

Basic DBT Group: Distress Tolerance

Learning Objectives

- Provide situations where these techniques are applicable
- Understand that reactive and negative emotional actions are not ideal
- List different activities and strategies one can utilize in acute stressful situation

Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Combines cognitive-behavioral techniques for emotion regulation and reality-testing with concepts of distress tolerance, mindful awareness.
- Group components
 - Core mindfulness
 - Interpersonal effectiveness
 - Emotional regulation
 - *Distress tolerance*

Distress Tolerance

- Used when: Unable, unwilling, or it would be inappropriate to change a situation
- Accept, in a non-evaluative and non-judgemental fashion, both oneself and the current situation at hand
- Goal
 - Become capable of calmly recognizing negative situations and their impact, rather than becoming overwhelmed or hiding from them
 - Make wise decisions about how to take action, rather than falling into intense, desperate, and destructive emotional reactions

Acute Stress Triggers

- Negative interactions with individuals
- Craving
- Environment
- Financial situations
- Employment

Why to do...?

- Acting out in an acutely stressful situation can lead to negative consequences
 - Fights
 - Damage to relationships
 - Substance abuse and relapse
 - Perception of being “hot headed”
- Sometimes stepping back and emotionally separating from a situation can be useful
 - Helps you reapproach the problem
 - Keeps anger, frustration, and grief at bay so they do not interfere
 - Allows you to make more sound decisions

Two Acronyms to help in distress tolerance...

1. "IMPROVE" the moment

I	Imagery	Safe place visualisation (go to your "happy place")
M	Meaning	Find meaning in the situation or how you are feeling
P	Prayer	Meditation, spirituality, affirmations
R	Relaxation	Breathe deeply, meditate, self-soothing actions
O	One thing at a time	Break down time and tasks into pieces; keep yourself in the present and pay attention to what you are doing right that instant
V	Vacation	Take a time-out, separate yourself from the situation
E	Encouragement	Positive and calming self-talk; speak with a mentor

2. Wise mind "ACCEPTS"

A	Activities	Hobbies, reading, listening to music, watching TV/ movies, writing
C	Contributing	Helping others, volunteering, aiding others with their problems, doing chores
C	Comparisons	"Things could be worse," comparing yourself to others who have it worse off
E	Emotions	Generate different emotions by watching movies, writing/ journaling, listening to music that is happy or upbeat or positive
P	Pushing Away	Thinking or putting our attention into something else, walking away from the situation
T	Thoughts	Counting things, "playing 10" (counting 10 colors in the room, 10 musical instruments, 10 fruits, 10 Bond films, etc...)
S	Sensation	Using senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching) to create meaningful distraction

Self-Soothing

- Behave in a kind, comforting, nurturing way to yourself
- Can be affirmations or an action that allows you to be easy on yourself
- Can use all five senses to self-sooth
 - Vision—walk and take in surroundings
 - Hearing—listen to soothing music and/or ambient sounds
 - Smell—take notice of the scents around you, particularly as it pertains to cooking or nature
 - Taste—have a comfort food, cook a favorite meal. Give particular attention to how the food tastes
 - Touch—Take a bath, play with a pet

Pros and Cons

- Think of the positives and the negatives about acting out and not using distress tolerance
- Make the table seen below for yourself (let the group work on an example using this table)
- This exercise helps you better analyze the situations, re-approach the problem, and

Tolerating Distress		Not Tolerating Distress	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons

Radical Acceptance

- Let go of fighting reality and accept the situation for what it is
- Experience the situation as it is—not how we want it to be
- Focus not on judging the situation, but being effective in the situation at hand

Ways to make the group interactive

- Have participants from the group provide examples for each point
- Allow group volunteers to write on the a chalk board, if available
- Remind the group that these are new emotional tools that take practice to implement
 - Old coping strategies did not work in the past (using substances, acting out, etc...); this group's purpose is to provide new strategies for the group to utilize