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Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, Part 2: Techniques and Skills

Tim Bautch, MA, LPC, CSAC

Agenda

- Review DBT skill sets and see some examples of how the skills are presented.
- How to look at case formulation under the DBT model.
- Discuss how to use DBT skills in session through case studies.
- Anything else?

Two examples of DBT group members:

- Jeff: 24 years old. Hx of Bipolar D/O, Heroin addiction. Significant incarceration and “chronic relapser.” Anger, stealing, difficulties in relationships.
- Brenda: 61 years old. Hx of traumatic events (childhood and as an adult), depression, “eating issues.” Struggles with being able to be assertive with her partner and adult age children. Identifies as a “helicopter parent” and “a perfectionist.” Joined after returning from a residential program to address Sx of trauma and depression.

What is the biopsychosocial model?

- **Biological** predisposition: high sensitivity and reactivity, slow return to baseline
- **Psychological** response: unhealthy coping skills “worked” at one point and thus were reinforced; but are no longer effective
- Invalidating **social** environment: Childhood trauma, use of emotional language met with negative and/or erratic responses, not modeled healthy coping skills

Looking at Treatment Needs According to the Biopsychosocial Model

- Biological:
 - Jeff: Family Hx of addiction and depression. Physical dependence on substances. Mood D/O responds to medication when he is sober. Reports “I go from 0 to 60 just like that.”
 - Brenda: Reports a family history of anxiety and depression. Reports “I get overwhelmed easy.” Acknowledged that sleep is an “unhealthy coping skill.”

Looking at Treatment Needs According to the Biopsychosocial Model

- Psychological:
 - Jeff: Reported being bullied and witnessing domestic violence against his mother growing up. Acknowledged that his anger and aggression kept him safe often when he was young. Was charged with domestic violence against a partner, which made him realize that he was not acting in accordance with his values. Also reported “relief” when using drugs initially, but now struggles with sobriety “even though I don’t even like using any more.”
 - Brenda: Reported mother is “very negative and critical” and father was absent often due to work. Reported at times she felt she had to “take care of my mother” growing up, by meeting her mother’s emotional needs. Reports similar issue with men and her children.

Looking at Treatment Needs According to the Biopsychosocial Model

- Social:
 - Jeff: Reports his parents split up when he was young, due to physical abuse. Reported a family pattern of mom getting into a relationship, it becoming abusive, and moving the family “in the middle of the night” to another town. He reports he always “felt like the new kid” in school, and never really had friends growing up. Reports limited modeling in emotional expression, especially how a man expresses emotions and connects with their children.
 - Brenda: Reports feeling mixed messages from her mother growing up, which was confusing. She found that often her mother was “in a better mood” when she “took care of my mother” by telling her what a great mom she was, as well as doing household chores. She reports that her mother spent a lot of time in her room alone, so client began doing this when she could not “make” her mom feel better. Client also reports ending up in difficult situations, both emotionally and physically, with men when she was younger, as well as in her current marriage.

Five Skill Sets

- Mindfulness
- Distress Tolerance
- Emotional Regulation
- Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Walking the Middle Path (Adolescent DBT)

Mindfulness

- 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 – *we are not our thoughts!*
- Learn to accept vs. avoid thoughts and feelings

General Benefits of Mindfulness

- Stability and Flexibility of Mind
- Self Awareness
- Focus
- Relationship satisfaction
- Happiness
- Sense of healthy control
- Increased Empathy
- Increased Creativity
- Problem Solving
- Academic performance
- Ethical Decision Making

Examples of Mindfulness Skills

- Mindfulness breathing/meditation
- Mindful eating
- Mindful walking
- Observe, Describe, Participate Effectively
- Moment to Pause
- Wise Mind
- Body Scan
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Example: WISE MIND

- Balance of Reasonable Mind and Emotional Mind = Wise Mind
- Spock and Dr. McCoy
- Both should be validated, acknowledged, and respected
- Observe, Describe, Participate
- Non-judgmental Stance

Teaching Wise Mind

- Introduce philosophy
- Provide Wise Mind Worksheet, break up in dyads
 - One box: “Emotional Thoughts”: Based on and driven by opinions and personal interpretation of events: What went through my mind? What disturbed me? What is it that is making me feel this way? What am I reacting to? What am I feeling?

Teaching Wise Mind Cont.

- Second box: “Rational Thoughts”: Based on factual evidence. What would be more reasonable? What am I thinking I should do? What advice would I give to a friend, or what would a caring friend say to me? What are the facts?
- Third box: “Wise Mind”: Stop and take a moment to pause. What does Wise Mind make of this? What’s the bigger picture? What will the consequences of my reaction be? What will be most helpful and effective, all things considered?

Example: Jeff

- **Issue:** On house arrest. Frustrated with “the system.” Trying to do things “the right way,” thinking about doing something that would violate his house arrest conditions.
- **Emotional thoughts:** “F**k probation!” “They don’t care about me.” “I need to keep busy or I’m going to go crazy!” “I don’t care if I go back to jail.” “I have no control in my life.”
- **Rational thoughts:** “I want to work, and they have a lot of hoops to jump through.” “They haven’t returned my calls.” “If I get caught, I’ll do my time inside and not see my son.” “My family is supportive while I’m not working because I’m working hard in treatment.”
- **Wise Mind:** “I’m still angry at my probation officer.” “He doesn’t care about me, but he doesn’t have to.” “I can find out who else I can call to arrange time to do an interview.” “I’ll keep looking for work.” “I can keep busy with projects around the house until then.” “I can spend more time with my son.”

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

Examples of Distress Tolerance Skills

- Self-soothe/Self Soothe First Aid Kit
- Distract through ACCEPTS
- Pros and Cons
- Half Smile
- Radical Acceptance
- Willingness
- Turning the Mind
- Crisis Survival Network

Example: Self Soothe/Self Soothe First Aid Kit

- Self soothing has to do with comforting, nurturing, and being kind to yourself.
- Brainstorm ways to use self soothing with all five senses.
- Self Soothe First Aid Kit: After identifying ways to self soothe with all five senses, create a “kit” that one can go to when one is in need of self soothing.

Teaching Self Soothe/Self Soothe First Aid Kit

- Discuss importance of self soothing, as well as idea that not all of us have been taught how to self soothe.
- Use Self Soothe worksheet that has blanks for all the senses. Give the group time to fill out the worksheet, then bring the group back together and ask people to share.
- Discuss concept of Self Soothe First Aid Kit, and the importance of creating the kit when we are regulated, so that when we need to self soothe, we don't have to think about what will work, we can get out our kit.
- Ask people to create a Self Soothe First Aid over the week and bring to the next session.

Example: Brenda

- During discussion of self soothing, Brenda identified that it is hard to give herself permission to self soothe, and she was never shown how or encouraged to do this growing up.
- Identified she could try self soothe when she is “beating myself up” for not being perfect. She also discussed her difficulties being around people when they are angry, and she could use self soothing when she is feeling unsafe.
- The next week, Brenda shared her kit. It was a heart shaped box “to remind myself I can love myself.” Inside was a photo of her children, an essential oil bracelet, hot chocolate, a paper with affirmations, and a gift from a friend at treatment. She reported she is keeping it by her bed, so she sees it everyday so she remembers she can love herself and can self soothe.

Emotional Regulation

- Understanding emotions
- Choosing how to react to our emotions
- Believing 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

Examples of Emotional Regulation Skills

- Acceptance Skills
 - Identify emotions
 - Ride the Wave
 - Feeling Not Acting
- Action Skills
 - Building Positive Emotions
 - Opposite to Emotion
 - ABC
 - Myths About Emotions
 - MEDDSS

Example: Building Positive Emotions

- Brainstorming ways to increase positive emotions through activities, thoughts, relationships, and activities
- Identifying when it may be most important to bring positive emotions into awareness
- Understand barriers and obstacles to feeling positive emotions, and strategies to overcome the barriers.

Teaching Building Positive Emotions

- Use worksheet to discuss rationale for this skill. Discuss link between our thoughts, actions, and decisions and our present mood.
- Discuss the importance of coming up with activities, thoughts, and behaviors when in a good place emotionally.
- Use worksheet to address barriers and obstacles to having positive emotions and have group discussion about times when we've held on to unhealthy emotions.
- After filling out worksheet, have homework assignment of engaging in activities that will increase positive emotions.
- Check in on experiences the next group.

Example: Jeff

- The week after discussing building positive emotions, Jeff reported engaging in two activities that built positive emotions.
- First he recognized that when his son wanted to play with him and he didn't want to, he would redirect him to play alone. He decided that this week he would "be mindful of my son's needs" and do what his son requested.
- He reported that even though he originally didn't want to play with Matchbox cars, he ended up having a great time.
- He also reported deciding to take up chainsaw carving. He did this due to being frustrated with not being able to go cut down wood to sell, so decided to do something with the wood he has.

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)

Examples of Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

- Assertiveness
- GIVE
 - (be) **G**entle
 - (act) **I**nterested
 - **V**alidate
 - (use an) **E**asy manner
- FAST
 - (be) **F**air
 - (no) **A**pologies
 - **S**tick to your values
 - (be) **T**ruthful
- Turning The Table
- Repairs
- Relationship Assumptions
- Active Listening

Example: GIVE

- Used for relationship effectiveness
- (be) **G**entle
- (act) **I**nterested
- **V**alidate
- (use) **E**asy Manner
- Gentle: assertiveness communication
- Interested: active listening
- Validate: use non-judgmental language (“I understand how you feel, but...)
- Easy manner: Use humor, mindful of body language, “soft sell” vs. “hard sell”

Teaching GIVE

- Discuss GIVE worksheet
- Have group discussion about communication styles, encourage members to think of a situation in which communication has been difficult
- Break up into dyads, complete and discuss GIVE worksheet, which asks how I can be Gentle, Interested, Validate, have an Easy Manner
- Discuss in larger group

Example: Brenda

- Brenda discussed her relationship with her mother, who is now in a nursing home, and she calls daily and visits a couple of times a week. She discussed how difficult it is at times to have an “easy manner” with her mother, due to her mother’s “constant complaining.”
- The next group, Brenda reported using GIVE with her mother. She discussed a common situation where her mother tells her “if you were a good daughter, you would get me out of here.” Brenda said this is when she usually says “goodbye” and leaves. She said this week she tried to be more gentle and validate that her mother sometimes gets lonely in the nursing home, and she understands why her mother would like to live at home. She reported that her relationship with her mother “is still complicated,” and she acknowledged feeling more empathy for her mother after the conversation, and she felt less tense when she left.

Walking The Middle Path

- Used in Adolescent DBT with both adolescents and parents
- Looking at Dialectical Dilemmas that tend to occur in teen/parent relationships
- Use DBT skills to find middle ground

Examples of Walking the Middle Ground Skills

- Parenting With Mindfulness
- Wise Mind
- Dialectical Dilemmas
 - Being Too Loose/Being Too Strict
 - Making Light of Problem Behaviors/Making Too Much of Typical Adolescent Behaviors
 - Holding on Too Tight/Forcing Independence Too Soon

Considerations when teaching

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

Considerations for forming a 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

Thank You!

Tim Bautch

tim.bautch@connectionsounseling.com

608-233-2100, ext. 2015

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