

UNC School of Social Work  
Clinical Lecture Institutes

## **The DBT Skills**

presented by  
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## **Our Agenda**

- Mindfulness
- Business
- Homework
- Skills

## **Mindfulness**

## **Business**

After today, what can I do  
with my DBT knowledge?

## **Role of the Individual DBT Therapist**

- Provide individual DBT therapy
  - Get the commitment to DBT
  - Diary cards
  - Skills coaching phone calls
- Deal with crises
- Identify the target behaviors (TB)
- Respond to SI, NSSIB, and TBs by using Behavior Chain Analysis
- Be on a DBT consultation team

### Role of the DBT Group Therapist

- Teacher
- Consultant to the individual DBT therapist
- DBT group therapist does not:
  - Provide therapy
  - Offer skills coaching outside of class
  - Take messages to the individual therapist

## Homework

Who wants to tell us about DBT, and what do you want us to know?

## A Brief History of DBT

- Designed by Marsha Linehan, Ph.D., 1980s and 90s
- Designed for suicidal and self-harming patients with Borderline Personality Disorder
- Theoretical underpinnings include cognitive, behavioral, client-centered, and Zen orientations
- Useful for anyone who is emotionally sensitive, with multiple, chronic, severe, and difficult-to-treat problems, on Axis I and/or Axis II

- Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder published 1993, along with accompanying skills training manual
- Behavioral Tech (behavioraltech.org) and the Linehan Institute are her research, treatment, and training entities
- Additional research has been conducted on DBT with teens, families, people with substance abuse, the depressed elderly, and those with eating disorders, as well as more recent research on Stage 2 of treatment
- Revised/updated skills training manual published November, 2014

## Why DBT?

“To learn and refine skills in changing behavioral, emotional, and thinking patterns associated with problems in living that are causing misery and distress.” (Linehan, 1993)

- Dialectical: the tension between two opposites, e.g., acceptance and change
- Behavior: DBT teaches people skills they need and may not have, to help them live more effectively
- Therapy: Treatment is both individual, with a DBT-trained therapist, and group, in a weekly skills class. The ability of both individual and group therapists to combine warmth, nurturing, and validation with absolute insistence upon learning and applying the skills so that the patient’s treatment goals can be met, cannot be overstated

## The goal of DBT

The ultimate goal of DBT is to help the person have a life worth living.



## The Problem Hierarchy

- DBT has four stages of treatment
- Stage 1: Severe Behavioral Dyscontrol
  - When the house is burning down, the thing to do is to put the fire out. Later we can investigate why it got started, if we want.



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- Stage 2 - Quiet desperation. Here is where uncovering and insight-oriented work takes place to move the person to emotional experiencing
  - Stage 3 - Problems in living. Help the person achieve ordinary happiness and unhappiness
  - Stage 4 - Incompleteness. Help the person develop the capacity for living joyously, free of the past

## Skills

### Assumption:

Because of emotional vulnerability (biological) plus the invalidating environment (social) the emotionally sensitive person does not have these skills

## Rational (Reason) Mind

- Rational thinking
- Logical, concrete
- Planning, organizing, evaluating
- Problem-solving
- Cool-headed
- Unflappable
- Total absence of emotions
- Sgt. Joe Friday, Spock, or Data

## Emotion Mind

- Emotions are in control of thoughts and behaviors
- Hot-headed
- Fly off the handle
- Artistic temperament
- A sports car: 0 - 60 in < 2 seconds

## Body Mind

- Body sensations
- What do you feel in your body?
- Where do you feel it?
- What do you notice, what clues are there?

## Wise Mind

- Joining emotion and rational mind (and body mind) to form something deeper and higher
- Your 'gut' or intuition
- Point of balance in your thinking
- Your 'third eye'

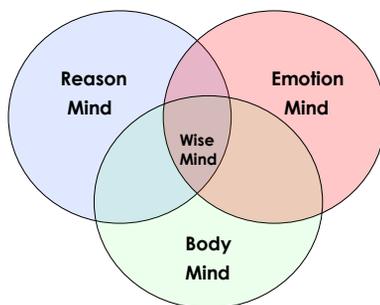
## Wise Mind

When skillful, we are in Wise Mind. Wise Mind is the place where Emotion Mind, Rational Mind, and Body Mind intersect.

## How Do I Know It's Wise Mind?

- Is the feeling passionate or moderated?
- Is there a balance between emotions and reason?
- Does the decision have staying power?
- What is your breathing like?

Wouldn't it be nice to be in Wise Mind all the time?



So what the heck are these skills, anyway?

- Core Mindfulness**  
(to decrease cognitive dysregulation)
- Interpersonal Effectiveness**  
(to decrease interpersonal chaos)
- Emotional Regulation**  
(to decrease affective lability)
- Distress Tolerance**  
(to decrease impulsivity and mood-dependent behaviors)

## Core Mindfulness

- Problems:
  - Avoidance of discomfort produces maladaptive behaviors
  - Sense of internal emptiness
  - Feeling overwhelmed
  - Believing that with enough effort one can get what one wants
  - Despair that life isn't fair

## Core Mindfulness

- Goals of the module:
  - To learn to observe one's thoughts, feelings, and body sensations without reacting to them
  - To cultivate a non-judgmental stance
  - To participate in life with awareness, because participation without awareness is characteristic of impulsive and mood-dependent behaviors
  - To approach, not avoid

## Core Mindfulness Skills

- Observe
- Describe
- Participate
- One-mindfully
- Non-judgmentally
- Effectively

## “What (to do)” Skills

- Observe (just notice)
- Describe (put words on)
- Participate (comes in handy when you're doing something you don't want to do)

## “How” Skills

- One-mindfully (just this one thing, for just this one moment)
- Non-judgmentally (neither good nor bad)
- Effectively (focus on what works)

## Non-judgmentally



## Non-judgmentally



## Effectively



## Mindfulness

- Being 'full of mind'
- A state, an attitude, a perspective
- Being fully in the current moment
- A way of paying attention
- A way of finding your center or balance
- A lampshade to direct your attention

Mindfulness is not a destination.  
It's a walk. It's an opportunity to  
see what your mind does.



## Interpersonal Effectiveness

- Problems:
  - Chaotic interpersonal relationships
  - Not knowing how to balance what one needs with what others want
  - Giving, giving, giving... until one explodes
  - Doing anything to avoid the other person being upset

## Interpersonal Effectiveness

- Goals of the module:
  - Decrease interpersonal chaos
  - Ask for what you want
  - Say "no" and be taken seriously
  - Build relationships and end destructive ones
  - Sustain or increase self-respect
  - Walk the "middle path", balancing acceptance and change, wants and needs in relationships

## Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

- Clarify interpersonal goals
- DEAR MAN
- GIVE
- FAST
- Build or end relationships

## Clarify Interpersonal Goals

- Objective or goal: what do I want to have be different at the end of this conversation?
- Relationship: How do I want the other person to feel about me at the end of this conversation?
- Self-respect: How do I want to feel about myself at the end of this conversation?

## DEAR MAN

- Describe the situation
- Express your feelings
- Ask for what you want or say “no”
- Reinforce (sweeten the pill, state the consequences if you do not get what you want)
- Stay Mindful (broken record, ignore attacks)
- Appear effective and competent
- Negotiate if necessary

## GIVE

- Gentle manner without attack or threat
- Act Interested
- Validate the other person’s point of view
- Easy does it, use the soft sell

## FAST

- Be Fair to both yourself and the other person
- No Apologies
- Stick to your values
- Be Truthful: no lying, excuses, or exaggeration

## Build (or End) Relationships

- Finding and getting people to like you
  - Look for people who are nearby
  - Look for people who are similar to you
  - Work on your conversational skills
  - Express liking (judiciously)
  - Join a group
- Be mindful of others
  - Observe
  - Describe
  - Participate

## (Build or) End Relationships

- Only make the decision to end a relationship in Wise Mind
- Use skills
  - Problem-solving (from ER) to repair a difficult but not destructive relationship
  - Cope Ahead (ER) to practice ending the relationship
  - DEAR MAN GIVE FAST (IPE)
  - Opposite Action (ER) for love, if you love someone who is destructive or abusive

## Additional Skills

- Dialectics
- Validation
  - Of others
  - Of oneself
  - Responding to invalidation
  - Strategies to change behavior

## Emotion Regulation

- Problems:
  - Discomfort with emotions
  - Intense emotional reactions
  - Mood swings

## Emotion Regulation

- Goals of the module:
  - Accept that emotions are a part of life and strive for some control over them (not total control)
  - Understand why we have emotions
  - Reduce emotional vulnerability
  - Decrease emotional suffering
  - Increase positive emotional experiences
  - Learn to act in ways opposite to the emotion

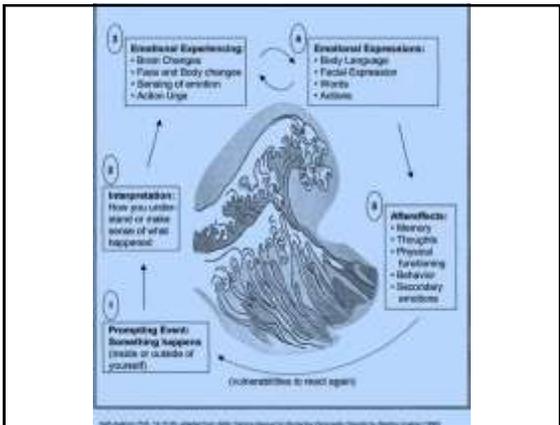
## Emotion Regulation Skills

- Check the facts
- Do opposite action
- Problem-solve
- Accumulate positives A
- Build Mastery B
- Cope Ahead C  
of the current emotion

## Understand Emotions

- Emotions recruit about 98% of our bodies to express themselves
- These are the basic emotions:
  - Joy
  - Sadness
  - Fear
  - Anger
  - Love
  - Shame
  - Envy
  - Jealousy
  - Disgust
  - Guilt

- All feelings are valid, all the time (yours, too)
- We have emotions for a reason
  - To communicate with and influence others
  - To organize and motivate ourselves and others to action
  - To self-validate



- ### Check the Facts
- Prompting Event
    - Interpretation (thought, belief, story, myth)
      - Automatic physiological changes
        - Body language and action urges
        - EMOTION!!!
    - Ask: is my interpretation accurate? How do I know?
      - Are there other possible interpretations?
      - Does my emotion or its intensity fit the facts?

- ### Do Opposite Action
- When afraid, approach
  - When depressed, get active
  - When angry, gently avoid/be kind
  - When ashamed, continue behavior openly
    - Do it over and over and over, or
    - Share the shame, and/or
    - Treat yourself with respect

- ### Problem-solve
- Describe the problem situation
  - Check the facts (all of them!)
  - Identify your goal in solving the problem
  - Brainstorm many possible solutions
  - Choose one that is likely to work
  - Take action – try it out!
  - Assess and evaluate your results

- ### Accumulate Positives
- Short-term (on a daily basis)
  - Long-term (build a life worth living, step by step)
  - Be unmindful of worries

## Build Mastery

- Do what leaves you feeling competent, confident, and capable
- Combat hopelessness and helplessness

## Cope Ahead

- Develop and rehearse a plan to deal skillfully with challenging situations
- Different from ruminating

## Reducing Emotional Vulnerability

### • PLEASE

- Take care of *Physical* health

- Balanced *Eating*

- Avoid mood-altering drugs

- Get the amount of *Sleep* that's right for you

- Get *Exercise*



## Mindfulness of the Current Emotion

- Suppressing emotions increases emotional suffering
- Attentional control is a prerequisite for emotional control
- Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional
- "I can't" is your mortal enemy

## Distress Tolerance

- Problems:
  - Impulsivity
  - Inability to delay gratification
  - Inability to endure distress

## Distress Tolerance

- Goals of the module:
  - Survive crises
  - Have a "first aid kit" for tough situations
  - Learn how to get through a difficult situation without making it worse and without harming yourself or anyone else

## When to Use These Skills?

- When we cannot solve the problem
- When we cannot solve the problem right now
- When we need to distract ourselves from urges or emotional distress
- (If you can solve the problem, solve it!)

## Distress Tolerance Skills

## STOP

- Stop
- Take a step back
- Observe
- Proceed mindfully

## Pros and Cons

- What is the payoff for using skills and tolerating the distress?
- What are the drawbacks to being skillful?
- What is the payoff for losing it, freaking out, picking up?
- What are the costs of losing it, freaking out, using?

## TIP

- Temperature
- Intense Exercise
- Paced Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## Distress Tolerance Skills

- Wise Mind ACCEPTS
  - Activities
  - Contribute
  - Compare yourself to others who aren't doing as well as you
  - Change your Emotions
  - Push away thoughts
  - Think of other things
  - Sensations

## Activities

- Engage in an activity that is unrelated to the distressing urge or emotion
  - Go to the movies
  - Go for a walk
  - Have a cup of tea
  - Do some gardening
  - Listen to music



## Contribute

- Give to someone or something
  - Volunteer work
  - Give a compliment
  - Random acts of kindness
- Shifts attention away from your problems
- Makes you feel really good about yourself
- Be mindful about using this skill!

## Comparison

- Compare yourself to those suffering more
- Focus on the more positive aspects of your life
- Highlight what you are grateful for
- Has to be a 'downward' comparison
  - Read old journal entries
  - Watch soap operas
  - Watch the news

## Change your Emotions

- Generate the opposite emotion to the current, unwanted emotion
- Must identify the unwanted emotion before choosing an activity to disrupt it (hee hee - this is tough!)
  - Scary movies
  - Joke books
  - Comedies
  - Funny greeting cards

## Push Away Thoughts

- Put a situation at arm's length
- Leave the environment
- "Step out" of your mind
- Do not dissociate
  - Build an imaginary wall
  - Take a time out
  - Censor ruminating
  - Put pain in a box
  - "Don't go there"

## Substitute Different Thoughts

- Emotions love themselves
- Emotions spark thoughts that bring on more of the same emotion
- Interrupt this pattern with alternative thoughts
  - Thought-stopping technique of your choice
  - Count to 10
  - Count anything
  - Puzzles
  - Read

## Sensations

- Distract yourself with other, attention-grabbing sensations
  - Hold an ice cube
  - Bite a lemon
  - Take a very hot shower
  - Snap an elastic band



## Self-soothe

- Self-soothe the five senses
  - Taste
  - Touch
  - Sight
  - Hearing
  - Smell

## IMPROVE the moment

- Imagery
- Find **M**eaning in the pain
- **P**rayer
- **R**elaxation
- **O**ne thing, in the moment
- **M**ini-**V**acation
- **E**ncourage yourself

## Imagery

- Imagine yourself handling the situation skillfully
- Use creative visualization to go to a safe place



## Meaning-making

- What is the meaning of this pain?
- Is there something I can learn from this?
- This can open the door to a spiritual exploration. (How can there be a loving God when so much unhappiness exists?)

## Prayer

- Not “why me?”
- The Serenity Prayer is a useful one here

## Relaxation

- Many techniques exist
  - Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Squeeze-and-release
  - Guided imagery
  - Mindful breathing



## One thing in the moment

- “I can do something for 24 hours that would kill me if I thought I had to do it for a lifetime.”
- “Just this one moment, that’s all I have to get through”
- Put the blinders on

## Mini-vacation

- Take a break from the distressing situation
- The key is to make it a mini-vacation
  - About 20 minutes
  - Pull the covers over your head for a bit
  - Then go back to the situation

## Encourage Yourself

- Cheerlead yourself
- “Just do it!”
- “Good job!”
- “This, too, shall pass”

## Radical Acceptance

- Acceptance does not mean approval
- Reality is what it is
- Life should be worth living even when there’s pain in it
- The opposite of acceptance is immovable willfulness
  - Because we believe there is a threat
  - Because we believe to accept will be a catastrophe

## Mindfulness of Current Thoughts

- Observe your thoughts
- Be curious
- You are not your thoughts (you don’t have to act)
- Don’t block or suppress thoughts

## Pearls

**What's one pearl you'll  
take away from today?**

### List of resources are available online

- Go to clinical lecture series website:  
<http://cls.unc.edu>
- Then to Clinical Institutes, select DBT Skills  
<http://cls.unc.edu/upcoming-programs-2014-2015/clinical-institutes/dbt-skills-workshops>
- Find “resource list” link  
<https://cls.unc.edu/files/2014/10/Resource-List.pdf>