Basic DBT Group: Emotional Regulation

Learning Objectives
- Provide situations where emotional regulation could be useful
- Understand that reactive emotional responses can be unmerited and damaging
- List different activities and strategies one can utilize to regulate emotions

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

Emotional Regulation
- Emotionally liable or intense, angry, intensely frustrated, depressed, or anxious emotional responses can cause unwanted consequences
- Learning to regulate these negative emotions is crucial to keeping them in check
- Teach skills pertaining to emotional regulation
  - Identify and label emotions
    - Unhelpful thinking habits:
      - Mind reading (assuming we know what another person is thinking), emotional reasoning (I feel bad so it must be bad), negative filter, internal critic, etc...
  - Identify obstacles to changing emotions
  - Reduce vulnerability to one’s “emotional mind”
  - Increase positive emotional events
  - Increase mindfulness to current emotions

Emotions, thoughts and what we do or feel an urge to do (behaviors) are all linked and become vicious cycles.

Changing one part of the cycle will help improve the situation and help you feel better.
**Story of emotion**
1. Prompting event
2. Interpretation of the event
3. Body sensations
4. Body language
5. Action/urge
6. Action
7. Emotion name, based on the label you give to emotions

**“PLEASE MASTER” Acronym**
- Making a list of situations that make you more vulnerable to your emotional mind
- Maintain a healthy body so there can be more healthy, positive emotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PL</th>
<th>Treat Physical Illness</th>
<th>Give attention to both mental and physical diagnosis. Getting these under control will not only empower you but also aid in optimizing the other categories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Eat healthy</td>
<td>Not only does this help you be more healthy, but it also improves mood by keeping blood sugar on an even keel</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Avoid mood-altering substances (alcohol and illicit drugs)</td>
<td>Self-treating with drugs or alcohol can potentiate irrational emotional responses. When used as an emotional coping mechanism,</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Sleep well</td>
<td>Practice good sleep hygiene (relaxing behaviors before bed, turning off technology before bedtime, monitoring caffeine intake throughout the day, avoiding naps, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>Taking time out of every day to do some form of exercise (morning stretching, walking, lifting, etc.)</td>
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<td>MASTER</td>
<td>Do something every day that gives you a sense of achievement or ability</td>
<td>Define something outside of your employment that you can dedicate to improving and mastering in your life (drawing, cooking, writing, etc.)</td>
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**Opposite action**
- Skill is used when you have an unjustified emotion (one that doesn’t belong to the situation)
- Do the opposite of what you are feeling
- Helps bring you out of an inappropriate emotional response (anger, frustration, etc...)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Action or Urge</th>
<th>Opposite Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Run away, avoid</td>
<td>Approach: go anyway and participate fully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Attack, fight</td>
<td>Gently avoid, be kind, see their perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Withdraw</td>
<td>Be with others and increase activity, and emotionally open up</td>
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Letting go of emotional suffering

- Observe and experience your emotion → Accept it → Let it go

STOP! (Questions to ask yourself when you feel distressed)

- What am I reacting to?
- What is it that’s really pushing my buttons?
- What is it that I think is going to happen here?
- What’s the worst (or best) thing that could happen? What’s more likely to happen?
- Am I getting things out of proportion?
- How important is this—really? How important will this be 6 months from now?
- What harm has actually been done?
- Am I expecting something from this person or this situation that is unrealistic?
- Am I overestimating the danger?
- Am I underestimating my ability to cope?
- Am I being pessimistic for no reason? Is there another way of looking at the situation?
- What advice would I give to someone in this situation?
- Am I spending too much time worrying about the past or the future? What can I do instead?
- Am I putting unjustified pressure on myself, setting up expectations that are unrealistic?
- Just because I feel bad doesn’t mean things really are bad.
- Am I jumping to conclusions? Am I misreading between the lines?
- Am I exaggerating the negatives and minimizing the positives?
- What’s the bigger picture?
- Even though this memory might make me upset, it’s not actually happening right now.
- What would be the consequences if I respond like I normally do?
- Is there another way of handling this?