

Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Training:

Adapted for Special Populations

Eric J. Dykstra, Psy.D.
Developmental Enhancement, PLC

Margaret Charlton, Ph.D., ABPP
Aurora Mental Health Center

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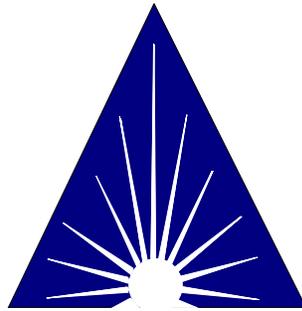
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This effort is based on Dr. Marsha Linehan's groundbreaking work on the treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder. Until she developed her model of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), there were few treatment options for this population and none of them had the type of success that has been seen using DBT. Dr. Linehan kindly consented to our adapting her DBT model for use with people who have dual diagnoses of both developmental disabilities and psychiatric disorders. Without her development of the model, as well as her permission and support of the adaptation project, none of what is presented in this manual would have been possible.

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Authors' Note

The information contained within this manual is a blend of standard DBT skills training, DBT material modified for special populations, and original thought. This work is not intended to supplant standard DBT training and should not be used by those unfamiliar with DBT. Those who wish to use this manual should also consider being trained in standard DBT; trainings are provided by Behavioral Tech, LLC (information available at www.behavioraltech.org).

Every attempt has been made to use person-first, respectful language as well as the most up-to-date and commonly used terms. The use of the titles patient, client, participant, and so forth are used to designate individuals who are actively participating in treatment with service providers, not passive individuals to whom a treatment is applied.

In addition, please be aware that this is an UNPUBLISHED DRAFT manual.

Chapter 1: Rationale for Psychosocial Skills Training with Clients Who Have Developmental Disabilities

Clinical lore often leads one to believe that psychotherapy for individuals with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities (DD/ID) and mental health concerns is limited to behavior modification in the areas of social skill training, self-injurious behavior, and adaptive functioning. However, there is a growing appreciation that individuals with DD/ID suffer from the same difficulties in life that persons of average intelligence suffer from, such as anxiety, mood disorders, substance abuse, and a range of other mental health concerns, as well as empirical backing for such (Charlton, 2002; Bütz, Bowling, & Bliss, 2000; Nezu & Nezu, 1994). Given this, treatment approaches targeting various symptoms and promoting positive mental health are necessary to enhance the lives of those with co-occurring DD/ID and mental health problems. However, typically-trained clinicians often find themselves at a loss when attempting to provide “typical mental health services” to those with lower cognitive abilities or other neurodevelopmental differences.

There are a number of issues that need to be addressed when providing psychotherapy to individuals with DD/ID and mental illness, including but not limited to the level of functioning of the individual, the therapist’s biases and views of psychotherapy and of persons with DD/ID, and the mode of psychotherapy provided (Bütz, Bowling, & Bliss, 2000; Sue & Sue, 1999). As Hurley and colleagues (1996) noted, effective psychotherapy must be adapted according to the idiosyncrasies of the individual a therapist is working with. While this is certainly true when working with those who are more neurotypical, there is a heightened importance of adaptation when working with those with developmental differences.

One of the popular and effective psychotherapeutic treatment modalities currently being used in the field is Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). DBT is an empirically validated, comprehensive treatment program addressing skills deficits in emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal relationships. This therapeutic intervention was originally developed by Marsha Linehan and is outlined in *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder* (1993a) and the accompanying *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder* (1993b). An overview of standard DBT appears in Chapter 3. Though it was originally developed as a treatment for individuals diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder, the treatment’s use has been expanded to address the needs of a wide variety of clients with severe and chronic DSM-IV Axis I and II multiple diagnoses of mental illnesses that are difficult to treat (Manning & Reitz, 2002). We believe that this treatment, in an adapted form, will also be effective in addressing the needs of individuals with DD/ID and mental health problems.

The skills that are taught as part of a DBT model are the very skills that people with DD/ID most often struggle with. From impaired impulse control to limited frustration tolerance, individuals with DD/ID and concurrent mental health problems often suffer from an inability

to cope with distress, regulate their emotions, effectively self-soothe when upset, and effectively develop and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. Like those diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, people with DD/ID also have a much higher likelihood of being the victims of trauma than the general population. There is considerable variability in the statistics reported, but estimates of the incidence traumatic episodes among individuals with DD/ID range from 4 to 10 times higher than the general population. Current research in the field of traumatic stress also indicates that people who are the victims of prior traumatic events such as bullying or racial slurs are less likely to be resilient to the effects of trauma. Therefore, it is not surprising that people with DD/ID exhibit a range of difficulties related to trauma exposure and have a relatively low incidence of recovery from traumatic incidents without therapeutic interventions (Charlton, Kliethermes, Tallant, Taverne, & Tishelman, 2004).

Dialectical Behavior Therapy appears to be a particularly effective treatment method for persons with DD/ID and mental health difficulties for a number of additional reasons. DBT focuses on strength-based instruction, on concrete skill building with built-in repetition, and on addressing deficits in a range of life domains. The first area, strength-based intervention, is vital when working with individuals with dual diagnoses. The DBT treatment model helps clients use their current skills more effectively by teaching them to use those skills in new ways and/or in new situations. The skill building does not stop there, however. DBT also helps clients add to their repertoire by teaching new skills and how to use the new skills most effectively. As mentioned above, the skills specifically addressed are in the areas of emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal effectiveness; mindfulness is also a skill (and way of being) that is trained and incorporated throughout the three modules. Furthermore, the treatment sessions build upon one another and skills already learned are reviewed and further generalized, thus providing the repetitive learning that the persons with dual diagnoses generally benefit from. Finally, DBT skills are naturally generalized, as the skills and skill modules are taught in a group therapy format, reviewed and practiced in individual therapy, and reinforced during interaction with other DBT team member(s).

Because of the high level of care that individuals with co-occurring difficulties often need, a multi-disciplinary treatment team is frequently involved. This presents another area in which DBT demonstrates its strength. If one is to start a DBT program, it is recommended that the whole team (broadly defined to include everyone who interacts with the clients – from office manager to program director, case managers, caregivers and therapists) be trained in DBT principles and be kept up-to-date with what is occurring in the skills groups and individual therapy (Fruzzetti, Waltz, & Linehan, 1997; Linehan, 1993a), keeping in mind the ethics of confidentiality. This team approach is effective as the team is unified and using the same language, as well as reinforcing the same use of skills. This provides consistency and an environment that supports new learning, as well as hinders any attempts by clients to use maladaptive ways of getting needs met (e.g. through asking numerous people until getting the answer they want, through “splitting”). Furthermore, the focus of DBT on strength based interventions helps to facilitate problem solving among team members as it discourages judgmental comments and blaming while promoting solution-focused problem-solving. Furthermore, as team members use DBT techniques and engage in the processes of using

DBT, they model the skills that are being taught for their clients, as well as become more effective in their own lives (Fruzzetti et al., 1997).

Chapter 2: Philosophical and Theoretical Roots of DBT and DBT-SP

Introduction

As mentioned above, DBT was originally developed by Dr. Linehan and outlined in two conjoined texts, *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder* (1993a) and *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder* (1993b). Because of the strong philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of DBT, it is important to understand the core philosophical assumptions. Further, a discussion of core pre-analytic assumptions underlying functional contextualistic interpretive accounts provides the analytic context giving meaning and definition to the behavior-analytic rooted work presented in this manual. The sections below briefly summarize the philosophies and theories that give rise to the DBT model.

Radical Behaviorism

Radical Behaviorism is a distinct approach within the Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavioral traditions within contemporary mainstream psychology. Radical Behavioral philosophies and theories are primarily rooted in the work of B.F. Skinner, though have been further developed by a range of professionals, including S.C. Hayes, M.M. Linehan, N.S. Jacobson, and numerous others. Radical Behaviorism also gave rise to a variety of interrelated forms of behavioral analysis, including applied behavior analysis (ABA), clinical behavior analysis, organizational behavior management, and so forth. For an excellent account of Radical Behaviorism, consult Chiesa's *Radical Behaviorism: The Philosophy and the Science* (1994). In summary, Radical Behaviorism does away with mechanistic accounts and proffers a whole person, contextual view of the person.

Functional Contextualism

Functional contextualism serves as the philosophy of science underpinning contemporary behavior analysis. A variant of the worldview of contextualism, functional contextualism is best characterized by its root metaphor, the ongoing act in context (Hayes, 1993; Hayes, Blackledge, & Barnes-Holmes, 2001; Pepper, 1942). The contextualistic worldview regards the person as a psychological whole, functioning in and with an environment. Behavior is viewed as the ongoing historically situated act in context. The analytic unit entails *behavior*, its *functions*, and the *contexts* in which it occurs. The mutual interrelations comprising the analytic unit are symmetrical, interconnected, interactive, dynamic, interpenetrative, and wholly indivisible (the web metaphor). The functional contextualistic perspective, as related to behavior analysis, holds prediction and influence of behavior with precision, scope, and depth as its analytic goals. The DBT approach is fundamentally rooted in functional contextualism and utilizes a pragmatic, functional, whole-person, behavior-analytic approach to behavior change.

Cognitive and Cognitive-Behavioral Influences

DBT also was greatly influenced by the cognitive-behavioral movement in contemporary psychology, whose leaders are often identified as A. Beck, A. Ellis, and A. Bandura, among

others. While avoiding attributing causative power to cognitions, the DBT approach does recognize, acknowledge, and teach the influential role that thoughts have in impacting an individual's choices and overall functioning. In addition, DBT exemplifies current cognitive-behavioral approaches that focus on changing the relationship with one's cognitions as opposed to directly challenging the content.

Recognizing the ubiquity of human suffering, DBT is not aimed at reducing or getting rid of ordinary pain or discomfort, nor on ridding oneself from particular thoughts or feelings, but rather is focused on reducing *unnecessary* suffering (similar to its “relative” *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy* (ACT; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999) in the behavior analytic tradition). Oftentimes individuals increase their suffering by struggling against that which they cannot change, such as trying to rid themselves of their respective histories. In contrast, the focus of DBT is on reducing unnecessary suffering through skillful means, namely managing urges and emotions in the service of pursuing valued life directions despite feeling pain, experiencing negative emotions, or thinking negative thoughts. In short, the focus is on achieving a balance between changing that which one is able to change and accepting that which is unchangeable, so that the individual can behave effectively in all situations and make progress toward his or her valued life goals – living a life worth living. During the process there is a focus on reducing suffering and particular thoughts and emotions may be altered so they are more pleasant, but this is not guaranteed. The relative concreteness of these ideas makes them accessible enough for many people to understand and utilize them, including persons with DD/ID. In summary, DBT encourages clients to take responsibility for their actions, advancing the dictum that “no matter what, I choose how to act.”

Dialectical Philosophy

The dialectical perspective is perhaps most parsimoniously described as a focus on the intentional bringing together (synthesis) of two seemingly conflicting sides (thesis and antithesis). This philosophy is founded upon the concept of a non-absolute ‘truth’ model, allows for (seemingly) conflicting perspectives, and sees ‘truth’ as developing, evolving, and constructed over time. This is middle ground between Universalism (‘ABSOLUTE TRUTH’ – this is THE WAY or THE TRUTH) and complete Relativism (‘NO TRUTH’ – its all RELATIVE). This worldview advocates the use of words such as ‘AND’ instead of ‘BUT’ or ‘NOT’ and is intentionally inclusive in nature. From a pragmatic perspective, a dialectical approach weakens dependence on assumptions, biases, and verbal rule-governance while promoting multiple-perspective-taking and facilitating increased openness to varied experiences. In other words, it reduces rigidity, excessive judgment and blame, and ineffective fundamentalism while broadening perspectives and allowing for a sharing of ideas.

There are three core principles that underlie this Dialectical Philosophy, including Wholeness and Interrelatedness, Polarity, and Continuous Change. A clear, pragmatic example that elucidates these principles is time. When considering the concept and application of time, it is easily understood that previous moments are clearly connected to this moment ... and this moment ... and this moment ... and so forth. Furthermore, the polarities of past versus the future are synthesized into this moment, yet this moment is only this moment for a short time as it is continuously changing as well. Said otherwise, that which is “the future” becomes

“the now” which becomes “the past”; the seemingly opposing forces of past and future are part of the unrelenting and ever-changing present moment.

An appreciation for this philosophy allows us to attend to the whole person in-context, understand the push-pull experiences that clients have, and recognize how difficult the change process can be, especially if change is not welcomed. Practically, this philosophy undergirds the working balance between acceptance (validation) and change. This balance, tenuous and ever-changing though it may be, is foundational to effective working with individuals with significant and numerous challenges.

Bio-Psycho-Social theory

The theory explaining why DBT successfully targeted a specific subset of individuals postulates that some people have a higher-than-typical baseline arousal level, they are highly emotionally reactive to their environments, and they have difficulty returning to a baseline arousal level. Frequently these individuals also have a history of trauma and severe emotional dysregulation, which holds both etiological and exacerbational potential. Oftentimes, these individuals also have skills deficits that inhibit effective coping with such experiences, frequently resulting in crisis-ridden lives characterized by chaotic interpersonal relationships and poor day-to-day functioning.

Said otherwise, the interplay between our biology, psychology, and interpersonal/social experiences (among other factors) is the foundation for understanding and working with individuals with numerous long-standing problems. Given the frequent occurrence of brain-based differences, increased amounts of stress in everyday life, and atypical interpersonal experiences for individuals with a range of developmental and intellectual differences, it is clear how this model applies. Furthermore, this highlights the need for individuals with DD/ID and mental health concerns to be involved with a multidisciplinary team that is well-connected and working in a consistent manner toward shared goals.

Chapter 3: Brief Overview of the Standard DBT Model

Working Assumptions (taking a DBT stance)

These assumptions were originally published in Linehan's *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Borderline Personality Disorder* (1993). They are summarized here as adapted for the target population of this manual.

Patients are doing the best they can.

This is a clearly 'person-centered' perspective. This assertion boils down to the appreciation for the fact that everyone is doing the best they can *in that moment*. This allows for variability in performance and different levels of success in various life domains. It also acknowledges that one's ability to effectively self-regulate and negotiate interpersonal relationships is fluid and affected by numerous factors in life (e.g. stress, sleep, nutrition, physical health, peer group, and so forth). Especially for those who are more vulnerable to the stressors they experience, it is important to acknowledge the effects of stress and not have rigid and unrealistic expectations. Remember that just because a client performed one way yesterday, it does not mean that the client can do the same today *and at the same time* we expect that positive change will occur over time.

Patients want to improve

The majority of people that will be involved in DBT-based treatment recognize that there are problems and they do want to change. Even if the initial desire for change comes from a desire to escape from or avoid negative consequences, most often individuals do acknowledge that something should change – even if it is not themselves. This opens the door to treatment and presents an opportunity to engage in an intentional change process.

Patients need to do better, try harder, ...

Wanting to change is not enough. Patients actually need to improve their performance. In addition, many of the patients we work with are unsuccessful in many of their attempts to help themselves. There are likely many reasons for this yet the fact remains that they are responsible for their lives. Our jobs are to encourage, build skills, maintain & increase motivation, and facilitate success. Balancing skill-based and performance-based perspectives is vital.

Patients have not caused all of their problems but they have to solve them anyway

This statement tends to hold true for most people. As so much of what happens in the world is out of one's direct control, many difficulties occur that are unavoidable. However, as human beings we are "response-able" and thus can choose how to respond in the multitude of situations that we face. While initially a seemingly harsh assertion, it really functions to empower clients (really all of us) to solve problems and become effective in many life situations. In addition, it allows us to maintain the stance that as professionals we cannot save people – they must work to save themselves.

Patients lives are unbearable as they currently are

If we really listen to the life stories of the people we serve, we will realize the living hell their lives have truly been. It may be complaining about the program they are in, “the system” they are a part of, their guardian, the food that they have to eat, their roommate, or even nonspecific grumbling – all of these are indications of dissatisfaction with one’s current life. This ties into the belief that people do want to change as well as needing to work on bettering themselves. While we cannot do the work for them or save them ourselves, we can work alongside to help patients change their lives.

Patients must learn new ways of being in all relevant situations

When planning for comprehensive treatment there are a couple of questions to ask to help with the generalization of skills. They are: *Success in the program is great ~ and what about real life?* and *Success with some people is great ~ what about the rest?* One of the most important measures of successful treatment is evidence that individuals have effectively generalized skills outside of the treatment environment.

Patients cannot fail in treatment

If we have a comprehensive, consistent, philosophy-to-theory-to-practice approach that doesn’t work ... either the treatment failed or the treators failed. This assertion protects against a “blame the patient” tendency that is all too common and is a reminder of our fallability as professionals. While there is no assertion, let alone a guarantee, that DBT-SP – or standard DBT for that matter – will be effective for all patients, the intentional consistency that exists from philosophy through practice provides a measure of confidence in the treatment approach. This also serves as a reminder that treatment should be customized and individualized for clients, even in an intentionally structured approach such as DBT.

Treators (everyone on the DBT Team) need assistance and support when working with individuals with intensive problems

It is easy to get caught up in the crisis of the week, get burnt out, become judgmental and invalidating, lose perspective, get lost, and otherwise fail. The team is a vital resource that needs to function well in order to protect against burnout, secondary traumatic stress, caregiver fatigue, and generally ineffective working. This is not easy work and we cannot do it alone.

DBT Team Agreements

Because the function of the team is so critical to the success of the patients we work with, the following agreements, if valued highly and lived reasonably, should provide a good foundation for working together.

Dialectical Agreement

Because disagreements, differences of opinion, and conflict arise, we agree to search for the synthesis in these situations as opposed to “THE truth.” Just as there is wisdom in all of the actions of our clients, each of us holds a valid perspective. Our job is to work to synthesize the perspectives presented before us. We agree to consider other perspectives and work collaboratively for the best of the clients we serve.

Consultation to the Patient

This agreement is centered on our role with patients. Just as we cannot “save” the individuals we work with, it is unhelpful to try and solve all of their problems for them. First, we agree to work with clients to use skills in their interactions with others. We help coach them about how to approach various treatment team members and work with them to find skillful ways of relating. Second, we agree to not intervene on their behalf nor tell other professionals how to respond to a client.

It should be noted, however, that coaching, teaching, and learning as a team does not conflict with this agreement. Finally, if a team member makes a mistake, we agree to acknowledge this and help clients accept and cope with this. As team members are fallible, so are the people that the clients will interact with in everyday life. We are privileged to have the trust of our patients and we must provide them with experiences that reflect the world that they live in.

Consistency Agreement

We agree that consistency is important ... AND ... real life happens. We concurrently agree to help clients cope with failures and inconsistencies. This presents opportunities for all of us (clients and professionals alike) to practice our DBT skills. Said otherwise, we strive to be consistent and we acknowledge that this will not occur 100% of the time.

Empathic Orientation

In order to be successful in our roles we must be mindfully empathic with those we work with. We agree to search for non-pejorative and non-judgmental interpretations and understandings of clients’ behaviors. We also agree to approach each other in a non-judgmental way and validate each others’ experiences. This is absolutely necessary, as the relationships between team members are as vital as the therapeutic ones between professionals and patients.

Fallibility Agreement

First, we agree that we are all imperfect and have permission to fail. Without this explicit statement judgment, invalidation, and strife will poison the team. Further, as a team we agree to utilize the DBT framework to help each other remain true to the philosophy and the approach. We agree to keep each other accountable and treat each other gently and with empathy.

Chapter 4: Adaptation of the Dialectical Behavior Therapy Model

Persons with DD/ID obtain significant benefits from participation in psychotherapy to address their mental health needs, provided the psychotherapy is presented in a manner that is accessible to them (Szymanski et al., 1994). At the time of this writing, only a few types of psychotherapy have been adapted specifically for use with this population; much additional work is needed to provide people with DD/ID the same range of options for treatment that the non-affected population is given. The current effort to modify DBT to meet the needs of people with DD/ID is just a beginning. As more research is done in this important area, it is our hope that specific standards will be developed so that the types of modification that are most helpful in making psychotherapy accessible people with DD/ID are known. We believe, based on our current work, that psychotherapy methods that address core deficits instead of superficial symptom reduction will be needed. For example, approaches that emphasize replacing old, maladaptive behaviors with new more adaptive ones, in the manner used in DBT skill building modules, will be particularly useful for this population (Dykstra & Charlton, 2003).

Adaptation of DBT for individuals with DD/ID begins with an overall assessment of the philosophy and theory, gauging its applicability to the targeted population. As mentioned previously, it seems that DBT is a “good fit” for persons with DD/ID and mental and behavioral health concerns. Given the often-seen constellation of multiple difficult-to-treat problems, vulnerability to stress, and need for intensive and long-term interventions, the DBT model provides a framework that addresses a number of the core deficit areas. The whole-person, developmentally-informed, comprehensive hierarchy of targets and skills that is found in DBT fits so well for many individuals with concurrent DD/ID and mental health problems. It is also important to note that the skills taught in DBT can serve well as the foundation for further work in the areas of independent living, resolving other mental health concerns, and generally increasing the quality of life for each individual.

From here, adaptation moved to the areas of language and presentation. The main tenets of DBT remained unchanged, however the presentation and language were adjusted to a level that persons with DD/ID can more easily comprehend and were modified to have more appeal to our adolescent target population. Just as when working with any individual with unique needs (read: all people), one must adapt materials to meet the client’s needs (Hurley et al., 1996; Pfadt, 1991). With this in mind, the curriculum was adjusted in a number of ways. First of all, the language was changed to make the concepts more accessible. Second, some of the concepts were been paired down and/or simplified to allow better comprehension and ability to apply the material. Third, the handouts were re-written and re-formatted in order to increase attention and aid in understanding. Finally, generous amounts of client feedback, repetition, and rehearsal have been incorporated into the therapy structure to aid in the learning, retention, and generalization processes.

Because the group skills training material was the most formalized and structured in standard DBT, the early phases of adaptation was focused here. In modifying each of the handouts suggested for use in the DBT group skills modules (Linehan, 1993b) we worked to use language that was accessible to and easily understood by our clients. For example, rather than talking about reducing emotional vulnerability, we focused on understanding how emotions affect us and on making good decisions when experiencing an emotion ([Emotional Regulation Handout 1](#)). We also used a visual presentation style that makes it easier for clients with DD/ID to absorb the information. This type of adaptation is illustrated in [Emotion Regulation Handouts 3a and 3b](#), where we reduced the number of interactions we attempted to teach, used more prominent arrows, illustrated the components with different types of shapes to help make them easier to remember, and simplified the language. As “choice” was a main concept we wished to teach in this module, we also added it to this handout to provide an additional repetition.

Another example of the type of adaptation is made with regard to the topic of emotional vulnerability. Linehan (1993b) uses the acronym “PLEASE MASTER” in her handout addressing how to reduce vulnerability to negative emotions. We modified this to “SEEDS GROW” and discussed controlling emotions instead of reducing vulnerability (see [Emotion Regulation Handout 10](#)). This modification allowed us to use simpler language that was already in our clients’ vocabulary, provided another opportunity to emphasize that we control our emotions—they do not control us, and simplified the visual presentation of the material.

Chapter 5: Session Format and Introduction to Skills Training

In the DBT model, group skills training is designed as one of three treatment-focused components. In addition to skills training groups, the model calls for all clients to participate in individual psychotherapy and for therapists to participate in a consultation group through which they can receive support in maintaining fidelity to the model. In the original model, four different skills groups were presented: Mindfulness, Interpersonal Effectiveness, Emotion Regulation, and Distress Tolerance. However, we found that when Mindfulness was taught as a separate module, many of the concepts presented were too abstract and difficult for people with DD/ID comprehend. In order to continue to present key concepts of mindfulness in a more accessible fashion, we chose not to make Mindfulness a separate module, but to integrate elements of mindfulness into each of the other three skill-building sections. Also, in our adapted model of DBT skills training, Interpersonal Effectiveness is referred to as Relationship Effectiveness, as this language was more easily accessible to our target population.

In providing adapted psychotherapy groups to people with DD/ID, it can be helpful to maintain a consistent structure for each session. In our work with this adapted model, we have used the following session structure. It is presented here as a suggestion for how to integrate all of the necessary components of the skills training in an accessible manner.

In introducing each of the modules, begin by giving the name and explaining the general focus of the group. Define the goals of the group and use specific and concrete terms when discussing how and why the skills taught in the group are likely to be important to the group members. Encourage the group members to talk about the types of problems they have encountered in the particular skill area. Group leaders should be prepared to offer suggestions and examples of the type of problems that will be addressed, including situations from their lives and other clinical situations, in case group members need a little help in getting started with the discussion.

Since many people with DD/ID may have limited experience with psychotherapy and because they may have some difficulty in learning social rules, we suggest that after the introduction the group work together to develop group rules and a group contract. Especially if many of your members have not been in a group before, it is important to talk about what to expect in group. It can be helpful to write down all of the rules that are developed as a group and for the first few sessions review the group rules at the beginning of the session. This review is continued until it appears that the group members remember and understand the rules as demonstrated by their behavior during the group.

The group members should be encouraged to talk about the rules they feel the group should follow. However, group leaders should also be prepared to introduce some basic rules if the members do not bring them up. All groups should include a discussion of informed consent and confidentiality in language that is accessible at the functioning level of the group

members. For example, it is important to be sure members understand that it is not OK to “gossip” about what happens in group with friends. It would not be appropriate for members to share problems that other clients talk about; however, it may be appropriate for them to talk about some of the skills they are learning with parents, foster parents, host home families, and so forth. These boundaries should be clarified when the rules are developed and should be reviewed until the members clearly retain the key concepts.

Respect for group leaders and other group members is another concept that is often included in the group rules. As group members are talking about rules, the concept of respect is often first expressed through rules against disrespectful behaviors, like interrupting, cursing, hitting and name calling. It is helpful for the group leader to clarify that all of these specific “do not’s” are part of a general concept of showing respect for others during the group process.

Another element of successful groups is setting clear limits on respect for self. Many of the clients we work with struggle with interpersonal boundaries. They need assistance in knowing whether it is appropriate to give personal information about sexual abuse history, specific living situations such as foster care and termination of parental rights, in addition to a large variety of other topics. In a process-oriented psychotherapy group, sharing a great deal of personal information might be desirable. In a more psychoeducational group, like skills training, it may be appropriate to share fewer intimate details. It is helpful for the group leader to think about what level of sharing will be appropriate for the current group and then to be sure that guidelines about sharing are incorporated into the group rules. These guidelines should also address the amount of contact that group members may have with each other during the course of the group. Think about whether it is OK with you (the group leader) for members to exchange phone numbers, to become friends with, or to date other members during the group. Group leaders should also be aware that these standards can change over time. It is not uncommon for group members to share very little personal information at the beginning of skills training, though over time the familiarity and comfort level increases, such that more personal sharing and interpersonal processing occurs in an appropriate manner.

In setting up the group it is also helpful to develop a contract between the therapist and group members. This contracting may begin with a discussion of the benefits the leader thinks members will receive from participating in the group. In some cases, the leader may do a test at the end to demonstrate retention of material or to identify need for further work in certain areas. If any type of evaluation is anticipated, it should be explained to group members at the onset of the group. Group members also need to know if there will be any type of celebration or graduation ceremony at the completion of the group. Further, a portion of the contract should be dedicated to establishing attendance policies, exclusion from group, and other pertinent information. All of these details serve to develop a clear contract between the group leader and the group members so that everyone knows what to expect in the course of the group.

Once the basic structure of the group has been decided on, we suggest following a consistent format for each group session. As described previously, for the first few sessions the group

format would include a review of the group rules. In addition, we suggest the following components:

Check-in

At the beginning of each group it is helpful to get some basic information regarding how group members are feeling. We use a variety of methods to check in, including a verbal report, the check-in sheet included in the handouts section of this manual, or some other means to obtain this information. It typically important aspect of checking it is to ask group members to share how they are feeling and to talk about why they think they may be experiencing these feelings. This routine helps to get members focused on group activity and encourages the beginning of discussion and sharing, as well as promoting group cohesion.

Mindfulness Activity

The leader should choose a mindfulness exercise that will complement the work that is going to be done in the session. If the group members had trouble participating in the previous session, an interactive exercise might be used. If group members struggled more with staying on task in the previous session, the leader might want to select a mindfulness exercise that improves focus such as a quiet, meditative activity.

Discussion of Mindfulness Skills

After the mindfulness exercise, the leader should facilitate a discussion about the skills that are presented in the exercise. This presents a good time to review the basic concepts of mindfulness. Depending on the skills training material to be presented later in the session, the leader might focus on the concept of wise mind; the “What’s” of mindfulness—observing, describing and participating; or the “How’s” of mindfulness—accepting, taking one thing at a time and working effectively ([Mindfulness Handouts 1, 2 and 3](#) respectively).

Review of Homework Assignments

It seems very basic, but surprisingly, many therapists give homework assignments and then neglect to follow up and talk about these assignments at the next session. It is very important that homework be given, because people with DD/ID have difficulty in generalizing skills from one setting into another. The use of homework assignments is one method of facilitating this generalization. Another way is to be sure that clients have samples of the information they learned during the group to take home to review with their caregivers. Including a review of homework assignments during group helps in a variety of ways. First of all it makes a clear statement that the group leader thinks the assignments are important. Second, homework review reinforces the clients who remember to do the assignments and helps those who forgot to realize how important the assignments are. It also gives the group leader a chance to talk about strategies for remembering the homework assignments after the end of the group session—another technique to facilitate use of the skills in other situations.

Presentation of Skill Training Material

The group leader should spend part of each group presenting new information on the skill that is being developed in the particular module. The end of this manual provides a series of handouts for each module. In addition, specific suggestions for the use of these handouts are made in the chapters on [Mindfulness](#); [Distress Tolerance](#); [Emotion Regulation](#); and

[Relationship Effectiveness](#). We find it helpful to give out the handouts on a weekly basis so that group members can put them into a notebook. The notebook helps them to review information with key caregivers and gives them a reference manual to look at after completing the group.

Review

Because repetition of material is essential for people with DD/ID to effectively absorb and retain information, each session should end with a discussion of what has been learned in the session. This is an opportunity for members to demonstrate what they have learned. It is also an opportunity for the group leader to assess clients' progress and what material needs further review. Group leaders may also find it effective to review and highlight the vital material from the previous group prior to introducing that week's topic.

Chapter 6: Mindfulness Skills

What is Mindfulness?

Historically, mindfulness practices were included in the spiritual practices of Daoist, Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian practitioners over the millennia. Within these traditions, mindfulness practices are intended to help guide practitioners in achieving a deeper understanding of and interconnectedness with the world and to facilitate spiritual connectedness with others, the world, and oneself.

From a definitional standpoint, mindfulness has been described in a number of ways, ranging from a simple cognitive skill to a way of being that the whole person is involved in. The general consensus, nonetheless, seems to be that mindfulness involves an individual being in full experiential contact with the fluid contingencies of living moment to moment. Further, though often used in the noun form “mindfulness,” it should be understood that the concept of mindfulness is best understood as a behavior that an individual engages in. For reasons of grammatical ease, however, “mindfulness” will often be used in place of “behaving mindfully.”

Psychology and Mindfulness Practices

Mindfulness has long been valued as an important practice in many Eastern spiritual traditions (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), though it has only recently been a subject of discussion and study in Western psychology (Baer, 2003). Spiritual leaders such as Thich Nhat Hanh (1987, 1999) and Pema Chodron (1991, 2001), as well as clinicians such as Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) and Marsha Linehan (1993a, 1993b) have developed popular, useful guides for teaching meditation practices for application in the daily affairs of life. Mindfulness strategies and mindfulness-related practices (such as acceptance and diffusion from language, among others) have recently become part of some standard psychotherapeutic modes.

The current emphasis on integrating mindfulness into psychotherapy leads to questions about the benefits of mindfulness. Why have Eastern spiritual practices emphasized mindfulness practices for centuries? Why are mindfulness training and mindfulness practices being included in varied psychotherapeutic approaches? What does mindfulness add to these approaches? What benefit is there to “keeping one’s consciousness alive to the present reality” (Hanh, 1987, p. 11)? Some answers are offered below.

Brown and Ryan (2003) contend that mindfulness may function to assist individuals in disengaging from automatic responding and instead engaging in behavior regulation, which has been associated with greater well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Further, mindfulness is hypothesized to add vividness and clarity to experience, thus directly contributing to happiness and comfort (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In addition, Baer’s (2003) review of mindfulness training strategies suggests that mindfulness skills can aid in a number of interrelated treatment interventions and goals, including cognitive change, self-management, relaxation, exposure, and acceptance. Finally, mindfulness may facilitate an increase in behavioral flexibility and broaden an individual’s repertoire of responses.

Given the above evidence for the benefits of mindfulness, a question with regard to effective mindfulness training arises. Traditionally, lengthy, structured meditative practices have been advocated as the method to train and practice mindfulness. Authors such as Hanh (1987) and Chodron (1991) encourage regular meditation practice as a means to become more mindful; meditative mindfulness practice is also the basis of contemporary psychological treatments for mentioned above (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2003; Segal et al., 2002; Teasdale et al., 2002). However, other contemporary psychotherapies that integrate mindfulness strategies, such as DBT (Linehan, 1993a) and ACT (Hayes et al., 1999), do not rely on lengthy meditation practices *per se* to teach or practice mindfulness. The various definitions of mindfulness and the ever-growing list of mindfulness training techniques – ranging from formal meditation to informal attending and describing – seems to imply that there are a variety of ways to be mindful, only one of which is through meditation (Hayes & Shenk, in press). As Hayes and Shenk assert, mindfulness practices must be empirically supported if they are to be integrated into a clinical regimen.

Mindfulness in Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Mindfulness practice is a core aspect of the Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT; Linehan, 1993a, 1993b). Reflecting the central dialectic in DBT of acceptance and change, mindfulness skills are focused on synthesizing an acceptance of one's history, current thoughts, emotions, and sensations with change efforts directed at distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and relationship effectiveness. Mindfulness skills, especially nonjudgmental observation and description, are needed in order to teach and develop all of the other skills — emotion regulation, distress tolerance and relationship effectiveness.

Because of the abstract nature of most mindfulness practice and the relatively concrete level of understanding for most people with DD/ID, in this adaptation of DBT it was decided to integrate the Mindfulness module into the other three modules. By including mindfulness as a component of the other modules, it is possible to include more concrete references to the ways in which mindfulness can be concretely applied in the use of other skills. Our suggestion is that for the first few sessions of Emotion Regulation, Distress Tolerance and Relationship Effectiveness, in addition to doing a mindfulness exercise, the following handouts should be reviewed. Suggestions to leaders regarding how to present this information are given.

Session 1

Materials:

- [Mindfulness Handout 1](#): States of Mind

Overview:

Begin by talking about what it is like to be in the state of emotional mind or “thinking hot.” In this state one’s emotions are so strong and so much in control that little or no rational thought is possible. Therefore, actions often take place without consideration of consequences. Contrast this to reasonable mind or “thinking cool.” In this state, we are so focused on rational thinking that we ignore our emotions. We don’t identify the feelings we are experiencing until they build up so much pressure that we are likely to act out unexpectedly. Neither of these extremes is particularly healthy in terms of our emotional well-being. It is not uncommon for group members to be very familiar with emotional and can have a hard time understanding reasonable mind. If this is the case, describing reasonable mind as making good decisions in the absence of strong emotion can be helpful.

In the middle between emotional and reasonable mind is the state we strive for with our mindfulness exercises, referred to as wise mind. In wise mind we are aware of our emotions, sensations, and other internal experiences and at the same time we are able to think about and plan our behavioral responses, as well as considering the consequences for such. We are able to accurately identify these emotions, but we are not so overwhelmed by the emotions that we can’t make good decisions. All of our mindfulness exercises are focused on helping to build voluntary control of our behavior and influence over our mental state so that we can maintain the balance needed to achieve wise mind.

Session 2

Materials:

- [Mindfulness Handout 2](#): Mindfulness: What To Do

Overview:

This handout focuses on what group members can do to improve mindfulness in day-to-day activities. It encourages them to use the skills of observing, describing, and participating as ways of improving control over what their mind focuses on.

- **Observe**

When observing something, the client is encouraged to pay attention both internally and externally, by examining what is going on in the world around them, what their body is doing and what their mind is doing. In different types of mindfulness exercises a single aspect of observing may be highlighted. In other exercises, the client is encouraged to notice multiple aspects, both internally and externally. Other words that can be used to describe observing include watching, paying attention to, checking out, and noticing.

- **Describe**

When describing something, the client is encouraged to give as many details as possible, whether the item being described is internal, such as thoughts or feelings or is something external that the person is attending to. Many describing activities focus on sensory-based experiences as well as other descriptive terms.

- **Participate**

The participation portion of this handout focuses on acceptance. The person is encouraged to notice what they are experiencing in a non-judgmental fashion. Instead of trying to control the experience, the person is encouraged to just focus on what is happening without trying to stop anything. Their goal is just to pay attention to what they are doing, feeling or thinking.

Session 3

Materials:

- [Mindfulness Handout 3](#): Mindfulness: How to Do It

Overview:

This handout focuses on functioning effectively by allowing oneself to accept what is happening around you without judging what is happening. It gives permission to focus on only one thing at a time and to give credit to yourself for using skills in the best way that you can.

Mindfulness Exercises

Listen to the Silence: Sit quietly and just listen to what is going on around you. Try to shut off your other senses and just focus on what your ears are able to tell you. After listening for a few minutes, have group members describe what they heard.

Watch the Flame: Begin by noticing how you are feeling. Then light a candle and sit around it. Use your eyes to notice how the flame moves. Try to keep your focus entirely on the flame, using your concentration on the flame to block out other intrusive stimuli. After about 5 minutes of concentration, check again to see how you are feeling and notice any changes.

Lotion: Rub a small amount of lotion into your hands and try to use all of your senses to notice as many things as possible about the lotion—scent, temperature, texture, etc. After a few minutes describe what you experienced to the other members of the group.

Be mindful of emotions: Think of a time recently when you experienced a strong emotion. Let yourself go back to that time and notice the feelings that you have, without judging them or acting on them. Notice any thoughts that you have in addition to the emotion. Describe to the group what you experienced.

Be mindful of what you eat: Give each person a small piece of food (candy, a chip, a piece of popcorn or anything else you think might work). Ask everyone to examine the food and then eat it. While eating the piece of food, focus on taste, smell and texture. Describe to the group what you experienced.

Be mindful of movement: Lead your group through a few gentle stretching exercises. Ask the members to notice how their body feels as it moves into different positions. Keep your focus internal and try to ignore external stimuli. Describe to the group what you experienced.

Be mindful of what you observe: Have clients walk around the building (inside or outside, as possible) quietly, simply observing. Then re-convene the group and have each member describe to the group what they experienced.

What is in the bag?: Select a number of objects and place them in a box or bag that clients cannot see into. Have them place their hand in the bag and describe their experience of the object without naming the object. Have others guess what the object may be. Another version of this exercise includes having others draw what the volunteer is describing without naming or giving away what the object is.

Chapter 7: Distress Tolerance Skills

Overview of the Module

Implicit in the natural course of life is an ebb and flow of pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Without evaluation, there are simply experiences of pleasure and of pain. Unfortunately, much of Western culture teaches people to evaluate pain as “bad” and to attempt to eliminate all discomfort they encounter in life. This is true even within the psychological community. The majority of psychological theories and therapies are, for the most part, predicated upon the notion that aversive and unwanted private events are problems to be eliminated. For example, those persons diagnosed with anxiety disorders are presumed to be experiencing “too much” arousal, whereas those individuals diagnosed with depression are assumed to be experiencing “unhealthy” changes in states of mood. Treatments for the above, then, focus on increasing “psychological health” by removing that which is experienced as uncomfortable. However, there are times when the unpleasant experience of pain cannot be changed and all change efforts directed at eliminating that pain lead to greater suffering. Distress tolerance skills present an alternative to these approaches in times of unchangeable discomfort; the skills focus on non-judgmentally accepting and tolerating that which life evokes.

The reasons that DBT advocates a stance of non-judgmental acceptance are simple. First of all, as numerous religious and spiritual groups have understood for centuries, pain and suffering are part of life. Painful experiences are not bound by race, culture, gender, SES, sexual orientation, religion, or any other factor. Second, the inability to accept pain and suffering often leads to impulsive and ineffective decision making – frequently resulting in greater pain and suffering and preventing substantial personal change efforts.

The distress tolerance skills taught in this module are, in some ways, an extension of the core mindfulness skills. DBT advocates a stance of non-evaluative or non-judgmental acceptance of oneself and one’s situation. Marsha Linehan, developer of DBT succinctly states it this way, “Essentially, distress tolerance is the ability to perceive one’s environment without putting demands on it to be different, to experience your current emotional state without attempting to change it, and to observe your own thoughts and action patterns without attempting to stop or control them.”¹ It must be understood (by therapists and clients alike) that DBT is advocating a stance of acceptance, not one of approval. In sum, one is accepting when one is being open to one’s psychological reactions in all circumstances, while behaving effectively, in the service of living a valued life. Said otherwise, the focus is not on accepting pain for the simple sake of accepting, but rather not causing additional suffering.

The skill training is broken down into two main areas, crisis survival skills and acceptance skills. The crisis survival skills include distracting, self-soothing, improving the moment, and thinking of pros and cons. The acceptance skills include radical acceptance, turning the mind

¹ Linehan, M. M. (1993). *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder*. New York: Guilford Press.

towards acceptance (choosing to accept reality and choosing to behave effectively), and increasing one's willingness to be open to experience.

There is a lot of flexibility in the presentation of this material. Depending on the characteristics of the group you are leading, expect to take between 10 and 15 sessions. The general structure we suggest using for presentation of this material is outlined in Chapter 3. In this adaptation, we also recommend integrating mindfulness skills into the other three skills modules, as opposed to teaching mindfulness as a separate module. Our suggestions for how to accomplish this are given in the chapter on [Mindfulness](#).

Sessions 1 and 2

Materials:

- [Mindfulness Handout 1](#): States of Mind
- [Mindfulness Handout 2](#): Mindfulness: What To Do
- [Distress Tolerance Handout 1](#): Goals of Distress Tolerance

Overview:

The focus of these two sessions will be establishing the basic goals of the Distress Tolerance skills module and teaching clients the basic information regarding mindfulness as described in the chapter on [Mindfulness](#). Because mindfulness skills are taught at the beginning of each module, don't spend too much time on them. Most clients are able to understand the basics rather quickly, but it is helpful to review the skills often. Although not a part of the original DBT protocol, we recommend beginning each session with a brief mindfulness activity, as described in the chapter on [Session Format](#). A balance of quiet, meditative activities and interactive, experiential activities seems to work well for clients with high impulsivity and short attention span.

[Distress Tolerance Handout 1](#) outlines the overarching goals of the group and serves as an introduction to the basic skills that will be taught in this module. You will want to spend some time on this sheet as it orients clients to the main focus of the group, but remember the specific skills will be taught in more detail later so you don't have to describe everything now. Begin the group by explaining what distress tolerance is and that the skills will help clients survive their crisis (or hard times) better. Introduce the idea that there are times that life is awful and there is nothing we can do to change it. It is at these times that we should focus on getting through the situations without making them worse. Elicit examples of distressing times from group members and discuss the ways they have tried to handle the situations in the past. If group members aren't ready to volunteer information yet, the group leader should be prepared to give some common examples like acting impulsively, giving up, etc. Talk with the group members about what strategies worked and which ones did not.

Much of the time we struggle against the negative feelings that result from distressing situations, using strategies that may work in the short term. When those control strategies stop working, we start to think that we must simply struggle more, work harder, and get better at fighting against the uncomfortable feelings. In the Distress Tolerance module, you will cover three steps to surviving distressing situations: understanding one's stress, accepting one's stress, and surviving the crisis.

The first major point is that all too often these attempts to control stress are ineffective and end up making the situations worse. If group members have a difficult time understanding this point, give the following example or a similar one from your own experience.

Marvin, an old farmer, fell into a hole one day when he was walking through one of his fields. Lucky for him, he happened to be carrying a shovel! He thought to himself, "I suppose I might as well start digging myself out of here." So Marvin started digging. He dug and dug, but the hole just kept on getting deeper! After

awhile, Marvin realized that he was getting himself deeper in the hole, so he thought to himself, “Wow, I’ve got to start digging faster and harder, or I’ll never get out of the hole.” So he started working even harder, digging and digging. What do you think happened to him? What would you do if you were in this hole?

- **Understand your stress**

It can be really difficult to survive crises and handle stressful situations if one doesn’t understand what is going on. Understanding your stress is a good first step, but understanding alone will not get you through the situation. This is a good time to do a brief review of how our body feels when we experience different emotions. It is important for group members to be able to accurately identify what they are feeling.

- **Accept your stress**

There are times, for various reasons, that distressing situations and emotions are not changeable. The group leader should elicit a few examples of things that we are unable to change, but which may be distressing from the group. If the group doesn’t have any ideas, the leader should suggest some events, such as inclement weather, that we are powerless to change but that can be very distressing. The skill of acceptance specifically targets those times when we do not have the power to change the uncomfortable situation. Accepting your stress leads naturally to the next objective, survival.

- **Survive your crisis**

The skills mentioned above, understanding and accepting, are for the purpose of surviving crises without making them worse. Everyone, throughout their lives, will experience pain and discomfort. Sometimes painful experiences come in situations that present no opportunity for processing and working on the emotions. Sometimes people need to simply learn to distract themselves for the time-being and work things out later. This module will help with tolerating distress, but also is focused on teaching greater acceptance (and less avoidance) of all experiences in life, positive and negative.

Homework:

Just give one simple assignment for each session. Here are a couple of examples, but any assignment that encourages group members to think about the skills that are being taught will be helpful. Then don’t forget to review clients’ success with the assignment next week.

- Between now and the next session, notice your state of mind. How much time do you spend in emotional mind, rational mind and wise mind.
- Notice times when you feel distressed. Don’t try to change anything, just notice the feelings. See what happens over time and if anything changes.

Session 3

Materials:

- [Mindfulness Handout 3](#): Mindfulness: How To Do It
- [Distress Tolerance Handout 2](#): Reasons to Use Distress Tolerance Skills
- [Distress Tolerance Handout 3](#): Ways to Survive Bad Times

Overview:

Using the session format described in chapter 4, after you have done the mindfulness exercise, introduce the mindfulness concepts found in Mindfulness Handout 3 (for suggestions of what to focus on see chapter 5, session 3).

Review Distress Tolerance Handout 2 quickly. Most clients will resonate with the 3 points here. Have group members give examples of painful times that they have made worse by not being willing or able to deal with their pain.

For Distress Tolerance Handout 3, begin with an overview of the three skills outlined on this handout: distracting, self-soothing (calming), and thinking about choices and consequences. These are basic skills used to simply tolerate and survive a crisis if things can't be changed right away. Go through this handout quickly, ensuring that clients understand the basics. Each skill or group of skills will be gone through in greater detail in subsequent handouts. In order to get group members focused, elicit examples of situations that need to be tolerated. Then present an overview of the skills to be learned.

- **Distract with “Wise Mind ACCEPTS”**
Present these skills as temporary activities to engage in. Remind clients that these are not “cures” for eliminating distress, just ways to survive crises. Provide and/or elicit examples of the different distracting activities.
- **Calm Yourself With Your Senses**
Review the 5 senses and give brief examples of how to use each one to self-soothe.
- **Think About Your Choices**
Oftentimes clients who engage in impulsive behaviors can start to manage their impulses a little better they are able to think about the consequences for their behavior before they act.

Homework:

Pick one of these skills and try using in between now and the next session. Report back to the group to let us know how it works.

Session 4

Materials:

- [Distress Tolerance Handout 4](#): Ways to Survive Bad Times: Distracting

Overview

Start by reviewing/discussing times and situations when it is beneficial to distract oneself. Overall, distracting skills can help reduce contact with the event that is evoking the distress. Then review examples of each of the specific skills.

- **Activities**

Get group members to list activities that they find helpful in distracting themselves. Use the examples from the handout or others that you think may be relevant, if needed to get discussion going. At times members may bring up activities that may tend to make the distress greater, instead of being a distraction (i.e., beating someone up or punching a punching bag). Talk about why the activity may not be helpful in reducing distress and go on to discuss an activity that is likely to be more useful.

- **Contribute**

Get group members to talk about ways that they have helped others. Then lead the discussion into how they feel when they help others. Introduce the idea that helping others is something you can do to make yourself feel better when you are dealing with a distressing event that is out of your control.

- **Compare**

Comparing oneself with others can help in two ways. First, it may give us new ideas on how to handle a variety of situations. Talk to the group about role models. The leader should be prepared to explain the concept of a role model, because many people with DD/ID are not familiar with this idea. After group members have identified some positive role models, discuss several examples of distressing situations. Get the members to talk about how they think their role models might handle these situations. Then talk about how you can use this skill in a distressing situation. You would use it by thinking about how your role model might handle the situation and then doing the same thing.

Second, one may see his/her situation in a different light when compared to those having more difficult times or those less fortunate in general. Just as helping someone in need can help people feel better about themselves, realizing that one's life is not as awful as it seems can refocus clients on making positive choices.

- **Opposite Emotions**

Work with the group to make a list of negative emotions and then talk about other emotions that could be used in an opposite way to help you to feel differently. For example if you are angry, watching something scary might create opposite emotions to help you to regain balance. Similarly if you are scared, reading a funny joke book might put you back in balance. For those who have the basic skills, challenge them even further

by suggesting activities such as being nice to a person they are mad at or approaching a feared situation or activity.

- **Push Away**

Essentially this technique is a use of guided imagery to help to block negative thoughts. Work with the group to come up with some visual images that could be used to block negative thoughts, like building walls or a picture of someone pushing the distressing problem away. Some may be surprised by the inclusion of this skill, as this behavior (in excess) is thought to contribute to some psychological problems. The secret is to use this skill only when needed – which should be infrequent at best. This should not be the first skill clients try, but it can be useful in an emergency.

- **Thoughts**

The main message here is that we have control of our thoughts. Rather than thinking about a distressing event for long periods of time, we can choose to think about something else. Thinking about other things will temporarily disrupt the cycle of thoughts about the unpleasant situation activating the associated emotions and vice versa. The thing we choose to think about might be a game that we really enjoy playing, a friend we are looking forward to seeing, or a simple activity like counting that occupies our mind. Remind clients, however, that this too is temporary and they will likely find themselves feeling the negative emotion and thinking about the situation again later.

- **Sensations**

Just the same as we can use our thoughts to block negative emotions from distressing events, we can use our senses. In the group, have members try thinking about something that they are angry about. Then have them focus on one of their senses by looking at something, feeling something, listening to something, etc. Then check in with them to see if the anger remained as intense. Other examples such as holding ice cubes, taking a hot bath, or snapping a rubber band will change the physiological experience related to emotions and likely interrupt the current negative emotion.

Homework:

Ask group members to try using one of these distractions when they experience something that is distressing between now and the next session. They should notice how well the technique works or doesn't work and report back to the group next time.

Session 5

Materials:

- [Distress Tolerance Handout 5](#): Ways To Survive Bad Times: Calming Yourself

Overview:

Many of the distracting skills are indirectly calming, but the following are clearly skills directed at self-soothing. Introduce the handout by reviewing the 5 senses with clients and then discuss the concept of self-soothing or calming. It may be helpful to present the idea of self-soothing as being comforting, gentle, and kind to oneself to your clients. Introduce the ideas for using each sense to self-soothe as examples of how to utilize senses to help calm down. Elicit other examples from clients of ways they use/have used their senses to self-soothe. Have them list other suggestions from the group on their handouts. In the group, practice using several different senses for calming.

Homework:

Have each group member pick one of the senses that they think works particularly well for them. Ask them to practice this skill at least once a day until the next session. They don't have to be distressed when practicing, but they should notice if they feel any different after the practice session. Have the group members report back to the group on how their practice sessions work.

Session 6

Materials:

- [Distress Tolerance Handout 6](#): Ways To Survive Bad Times: Thinking About Your Choices

Overview:

Many of our clients have difficulty thinking about the consequences for their behavior when they are experiencing strong emotions. Begin presenting this handout by discussing how difficult it is for some people to think of the different choices they have in situations and what the consequences are for those choices. Elicit examples from group members, or if they have trouble thinking of examples, present a situation in which a person is faced with a few choices and there are consequences (positive or negative) for whatever choice they make. Some ideas may include having to choose between spending time with family vs. friends or a lover vs. friends; having family members dislike one's chosen romantic partner; apologizing for a perceived mistake vs. being right, and so on. To practice, either have group members fill out the handout according to examples being given in the group or work together on a white board. Sometimes it is fun to see how many different choices (both good and bad) a person could make. Then after considering all the consequences, talk about which of the choices would be the best in this situation.

Homework:

Have group members pick a situation between now and the next session. They should think about all the different choices they could make in the situation and then pick the one that they think is the best. If the member's writing skills allow, they may complete the handout to record the homework. If they are unable to write, caregivers could be recruited to help with the assignment. It is also possible for members to use a tape recorder to present their homework or just to tell what they thought about. Using one of these methods, they should report back to the group at the next session.

Session 7

Materials:

- [Distress Tolerance Handout 7: Accepting Reality](#)

Overview:

Radical acceptance is a concept that most people are very unfamiliar with. The prevailing view in psychology – and society in general – is that most, if not all distressing experiences are unhealthy. However, pain is part of life. The expressions of pain, whether it is physical, psychological, spiritual, or a combination, are nature's way of letting us know that something is wrong.

Discuss what it would be like to feel no pain. At first this may seem appealing, but have group members consider the consequences. How would a person prevent severe damage from burns, punctures, or injuries? What would happen when we got sick? What would happen to cultural practices, stories, and relationships if we did not feel the pain of losing someone close to us?

Once clients have a grasp on the concept that pain does have some function, move to a discussion about pain and suffering. Pain is a natural response to unpleasant experiences – a discomfort; suffering is non-acceptance of the pain – adding to an already uncomfortable situation. Suffering is a result of ineffective strategies attempting to control, reduce, or rid oneself of the experience of pain. Radical acceptance involves letting go of the struggle to control reality.

- **Radical Acceptance**

In order to practice radical acceptance, one first must acknowledge that which exists. Anything but acknowledgment is simply another way to attempt to avoid. Then one must put up with, tolerate, and endure reality. In fact, one practices radical acceptance only when one embraces all experiences, whether they are pleasant or painful.

- **Turning Your Mind**

Practicing radical acceptance is counter-intuitive and takes a great deal of effort. Practicing radical acceptance is an effortful choice, one that must be made again and again. Without this repetitive effort, we will naturally turn towards escape and avoidance. Turning your mind towards this choice that needs to be made is the first step towards practicing acceptance.

- **Willingness**

In order for one to practice acceptance, one must be willing to experience that which happens. Willingness is choosing to withstand, tolerate, embrace, and accept. Frame willingness as the opposite of willfulness – willfulness is when one tries to control all that happens to him or her whereas willingness is allowing one to experience the world as it is. Willingness is a skill that is used in the service of being effective in all situations.

Willfulness leads to ineffective action while willingness leads to effective action. Metaphors (such as the following) can be used to help illustrate the above points.

Life is like the ocean. There are times when the sun is shining, the temperatures are warm, and the water is calm. Life can be peaceful, relaxing, and enjoyable. There are also times when the wind is whipping, rain (or snow) is falling, and 10 foot waves are crashing upon the beach. During storms, it can be helpful to try and find shelter. If there is no shelter, sometimes it helps to dig a little hole. Sometimes you just need to stand and let the waves break over you. Sometimes all you can do is tread water and keep from drowning. But cursing the storm, commanding the storm to stop, turning your back upon the storm, or refusing to acknowledge the storm doesn't help you.

In addition, some clients may be familiar with the Serenity Prayer, made popular by Alcoholics Anonymous: "Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Homework:

Practice Radical Acceptance at least once before the next session. Try using "Turning Your Mind" or "Willingness" to help in the process. Report back to the group next time about what happens.

Session 8

Materials:

- [Distress Tolerance Handout 8](#): Accepting Reality: Breathing

Overview:

This handout, as well as the next two, is based on exercises in Thich Nhat Hanh's 1987 book, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, as adapted by Marsha Linehan. The majority of religious and spiritual practices include exercises to assist in meditation, prayer, or spiritual enlightenment. Breathing exercises are an integral part of many of the above; they are also central in relaxation training protocols and treatments for many anxiety disorders. Focusing on breathing is an excellent way to allow one's *wise mind* to work and to assist in practicing radical acceptance.

It is helpful to start with a basic introduction to the skill, then review and practice each variation of the skill. Many clients will enjoy practicing these skills in the group setting, though there will likely be others who are reticent. Notice also that there are numerous variations that one could use with any of the three acceptance skills. Encourage all group members to try all of them (as possible) in group and pick one or two to practice during the week, eventually finding exercises that they enjoy and that work for them.

Homework:

Have group members commit to practicing one of the exercises each day for at least 5-10 minutes. The members should be prepared to report back to the group at the next session regarding their experience.

Session 9

Materials:

- [Distress Tolerance Handout 9](#): Accepting Reality: Half-Smiling

Overview:

Emotions, thoughts, and overt behaviors all have bi-directional influence on each other. While feeling happy often makes people smile, smiling can also help people feel happy. There is some truth to the saying “fake it until you make it.” In order to feel more accepting, adopting a congruent facial expression is helpful. Have group members practice having a scowling facial expression, then no expression, and then a half-smile. The half-smile can feel unnatural at first. A helpful way to teach clients how to relax their facial muscles is to pretend that they are sleeping/falling asleep and gently pick up the corners of their mouth. Elicit feedback from clients regarding their experience with their different facial expressions. Briefly practice the 4 different exercises listed on the handouts during group.

Homework:

Have group members commit to practicing one of the exercises each day, until your next session. Have the group members report back regarding their success with the exercise.

Session 10

Materials:

- [Distress Tolerance Handout 10](#): Accepting Reality: Focusing

Overview:

Two contributing factors to much suffering are lack of attention to one's experiences and over-attending to one's thoughts, including evaluating, judging, ruminating, and so forth. Using *wise mind* necessitates the ability to get some distance from one's "mindy" thoughts. Achieving wise mind also requires using mindfulness skills, such as attending to other aspects of experience. When practiced regularly, these activities can lead to a greater ability to practice radical acceptance across situations. Furthermore, in a crisis these focusing skills can help prevent emotional and behavioral escalation.

Briefly practice the 4 different exercises listed on the handout during group. Talk about which of the exercises work best for different people and acknowledge that not all techniques will work for everyone.

Homework:

Have each group member select the technique that they think will work best for them. Have everyone commit to practicing one of the exercises each day. Group members should report back at the next session regarding how these exercises worked for them.

Chapter 8: Emotion Regulation Skills

Overview of the Module

Emotion Regulation is a skill that many people struggle with. In fact, intense anger, frustration, depression, and anxiety are emotions far too many people experience frequently. For those who have histories of traumatic experiences and those who grew up in emotionally invalidating environments, this emotional intensity and lability are even greater problems.

Additionally, painful emotions are often perceived as the problem to be fixed, when in fact the painful emotions are natural and understandable consequences to the individual's experiences. In attempts to "fix" their problematic painful emotions, clients will often engage in impulsive, dysfunctional behaviors including self-harm and substance abuse. Furthermore, clients often increase their suffering by walling off, avoiding, or fighting with their primary emotional experiences. These control tactics often result in secondary emotions, such as feeling depressed, guilty, angry, or ashamed for feeling a particular way. Many of the skills in this module are designed to undermine this process by reducing one's vulnerability to the negative emotions and increasing one's acceptance of negative emotions when they occur.

Teaching emotion regulation skills is a difficult task. It must be emphasized that these skills are not a way to have absolute control over what one feels, but rather to moderate the intensity, frequency, and duration of painful experiences. Because emotions are natural consequences of that which happens in the environment around us, complete control is only possible if the environment can be completely controlled – clearly an impossible task. Mindfulness skills – especially nonjudgmental observation and description are needed in order to teach and develop emotion regulation skills.

In order to teach these skills, group leaders must validate the clients' experiences, as emotional validation is the foundation for the rest of the skill training. Too often our emotional responses to events and experiences are evaluated as unreasonable and observed in disbelief. Validation is critical to the dialectical process of accepting one's emotional experiences and responses *and* responding more effectively in the future.

Clients will further resist learning and implementing the skills unless they see benefit in doing so. A way to engage and join with clients around this issue is having them assess how well their current approach is working for them. Though they may get some benefit from having extreme emotional and behavioral displays, most clients will admit that they would like to handle things better. Emotion regulation skills are designed to empower clients so that they are able to choose their responses (to environmental events and their own automatic responses to environmental events) and behave more effectively in difficult situations.

Here are specific emotion regulation skills that will be taught:

Identifying and Labeling Emotions

This can be a difficult skill to learn, especially for those with little experience paying attention to emotions. This skill is much more helpful if one can describe the contexts in which emotions

typically occur as well. This includes the ability to observe and describe prompting events, interpretations of events, physiological and psychological correlates of emotions, behavioral expressions related to emotions, and the consequences (effects) of emotions on general functioning.

Identifying Obstacles to Changing Emotions

In essence, emotions function as modes of communication. First of all, emotions serve as signals to ourselves, informing us about our current environment and motivating us to behave in response to the environment. Second, emotions communicate to others and help influence their behavior. Given the naturally reinforcing qualities of these functions, it is easily understood why emotions are difficult to change. Understanding how emotions work, however, is a good step towards being able to find appropriate ways to change.

Reducing Vulnerability to “Emotion Mind”

Numerous factors influence the level of reactivity we have to our emotions. Especially for those clients with fewer internal resources to begin with, factors such as lack of sleep, poor nutrition, inconsistent medication adherence, and lack of physical activity can increase emotional lability and ineffective problem solving techniques. In addition, increasing positive activities to reduce one’s emotional reactivity have long term benefits, but often little short term payoff. Engaging in helpful activities requires an active, persistent approach.

Increasing Positive Emotional Events

One of the core DBT assumptions is that one’s emotional experience is a natural result of environmental experiences. In short, most people have good reasons for feeling bad. The most parsimonious way to counteract feeling bad is to engage in activities that result in more positive feelings. For individuals with DD/ID, this includes working with caregivers to provide daily opportunities for positive experiences and making long term commitments to positive lifestyle changes.

Increasing Mindfulness to Current Emotions

Many people increase the effects of their negative emotions by attempting to inhibit, deny, or judge them. The focus of this skill is on increasing exposure to primary emotions and blocking ineffective coping strategies, thereby undermining their capability to evoke negative secondary emotions. Basically, clients are taught to increase their willingness to feel emotional pain without feeling guilty, anxious, or angry about it.

Taking Opposite Action

One of the greatest skill deficits that many individuals with dual diagnoses exhibit is that of behavioral emotional expression. The skill of taking opposite action is simply choosing to behave in a way that is in opposition to or inconsistent with one’s current emotion. This skill has the benefits of decreasing the length of negative emotions and decreasing ineffective behavioral responses. In addition, it should be noted that taking opposite action is more than simply blocking expression of negative emotions; taking opposite action involves actions such as approaching that which one is afraid of and being nice to those one is angry with.

Applying Distress Tolerance Techniques

As mentioned above, impulsive emotional responding often creates greater negative experiences. Simply tolerating negative emotions can help stop the perpetuation of negative emotions and ineffective coping skills.

There is a lot of flexibility in the presentation of this material. Depending on the characteristics of the group you are leading, expect to take between 10 and 15 sessions. We suggest using the group structure outlined in [Chapter 4](#) as a general format for the presentation of the materials. In this adaptation, we also recommend integrating mindfulness skills into the other three skills modules, as opposed to teaching mindfulness as a separate module. Our suggestions for how to accomplish this are given in [Chapter 5](#).

Sessions 1 and 2

Materials:

- [Emotion Regulation Handout 1](#): Goals of Emotion Regulation
- [Mindfulness Handout 1](#): States of Mind
- [Mindfulness Handout 2](#): Mindfulness: What To Do

Overview:

The focus of these sessions will be establishing the basic goals of the Emotion Regulation skills module and teaching clients the basic information regarding mindfulness as described in [Chapter 5](#). Because the mindfulness skills are taught at the beginning of each module, don't spend too much time on them. Most clients are able to understand the basics rather quickly, but it is helpful to review the skills often. Although not a part of the original DBT protocol, we recommend beginning each session with a brief mindfulness activity, as described in Chapter 3. A balance of quiet, meditative activities and interactive, experiential activities seems to work well for clients with high impulsivity and short attention spans.

Emotion Regulation Handout 1 outlines the overarching goals of the group and serves as an introduction to the basic skills. You will want to spend some time on this sheet as it orients clients to the main focus of the group, but remember the specific skills will be taught in more detail later so you don't have to describe everything now.

- **Understand your emotions**

In order to regulate emotions, the first step is to be willing to look at the emotions you are experiencing. Then you need to be able to accurately identify and label those emotions. This task necessitates the use of the mindfulness skill of observing and describing. While there are an infinite number of names for the various nuances of emotions, for individuals with lower cognitive abilities it is helpful to start with five basic emotions: happy, sad, mad, embarrassed, and scared (the five emotions on the check-in sheet discussed in [Chapter 4](#)). Later the list of emotions may be expanded, but it is best to start with a brief list of emotions initially.

The next aspect of understanding emotions is to understand the function of emotions. Very simply, emotions help prepare people for action. Emotions like scared, embarrassed, and mad prepare the protective "fight or flight" response pattern while both sad and happy can facilitate developing connections with others, among other things. Emphasize the point that emotions are in no way "bad," but some feel yucky and others feel good. All emotions play a role in our lives and have a useful function – at least when they occur in moderation.

- **Control Your Behavior**

Many of our clients are subject to their emotions; they lack skill to respond differently or moderate their emotions. Because of the multiple influences on emotions, having insight about or understanding of emotions in isolation has only limited benefit; understanding one's emotions in the context that they occur will aid in the ability to identify and label the emotions. As you move through this module, leaders will be emphasizing the contextual influences, which include the prompting event, the interpretation/thoughts about the prompting event, the sensations and experiences that occur with the emotion, the emotionally

expressive behaviors accompanying the emotion, and the consequences/aftereffects of the emotion. The process of “chaining” events this way enables clients and therapists alike to identify choice points and interventions (skills) that could be used at these choice points. The core of this idea is “no matter what, I choose how to act.” It does not matter what sorts of emotions, thoughts, sensations, and/or perceptions we are experiencing, we all still make choices about how to behave. Certain experiences certainly make it more difficult to respond in a societally appropriate manner, yet appropriate responses are not impossible. As you discuss of how to respond to environmental stimuli appropriately, it is also a great time to validate the emotions that the client is feeling.

- **Stop Feeling Bad All The Time**

Another way to regulate emotions, reducing one’s vulnerability to them, can be achieved in a number of ways. First of all, by using one’s *wise mind*, clients will be able to reduce the amount of time spent in *emotional mind*. Additionally, engaging in activities that increase positive emotions will help clients experience more of the normal range of emotions. Finally, clients will be able to learn how to let go of painful emotions and reduce their suffering by being mindful of their emotions instead of fighting them, avoiding them, or wallowing in them; clients will also learn how to engage in “opposite action” in order to reduce the power that emotions have over them.

Homework:

Just give one simple assignment for each session. Here are a couple of examples, but any assignment that encourages group members to think about the skills that are being taught will be helpful. Then don’t forget to review their success with the assignment next week.

- Between now and the next session, notice your state of mind. How much time do you spend in emotional mind, rational mind and wise mind?
- When you experience emotions, think about how your body feels and try to accurately label the emotion.

Session 3

Materials:

- [Mindfulness Handout 3](#): Mindfulness: How To Do It
- [Emotion Regulation Handout 2](#): Lies and Truths About Emotions

Overview:

Using the session format described in chapter 3, after you have done the mindfulness exercise, introduce the mindfulness concepts found in Mindfulness Handout 3 (for suggestions of what to focus on see [chapter 5, session 3](#)).

Many of our clients, for a variety of reasons, have ideas about emotions that are incorrect, invalidating, and contribute to their suffering. Emotion Regulation Handout 2 is a way to help clients identify the dysfunctional beliefs that they have about emotions and develop their own counter-statements. You can use this sheet in a variety of ways, depending on the functioning level of the group members. Clients can write in their own truths about emotions individually; the group can work together to develop truths and then individual clients can write the group truths on to their handout; or the group can develop truths together and the group leader can write out the truths and provide copies of the completed handout to the group members.

A great way to discuss the lies about emotions is to use the devil's advocate technique in support of the lies. Using this technique the group leader would state strongly that there is a correct way to feel all the time, using extreme examples, so that the group members can argue against the obvious incorrectness of this position. For example, the leader might proclaim: "Everyone should feel happy all of the time. It is not OK to feel any other way." Use of this technique will help clients to more strongly identify with the challenges to the lies and hopefully make the truths about emotions concrete and understandable to the clients. Using this technique as you process the handout should also help clients recognize that emotions are not bad and they do not need to be angry, guilty, frustrated, or ashamed about feeling specific emotions.

Homework:

- Notice your emotions between now and the next session and accurately label them.

Session 4

Materials:

- [Mindfulness Handout 1](#): States of Mind
- [Emotion Regulation Handout 3a and 3b](#): Model of Emotions
- [Emotion Regulation Homework Sheets 1-3](#): Homework Sheet

Overview:

Emotion Regulation Handout 3 is a very simplified version of Linehan's (1993b) model for describing emotions. The core components have been retained but some of the more complex nuances have been modified or eliminated in order to make the model easier to understand. Although review of this handout is described as a single session, leaders may find that spending additional sessions on this skill would be helpful depending on the needs of the group members. It may also be helpful to teach this skill to other caregivers who can help by prompting clients to use the skill in other environments outside of the session.

- **Stuff Happens**

Prompting events for emotions can be located externally (in the environment) or internally (thoughts, behaviors, physiological arousal/calming, or other emotions). While it is quite common for people to focus on the internal prompts for emotions, the emphasis should be balanced between external and internal prompts. Leaders should use both internal and external prompts as examples in discussing this handout with group members. It is also important to note that emotions can occur automatically (without thinking), such as when looking down from a high place or seeing a close friend.

- **I feel my emotion**

Emotions are complex experiences, made up of many components. These components include:

- a) Physiological responses or sensations like increased/decreased pulse and respiration, muscle relaxation/contraction or changes in the way the gastrointestinal tract feels;
- b) Facial expressions like smiles, frowns, widening of the eyes, etc.;
- c) Brain responses that determine how well and what types of information we can process; and
- d) Urges to take different types of action.

Emotions always occur with physiological correlates, including changes in heart rate, muscle tone (tensing or relaxing), sweating or feeling cold, facial expression, and so on. Some clients will recognize these changes very quickly, while others will not have noticed the relationship between their physical body and their emotions.

One way to get clients to associate emotions with their accompanying physical sensations is to have them think of the last time they felt a strong emotion and then lead them through a brief body scan – especially focusing on the stomach, chest, and shoulder areas. Most clients will be able to identify changes in their heart rate and muscle tension, as well as facial expressions.

An area that many of our clients have difficulty is with the urges that accompany emotions. Because of the evolutionary function of emotions to prompt action, our bodies get “pumped

up” when a strong emotion is present. However, these action urges are often inappropriate for the current cultural setting. The urge to retaliate to verbal aggression makes sense – if survival is on the line, but retaliation may not be the best choice in a less serious situation. Discuss with clients the various urges they experience with a variety of different emotions.

Because of the cultural and social pressures to appear “healthy,” many people learn to inhibit the public expression of their emotions – especially facial expressions. However, if clients want people to know how they are feeling, they need to let others know! This is a good time to share with participants the reasons for allowing our faces to express our emotions. It is also a good time to talk about why we do a check-in at the beginning of each session, including that it is great practice in identifying and sharing information about emotions in appropriate ways.

An additional area that leaders should consider discussing is that many clients have been told to “stop feeling” whatever it is they are experiencing. Not only is this invalidating, but it is impossible! To demonstrate this, ask the group members to stop feeling their bodies in their chairs or their feet in their shoes. The only way to do this is to distract yourself and divert your attention elsewhere. While sometimes this is easy and it works, other times it is very difficult. Discuss when it is easy to distract ourselves and when it is difficult; group members will likely discover that some individuals find it easier at certain times, and other individuals at other times.

- **I think about what happened**

While there are some events and situations that automatically evoke emotional responses, many emotions are prompted by the one’s thoughts, interpretations, or appraisals of the event. The key point being emphasized here is that we often respond to our interpretation of the event instead of the event itself. Have the group think of some emotionally evocative events and describe how they might react to them. Help the group to understand that given the same event different people are likely to respond in different ways. In each of these situations, discuss the types of things that people might be thinking that might prompt their behavior. Help the group members to understand that the way a person thinks about an event might be responsible for all the different reactions people have to the same event. Some examples that could be used for discussion include:

- a) When in the presence of reptiles some people show signs of fear and disgust while others draw closer.
- b) When meeting a new person, some people are intimidated and are shy while others look forward to and are happy about meeting new people.
- c) When driving some people experience excitement and exhilaration while others experience fear and trepidation.
- d) In a conflict with a friend or family member, some people become angry because the other is acting unfriendly while others become afraid that the relationship will never be the same and all of their relationships will end up in shambles.

- **I Make A Choice**

All components in this model are important, but this one is especially so. Clients may have the most difficult time with this step. Culturally, reasons for behavior are evaluated as more

valid if there is an emotional aspect. For example, reasons given in response to questions like “why did you do that?” such as “I was angry” or “I was depressed” are much more acceptable than “I don’t know.” Nonetheless, making choices should be emphasized at this point. Emotions do not cause us to act, they simply prepare us for action. Eliciting examples from the group of times that they have had the urge to do something but resisted will help make this point.

There are also numerous choices to make when feeling emotions. These choices include (but are not limited to) expressing the emotion (using body language), sharing the emotion with people (using words), and deciding whether or not to act on the urges associated with the emotion.

- **Homework Sheet**

After going through each of the individual items on Handout 3: Model of Emotions, use Emotion Regulation Homework Sheet 1 to demonstrate the steps in the emotion process. Take time to review all of the steps, describing a variety of prompting events; what kind of thoughts might occur; the feelings that might be experienced, including how the client’s face might look and body might feel; and finally consider the choices by discussing the urges the client might feel and how they will decide what is the best choice for them at this time.

In processing this handout, the leader will be talking about situations that have already occurred. Sometimes the choices made in these situations were not ideal and it is helpful to talk about goals for “Next Time.” This technique provides an opportunity for clients to set goals for themselves and to rehearse positive choices. Sometimes role-play of the situations with rehearsal of the positive choices is a very powerful technique. It is usually best not to allow the role-play of negative choices, because clients generally have plenty of practice with their negative choices. Instead group time and attention should be focused on practicing better ways of handling difficult situations.

Homework:

Ask clients to take blank copies of Homework Sheet 1 home and to fill it out when they encounter tough emotional situations. Also be sure that caregivers are aware of this sheet and will prompt clients to complete it. The homework sheet can be completed to illustrate successful handling of events, as well as to process situations that were handled in a less than optimal fashion. Working with this sheet should, over time, increase the client’s awareness of his/her emotions and action urges, as well as the results or consequences for his/her actions.

Sessions 5-8

Materials:

- [Emotion Regulation Handout 4](#): Words for Emotions: Happy
- [Emotion Regulation Handout 5](#): Words for Emotions: Mad
- [Emotion Regulation Handout 6](#): Words for Emotions: Sad
- [Emotion Regulation Handout 7](#): Words for Emotions: Scared
- [Emotion Regulation Handout 8](#): Words for Emotions: Embarrassed
- [Emotion Regulation Homework Sheets 1-3](#)

Overview:

Begin these sessions by asking if anyone in the group used the Homework sheet. If the sheet was used by any of the group members, go over the incident and talk about what lessons were learned by using the homework sheet. If no one used the sheet, talk with group members about incidents that happened during the week where using the homework sheet would have been helpful. If possible, process at least one or two incidents with the group using the homework sheet format to reinforce the connection between prompting events, thoughts, feelings and choices. Be sure that everyone has blank copies of Handout 15 in case they need to use it during the upcoming week.

Depending on the group, it may be necessary to spend an entire session on each emotion (happy, mad, sad, scared, embarrassed), or it may be possible to cover more than one emotion in each session. The leader will decide how quickly the group can move through the handouts, depending on the group's success in completing the goals described for this section.

One of the goals for these sessions is to get clients familiar with the many emotional synonyms that can be used in describing basic emotions. These sheets contain samples of the lists of emotion synonyms that the pilot group came up with. However, these are but a few of the words that can be used to describe emotions. Feel free to have your clients add to the list.

The bottom of each sheet contains space for clients to identify 5 objects and/or situations that evoke the specified emotion. Depending on your preference, group time can be taken to have each member complete the sheet and share an item/items or the group could work together to generate a number of things that might elicit the specified emotion. It is important to consider that both prompting events and thoughts may elicit various emotions. This activity can be an excellent time for the group members to identify with each other and build empathy for others. Depending on time constraints, leaders may also choose to have clients fill out the bottom section at home. There is some advantage to having some of these assignments done both in group and at home, as working in another environment may help clients to generalize the skills outside the group room and involving other caregivers may help to provide prompts to use the skills in other environments.

Additional goals for these sessions are to review the types of sensations that clients associate with these emotions to facilitate accurate identification of emotions. Completion of the bottom portion of the sheet should emphasize the manner in which prompting events and/or thoughts are related to the feelings we experience. Depending on the leader's evaluation of the group members' retention, it may be helpful to revisit Emotion Regulation Handout 3 to talk again

about the connections between prompting events, thoughts, feelings and the choices we eventually make.

Homework:

Ask clients to take blank copies of the homework sheets home and to fill it out when they encounter tough emotional situations. Also be sure that caregivers are aware of this sheet and will prompt clients to complete. It can be completed to illustrate successful handling of events, as well as to process situations that were handled in a less than optimal fashion. Working with this sheet should, over time, increase the client's awareness of his/her emotions and action urges, as well as the results or consequences for his/her actions.

Session 9

Materials:

- [Emotion Regulation Handout 9](#): What Good Are Emotions?

Overview:

This handout explains why we have emotions. The basic functions of emotions are to communicate and to prepare for action. As shown in the model for emotions, emotions occur in reaction to something and prepare us to respond to that event. This seems to be an important key to survival, especially when competing for life necessities such as safety, food, and shelter. Given this vital function, it is not surprising that emotions are so difficult to change. If emotions were less important, they would have less effect on us and would be much easier to change.

- **Emotions Communicate to Others**

Facial expressions, one of the most visible components of emotions, are quick, efficient means of communicating. Additionally, many facial expressions evoke automatic reactions from others, such as smiling when you see someone smile at you or feeling bad when you see someone crying. The non-verbal expression of emotions can also say to people “don’t mess with me,” “I need help,” and “I care for you,” among others. Emotionally expressive factors such as tone of voice, volume, posture, and facial expressions are all very powerful communicators.

The nonverbal communication of emotion is often stronger than any verbal expression of emotion. Thus, if someone is scowling and says that there is nothing wrong, those around him/her will probably not believe that there is nothing wrong or going on with the scowling individual. Emphasize two points: a) People more often believe what they see, not what they hear, and b) If you want to let someone know how you are feeling, make sure that your nonverbal and verbal expression of emotion match.

- **Emotions Communicate to Ourselves**

For many people, emotions function as signals. For example, anxiety may function like a “stop sign” or a “proceed with caution sign.” Anger, perhaps, may function like a fire alarm as it often increases alertness and prepares a fight or flight response. Most of the time responding to our emotional signals is effective – that is until we start responding to them as if they were facts. One of the core principles of this approach is that thoughts and feelings do not cause behavior; they are responses to our environment and prepare us to act but they do not cause us to act.

- **Emotions Prepare for Action.**

Emotions are hard-wired with specific action urges. This is beneficial as it saves time and eliminates the need to think through all situations. The benefit is clear in truly dangerous and/or threatening situations, however the benefit is not so clear in many other situations. There are many times when we must inhibit the automatic responses and not respond to the action urges that are evoked by our emotions. Remember, it is not the emotion that is dysfunctional or needs to be changed ... it is the actions that would be maladaptive that need to be inhibited. Given the vital functions of emotions, it is no wonder that emotions are so difficult to change. We have all tried to do this and have likely failed at times.

Homework:

Ask clients to take blank copies of one of the homework sheets home and to fill out when they encounter tough emotional situations. Also be sure that caregivers are aware of this sheet and will prompt clients to complete. It can be completed to illustrate successful handling of events, as well as to process situations that were handled in a less than optimal fashion. Working with this sheet should, over time, increase the client's awareness of his/her emotions and action urges, as well as the results or consequences for his/her actions.

As the group goes on, you should notice an increase in the sophistication with which clients are able to complete this sheet. As they learn more skills, prompt them to use the skills in real life situations in order to make better choices for themselves.

Session 10

Materials:

- [Emotion Regulation Handout 10](#): Keeping Control of Your Emotions.

Overview:

Because emotions are a function of the current environment, an effective way to help moderate one's emotions is to reduce one's emotional vulnerability. A helpful way to remember the skills involved in this process is to remember the phrase "SEEDS GROW." Each of these statements represents a skill that can be utilized to reduce emotional vulnerability.

Sickness needs to be treated

Eat Right

Exercise every day

Drugs are bad

Sleep well

GROW every day

- **Sickness needs to be treated**
Being sick consumes many resources and reduces one's resistance to many things, including negative emotions. Taking care of one's physical body is one way to improve the chances of feeling well. However, sickness applies not only to our physical body, but also to emotional well-being. Talk with your group members about the resources they have available for addressing their needs and how they plan to use those resources. Try to get group members to set specific goals regarding how they will use their resources in specific situations. Use examples that are relevant to the experience of the members in your group.
- **Eat right**
Balanced eating is another way to improve the way one feels. Discuss the ways that different foods make group members feel (energized, calm, comforted). Emphasize the need to eat all types of food in moderation. Talk about situations that your group members may have experienced in which the way they eat influences the way they feel and possibly even the choices they make. For example, consider how group members might feel after eating a lot of candy or drinking a great deal of a caffeinated beverage. How might those feelings influence thoughts and actions?
- **Exercise every day**
Consistent exercise is not only a natural antidepressant; it also results in an increase in energy. A healthy lifestyle is an important component in feeling well. Consistent exercise is also a way to build confidence regarding your ability to follow a program and to build mastery of physical skills. Discuss with group members how they feel when they exercise an appropriate amount; how they feel when exercising too little and how they feel when they exercise too much. Talk about how different levels of exercise might influence feelings, thoughts and actions.
- **Drugs are bad**

Using illicit and other non-prescription mood-altering drugs are excellent ways to *increase*, not decrease, one's vulnerability to mood swings and negative emotions. This is a good opportunity to discuss the difficulties clients have had/are having with drugs and alcohol. Clearly explain the differences between temporary/short term solutions to emotional difficulties (like drugs and alcohol) and longer term solutions (like lifestyle changes and therapy). Talk about the influence use of drugs might have on feelings, thoughts and actions.

If group members are taking prescribed medications, this section is also a good time to talk about the reasons these medications are prescribed. Leaders should work to differentiate between "drugs" that are bad for us and "medications" that can be very helpful in meeting our goals of better emotional regulation.

- **Sleep well**

Getting 7-9 hours of sleep is generally recommended for most people. Much less or more sleep may contribute to problems with mood regulation. This is also a good time to present the idea of good "sleep hygiene." Typical guidelines for good sleep hygiene include limiting activities in the bedroom to sleep and sex, not having a TV in the bedroom, going to bed at the same time every night and getting up at the same time every day, not taking long naps during the day, not drinking caffeine after 12pm, and not drinking alcohol before going to bed. A standard recommendation is that if you are unable to sleep, get up after 20 minutes and read or do a calming activity until feeling sleepy before returning to bed.

- **GROW every day**

Growing every day takes effort and practice. It is much easier to commit ourselves to making the effort if we are able to identify some success. If someone experiences too many failures s/he is likely to get discouraged and stop trying. On the other hand, if someone is successful without effort s/he will likely have difficulty when greater effort is needed. We all have qualities that we like and things that we are good at, just as we all have areas for growth. Remember, the only way we get good at things is by putting effort into things we don't do so well. Have group members give examples of things that they have done that have helped them grow.

At the end of this handout elicit "action plans" from clients in order to help them actively address those areas that they need to work on. Have them describe their individual goals for growth. Have them list, for example, what foods to eat more of/less of, how they plan to schedule their sleep, what sorts of exercise they are going to do, and what they are going to do in the next week to help themselves grow. Check in with clients occasionally to see if they are following through on these suggestions.

Homework:

Remind clients of the goals for growth that they developed during group. Ask them to report back to the group about their successes and challenges at the next session.

Session 11

Materials:

- [Emotion Regulation Handout 11](#): Feel Better More Often
- [Emotion Regulation Handout 12](#): Ways to Have Fun
- [Emotion Regulation Handout 13](#): 101 Ways to Have Fun

Overview:

As mentioned previously, from the DBT perspective emotions are understood as responses to other events. It follows, then, that engaging in pleasurable activities is the most successful way to increase positive emotions.

- **Have Fun**

Short Term: Do fun things! This is a very simple point, yet highly important. It is very easy to forget to do at least one fun thing every day. Setting aside time to do one fun thing a day is a small step with powerful effects.

Long Term: Living a fun, fulfilling, and enjoyable life is what most people want. However, many of our clients are unclear about what it takes to have such a life and often make choices that result in a less enjoyable life style. Group members will likely need encouragement to discuss some of the choices they are making that decrease the amount of fun in their lives. Simple things such as going to time out or breaking rules can prevent them from earning privileges that can increase the amount of positive emotions they experience. For those clients in higher levels of care (such as day-treatment or residential placements) the amount of fun they can have is often highly contingent upon basic choices they make.

Depending on the group members, some may need assistance in thinking of small steps they can make in order to increase their positive experiences. With Handout 11 discuss fun things that group members would like to do. Depending on the level of functioning of the group members, leaders might have clients write down a short list of fun things they would like to do or goals that they have; might work as a group to complete these items; or might involve other caregivers in reviewing these items individually with clients at home. However the list is made, it is important to talk about the steps it will take to achieve the goals and to encourage clients to take the first step as soon as possible – in group, after group, and so forth.

- **Be Mindful During Fun Times**

Another way to increase the amount of positive experiences in life is to actually pay attention when having fun. It can be easy to be overwhelmed when the negative experiences are more numerous and more powerful than the positive ones. Being fully focused and mindful when having positive experiences can increase their power and also protect against destroying fun times with worry.

- **Ways to Have Fun and 101 Ways to Have Fun**

Leaders may choose to use either or both of these handouts, whichever seems to reflect your groups needs the best. Handout 13 (101 Ways) may be overwhelming for some clients whereas Handout 12 may be too basic. It is probably not necessary to review the whole sheet

during group, but it may be helpful to have clients choose 1 or 2 fun activities that they would like to try to get them started. It is also helpful to talk about barriers to getting started. What kinds of things might stop group members from trying new activities that might be fun? Group leaders should try to elicit any fears or embarrassment issues that might be barriers. The group should also talk about how easy it is to continue with old habits that take up all our time and don't leave the opportunity to try new things.

Homework:

Be sure that all the group members pick out a couple of fun activities that they will try between now and the next session. Ask them to report back to the group regarding their experiences. Were they successful in having fun? Did some type of unexpected barrier occur or did they try the activity, but find that it wasn't as enjoyable as they expected? Be prepared to process these experiences in the next session.

Session 12

Materials:

- [Emotion Regulation Handout 14](#): Change How You Feel by Acting Differently

Overview:

Numerous researchers have found that one of the best ways to control how you feel is to act in opposition to emotion-related action urges. For example, if situational anxiety is preventing someone from living the life that s/he desires, intense exposure to the feared situation in the absence of escape and avoidant behaviors is the best way to give the individual freedom to live as s/he desires. Likewise, most effective treatments for depression include an aspect of behavioral activation. The suggestions on the handout are simple, yet very difficult actions to carry out. Leaders should validate group members by talking about how difficult it is to carry out these actions. Take time to explain to group members that their fear/guilt/sadness/anger will not immediately disappear when engaging in opposite actions, but that over time the negative emotions the group members experience will likely decrease in frequency, intensity, and especially duration. Also get examples from clients of times when they have used this skill or when they might have been able to use this skill if they had known about it. Explain that over time, with practice, they will be able to experience strong emotions *and* control their behavior.

In the group, try working with clients to pick out emotions and opposite actions to practice. Role-play can be a very effective way of having group members practice this new skill. Depending on the group, the leader may select one or two members to do the role-play while the rest of the group watches. Then the leader can rotate the role-play and audience roles among the group members. If the group members are functioning on a more independent level, the leader can suggest breaking up into several small teams to do the practice. Once all of the group members have had a chance to do some practice in the group setting, have your clients pick one of their emotions and an opposite action to practice with during the coming week.

Homework:

Be sure that each client has picked out a strong emotion that tends to be troublesome for them and has identified an opposite action. Encourage the group members to practice the opposite action whenever they experience the strong emotion between now and the next session. Ask the group members to report back regarding their experience.

Chapter 9: Relationship Effectiveness Skills

(How to make relationships work)

Overview of the Module

This is a group that focuses on learning and using various skills to facilitate relationship growth and effectiveness. The clients that we work with often have poor regulation of their interpersonal boundaries and difficulty respecting the boundaries of others. At times these individuals may want intense closeness, and at other times great distance – often somewhat unpredictably. As with the emotion regulation and distress tolerance modules, this skill group is focused on moderating the intensity and polarity of clients' relationships. This skill group has much in common with popular assertiveness and interpersonal problem-solving teachings. The goals of the group include helping clients learn how to ask for what they need in relationships; saying no and resisting being taken advantage of in relationships; and learning how to work through interpersonal conflict.

In addition to the basic skills that will be taught, leaders should emphasize how to choose which skills to use in varying situations. Not all of the skills are effective in all situations. Clients need to be able to determine what their goals for a current relationship are and then what skills would be best used to build and maintain that relationship. In short, clients need to be familiar enough with relationship skills to use them fluidly and effectively in changing situations.

There is a lot of flexibility in the presentation of this material. Depending on the characteristics of the group you are leading, expect to take between 10 and 15 sessions. The general structure we suggest using for presentation of this material is outlined in [Chapter 4](#). In this adaptation, we also recommend integrating mindfulness skills into the other three skills modules, as opposed to teaching mindfulness as a separate module. Our suggestions for how to accomplish this are given in [Chapter 5](#).

Session 1, 2 and 3

Materials:

- [Mindfulness Handout 1](#): States of Mind
- [Mindfulness Handout 2](#): Mindfulness: What To Do
- [Mindfulness Handout 3](#): Mindfulness: How To Do It
- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 1](#): Goals of Relationship Effectiveness

Overview:

The focus of these sessions will be establishing the basic goals of the Relationship Effectiveness skills module and teaching clients the basic information regarding mindfulness as described in [Chapter 5](#). Because the mindfulness skills are taught at the beginning of each module, don't spend too much time on them. Most clients are able to understand the basics rather quickly, but it is helpful to review the skills often. Although not a part of the original DBT protocol, we recommend beginning each session with a brief mindfulness activity as described in [Chapter 4](#). A balance of quiet, meditative activities and interactive, experiential activities seems to work well for clients with high impulsivity and short attention spans.

As you begin the discussion of the name of the group and basic goals, ask group members what types of problems they have encountered in relationships (be prepared to give some common examples like being taken advantage of, having someone break up with you when you don't know why, etc. if the group is quiet at this stage). Relationship Effectiveness Handout 1 is an overview of the goals of the group, as well as some introduction to basic skills. You will want to spend some time on this sheet as it orients clients to the main focus of the group, but remember the specific skills will be taught in more detail later so you don't have to describe everything now. Even if you don't go into a lot of detail, going through the initial handout will possibly take a couple of sessions.

- **Getting what you want**

In reviewing this point with the group members, ask about things they want in a relationship. Then discuss what they feel they have to do in the relationship to get what they want. Be aware that in this discussion clients are likely to cover a broad range of "wants." Some clients may want outrageous things in relationships, some may want very little, some may not be sure what they want, and some may want relatively healthy, basic things. If the clients are initially reluctant to contribute or are unsure what is wanted, the leader may make some suggestions about things many people want in relationships, like attention, affection, to be validated, someone to vent to, etc. Then help group members figure out how to get what they want in the relationship. Elicit examples of positive ways (asking politely, being assertive, 'I' statements) and negative ways (threatening, cursing, withdrawing, etc.) of getting what we want.

For various reasons, many of our clients have unstable and chaotic interpersonal relationships. They frequently are unaware of the common norms, rules, etc. in relationships. Leaders will need to be prepared to explain common norms and teach about basic rights in relationships as the group progresses.

- **Getting or Keeping Relationships**

Clients don't often think about how their behavior is affecting others; this module is an opportunity to increase that awareness. Leaders should be prepared to make basic points such as "people need to like each other in order to start relationships or stay in a relationship." Use role-plays, examples, and so on to illustrate this. Take some time to let clients discuss and play out some situations, both positive and negative. Have the group members' think of things that would build or break relationships and then discuss or role-play through them.

- **Improving Self-Respect**

Why is self-respect important in relationships? Try to keep the focus on group members' need for respect in their relationships. The leader is working on helping the group members to realize that not only is it important to focus on others' needs, rights, and goals in relationships, it is vital to have self-respect and work to meet their own needs, rights, and goals.

Homework:

Just give one simple assignment for each session. Here are some of examples, but any assignment that encourages group members to think about the skills that are being taught will be helpful. Then don't forget to review client's success with the assignment at your next session.

- Between now and the next session, notice your state of mind. How much time do you spend in emotional mind, rational mind and wise mind.
- Think about what you want in a relationship. Next session be prepared to talk about some of your relationship goals.
- Think about the methods you generally use to get what you want in a relationship. At the next session be ready to talk about the ways that work well for you and the ways that don't work as well.
- Think about how you express respect in your relationships. Next session be prepared to give some examples of how you express respect.

Session 4

Materials:

- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 2](#): Lies and Truths About Relationships

Overview:

This handout “sets the stage” for learning more about the basics of relationships by disputing false ideas and encouraging true ideas about relationships. They can be used in a number of ways: Have clients identify the “lies” that they believe(d) are true; have clients change the “lies” into “truths;” have clients (and leaders) add “lies” and “truths” from their experiences.

Homework:

Watch how you interact in relationships between now and the next session. Notice if you are still acting like you believe some of the lies in relationships that we talked about today. Next session report back to the group on what you discover.

Session 5

Materials:

- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 3](#)

Overview:

This handout is intended to help group members visually and concretely see different types of relationships and ways that they are different. Leaders should take time to elicit examples and use other teaching examples to illustrate various relationships. Relating to the previous handout, leaders can discuss how relationships with different people in different circles can seem very different and the ways we relate and interact with people are variable. These concepts can be reviewed with following handouts too, such as with Handout 4: Making Choices in Relationships.

Homework:

Have the group members take this sheet home and continue placing people in their lives in the circles. Some may need help making a list of people and/or figuring out the best place to put them.

Session 6

Materials:

- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 4](#): Making Choices in Relationships

Overview:

In reviewing this handout, leaders should make the point that there are a lot of ways to ask for things and to say no in relationships. These choices range from asking weakly to asking strongly. In order to have effective relationships, we must be able to use this full range of assertiveness, depending on the needs of the situation. During the session, use a variety of techniques to help clients understand and practice assertiveness skills at various levels, including role playing, getting examples from clients, asking clients to vote on whether they think particular methods are strong or weak, and so on.

Homework:

Group members should practice using an appropriate level of assertiveness in their relationships. Notice how using assertiveness works and report back to the group next time.

Session 7

Materials:

- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 5](#): Making Choices: Things to think about

Overview:

Leaders should be prepared to provide definitions and examples of each of these concepts. For example, when an authority figure is making a reasonable demand or request of a child, the child will likely be consequence for not following through. Another example could be when a child is making a request of an adult; considerations must be made for time and ability for the adult to carry out the request.

This handout gives greater context to the choices discussed in handout 4. Take your time in going through each factor to be sure that all the clients in the group understand each one. Clients that grasp the concepts more quickly may enjoy thinking of ways to show or teach other clients what is meant by the concepts. This exercise also provides the leader with an opportunity to identify and correct misconceptions on the part of the group members who believe they have a full understanding of the concepts.

As you are going through the concepts, have the clients discuss how they could achieve them. Remind them to consider the intensity that would be appropriate to use in achieving each of their goals, as a way of linking the new concepts you are introducing to the previous handout. Leaders may want to demonstrate this process by “thinking aloud” while role-playing a situation. In addition, try to role-play appropriate intensity and inappropriate intensity interactions. Be flamboyant and dramatic when using high intensity requests and then use a high intensity request while being excessively passive. Reverse the process by behaving in an excessively passive way when using low intensity requests and then behave dramatically while making a low intensity request. Ask clients if they recognize their behaviors in any of these role-plays. Finally, have the clients role play situations in which they can demonstrate an appropriate level of assertiveness/intensity. They may want to try ideas like: asking a peer for a ride home; asking a peer to share a snack; asking a therapist for a special favor; responding to a request from therapist to reschedule; or asking a parent to extend curfew.

Homework:

Think about what you want in one of your relationships. Then, being careful to be respectful and considerate of the other person’s rights, ask for what you want. Ask at an appropriate level of assertiveness for the request that you are making. Report back to the group next time.

Session 8

Materials:

- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 6: Why Use Skills?](#)

Overview:

This handout is the last one before the actual skills are taught. This handout is one that should keep clients oriented to times that skills could be helpful and should be used. As you go through each section in the handout, have group members give examples. You may have to model or give personal examples yourself to help start the process. The discussion points below illustrate the key ideas that leader will be attempting to teach the group.

- **Taking Care of Relationships**

It is easy to forget that relationships take effort. Just as we nurture children, pets, plants, etc., we need to take care of relationships. The skills that you will learn will help improve the quality of your relationships, as well as increase awareness regarding when relationships should be terminated. Have clients discuss the different ways that they have used skills to enhance and maintain relationships, as well as good and bad ways of handling bad relationships.

- **Balancing “Wants” and “Shoulds”**

In this section the group leader begins to teach clients to balance those things that they want to do because they are enjoyable with those things that they should do as responsible individuals. Elicit examples from clients of things that they should do, such as their homework, chores at home, not break the law, etc. and reasons why they should do those things. Also help clients evaluate their “wants.” Members may want more possessions, but have to balance that with not breaking the law by stealing to get the things that they want. They may want to have more intimate relationships with their partners, but need to balance that with waiting for their partners to consent to the intimacy without being coerced. Members may be more accepting of peer feedback regarding positive and negative “wants,” though make sure the group does not get too negative.

- **Building Self-Respect:**

Being successful in relationships is of great value to many people, and builds self-respect. These skills will help individuals to succeed in relationships and maintain their dignity. Appropriate assertiveness and decision-making skills will be taught to facilitate this process. Many clients will easily misunderstand what it means to stand up for what they believe in. Self-respect not only includes staying true to what one believes in, but also being successful in compromising and negotiating with others when there are disagreements.

Homework:

Think about one of your relationships. In that relationship are you being treated with an appropriate level of respect? If not, what steps could you take to increase your self-respect in the relationship? Report back to the group next time.

Session 9 and 10

Materials:

- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 7: Getting What You Want](#)

Overview:

Take your time going over this material. You may want to try different methods of covering the information. You could take each aspect and practice it, or do an overview of all of the skills, then go back to teach and practice each skill. Use any way you feel most comfortable and that you think your group members will respond to. It is likely that you will need at least two sessions to cover it all. Use a variety of teaching techniques to help your clients: having each give examples of when they have used the skill, examples of when they have not used the skills and how they could have done it differently, role play situations in which one or a few of the skills need to be used, and so on.

Example situations that can be used include negotiating a conflict with a parent, resolving a fight with a romantic partner, making a request from a friend, or appealing a grade received in school. When some of the clients in the group are presenting a situation through role-play, the other group members may enjoy rating how successfully they have accomplished the components of **DEAR MAN**.

Though the handout is titled “Getting What You Want,” this is in the context of skill development and refinement. Even the most skilled people don’t always get what they want. Group members will benefit from practicing how to handle situations in which they do not get what they want, even when they use all of these skills appropriately. This is an area in which you may have to prompt for the use of distress tolerance skills, especially acceptance.

- **Describe**
Using the facts, without being judgmental or blaming, describe the situation that you want to talk about.
- **Express**
As you express yourself, be careful to use “I” statements, rather than stating “You” do certain things. Using “You” statements often leaves the person you are trying to communicate with feeling blamed.
- **Ask or Say No**
As you are making your statement, be clear in saying exactly what you would like to see happen (or stop happening). However, be aware that your statement is just a starting point. The person you are talking with may not agree to everything you ask. You may need to move on to negotiation.
- **Reward**
People like to be appreciated for those things they do in a relationship. This is a good time to tell the person how much you value the relationship and the help that they give you.
- **Mindfulness**

Use the skills you have learned to calm yourself so you can stay in wise mind. It is important that you stay aware of your emotions, but that you do not let them take charge and trick you into making bad choices.

- **Appropriate Behavior**

Be polite and respectful as you present your concerns and make your request. Make eye contact and use good manners. Say please and thank you.

- **Negotiate**

Group leaders should be aware that negotiation and compromise are some of the toughest relationship concepts acquire and use. Be prepared to spend considerable time on this area. It is important to define the concepts in a clear and understandable way. For example, negotiation is the process of two people talking calmly about what their needs are, so that they can reach a solution that both can live with. A solution that isn't exactly what either person originally wanted, but which both people can live with is a compromise. Talk about some situations in which compromise is necessary and can meet the needs of both people. Also talk about the process of negotiating in order to reach that compromise. Be prepared to give lots of examples. One of our favorite starting places is the following story:

There was only one orange in the house, but two people wanted it. Instead of fighting about who would get the orange, they started to talk. They talked about why each of them wanted the orange. They found out that one of the people wanted to peel the orange and eat the center. The other person wanted to grate the peel to make a cake. Once they started talking they realized that even with only one orange they could both get their needs met.

You can then go on to talk about what might have happened if they both wanted to eat the orange. Then they might have had to compromise, with each of them getting half of the orange. As you go through this process, what you really want to teach is the importance of staying calm enough so that the problem can be talked about. That way there is a possibility of reaching a compromise that meets at least some of your needs. For example, if you get into a big fight with your sister because you don't want to share the orange, your mother may come in and take the orange away. Then instead of getting half an orange, you get nothing.

Homework:

Try practicing **DEAR MAN** in a real life situation. See how it works and report back to the group next time.

Session 11

Materials:

- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 8](#): Respecting Yourself

Overview:

Self-respect is a key component to effective relationships. It is difficult to have effective relationships with other people if one does not appreciate oneself. Be prepared to discuss the importance of each of the areas: Fairness, apologies, sticking to what you believe, and telling the truth. Ask group members why they think each aspect has been mentioned. Also, help clients to understand that building good relationships means flexibility. For example, it is important to stick to what you believe in, but it is also important to listen to what your partner has to say. If your partner presents new information, and you find that you agree with the information presented, it is OK to change your beliefs. It is not OK for someone to demand that you change your beliefs to be consistent with what they believe in. Talk about when telling the truth is important to build trust in relationships and when telling someone an unpleasant truth might be disrespectful and damaging.

Homework:

In your relationships, watch for times that you can practice the skills we talked about today: fairness, apologies, sticking to what you believe in or telling the truth. Before the next session, use at least one of these skills and notice what happens. Report back to the group next time.

Session 12

Materials:

- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 9](#): Keeping Good Relationships

Overview:

The skills taught with this handout are basic relationship skills. Some clients will be good at some or all of them, while others may struggle with them all. These skills should be used in moderation – always being gentle, interested, funny, and understanding can lead to being taken advantage of. Also, in clearly negative (e.g., abusive) relationships these are not the recommended skills. Ask group members why they think each aspect has been mentioned. Talk about when it might be appropriate to use these skills and when other skills might be more appropriate. Discuss with clients how to balance self-respect and self-focused skills (Handout 7) with these other-focused skills. It may help to use some examples like the following: If your girlfriend is hitting you should you be gentle and try to show her that you care or should you be assertive and ask her to stop? If the group response is to be gentle, try switching the genders and see what happens. If the group switches responses when you switch genders, talk about whether that response makes sense within their culture/value system.

Homework:

In your relationships try to find a time when it would be appropriate to use the skills we learned today, being gentle, interesting, funny, or trying to understand. Then try using that skill. When you have used the skill, notice what the response from the other person is. Report back to the group next time.

Session 13

Materials:

- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 10](#): Sometimes Using Skills is Hard

Overview:

This handout acknowledges that there are many times when using these skills is difficult and using the skills may not be what we really want to do. There are valid reasons why using the skills might be hard and some of these are listed, along with possible solutions. Work with your group to see if you can come up with other reasons why using skills is hard. Work on finding solutions for what to do when difficulty is encountered. This list is not designed to be comprehensive. You will see as you teach this section that the handout demonstrates a central dialectic of acceptance and change.

Leaders should focus on validation as the key training tool for this session. Focus on validating the group members' experiences of difficulty and failure when using the skills, as well as their anxiety about using the skills ... and possibly not being successful.

At the same time, reinforce that difficulty, struggle, and failure are not reasons to give up, or to not use skills. Let your group members think about all of the rewards they will gain in relationships if they are persistent in using the skills, even when they encounter difficulties.

Homework:

In your relationships, watch for the times when it is really hard to use the skills you have been learning. When that happens, notice the things that you are saying to yourself. Then see if you can use one of the solutions we talked about today. Remember what the problem was and what solution you used. Report back to the group next time.

Session 14

Materials:

- [Relationship Effectiveness Handout 11](#): Practicing Relationship Effectiveness

Overview:

This handout provides a short list of ideas on practicing relationship effectiveness. If a client tried each of these ideas, most of the skills taught in this module would be covered. However, your clients will probably be able to think of lots of other ways to practice their skills. Have the clients talk about all the ways they could use these skills in their day-to-day lives.

Homework:

Have each client set a specific goal about one or two things they will do to practice the relationship skills they have learned.

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List of Handouts

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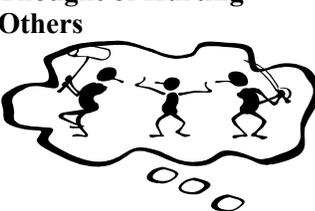
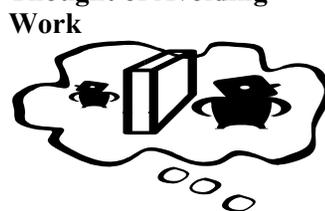
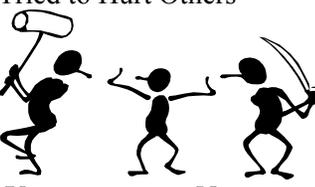
Relationship Effectiveness

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Daily Diary Sheet 1

Name: _____

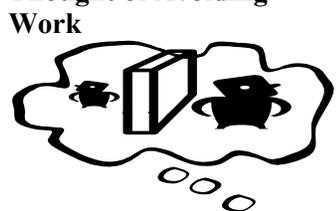
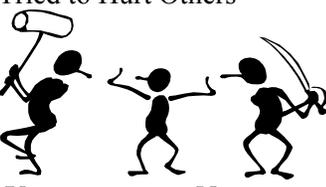
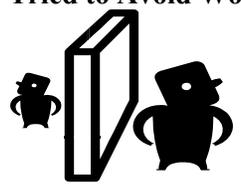
Date: _____

Exercised  Yes No	Took Medication  Yes No	Ate Healthy Food  Yes No	Got Enough Sleep  Yes No	Used Skills  Yes No
Felt Sad  No A little A lot   	Felt Angry  No A little A lot   	Felt Worried  No A little A lot   	Felt Embarrassed  No A little A lot   	Felt Happy  No A little A lot   
Thought of Arguing  No A little A lot   	Thought of Running Away  No A little A lot   	Thought of Drugs/Alcohol  No A little A lot   	Thought of Hurting Others  No A little A lot   	Thought of Avoiding Work  No A little A lot   
Argued  Yes No	Tried to Run Away  Yes No	Used Drugs or Alcohol  Yes No	Tried to Hurt Others  Yes No	Tried to Avoid Work  Yes No

Daily Diary Sheet 2

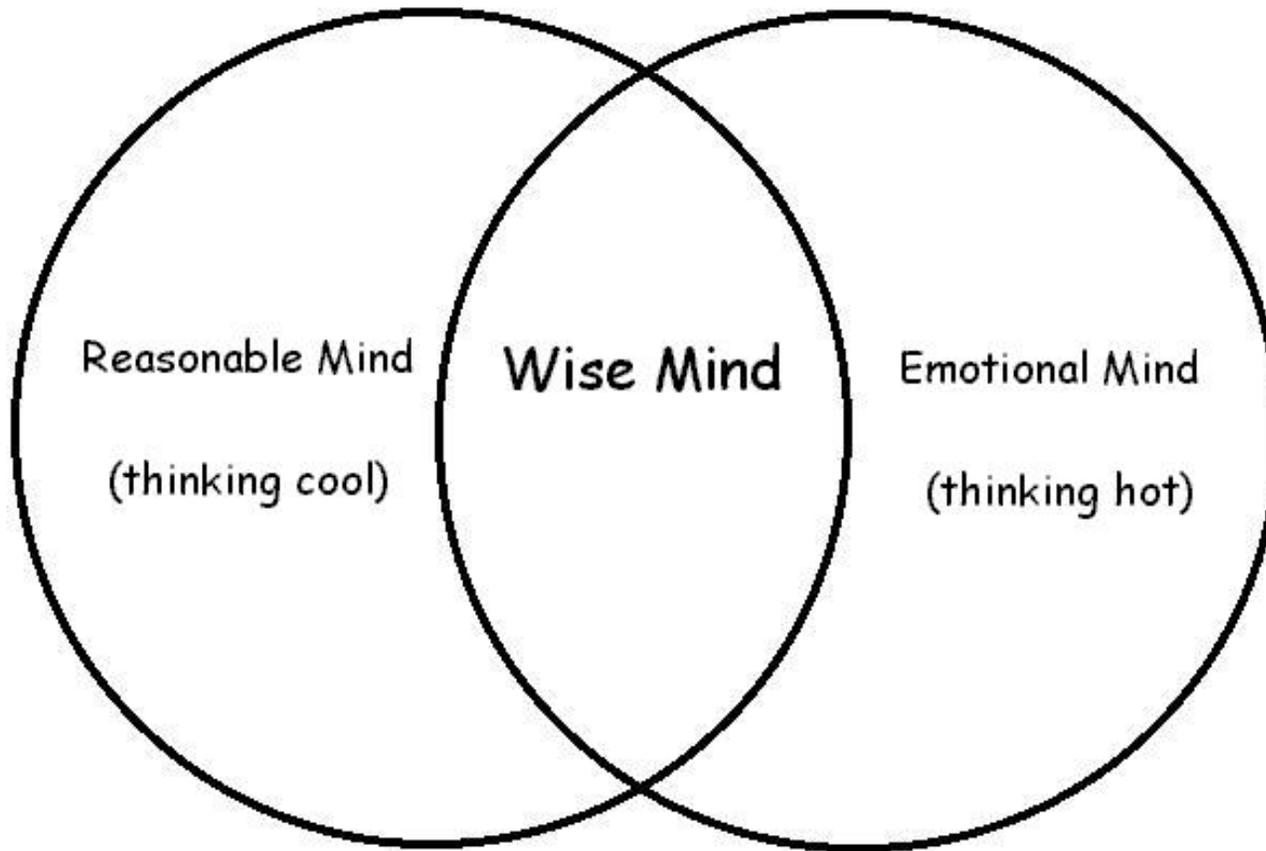
Name: _____

Date: _____

Exercised  Yes No	Took Medication  Yes No	Ate Healthy Food  Yes No	Got Enough Sleep  Yes No	Used Skills  Yes No
Felt Sad  No A little A lot   	Felt Angry  No A little A lot   	Felt Worried  No A little A lot   	Felt Embarrassed  No A little A lot   	Felt Happy  No A little A lot   
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Argued  Yes No	Tried to Hurt Self  Yes No	Used Drugs or Alcohol  Yes No	Tried to Hurt Others  Yes No	Tried to Avoid Work  Yes No

Mindfulness Handout 1

States of Mind



Mindfulness Handout 2

MINDFULNESS: WHAT TO DO

OBSERVE

Just pay attention to what the world is doing
Just pay attention to what your body is doing
Just pay attention to what your mind is doing

DESCRIBE

Name your feelings
Say "I was thinking ..."
Talk about what you were paying attention to

PARTICIPATE

Just feel whatever you are feeling
Just think whatever you are thinking
Just do whatever you are doing
Don't try to stop anything, just pay attention

Mindfulness Handout 3

MINDFULNESS: HOW TO DO IT

ACCEPT

Don't think of things as right or wrong
Notice what is happening, not what you think about it

ONE THING AT A TIME

Do one thing at a time. Don't eat and talk at the same time
Pay all of your attention to one thing at a time
When you've been distracted, focus on one thing again

EFFECTIVELY

Focus on what needs to be done - do what works
Use your skills the best you can
Think about the rewards and consequences of your behavior
Let go of the feelings that don't help you

Distress Tolerance Handout 1

Distress = Feeling Bad, Feeling Upset

Tolerance = Putting up with, Accepting

GOALS OF DISTRESS TOLERANCE

Understand Your Stress

Identify what you are feeling

Accept Your Stress

Don't try to get rid of your pain if you can't

Survive Your Crisis

Distract yourself
Calm yourself
Make yourself feel better
Think about your choices

Distress Tolerance Handout 2

Reasons to Use Distress Tolerance Skills

Pain is part of life

**If you can't deal with your pain
you will probably do things without thinking**

**When you act without thinking you might hurt
yourself or not be able to get what you want**

Distress Tolerance Handout 3

Ways to Survive Bad Times

Distract with "Wise Mind ACCEPTS"

Activities
Contributing
Comparisons
Emotions
Pushing Away
Thoughts
Sensations

Calm Yourself With Your Senses

Seeing
Hearing
Smelling
Tasting
Touching

Think About Your Choices

Make a list of choices and consequences

Distress Tolerance Handout 4

Ways to Survive Bad Times

Distracting

"Wise Mind **ACCEPTS**"

Activities: Do something to keep you busy.

Play games, exercise, talk with friends, talk with your therapist, read a good book, take a nap, sing, write, do art, listen to music, clean

Contribute: Do something for others.

Help others, make a card for a friend, give a gift, volunteer, make something for someone else

Compare: Look at other people.

Look at how others have handled similar situations, look at how other people are doing now, look at what your role model would do

Opposite *E*motions: Do something to feel differently.

Do the opposite of what your emotion is telling you - do things to make you feel differently: read joke books, watch funny movies, watch scary movies, listen to music, go shopping, play a game

Push Away: Keep yourself safe.

Push the situation away, imagine a wall in front of you to keep you away from the bad situation

Thoughts: Think about something else.

Think about other things, think about good memories, think about friends or family, think about your favorite things, count from 100 backwards, watch TV, do math problems

Sensations: Do something to distract your body.

Hold ice, squeeze a stress ball, take a hot bath, play with play-doh, take deep breaths, snap a rubber-band, chew gum, eat something tasty

Distress Tolerance Handout 5

Ways to Survive Bad Times

Calming Yourself

Your 5 Senses

Seeing: Use your eyes.

Look at pretty flowers. Look at a nice picture. Watch the flame of a candle. Look at the blue sky. Look at the mountains or the lake. Watch the clouds. Look at the green trees. Look at the stars and the moon. Watch water flowing. Look at artwork. Watch animals.

Hearing: Use your ears.

Listen to calm music. Listen to water running. Listen to the wind. Listen to the rain. Listen to a story. Listen to the cars on the street. Listen to people laughing.

Smelling: Use your nose.

Smell nice lotion. Smell perfume or cologne. Smell an orange or a lemon. Smell a nice candle. Smell flowers. Smell someone's baking or cooking. Smell the rain. Smell something chocolate.

Tasting: Use your tongue and your mouth.

Taste a piece of candy. Eat your favorite food. Drink some lemonade or soda. Chew a piece of gum. Eat ice cream. Drink some coffee. Eat chocolate. Eat peanut-butter.

Touching: Use your body.

Take a hot bath or shower. Pet a dog or cat. Hold ice in your hands. Sit on a comfortable couch or chair. Wear your favorite clothes. Put lotion on your body. Give someone a hug (with their permission). Sit in the warm sunshine. Put on a heavy blanket. Sit in front of a warm place or a fan. Hug a pillow.

Distress Tolerance Handout 6

Ways to Survive Bad Times

Thinking About Your Choices

Write down a list of your choices in the situation. Then write down the results of those choices.

• Choice 1

• Choice 2

• Choice 3

• Choice 4

• Choice 5

• Result 1

• Result 2

• Result 3

• Result 4

• Result 5

Distress Tolerance Handout 7

Accepting Reality

(dealing with the stuff that we can't change)

Radical Acceptance

Acceptance is: admitting what is there

Acceptance is: tolerating what is there

Acceptance is: not judging what is there

Turning your Mind to Acceptance

Turning your mind is: a COMMITMENT

Turning your mind is: a CHOICE

Turning your mind is: DOING IT over and over and over again

Willingness

Willingness is: Tolerating, Accepting, and Choosing

Willingness is: Doing what is needed - Being effective

Willingness is: Listening to your *WISE MIND*

Distress Tolerance Handout 8

Accepting Reality

Breathing

One way to use your *Wise Mind* is to relax your whole body and focus on your breathing. Pay attention to your body - notice your stomach and chest rising and falling.

Here are some different ways to do this:

1. Deep Breathing

Lay down on your back. Take gentle, deep breaths. Notice how your stomach is going up and down. Do this for about 5 minutes.

2. Counting Your Breath

Sit or Lay down. When you breathe in and out, silently say "1." After the next breath silently say "2." Keep counting up to 10. When you get to 10, start over. Do this for about 5 minutes.

3. Focus on Your Breath and Listen to Music

Listen to some soft, peaceful music. While you are listening, take gentle, deep breaths and concentrate on your breathing.

4. Breathing and Relaxing

Sit in a comfortable chair, lie on a couch or bed, or find another comfortable place. Let all your muscles relax. Pay attention to your breath going in and out. Notice what your body feels like too.

Distress Tolerance Handout 9

Accepting Reality

Half-Smiling

One way to use your *Wise Mind* is to relax your whole body and softly smile. Pretend you are sleeping and keep that look on your face.

Here are some good times to do this:

1. When you wake up in the morning

As you wake up, lie in your bed for a few minutes and put the gentle smile on your face.

2. When you are listening to music

Pay attention to the words and the music, relax your body, and gently smile.

3. When you are angry

Try to relax your body and focus on the half-smile you put on your face.

4. When you are lying or sitting down

Relax your body, take some deep breaths, and gently smile.

Distress Tolerance Handout 10

Accepting Reality

Focusing

One way to use your *Wise Mind* is to focus on what you are doing. Try to accept yourself as you are and pay attention to what is going on in your world.

Here are some good ways and times to do this:

1. Pay attention to your body

Take a few minutes and focus on where your body is and what it is doing. Use breathing to help you focus.

2. Pay attention when you are eating

Eat (or drink) very slowly. Put small pieces of food in your mouth and experience the taste and the texture of the food. Notice what the food (or drink) is like.

3. Pay attention while taking a shower or a bath

Take a warm shower or bath. Wash yourself slowly. Use your breathing to help you focus on washing yourself.

4. Pay attention when doing schoolwork

Use your breathing to help you focus. Do your work slowly and carefully, paying attention to the instructions and the questions.

Distress Tolerance Homework Sheet 1

Ways to Survive Bad Times - Distracting

"Wise Mind **ACCEPTS**"

Activities: Do something to keep you busy.

Contribute: Do something for others.

Compare: Look at other people.

Opposite **E**motions: Do something to feel differently.

Push **A**way: Keep yourself safe.

Thoughts: Think about something else.

Sensations: Do something to distract your body.

1. WHAT WAS THE SITUATION?

2. CIRCLE THE SKILL THAT YOU USED

3. WRITE DOWN HOW YOU USED THE SKILL

4. HOW DID IT MAKE YOUR BODY FEEL?

5. WHAT ELSE WILL YOU DO NEXT TIME?

Distress Tolerance Homework Sheet 2

Ways to Survive Bad Times

Calming Yourself With Your Senses

Seeing: Use your eyes.

Hearing: Use your ears.

Smelling: Use your nose.

Tasting: Use your tongue and your mouth.

Touching: Use your body.

1. WHAT WAS THE SITUATION?

2. CIRCLE THE SKILL(S) THAT YOU USED

3. WRITE DOWN HOW YOU USED THE SKILL

4. HOW DID IT MAKE YOUR BODY FEEL?

5. WHAT ELSE WILL YOU DO NEXT TIME?

Distress Tolerance Homework Sheet 3

Ways to Survive Bad Times

Thinking About Your Choices

Write down a list of your choices in the situation. Then write down the results of those choices.

WHAT WAS THE SITUATION?

WHAT WERE YOUR CHOICES?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

WHAT DID YOU CHOOSE?

WHAT WAS THE RESULT?

IS THAT WHAT YOU WANTED? yes no

WHAT WILL YOU DO NEXT TIME?

Distress Tolerance Homework Sheet 4

Accepting Reality

Use your *Wise Mind* to help you ACCEPT REALITY by using one of these skills:

BREATHING: deep breathing, counting, breathing and relaxing

HALF-SMILING: relax your body and softly smile

FOCUSING: pay attention to what ever you are doing

WHAT WAS THE SITUATION?

1. CIRCLE THE SKILL THAT YOU USED

2. WRITE DOWN HOW YOU USED THE SKILL

3. HOW DID IT MAKE YOUR BODY FEEL?

4. WHAT ELSE WILL YOU DO NEXT TIME?

Emotion Regulation Handout 1

GOALS OF EMOTION REGULATION

Understand Your Emotions

Look at your emotions
Identify your emotions
Understand what emotions do

Control Your Behavior

Understand how emotions affect you
Make good decisions even when you are feeling yucky
Don't let emotions control you

Feel Better More Often

Accept and let go of painful emotions
Good choices = Good rewards

Emotion Regulation Handout 2

Lies and Truths About Emotions

1. There is a right way to feel all the time

Truth _____

2. I should not let others know how I feel

Truth _____

3. Negative feelings (angry, sad) are bad

Truth _____

4. Feeling emotions = I am out of control

Truth _____

5. Emotions happen for no reason

Truth _____

6. Some emotions are stupid and bad

Truth _____

7. Other people should tell me what to feel

Truth _____

8. Other people know how I feel better than me

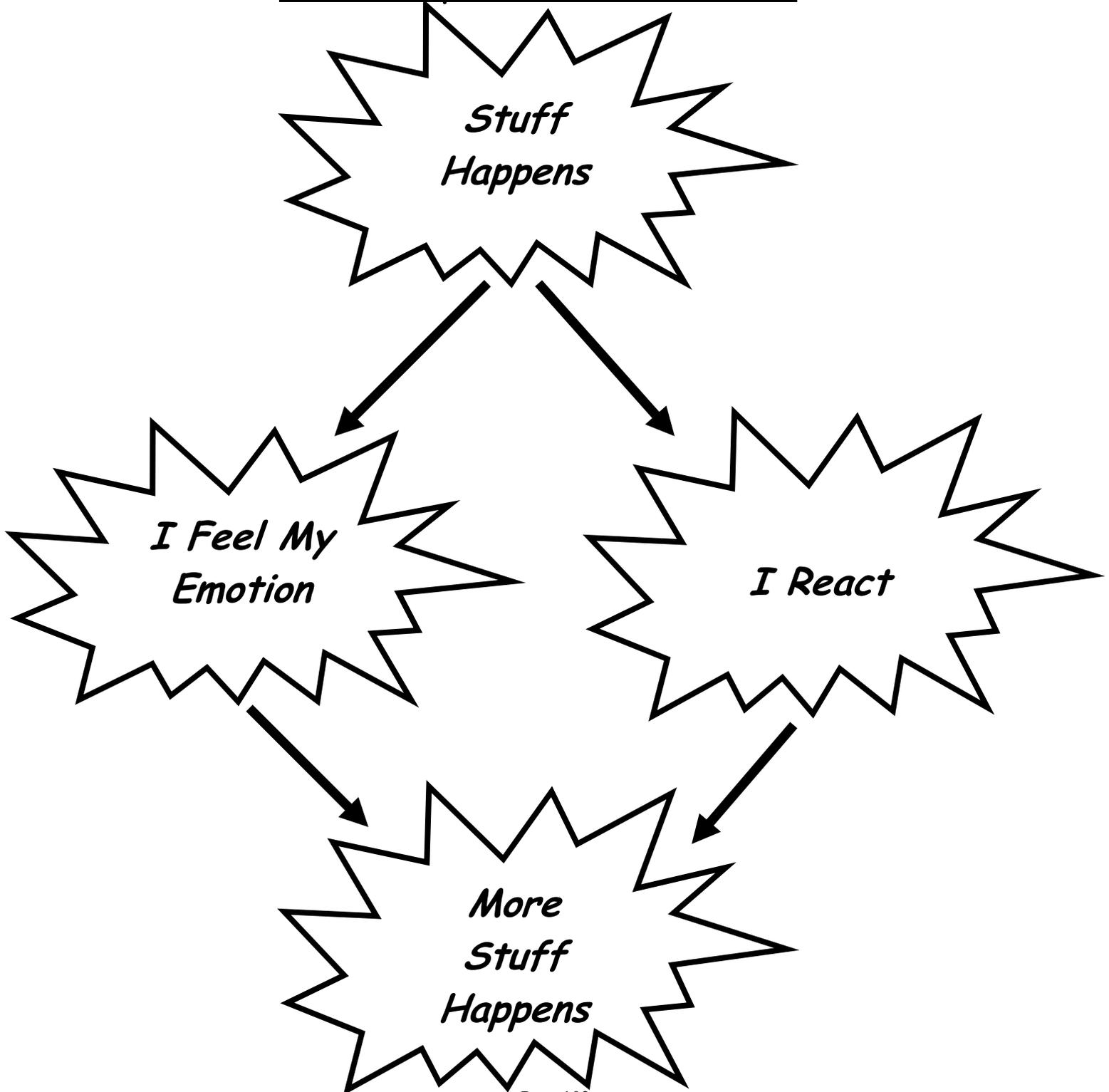
Truth _____

9. Emotions that hurt are not important

Truth _____

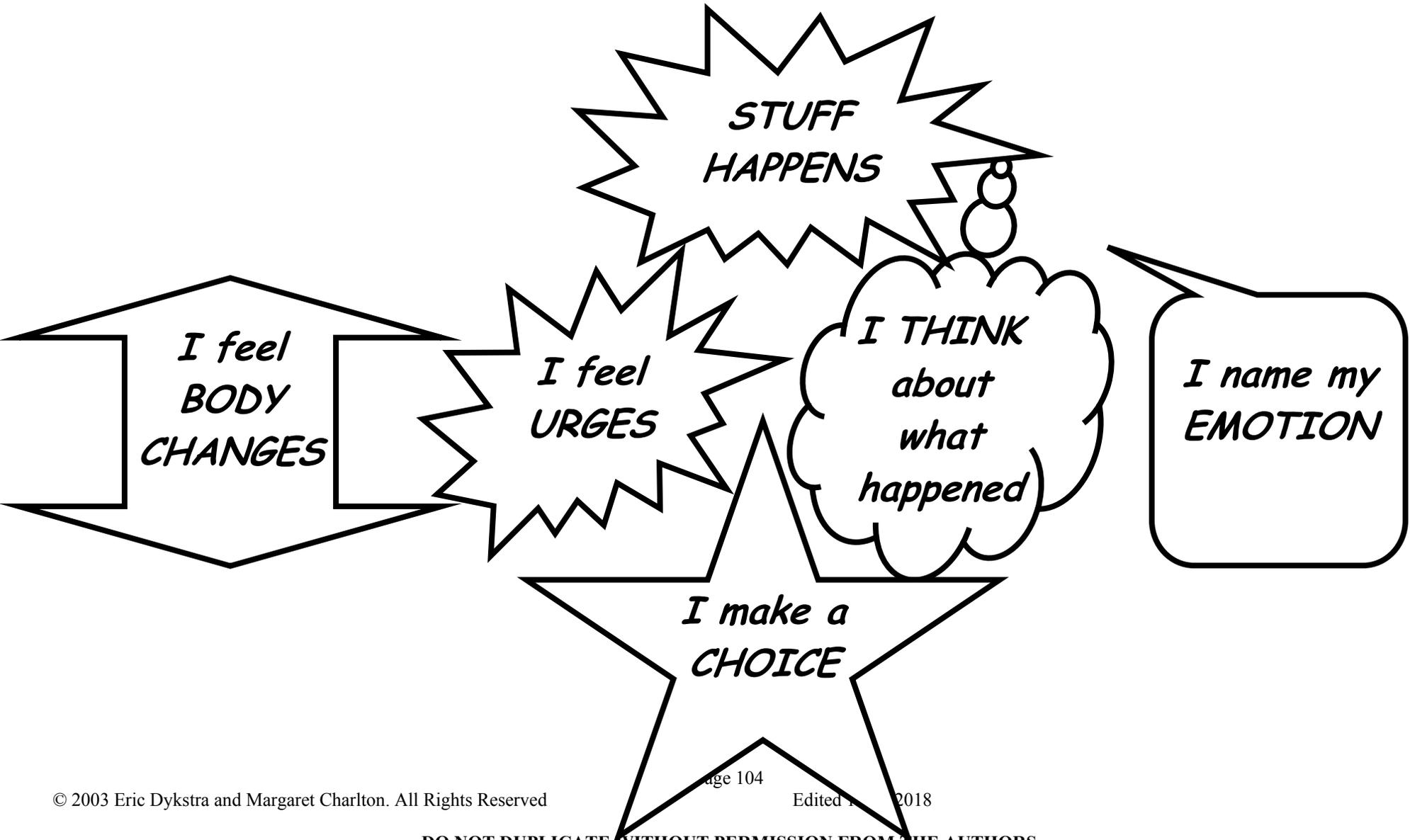
Emotion Regulation Handout 3a

Unhealthy Model of Emotions



Emotion Regulation Handout 3b

Healthy Model of Emotions



Emotion Regulation Handout 4

WORDS FOR EMOTIONS: *HAPPY*

CHEERFUL

JOYFUL

Other Words:

DELIGHTED

PLAYFUL

EXCITED

SILLY

GLAD

THRILLED

GOOD

ZANY

These things make me happy

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Emotion Regulation Handout 5

WORDS FOR EMOTIONS: SAD

CRUSHED

GLOOMY

Other Words:

DEFEATED

HURT

DEPRESSED

MISERABLE

DISAPPOINTED

UPSET

DOWN

WEEPY

These things make me sad

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Emotion Regulation Handout 6

WORDS FOR EMOTIONS: MAD

ANGRY

FRUSTRATED

Other Words:

ANNOYED

TICKED OFF

BUMMED

P.O.'D

DISGUSTED

UPSET

ENRAGED

VEXED

These things make me mad

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Emotion Regulation Handout 7

WORDS FOR EMOTIONS: SCARED

AFRAID

OVERWHELMED

Other Words:

ANXIOUS

PANIC

FREAKED OUT

SHOCKED

FRIGHTENED

SPOOKED

JUMPY

SURPRISED

NERVOUS

WORRIED

These things make me scared

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Emotion Regulation Handout 8

WORDS FOR EMOTIONS: EMBARRASSED

ASHAMED

REGRETFUL

Other Words:

DISGRACED

REMORSEFUL

HUMILIATED

SHEEPISH

INSULTED

SHY

LONELY

VULNERABLE

These things make me embarrassed

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Emotion Regulation Handout 9

What Good Are Emotions?

Emotions Communicate to Others

1. Other people can see my face and can know how I am feeling
2. I can see other people's faces and know how they are feeling
3. My emotions affect me and they affect other people

Emotions Help Communicate to Ourselves

1. My emotions tell me if something or someone is dangerous
2. My emotions tell me if something or someone is safe
3. Emotions are like a "fire alarm"

Emotions Prepare for Action

1. Emotions make me want to act (urges)
2. Emotions help me act fast (without having to think)
3. Emotions help me survive dangerous things and people

Emotion Regulation Handout 10

Keeping Control of Yourself

A good way to remember these skills is “SEEDS GROW”

Sickness needs to be treated.

You need to take care of yourself and your body. See your doctor and take your medicine.

Eat Right.

You need to eat good food. Don't eat too much or too little.

Exercise every day.

Do some exercise every day. Stay in shape.

Drugs are bad.

Stay away from drugs and alcohol. They make you out of control.

Sleep well.

Get enough sleep at night so you are not tired during the day.

GROW every day.

Do something you are good at every day and try doing something new every day

Emotion Regulation Handout 11

Feel Better More Often

Have Fun

Short Term:

Do fun things every day

Long Term:

Make good choices so that you can have fun more often

Make goals and work towards them

Make and keep good friendships

My Goals:

The Steps:

Be Mindful During Fun Times

Focus your attention on good stuff that happens

Refocus when you are distracted

Don't worry about when the fun will end

Emotion Regulation Handout 12

Ways to Feel Better

1. Laughing
2. Playing Games
3. Exercising
4. Being outside
5. Thinking about good times
6. Listening to music
7. Helping others
8. Sleeping
9. Spending time with friends or family
10. Saying and Hearing "I Love You"
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

Emotion Regulation Handout 13

101 Ways to Feel Better

1. Saying "I Love You"
2. Buying something new
3. Cleaning and organizing
4. Collecting things (coins, shells, etc.)
5. Coloring a picture
6. Cooking a meal
7. Cutting grass
8. Dancing
9. Daydreaming
10. Decorating for the holidays
11. Doing arts and crafts
12. Doing a hobby (models, coins, etc.)
13. Doodling
14. Dressing up and looking nice
15. Eating a favorite food
16. Exercising
17. Flirting
18. Flying a kite
19. Flying a toy plane
20. Gardening
21. Getting a haircut
22. Getting a manicure/pedicure
23. Getting a massage
24. Getting something done
25. Giving/getting hugs
26. Going boating
27. Going bowling
28. Going camping
29. Going fishing
30. Going for a walk
31. Going hiking
32. Going horseback riding
33. Going hunting
34. Going on a date
35. Going on a picnic
36. Going out to dinner (eating)
37. Going skating
38. Going swimming
39. Going to a movie
40. Going to a party
41. Going to museums
42. Going to plays and concerts
43. Going to the beach
44. Going to the zoo
45. Going window shopping
46. Having family get-togethers
47. Having lunch with a friend
48. Having quiet evenings
49. Laughing
50. Listening to music
51. Listening to nature sounds
52. Looking at nature
53. Looking at pictures
54. Losing weight
55. Lying in the sun
56. Making a gift for someone
57. Making a fort
58. Making a snack
59. Making a snowman or snow angel
60. Meeting new people
61. Painting
62. Planning activities
63. Playing cards
64. Playing football
65. Playing hockey
66. Playing musical instruments
67. Playing pool
68. Playing soccer
69. Playing video games
70. Playing volleyball
71. Playing with animals
72. Playing with modeling clay or play-doh
73. Practicing karate, judo, yoga
74. Practicing religion (going to church, praying, reading a holy book, etc.)
75. Reading a good book
76. Reading magazines or newspapers
77. Reflecting on how I've improved
78. Relaxing
79. Remembering loving people
80. Riding a bike
81. Saving money
82. Setting goals for yourself
83. Sewing
84. Sightseeing
85. Singing
86. Sleeping
87. Spending time with good friends
88. Taking a break
89. Taking care of plants or pets
90. Taking pictures
91. Talking with friends or family
92. Telling jokes
93. Thinking about good times
94. Traveling
95. Watching TV
96. Work on a personal goal
97. Fixing something
98. Wash a car
99. Writing (poems, journal, stories)
100. Working
101. Hearing "I love you"

Emotion Regulation Handout 14

Change How You Feel by Acting Differently

Fear

1. Do what you are afraid of doing over and over and over
2. Do things that make you feel in control

Guilt or Shame

1. Repair the mistake by saying "I'm sorry" and do something to help the person you hurt
2. Learn from the mistake and don't make the same mistake again
3. Accept the consequences for what you did

Sadness

1. Do activities, keep yourself busy
2. Do things that make you feel good at what you do

Anger

1. Be nice to the person you are angry at
2. Think about how the other person is feeling

Emotion Regulation Homework Sheet 1

Emotion Chain Analysis 1

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Emotion Name: _____ Strength: a little medium a lot
(happy, sad, angry, embarrassed, scared) (1) (2) (3)

1. **PROMPTING EVENT** for my emotion: What happened?

2. **MY THOUGHTS** (interpretation) about the situation:

3. **MY BODY**: What was I feeling in my body? What was my facial expression?

4. **ACTION URGES**: What did I want to do? What did I want to say?

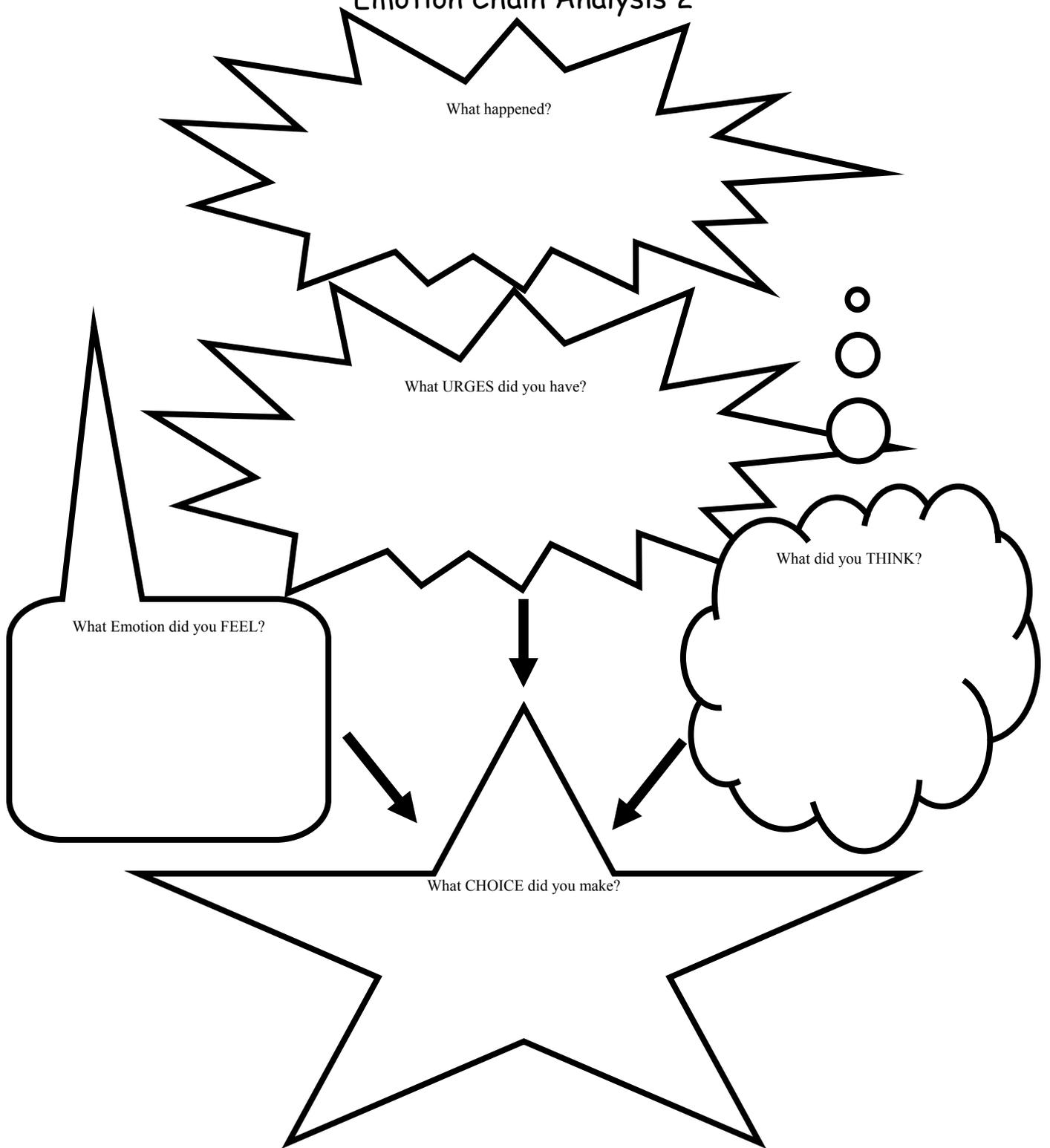
5. **MY ACTIONS**: What did I do? What did I say?

6. **THE CONSEQUENCES**: What happened after my feeling and my actions?

7. **NEXT TIME**: What will I do next time?

Emotion Regulation Homework Sheet 2

Emotion Chain Analysis 2



Emotion Regulation Homework Sheet 3

Emotion Chain Analysis 3



What Happened?



What emotion did you feel?



What did you think?



What urges did you feel? What did you want to do?



What did you do?

Relationship Effectiveness Handout 1

Goals of Relationship Effectiveness

Getting What You Want

1. What do I want in this situation?
 2. What do I have to do to get it?
- Having your rights respected and getting your needs met
 - Being understood by others
 - Fixing relationship problems
 - Knowing HOW and WHEN to say "No"

Getting or Keeping Good Relationships

1. How do I want the other person to feel about me?
 2. What do I have to do to get or keep this relationship?
- Behaving so that the other person keeps liking you
 - Balance short-term and long-term relationship goals

Improving Self-Respect

1. How do I want to feel after this?
 2. What do I have to do to feel that way?
- Respecting your own beliefs and values
 - Making choices that help you feel successful

Relationship Effectiveness Handout 2

Lies and Truths About Relationships

LIES

- I don't deserve good things (respect, love)
- I shouldn't say no to people
- People shouldn't say no to me
- Everyone should think the same things as me
- I can't ask other people for things
- Other people shouldn't ask me for things
- This relationship is the only one that's important

TRUTHS

- I deserve good things (respect, love)
- I can say no to people
- People can say no to me
- Everyone has their own point of view
- It's okay to ask people for things
- It's okay if other people ask me for things
- The world will not end if this relationship does not work

Relationship Effectiveness Handout 3

Making Choices in Relationships

Asking

Low Intensity (weak)

1. Don't ask, don't hint
2. Hint to what you want "Hmm, that looks good"
3. Ask softly "I would like it if ..."
4. Ask strongly "I need you to please ..."

High Intensity (strong)

Saying No

Low Intensity (weak)

1. Just do what the other person wants
2. Say "I don't want to" but do it anyway
3. Say "MAYBE" and think about it more
4. Just say "NO"

High Intensity (strong)

Relationship Effectiveness Handout 4

Making Choices in Relationships: Things to Think About

1. **Priorities**: What is most important to you: The relationship? Self respect? Getting what you want?
2. **The Relationship**: How important is the relationship to you? How important is it to the other person?
3. **Rights**: Are anyone's rights being violated? Are they being supported?
4. **Authority**: Does the person have power or influence over you (a caregiver, a teacher, the police)? Are they telling you to do something that you are supposed to do?
5. **Respect**: Am I respecting the other person? Am I being respected?
6. **Time**: Is this a good time for me? Is this a good time for the other person?
7. **Ability**: Can I give what the other person is asking? Can the other person give what I am asking for?

Relationship Effectiveness Handout 5

Why Use Relationship Effectiveness Skills?

Taking Care of Relationships

- Get out of bad relationships
- Don't let hurts and problems build up
- Use relationship skills to take care of problems

Balancing "Wants" and "Shoulds"

- Make sure that you are doing the things that you should do
- Make sure that you are doing some things that are fun for you to do

Building Self-Respect

- Stand up for what you believe in
- Listen to your *Wise Mind*

Relationship Effectiveness Handout 6

Getting What You Want

There are certain skills that you need to use in order to be effective in relationships and get your needs met. A good way to remember them is to remember

"DEAR MAN"

Describe: Describe the situation using facts first.

Express: Express your feelings and thoughts using "I- want" and "I don't want" statements.

Ask or Say No: Nobody can read minds, so you need to be clear about what you want or what you will not do.

Reward: Reward the other person by telling them how they are helping you and telling them how much you appreciate that help.

Mindfulness: Stay mindful, use your *Wise Mind*, and focus on why you are talking with the other person.

Appropriate Behavior: Use good manners, say please and thank you, make eye contact, and act confidently.

Negotiate: Compromise to get what you need. Be willing to give and to get.

Relationship Effectiveness Handout 7

Respecting Yourself

There are certain skills that you need to use in order to be effective in relationships. One of these skills is respecting yourself. A good way to remember these skills is to remember "**FAST**"

Fair: Be fair to yourself and the other person.

Apologies: Apologize for what you do wrong, but don't apologize for wanting, for thinking, or for living.

Stick to what you believe in: Figure out what you believe. Respect your own opinions. Live how you believe is right.

Tell the Truth: Don't lie or tell stories. Be true to other people and yourself. Don't act helpless when you are not.

Relationship Effectiveness Handout 8

Keeping Good Relationships

There are certain skills that you need to use in order to make relationships work well. A good way to remember them is to remember "GIFT"

Gentle: Be gentle. Show the other person that you care.

Interest: Show the other person that you are interested by listening to him/her. Don't interrupt, make eye contact, and be patient.

Funny: Be funny sometimes and use humor. Smile a lot.

Try to Understand: We all have different opinions and we see the world differently. Try to understand the other person's point of view.

Relationship Effectiveness Handout 9

Sometimes Using Relationship Effectiveness Skills is Hard

- **When You Don't Know How**
 - Sometimes you just don't know what to do or how to do it.
 - Solution: Ask for help.
- **When You Are Worried**
 - Sometimes you might think:
 - "They won't like me."
 - "I don't deserve this."
 - "I can't do this."
 - Solution: Try using a skill anyway, see what happens.
- **When Your Emotions Get In The Way**
 - Sometimes your emotions are so strong and they try to control what you do. This makes it hard to use your skills.
 - Solution: Use mindfulness skills to calm down and then make a good choice.
 - Solution: Ask for help if you need it.
- **When You Can't Decide What To Do**
 - Sometimes you can't decide what skill to use and you think: "I just can't decide."
 - Solution: Just pick one and try it! If it doesn't work, try a different one next time.
- **When the World Doesn't Let You**
 - Sometimes you can't use your skills because other people are more powerful or because the world is too strong.
 - Solution: Work on accepting this situation, but don't give up. Use your skills when you can.

Relationship Effectiveness Handout 10

Practicing Relationship Effectiveness

1. Ask your therapist for a special favor
2. Order a special meal at a restaurant
3. Go to the store and ask a salesperson for help
4. Invite a friend to coffee or for lunch
5. Ask someone out on a date
6. Ask for help on work/schoolwork or help someone else on their work/schoolwork
7. Ask for help fixing something or help someone else fix something
8. Ask other people to remain quiet during school or work
9. Start a conversation with someone you want to get to know better
10. Do something nice for someone you care about

Relationship Effectiveness Homework Sheet 1

Looking At How I Ask and Say No

When is one time this week when I asked for something with "weak" intensity:

Did I get what I wanted: Yes No

How did I feel afterwards?

When is one time this week when I asked for something with "strong" intensity:

Did I get what I wanted: Yes No

How did I feel afterwards?

When was one time this week when I said no to someone with "weak" intensity:

Did I get what I wanted: Yes No

How did I feel afterwards?

When was one time this week when I said no to someone with "strong" intensity:

Did I get what I wanted: Yes No

How did I feel afterwards?

Relationship Effectiveness Homework Sheet 3

Getting What You Want

Directions: Use this sheet to practice the DEAR MAN skills that you want to use or that you should have used

Describe: Describe the situation using facts first.

Express: Express your feelings and thoughts using "I want" and "I don't want" statements.

Ask or Say No: Nobody can read minds, so you need to be clear about what you want or what you will not do.

What are you going to ask for or say no to?

Reward: Reward the other person by telling them how they are helping you and telling them how much you appreciate that help.

What are you going to say?

Mindfulness: Stay mindful, use your *Wise Mind*, and focus on why you are talking with the other person.

Appropriate Behavior: Use good manners, say please and thank you, make eye contact, and act confidently.

Negotiate: Compromise to get what you need. Be willing to give and to get.

What are you willing to give in order to get what you want or need?
