Background:

Imagine that you have been working with Joan for six months using DBT. She has completed one module of DBT skills training (the interpersonal effectiveness module).

In general, Joan has been open to the DBT concepts and has some capacity to look at her own behavior at times. She has managed to keep her job at Macy's at Southpoint as a sales clerk. Overall the job has been going well and she has been feeling better having a paycheck, being able to pay her bills, and this has lessened conflict with her parents. Joan has made friends with a woman at work, Tameka and you've been hearing about this for several weeks. Joan is very excited about this since she has few friends and you've been a little worried that she's going to scare Tameka off with her neediness.

Remember that her main target behaviors are self harm (she has since committed to the one year moratorium on suicide) alcohol (she had agreed to quit and did so according to her diary cards), pot smoking, conflict with parents .

She tends to alternate between feeling depressed, worthless and like she is terrible person and feeling enraged and lashing out. When she is in that angry state, she blames others and takes little responsibility for her own actions. When she is in the depressed, "wanting to cut" state, she sees EVERYTHING as her fault and feels like she is a terrible person.

Session to role play:

In this session, Joan comes in very chipper and in a good mood. But you notice on her diary card that she cut herself on Sunday. None of her other problematic behaviors were engaged in this week according to the diary card. It is unusual for Joan to hurt herself, this has only happened 2 times since starting therapy. Joan doesn't raise the issue and wants to talk about her interest in buying a car and her parents not supporting that. You need to bring up the self harm because it is highest in hierarchy for this week's session. Once you get her to talk about what happened, your job is to elicit details and do a "chain analysis" of the self harm incident.

Remember that a chain analysis involves identifying what led up to the incident—what were the links in the chain? These include:

vulnerability factors,

 prompting event,

 thoughts and feelings before the target behavior occurred,

what did they try to help them feel better,

did they use any skills or try to use any skills?

Focus on just filling out the chain of events thoroughly and sensitively using validation throughout. If you have time you can start to look at the skillful behaviors or prevention plans for future incidents.