

Skills for Effective Communication & Distress Tolerance

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Workshop Goals

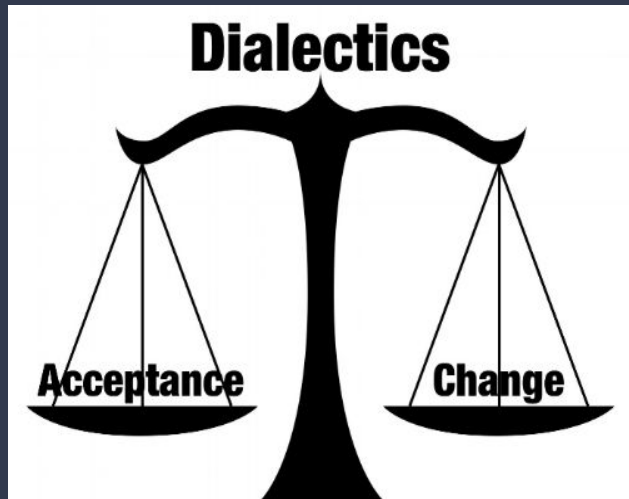
- Understand common reactions to recent world stressors
- Understand vulnerabilities to negative emotions
- Learn validation skills
- Learn skills for tolerating distressing emotions

Overview of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)



- Skills-based curriculum that helps students with emotional problem-solving
 - **Mindfulness**
 - **Distress Tolerance**
 - Emotion Regulation
 - Interpersonal Effectiveness
 - **Walking the Middle Path**
- Understand our emotions, feel our emotions, without necessarily letting them run the show
- Label emotions, thoughts, urges - and then decide what to do

Dialectics in DBT



- Dialectical means two seemingly opposite ideas can both be true at the same time
- A worldview encapsulated by the idea that there is no one truth
- Moving away from “either/or” to “both/and”
- Looking for what is being left out

*I am doing our best, and I need to do better.
I understand your perspective, and I disagree with you.*

*I feel nervous about this, and I can handle it.
Some days are easy, and some days are hard.*

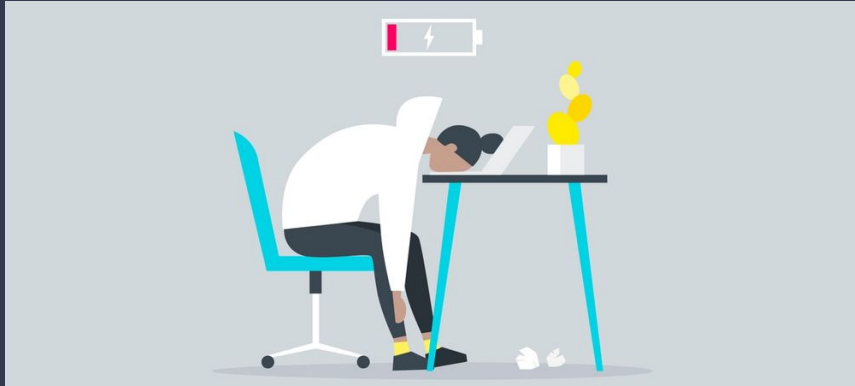
What is emotion dysregulation?

- Difficulty identifying, labeling, & naming emotions
- Difficulty noticing emotions at low intensities
- Difficulty not acting on emotion urges
- Difficulty controlling emotions and modulating their intensity
- Difficulty sitting with and tolerating aversive emotions
- Emotions taking over, making it hard to stay focused or be productive
- Emotional outbursts interfering with relationships with family and friends

But what are common reactions do we expect from our kids?

- More emotion dysregulation
- Decreased motivation for school
- Disrupted sleep
- Elevated sadness
- New fears or anxieties, particularly around health matters and general uncertainty
- More difficulty with authority
- Greater push for privacy
- Increased (desire for) screentime

Common reactions for parents



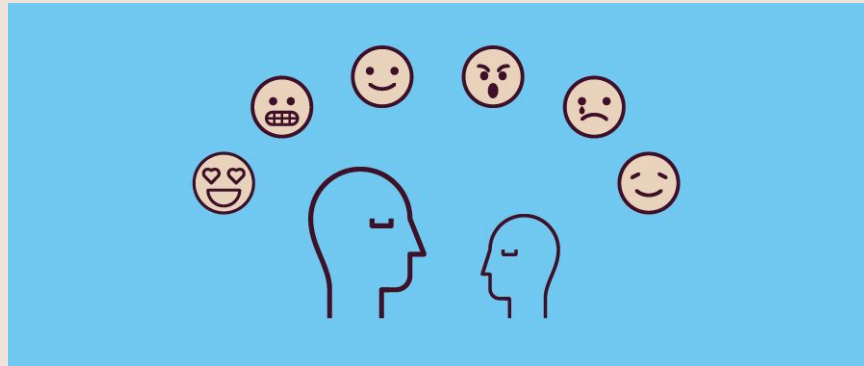
- More burnout across settings, contexts, and roles
- Burnout is a reaction to chronic work and life stressors, including stressors about our children's well-being
- State of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion
- Feeling of being overwhelmed
- Emotion dysregulation
- Difficulty with communicating with others
- Disrupted sleep
- Feeling less motivated and productive
- Self-judgments
- Ruminative thinking

What makes us & our kids more prone to burnout?

- Emotional vulnerabilities
 - Quick, sensitive emotions
 - Big, reactive emotions
 - Long-lasting emotions, leading to a slow return to baseline
- Feeling invalidated, misunderstood, ignored, or dismissed by others
- Emotional vulnerability + invalidation = persistent, frequent, intense difficulties with emotions, relationships, & behavior

Improving Communication with Validation

- Validation communicates to another person that his or her feelings, thoughts, or actions make sense
- Confirming, authenticating, corroborating, verifying
- Validation does not necessarily mean that you agree with what the other person is saying, doing, or feeling



A woman with long dark hair is shown in profile, looking to the left. A single nail is driven into her forehead. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

IT'S **NOT**
ABOUT
THE
NAIL

Validation – How To

Why bother?

- It strengthens relationships!
- It reduces emotional dysregulation
- It shows that you:
 - Are listening
 - Understand (or are trying to understand)
 - Are being non-judgmental
 - Care
- Validate before problem-solving

What can I validate?

- Emotions, thoughts, urges, behaviors
- The importance of the problem
- Task difficulty
- Emotional pain
- Feeling out of control
- Things being harder than they used to
- Difficulty tolerating uncertainty
- Sadness, anxiety, fear
- Doing the best they can

What does validation sound like?

Validation doesn't necessarily mean that you agree with someone's thoughts or behaviors, it **means that you can recognize their feelings.**

@MYSIGNATURENUTRITION

It makes sense that you feel...

I can understand why you want to...

This sounds really upsetting.

Of course you are feeling...

This is tough! This sucks.

I can see you are trying your best.

Validation is not:

- What's the big deal?
- You're being too sensitive
- Just calm down!
- Don't worry about it, you'll get it next time!
- There are bigger problems in the world!
- Don't be so angry.

What gets in the way of validation?

- Often times - emotions, stress, worry, and burnout
- In order to validate others (and ourselves), we need to take care of our own emotions by using Distress Tolerance skills

DBT Distress Tolerance

- Short-term skills & solutions that help us tolerate difficult situations when problems cannot be solved right away
- Help reduce the intensity of our emotional distress
- Help us distract from emotional pain (in the short term)
- Re-regulate so that we can communicate effectively
- Reduce acting impulsively
- To use: label emotion, label what is distressing me - then be willing to take a break
- *Can model effective coping*

Distracting with ACCEPTS

- Wise mind: synthesis of reason and emotion
- Goal: short-term distraction from whatever is driving painful emotions
- Time-limited
- Shared family distracting activities
- Distraction materials, box, corner, room

Crisis Survival Skills: Distract with “Wise Mind ACCEPTS”

<u>Activities</u>	Do something. Call, e-mail, text, or visit a friend; watch a favorite movie or TV show; play your instrument or sing; play videogames; draw, cook, or bake; write in a journal; clean your room; go for a walk or exercise; read a book; listen to your iPod, go online and download music, apps; play a game with yourself or others.
<u>Contributing</u>	Contribute to (do something nice for) someone. Help a friend or sibling with homework; make something nice for someone else; donate things you don't need; surprise someone with a hug, a note, or a favor; volunteer.
<u>Comparisons</u>	Compare yourself to those less fortunate. Compare how you are feeling now to a time when you were doing worse. Think about others who are coping the same or less well than you.
<u>Emotions</u>	Create different emotions. Watch a funny TV show or emotional movie; listen to soothing or upbeat music; get active when you are sad; go to a store and read funny greeting cards or joke books.
<u>Pushing away</u>	Push the painful situation out of your mind temporarily. Leave the situation mentally by moving your attention and thoughts away; build an imaginary wall between you and the situation. Put the pain in a box and on a shelf for a while.
<u>Thoughts</u>	Replace your thoughts. Read; do word or number puzzles; count numbers, colors in a poster, tiles on a wall, anything; repeat the words to a song in your mind.
<u>Sensations</u>	Intensify other sensations. Hold or chew ice; listen to loud music; take a warm or cold shower; squeeze a stress ball; do sit-ups and push-ups; pet your dog or cat.

Self-Soothe

- Goal: Activate a sense of safety, calm, soothing
- Can use preventatively - before a difficult conversation, before working on homework

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 5

Crisis Survival Skills: Self-Soothe with Six Senses

VISION **HEARING**
SMELL **TASTE**
TOUCH **MOVEMENT**

- Vision** Go to your favorite place and take in all the sights; look at a photo album; zone out to a poster/picture; notice colors in a sunset; people watch.
- Hearing** Listen to your favorite music and play it over and over again; pay attention to sounds in nature (birds, rain, thunder, traffic); play an instrument or sing; listen to a sound machine.
- Smell** Put on your favorite lotion; use a scented aftershave or body wash; make cookies or popcorn; smell freshly brewed coffee; go to the park and “smell the roses.”
- Taste** Eat some of your favorite foods; drink your favorite nonalcoholic beverage; have your favorite flavor of ice cream; really notice the food you eat; eat one thing mindfully; don’t overdo it!
- Touch** Take a long bath or shower; pet your dog or cat; get a massage; brush your hair; hug or be hugged; put a cold cloth on your head; change into your most comfortable clothes.
- Movement** Rock yourself gently; stretch; go for a run; do yoga; dance!

Thank you!

Questions?

cbc-psychology.com

