIALECTICS

## What are Dialectics?

The easiest way to think about dialectics is to consider the idea of *balance*. Dialectics seeks to take what seem to be opposite and opposed opinions and find the kernel of truth in all sides.

## How do we think Dialectically?

The goal in dialectical thinking is to achieve a synthesis of oppositions, *instead of* focusing on which side of an argument is "right." Rather than thinking along the lines of **either-or**, dialectical thinking uses **both-and** approach.

## This perspective helps...

- Expand your thoughts and ways of considering life situations.
- Create alternative solutions
- Unstick standoffs and conflicts.
- Be more flexible and approachable.
- Avoid assumptions and blaming.
- Be understanding while sticking to your values

## Examples:

- You are doing the best you can, AND you need to do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change.
- You may not have created your problem AND you still need to fix it
- You are angry about your partner cheating AND still feel sad that the relationship is over

# DIALECTICS

## "How to" Guide

### Hints for Thinking and Acting Dialectically

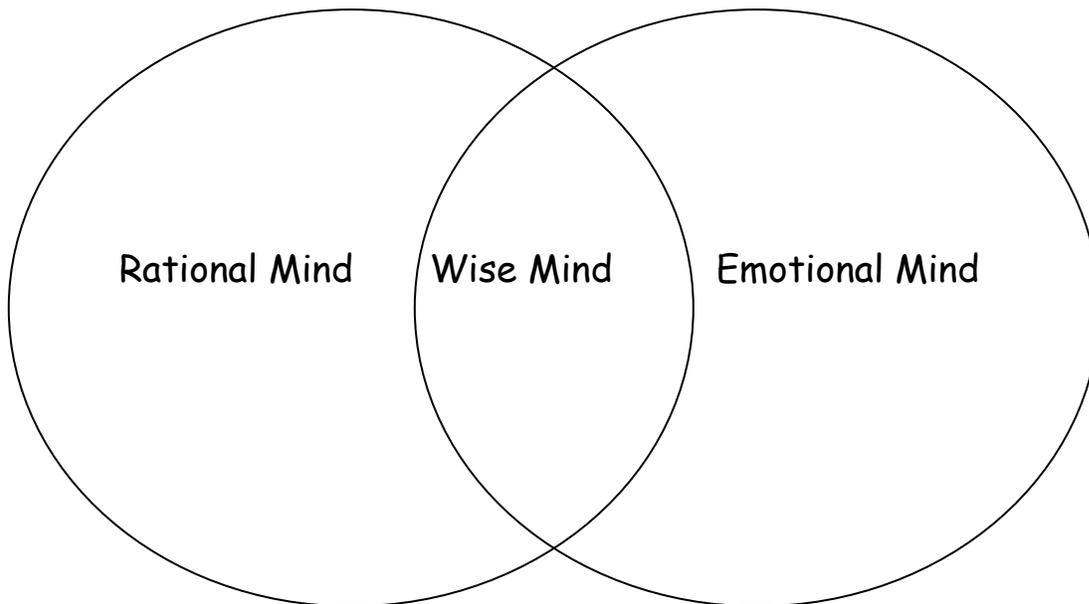
1. Move away from "either-or" thinking to "*both-and*" thinking. Avoid extreme words: "always," "never," "you make me ..." Be descriptive.

Example:

- Instead of saying "Everyone always treats me so unfairly."
  - Try "Sometimes I am treated fairly and sometimes I am treated unfairly."
  - Or "I feel I am being treated unfairly in this situation."
2. Practice looking at all sides of a situation, all points of view. Find the kernel of truth in every side.
  3. Remember: *No one* has the absolute truth. Be open to alternatives.
  4. Use "I feel ..." statements, instead of "You are ...," "You should ...," or "That's just the way it is" statements.
  5. Accept that different opinions can be valid; even if you do not agree with them ("I can see your point of view, even though I do not agree with it").
  6. Do not assume that you know what other are thinking; check your assumptions ("What did you mean when you said ...?").
  7. Do not expect others to know what you are thinking ("What I am trying to say is ...").

## States of Mind

You are most effective when you can identify your emotions AND the facts in any situation...this is called being in Wise Mind



**One way to shift into Wise Mind is to do a "Describe"**

### DESCRIBE

- *Wordful watching*: Describe what you observe with words.
- Put words on the experience - for example, "I feel sad," or "My heart is pounding."
- Describe **ONLY** what you observe, without interpretations or opinions

Adapted from: *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder* By Marsha Linehan, Guilford Press, 1993

## Managing Extreme Emotions

Sometimes your emotional arousal level is so **high** and your reactions so **extreme** that your ability to use skills breaks down.

You can tell that you are at your personal **skills break-down point** when:

- You are completely caught in "emotion mind"
- You can not focus your mind on anything but the emotion itself
- You are so overwhelmed that your brain is not processing information
- You can not problem solve or use any complicated skills



### Managing Extreme Emotions Step-by-Step

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**Step 1: Observe and describe** that you are at your personal **skills break-down point** and are no longer able to be effective.

**Step 2: TIPP** your body chemistry to bring down your arousal

- **Temperature Change**  
Place **ice** pack on or splash icy water on your **cheek bones**  
Do this for at least **30 seconds while holding your breath**
- **Intense Exercise**  
If you are approved for exercise, exercise rigorously for 20 minutes
- **Progressive Relaxation**  
From your head to your toes, relax your body muscles one by one.
- **Paced Breathing**  
Breathe in for a shorter amount of time than you breathe out.  
Ex: Breathe in for the count of 4 and out for the count of 6

## Identifying When You Are Feeling Sad

### Some words people use for sad...

Depressed	Abandoned	Insecure	Lonely
Homesick	Upset	Defeated	Unhappy
Grief	Pity	Distraught	Depressed
Misery	Hurt	Disconnected	Neglected
Disappointed	Rejected	Suffering	

### Events that can trigger feeling sad...or interpreting an events as if one of these things has happened...

- Losing something or someone that is irretrievable
- Things are not the way you expected or wanted and hoped for
- Losing a relationship;
- Being separated from someone you care for or value; thinking about how much you miss someone
- Being rejected or excluded
- Not getting what you've worked for
- Being alone or isolated

### Biological Changes and Experiences of Sadness

- Feeling tired, run-down or low in energy
- Feeling lethargic, listless; wanting to stay in bed all day
- Feeling as if nothing is pleasurable anymore
- Feeling as if you can't stop crying, or feeling that if you ever start crying you will never be able to stop
- Breathlessness

### How you might act when you are feeling sad...

- Avoiding things
- Acting helpless
- Moping, brooding, or acting moody
- Making slow, shuffling movements
- Withdrawing from social contact
- Avoiding activities that used to bring pleasure
- Sitting or lying around 'being inactive
- Staying in bed all day
- Saying sad things
- Talking to someone about sadness
- Talking little or not at all
- Using a quiet, slow, or monotonous voice
- Eyes dropping
- Frowning, not smiling
- Posture slumping
- Sobbing, crying, whimpering
- Giving up and no longer trying to improve

## Identifying When You Are Feeling Angry

### Some words people use for anger...

Angry	Annoyed	Outraged	Cranky
Aggravated	Pissed	Grouchy	Upset
Agitated	Frustrated	Bitter	Irritated

### Events that can trigger feeling angry...or interpreting an events as if one of these things has happened....

- Having an important goal blocked or prevented
- Having an important or pleasurable activity interrupted, postponed, or stopped
- You or someone you care about being attacked or hurt physically or emotionally by others
- You or someone you care about being threatened with physical or emotional pain by someone or something
- You or someone you care about being insulted
- Not obtaining something you want (that another person has)

### Biological Changes and Experiences of Anger

- Muscles tightening
- Teeth clamping together, mouth tightening
- Hands clenching, rigid in your body
- Feeling your face flush or get hot
- Feeling like you are going to explode
- Feeling out of control
- Wanting to hit, bang the wall, throw something, blow up
- Wanting to hurt someone

### How you might act when you are feeling angry...

- Physically attacking the cause of your anger
- Verbally attacking the cause of your anger
- Making aggressive or threatening gestures
- Pounding, throwing things, breaking things
- Walking heavily, stomping, slamming doors
- Walking out
- Using a loud voice, yelling or screaming
- Acting quarrelsome or sarcastic
- Using obscenities or swearing
- Brooding or withdrawing from others

## Identifying When You Are Feeling Fear

### Some words people use for fear...

Scared	Hysterical	Shock	"Freaked out"
Anxious	Nervous	Tense	Worried
Frightened	Overwhelmed	Uneasy	Panic

### Events that can trigger feeling fear...or interpreting an events as if one of these things has happened....

- Having your life, your health or your well-being threatened
- Being in a similar or the same situation where you have been threatened or gotten hurt in the past, or where painful things have happened
- Flashbacks
- Being in situations where you have seen others threatened or be hurt
- Being in a new or unfamiliar situation
- Being alone (e.g. walking alone, being hoe alone, living alone)
- Being in the dark
- Being in crowds
- Having to perform in front of others (e.g. school, work)
- Pursuing your dreams
- Dating/falling in love

### Biological Changes and Experiences of Fear

- Breathlessness, fast heartbeat
- Choking sensation, lump in throat
- Muscles tensing, cramping
- Clenching teeth
- Feeling nauseous
- Feeling you hairs standing on end ("butterflies") in stomach
- Feeling nervous, jittery, or jumpy
- Wanting to run away or avoid things
- Wanting to scream or call out

### How you might act when you are feeling fear...

- Fleeing, running away
- Running or walking hurriedly
- Hiding from or avoiding what you fear
- Engaging in nervous, fearful talk
- Pleading or crying for help
- Talking less or becoming speechless
- Screaming or yelling
- Darting eyes or quickly looking around

## How To Check The Facts



Many emotions and actions are set off by our thoughts, assumptions, and interpretations of events



Examining our thoughts and checking the facts can help shift our emotions

### How to Check the Facts:

1. **Ask:** What is the event prompting my emotional reaction? 
  - Describe the facts that you observed through your senses.
  - Challenge any judgments, extremes, and absolute black-&-white descriptions
  
2. **Ask:** What are my interpretations and thoughts about the facts? 
  - Think of other possible interpretations.
  - Practice looking at all sides of a situation/all points of view
  - If possible, test your interpretations to see if they are correct
  
3. **Ask:** What about this event or situation is worrisome to me? 

Am I assuming a threat?

  - Label the threat
  - Assess the possibility that the threatening event will really occur
  - Think of as many other possible outcomes as you can.
  
4. **Ask:** What is the worst case scenario? 
  - Identify the worst possible outcome to the event or situation
  - Realistically imagine how you would cope with this worst case scenario
  
5. **Ask:** Does my emotion and emotional intensity fit the facts? 
  - Determine now whether your emotions fit the facts
  - Determine whether your emotional intensity fits the facts

## HOW TO ACT OPPOSITE TO WHAT YOUR EMOTIONS ARE "TELLING YOU" TO DO

Opposite action is acting opposite to your emotional urge



Opposite action works when

1. The emotion or the intensity or the duration of the emotion is NOT WARRANTED by the facts of the situation
2. The emotion or the intensity or the duration of the emotion is NOT EFFECTIVE for the situation.

### OPPOSITE ACTION STEP-BY-STEP

---

**Step 1: Check the Facts** to be sure your emotional reaction is not warranted or is not effective for the situation.

**Step 2: Identify Action Urges** associated with your emotion.

**Step 3: Act Opposite** to your urges

**Step 4: Continue Opposite Action** until your emotion goes down at least enough for you to notice.

**Step 5: Repeat . . .** over and over, every chance you get. Keep repeating until your emotional sensitivity to that prompting event decreases.

## Figuring Out Opposite Action for Sadness

When you are feeling sad, you may want to cry, avoid, isolate, stay in bed, listen to sad music, watch sad movies, keep talking about what is making you sad over and over again, keep thinking about what is making you sad over and over again.....

### Instead you should:

1. Get **ACTIVE**; engage, don't avoid people and activities.
2. **PLAN** to do something you already know you enjoy.
3. Find a way to **LAUGH**. Watch comedy. Read jokes. Call a friend.
4. Do **ANYTHING** other than what your sadness is telling you to do.
3. Take Opposite Actions **ALL THE WAY**

#### \* Pay attention to the **PRESENT MOMENT!**

If you are making the effort to do something other than engage in your sad urges, you have to **PAY ATTENTION** to the activity you are choosing

Be mindful of your environment, each detail as it unfolds.

#### \* Change **POSTURE** and keep an **UPBEAT VOICE TONE**.

"Bright" body posture, shoulders back, head up, lift your chin, and make eye contact

#### \* Change **BODY CHEMISTRY**

Increase physical movement; get up and move!

Run, jog, walk, bike, stretch, swim, or do any other active movement

## Figuring Out Opposite Action for Fear

When you are feeling fear, you may want to avoid, run away from, "not do" or confront the thing that is causing you fear. If this "thing" is actually a threat to you (ie a poisonous snake), follow your action urge! However, if it is not life threatening (ie a class presentation), you need to do the that thing over, and over and over again until your fear decreases (this allows you to realize you CAN tolerate it and develop competency for this thing).

If you have something coming up that makes you feel fear, and you plan on doing it, but you still have to effectively manage your feelings until you can confront this "thing", do the following:

1. Problem solve: engage in all the steps necessary to fully prepare for this "thing"

Once you've done that, this is nothing more you can do but tolerate the time as gracefully as possible, so use distractions to tolerate your distress.

### OPPOSITE ACTIONS for FEAR

1. Do what your are afraid of doing OVER and OVER and OVER
  2. APPROACH events, places, tasks, activities, people you are afraid of
  3. Take Opposite Actions ALL THE WAY
- \* Keep your EYES AND EARS OPEN and focused on the feared event.
  - \* Look around slowly, explore, and take in the information from the situation.
    - \* Change POSTURE AND KEEP A CONFIDENT VOICE TONE.
    - \* Keep your head and eyes up, shoulders back but relaxed, Assertive body posture
    - \* Change BODY CHEMISTRY.
    - \* Breathe deeply, all the way into your diaphragm. Breathe slowly.

## Figuring Out Opposite Action for Anger

When you are feeling anger, you may want to "attack"...this could be an urge to physically attack, destroy property, harass someone (call/text/email repeatedly), yell, make sarcastic comments, passively withdraw, etc.

### Instead you should:

1. At best, do something nice for the person who is making you angry.
2. If appropriate, you can treat this person in a loving way.
3. Otherwise, gently AVOID the person you are angry with (rather than attacking)
4. If you can't do something nice for the person who upset you, do something nice for someone else.
5. Take Opposite Actions ALL THE WAY

\* Imagine UNDERSTANDING and EMPATHY for the other person.

\* Step into the other person's shoes. Try to see the situation from their point of view. Imagine what they might have been thinking that would make sense to them

\* Change your POSTURE.

Relax your chest and stomach muscles, unclench your teeth, relax your face muscles, and half-smile. Unclench your hands loosen up your shoulders

\* Change BODY CHEMISTRY (TIPP)

# RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

Pain is a part of living. It can be emotional or physical. Pain is nature's way of telling us something is wrong, or that something needs to be done.

Suffering comes when people are unable or refuse to accept pain...when people cling to what they want or refuse to accept is happening. . Pain can be difficult and near impossible to bear but suffering is self induced and makes everything much worse.

Freedom from suffering requires acceptance from deep within of *what is*. The pain cannot possibly subside until you accept the reality of what has caused the pain.

*Suffering = Pain + Non-Acceptance*

Principles of Radical Acceptance:

- Let go of fighting reality.
- Acceptance is the only way out of pain.
- Deciding to tolerate the moment is Acceptance.
- Acceptance is acknowledging what is.
- Acceptance does not equal "liking it" or "condoning it" or "agreeing with it"

## HOW DO WE RADICALLY ACCEPT THE THINGS WE DON'T WANT TO BE TRUE?

### TURNING THE MIND: Choice and Commitment

- Acceptance of reality as it is requires a CHOICE.
  - It is like coming to a fork in the road. You have to *turn your mind* towards the acceptance road and away from the "rejecting reality" road.
- You have to make an inner COMMITMENT to accept.
  - The COMMITMENT to accept does not itself equal acceptance. It turns you toward the path, and is the first step.
  - You have to turn you mind and commit to acceptance **OVER and OVER and OVER** again. Sometimes you have to make the commitment many times in just a few minutes.

Adapted from: *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder* By Marsha Linehan, Guilford Press, 1993

## WILLINGNESS

Cultivate a *WILLING* response to each situation

- Willingness is doing what is needed in each situation.
  - Focus on being *Effective*.
- Willingness is listening very carefully to your *Wise Mind*
- Willingness is being open to doing something differently.

## WILLFULNESS

Replace *WILLFULNESS* with *WILLINGNESS*

- Willfulness is sitting on your hands when action is needed, refusing to make changes that are needed.
- Willfulness is *GIVING UP*.
- Willfulness is doing the *OPPOSITE* of "Doing what works," of being effective.
- Willfulness is trying to *FIX* every situation.
- Willfulness is refusing to *TOLERATE* the moment.

The goal is to be effective and let go of having to be **right**.

Do you want to be right, or do you want to be effective?

This is a choice, there *ARE* options.

## Problem Solving

**Step 1:** OBSERVE and DESCRIBE the problem, just the actual facts

**Step 2:** Check to make sure everything you are considering to be a “fact” has actual evidence to support it

**Step 3:** If you have made assumptions or are missing data, redefine the problem using JUST THE FACTS

**Step 4:** Identify your GOAL for solving the problem. Double check if this goal is actually achievable

**Step 5:** Brainstorm all different possible solutions, both realistic and even silly. Don't immediately discount a solution just because it might be daunting in some way.

**Step 6:** Choose a solution that is **most likely** to work

**Step 7:** Put the solution into action. If it works, great! If not, try another option from your original brainstorming.

## How to Distract When You Need to Tolerate Distress

The goal of these skills is to tolerate painful events and emotions when you can't make things better right away. The primary function of distracting yourself is not to "feel better" but to not make the situation worse!

Distract with the "ACCEPTS" skill...

### Activities

List options:

### Contributing

List options:

### Comparisons

List options:

### Emotions *(be sure the activity creates different emotions)*

List options:

### Pushing Away

List options:

### Thoughts

List options:

### Sensations

List options:

## Self-soothe with the FIVE SENSES

What does it mean to feel soothed? How do you know when something is soothing for you? How can you use your five sense, separately, or "stacking the deck" to tolerate your distress?

### Vision

List options:

### Hearing

List options:

### Smell

List options:

### Taste

List options:

### Touch

List options:

## Interpersonal Effectiveness

We often experience distress in our lives because of an interaction we have had, or need to have, with another person. If we can increase the likelihood these interactions will meet our goals, we should experience less distress.

In interpersonal interactions, most situations fall into one of three categories:

1. We need to make a request AND are willing to negotiate

Skill: DEARMAN

2. We need to set a limit, say no, preserve our self-respect

Skill: FAST

3. We want to create or maintain a good relationship

Skill: GIVE

In order to have the best chance of being effective, we first have to figure out what our PRIMARY goal is for an interpersonal situation. This directs us to the appropriate skill.

## How to Make a Request When You Are Willing to Negotiate

*\*start by asking, "Is now a good time to talk for a few minutes?" Be willing to have to put the conversation on hold for a time this person can really be present and listen.*

### Describe

Describe the situation. Tell the person exactly what you are responding to. Use **only the facts**.

### Express

Express your feelings and opinions by using "I" statements ("I feel ...," "I would like ..."). Do not assume that the other person knows how you feel. Stay away from "You should ..."  
People often listen better if you **first** validate their possible feelings/experiences/worries of a situation. It can be helpful to start by validating them, then share one of your feelings, then validate them, until you are able to express all of your key feelings

### Assert

Ask for what you want clearly, with no hesitation. "I would like you to" vs. "So, if at all possible, it would be great if you could". Remember, the other person cannot read your mind.

### Reinforce

Reward the person ahead of time by explaining the positive effects **for them** of you getting what you want. Why is it in their best interest to do what you are asking?

### (stay) Mindful

Keep your focus on what you want, avoid distractions. Come back to your assertion over and over; be a "broken record." Ignore attacks; keep making your point.

Appear Confident Make (and maintain) eye contact. Use a confident tone of voice and body posture.

### Negotiate

Be willing to "give to get." Offer alternative solutions to the problem. If you can't come to an agreement, "turn the tables" and see if they can offer a solution. Some people need the resolution to come from them

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## How To Set a Limit, Say No, Preserve our Self-Respect

Use this skill when your PRIMARY goal is to develop and keep your self-respect. A way to remember these skills is to remember the word "FAST:"

**(be) Fair**

**(no) Apologies**

**Stick to Values**

**(be) Truthful**

**(be) Fair**

Be fair to YOURSELF and to the OTHER person.

**(no over) Apologies**

Do not OVER apologize. If there is a need, sincerely apologize once. If you over apologize, it is often interpreted, by the other person, as you NOT having a firm line. In turn, they may not respect the boundary you are trying to set.

**Stick to Values**

Stick to YOUR OWN values.

It doesn't matter what the other person's values are..this is about YOUR values.

**(be) Truthful**

Don't lie, act helpless when you're not, or exaggerate. Don't make up excuses. When we do this, it is often conveyed as us being hesitant about the limit we are trying to set. In turn, this can lead to the other person continuing to try to "push" for what they want.

## How to Create or Keep a Good Relationship

Use this skill when your primary goal is to create and/or keep a good relationship or a relationship you need to keep "working" well.

A way to remember this skill is to remember the word "GIVE:"

**(be) Gentle**

**(act) Interested**

**Validate**

**(use an) Easy Manner**

**(be) Gentle**

Be courteous and open-minded in your approach.

No Attacks

No verbal or physical attacks. No hitting, clenching fists. Express anger by using "I feel ..."

No Threats

No "manipulative" statements, no hidden threats. No "I'll kill myself if you..." Tolerate a 'no' to requests. Stay in the discussion even if it gets painful. Exit gracefully.

No Judging

No moralizing or preaching. No "If you were a good person, you would..." or "You should..." or "You shouldn't..."

**(act) Interested**

Listen and be interested in the other person.

Listen to the other person's point of view. Don't interrupt, talk over, etc. Be sensitive to the person's desire to have the discussion at a later time. Be patient.

**Validate**

Validate or acknowledge the other person's feelings, wants, difficulties, and opinions about the situation. Be nonjudgmental out loud: "I can understand how you feel," "I realize that this is hard for you," and "I see that you're busy, but could we talk for a minute?"

**(use an) Easy Manner**

Use a little humor. Smile. Ease the person along, be light-hearted. Use a "soft-sell" over a "hard-sell."

# Ways to Regularly Engage in Life and Take Care of Yourself To Increase Your Emotional Stability

A way to remember these skills is to remember the term "ABC PLEASE".

**A**

## Accumulate Positive Emotions

Short Term: Do pleasant things that are possible now  
Long Term: Make changes in your life so that positive events will occur more often. Build a "life worth living".

**B**

## Build Mastery

Do things that make you feel competent and effective as a line of defense against helplessness and hopelessness.

**C**

## Cope Ahead of Time with Emotional Situations

Rehearse a plan ahead of time so that you are prepared to cope skillfully with emotional situations.

**PLEASE**

Take Care of Your Mind by  
Taking Care of Your Body

## Using Cope Ahead to More Effectively Manage a Future Problem

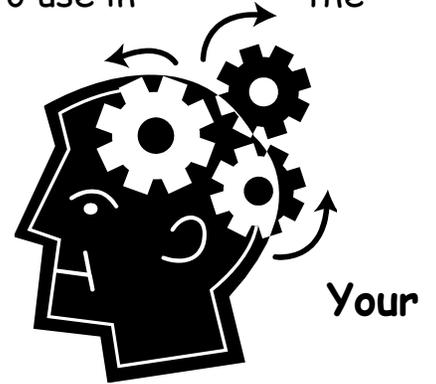
**Describe** a situation that is likely to prompt skills-interfering emotions

- Name the emotions most likely to interfere with using your skills

**Decide** what coping or problem solving skills you want to use in the situation

**Imagine the situation** in your mind as vividly as possible

**Rehearse** in your mind coping effectively



## Taking Care of Your Mind by Taking Care of Body

\*Remember these as "PLEASE" skills

**PL** Treat **Physical LIllness** by...seeing a doctor when necessary. Take medication if it will help you feel better. Don't allow yourself to suffer from physical symptoms unnecessarily

**E**Balance **Eating**...eat balanced meals and snacks at regular intervals throughout the day to reduce fatigue and blood sugar swings

**A** Avoid mood-**Altering** drugs...stay off non-prescribed drugs if they make you vulnerable to emotions

**S**Balance **Sleep**...try to get adequate sleep. Design and practice better sleep hygiene if you have difficulty sleeping.

**E**Exercise...moderate exercise on a regular basis has been shown to be as effective as a low dose anti-depressant. It is very helpful for regulating high and low mood swings.

Remember how emotionally vulnerable you become when you are not taking care of your body's basic health needs

## DBT SKILLS – QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

- 1. Wise Mind:** Be aware of Emotion Mind, Rational Mind, and Wise Mind. The way out of Emotion Mind is by engaging in a Mindfulness Activity.  
**\*Wise Mind = Emotion Mind + Rational Mind**
- 2. Observe:** JUST NOTICE. Observe with your five senses. Don't label or put into words.
- 3. Describe:** Describe in detail what you are experiencing (touch, taste, vision, hearing, smell).
- 4. Participate:** Completely participate. Don't just Observe or Describe. Don't worry about what came before or what will come after, just engage in the moment.
- 5. Non-Judgmental Stance:** Acknowledge without judging. Describe the facts of the situation without adding opinions. Recognize consequences of behavior without judging them to be positive or negative.
- 6. Effectively:** Doing what it takes to meet your goal, even if the situation feels unfair and we wish it were different.
- 7. DEAR MAN:** **D**escribe the facts of the situation. **E**xpress feelings. **A**ssert what you want. **R**einforce desired responses. Be **M**indful in order to stay focused on your goal (be a Broken Record). **A**ppear confident, even if you don't feel that way. **N**egotiate: be prepared to bargain.
- 8. GIVE:** Be **G**entle in your approach. Act **I**nterested – listen to the other person. **V**alidate the other person's view point. Use an **E**asy manner.
- 9. FAST:** Be **F**air to yourself and others. Don't over **A**pologize. **S**tick to your Values. Be **T**ruthful.
- 10. ABC PLEASE:** **A**ccumulate positive events by planning activities you enjoy. **B**uild Mastery by engaging in activities you already excel in, or can improve in. **C**ope Ahead of Time for distressing situations. Treat **P**hysical **I**llness. Balance **E**ating. **A**void mood-altering drugs. Balance **S**leep. **E**ngage your body.
- 11. Check the Facts:** Determine whether your emotional responses and actions are warranted by the facts of the situation.
- 12. Problem Solving:** Identify your goal in managing your emotions, brainstorm solutions, choose a solution that is likely to help you reach your goal, and put the solution into action.
- 13. Opposite to Emotion Action:** Be mindful of the action urge that goes along with each emotion and act opposite to that urge. (e.g. sometimes we are angry and have the urge to attack someone – instead try to remember the fun you've had with them in the past).
- 14. Distract:** Focus your attention on something other than emotion. Distract with Wise Mind **ACCEPTS**: by **A**ctivities, **C**ontributing, **C**omparisons, creating a new **E**motion, **P**ushing Away, **T**houghts, **S**ensations.
- 15. Self-Soothe:** Engage in activity which is calming. Use any or all of your five senses: Sight, Smell, Touch, Taste, and Hearing. Ex: Take a bubble bath and notice the smells, sounds, and feel of it.
- 16. IMPROVE the Moment:** Do something that will improve the moment you are in. **I**magery, **M**eaning, **P**rayer, **R**elaxation, **O**ne thing in the moment, **V**acation, **E**ncouragement.
- 17. PROS and CONS:** Make a list of the reasons for and against tolerating a crisis or engaging in some particular activity.
- 18. Radical Acceptance:** When your situation cannot improve, accept reality as it is right now. Turn your mind back to this acceptance over and over

