

Wisconsin Public Psychiatry Network Teleconference
(WPPNT)

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Advanced Dialectical Behavior Therapy: Skills training

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HISTORY OF DBT

- Developed by Marcia Linehan
- Studying suicidal behaviors and BPD
- Began with CBT, expanded CBT model to incorporate more skill training
- “Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder.” in 1993

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BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL

- Biological predisposition: high sensitivity and reactivity, slow return to baseline
- Invalidating environment: Childhood trauma, use of emotional language met with negative and/or erratic responses, not modeled healthy coping skills
- Psychological response: unhealthy coping skills “worked” at one point, but no longer work or consequences become too great; response is reinforced through repetition

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Four Skill Sets Taught

- Mindfulness
- Distress Tolerance
- Emotional Regulation
- Interpersonal Effectiveness

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DBT Treatment May Be Appropriate For:

Personality Disorders
PTSD/Trauma
Depression
Mood Disorders
Anxiety
Substance Use Disorders
Eating Disorders
Impulse Control/Anger Issues

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Two examples of DBT group members:

- Tonya: 45 years old. Single. Hx of Depression, Alcohol Abuse, Marijuana Dependence. Often feel “stuck” in her depression – isolation, uncontrollable crying, misses work.
- Jerry: 27 years old. Hx of OCD. Successfully completed residential program for OCD Sx. Two young children and financial stress. When Sx are activated, fears food contamination (loses weight), fears daughters are ill (frequent trips to ER), skin picking.

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Format of Our DBT Group

- 90 minute group
- Introduce skill set
- Guided meditation
- Remainder of time: Introduce and practice 3 skills
 - Lecture
 - Worksheets
 - Dyads
 - Group discussion
 - At end: assign homework for the week

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MINDFULNESS SKILL SET

- Learning how to be aware of and present with all thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Becoming responsive vs. reactive
- Experience thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in a non-judgmental fashion – thoughts are not facts
- Differentiate ourselves from our thoughts and behaviors
- Learn to accept vs. avoid thoughts and feelings

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Example: Body Scan

- A way to get grounded in body and environment
- Notice sensations (pain, tightness, etc.) in body
- Take a moment to notice body as a whole
- Turn attention to outside body (notice feet on ground, scan all 5 senses)

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Teaching Body Scan

- Introduce how Body Scan teaches mindfulness
- Have members participate in a body scan exercise
- Provide Body Scan Mindfulness Exercise Worksheet, break up in dyads and answer following questions:
 - How was the experience?
 - Any parts of the body that were difficult to be present with?
 - Any obstacles to using this skill?
 - Strategies for practicing skills on a regular basis.
- Assign as Homework for the next week.

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Example: Jerry

- Became more mindful of his urge to pick at his skin.
- When urge first began, took a deep breath.
- Closed eyes, and engaged in body scan.
- He reported that if he used this skill just as the urge came on, he was able to “get in my body,” and not pick at his skin.

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILL SET

- Learning how to cope with distressing situations without engaging in unhealthy coping skills
- Skills to cope “in the moment” as opposed to solving problems
- Balance of willingness and active strategies
- Learn to distract without avoiding

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Example: Radical Acceptance

- Practice of accepting life on its own terms and finding effective strategies to cope with whatever is happening.
- Much like the Serenity Prayer.
- Begins with self-acceptance and self-care

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Teaching Radical Acceptance

- Introduce skill with Radical Acceptance Worksheet.
 - Love and be gentle with yourself
 - Praise yourself
 - Accept yourself
 - Find ways to support yourself
 - Forgive yourself
 - Lend a hand to others
 - Take care of your body and accept it lovingly
- Group discussion about any of these components that may be difficult for them; brainstorm ways to work through difficulties.

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Teaching Radical Acceptance, cont.

- Introduce Practicing Radical Acceptance Worksheet
 - What is the problem?
 - What part is difficult for you to accept?
 - What is the reality of the situation?
 - What are some of the causes that lead up to this reality?
 - What are some ways you can practice accepting the whole self (half-smile, prayer, focus of statement of acceptance “everything is as it should be.”)
- After completion, share with the group

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Example of Radical Acceptance: Tonya

- Problem or situation: chronic depression
- Part it is difficult to accept: "I don't want to be depressed the rest of my life."
- Describe the reality of the situation: There are times that I am very depressed, and there are times that I am not depressed.
- Causes: Some may be chemical. When I isolate and smoke pot I am more depressed. When I think about "shoulds" ("I should be married," I should have kids like my sister.") I am more depressed. When I'm really depressed, I am afraid I will never be happy again.
- Skills: Tell myself "I know I am not always depressed." Instead of coming home and getting high, walk my dog as soon as I get home – leave the leash by the front door. Accept that I have depression, and try not to get depressed about being depressed.

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EMOTIONAL REGULATION SKILL SET

- Understand our emotions
- Learn to choose how to react to our emotions
- Learn all emotions are valid, move away from judging emotions
- Develop resiliency to dealing with emotions
- Increase behaviors that lead to less emotional distress
- Develop emotional balance – experience emotions congruent with situation

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Example: MEDDSS

- Acronym for healthy habits that increase potential of regulated mood
- **M**astery
- **E**xercise
- **D**iet
- **D**rugs (Medication)
- **S**leep
- **S**pirituality

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Teaching MEDDSS

- Use worksheet to discuss rationale for this skill. Discuss how there are things we can do to decrease moods we are uncomfortable with and increase moods we enjoy.
- Define each of the skills
- Give out worksheet to come up with examples from each skill set that you have done or are willing to try.
- Come back together as a group and share ideas.
- Have each member commit to doing at least one of the skills over the next week.

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Example: MEDDSS: Jerry

- Jerry identified that exercise is very helpful to him, and he has not been exercising since his daughter was born. He said he has weights, and identified a time of day when he would usually be able to lift weights. He also discussed diet, reporting that he has been eating very little due to concerns about food being undercooked and unsafe. He agreed to discuss this with his partner, and felt that he could trust her to make spaghetti (without meat), and he would try and eat it.
- The next week, he was able to eat the spaghetti. He was able to exercise twice, and committed to trying to find more days to do this.

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INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS SKILL SET

- Learn to get needs met in relationships that is respectful to all involved (Objectives Effectiveness)
- Learn skills to get and maintain healthy relationships (Relationship Effectiveness)
- Learn ways to improve self-respect (Self-Respect Effectiveness)

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Example: FAST

- Used for self-respect effectiveness
- (be) **F**air to yourself
- (no) **A**pologies
- **S**tick to values
- (be) **T**ruthful

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Teaching FAST

- Discuss FAST worksheet
- Break up into dyads, complete and discuss FAST worksheet, which asks:
 - I can be Fair to myself in relationships by:
 - I can Apologize less in relationships by:
 - I can Stick to values in my relationship by:
 - I can be Truthful with myself and others by:
- Discuss in larger group

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Example: FAST: Tonya

- During discussion, Tonya mentioned being a relationship with someone who she uses with regularly. She reported she wants to stop using, but doesn't want to make him feel bad.
- Recognized that her values have changed during the relationship. She now values being sober, and he does not. She does not need to apologize for her change in values.
- She never told him that she was trying to stay clean and sober, and committed to being honest with him.

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR SKILLS TRAINING

- Repetition is the key!
- Consider teaching grounding techniques prior to DBT skills
- Expect outside work (homework, Diary cards)
- Teach the concept before the individual skill
- Address biopsychosocial needs
- Use dialectical language
- Balance acceptance and change-based skills

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR A DBT GROUP

- How to screen for appropriateness
- Group rules/expectations
- Safety plan and safety expectations
- Open vs. Closed group
- Format: balance of process and education
- Ability to communicate/coordinate with primary therapist
- How to address Treatment Interfering Behaviors
- How to get your own support

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