

Practical skills for Change: DBT inspired techniques for working with clients

B. NILAJA GREEN, PHD

LICENSED CLINICAL & COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGIST

STANDPOINT WELLNESS CLINICS

EMORY UNIVERSITY MHTTC

Who am I?

- Licensed Clinical and Community Psychologist
- Founder of Standpoint Wellness – a boutique integrative mental health care practice in North Fulton
- Trauma specialist & DBT trained
- Adjunct professor at Emory University
- Clinical Supervisor at Georgia State University
- Creator of the Radical Introspective Method for therapists

bngreen@emory.edu

www.standpointwellness.com



Objectives



- INTRODUCE OVERARCHING
EFFECTIVENESS
FRAMEWORK



- INTRODUCE 5 OPTIONS
FOR RESPONDING TO A
PROBLEM



- INTRODUCE MINDFULNESS
PRINCIPLES



- INTRODUCE THE "HOW" &
"WHAT" SKILLS OF
MINDFULNESS



- INTRODUCE THE 3 STATES
OF MIND



Foundations

- Biosocial Theory

- Biological vulnerability to emotion dysregulation and hypersensitivity
- Invalidating environment – including (but not only) abusive experiences

- Emotion dysregulation limits the ability to engage in other functionalities such as:

- Having a coherent sense of self
- Being able to access problem solving
- Effective interpersonal relationships
- Goal directed behaviors
- Effective communication

- Dialectics – in order to effectively manage clients who are both emotionally vulnerable and afraid of change – therapist must balance the dialectics (or oppositions) the clients face in themselves – two opposing things can be equally and simultaneously true, i.e. suicide attempt



What do
you see?





“We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are.”

- ANAIS NIN

(Some) Fundamental Assumptions

DBT has a unique perspective when it comes to engaging with clients:

- The technique seeks to help clients feel more effective in their regulation of their emotions, management of crises and engaging in relationships.
- Through more effective actions, clients are meant to feel more competent, confident and able to connect to their lives.
- Behavior is thought of and evaluated according to its effectiveness, rather than whether we agree with it or not.
- Consider that all behavior serves a function, comes from somewhere (i.e. it is not random).
- Patients are doing the best they can *and* they can do better.
- Patients are moving along a continuum of acceptance and change. We recognize this and hold this dialectic with and for them.
- Judging and placing blame is less effective than finding out how to change ineffective actions.



Poll # 1:

(Choose 1)

My clients come to me primarily because:

- a. They are ready to change.
 - b. They want advice/suggestions.
 - c. They are suffering.
 - d. They need skills.
-



Skill #1: Choosing goals

Motivation – Why is your client here (in their words)? (MI questions)

- - What does life look like for you in 6 months if nothing changes?
- Help me understand ___?
- How would you like things to be different?
- What are the good things about ___ and what are the less good things about it?
- When would you be most likely to ___?
- What do you think you will lose if you give up ___?

As a skill-based intervention, DBT builds off specific goals set by client & therapist:

- Behaviors to increase
- Behaviors to decrease (always include self harming behaviors here)
- Determine the triggers for the presence of these behaviors as well as reinforcement of the behaviors

Skill #1 cont'd

- Behavioral considerations
 - Behavior that is reinforced continues
 - Replacement behaviors must be applied in relevant situations
 - New behaviors must be practiced
 - Anticipate when behaviors might be harder to access and plan ahead for them
 - Create the ideal “goal” and the “minimum goal”
 - i.e. while we would love clients to practice the new behavior daily (the ideal goal), we can have a minimum goal of practicing 3x/week
- DBT focuses on 4 main areas: increasing mindfulness, decreasing emotional dysregulation, effective crisis management, increasing interpersonal effectiveness

Skill #2: Fundamental Problem-solving technique - Pros and cons

- Client ambivalence	Normative
	Helpful to acknowledge
	Can be useful
	Can trigger therapist frustration, confusion, etc..
	Ask yourself, how does this ambivalence make sense?
- Problem solving motivation skill	Introduce pros and cons of using skills in any given situation
	Allows clients to continue to have a say in how and if they use skills/treatment
	Allows them to step back from situations, including their own emotions and thoughts to re-engage in a more thoughtful way
- Method – have clients describe the situation & describe their goals	List pros of using skills in the situation
	List cons of using skills in the situation
	Can teach this as a skill in session and then have them use this skill on their own, even in session

Skill #3: The Problem-Solving Framework

1. Solve the Problem

- Be able to identify the actual problem

2. Feel better about the Problem

- Use emotion regulation skills

3. Tolerate the Problem

- Use distress tolerance skills

4. Stay Miserable

- Use no skills

5. Make things worse!

- Use ineffective skills





Breakout Group

THE 5 RESPONSE FRAMEWORK



Poll # 2:

(Choose 1)

Mindfulness is primarily:

- a. A stress management technique.
 - b. A pain management technique.
 - c. A way to contact the present moment.
-




Mindfulness combines three basic elements of presence:

What do we mean when we say “mindfulness?”

Awareness

Presence

Acceptance



Skill #4: What is Mindfulness?

- From an Eastern tradition of meditation (Buddhism, Yoga, etc.)
- A consistent work of attending to the present moment with full, non-judgmental attention, willingness and responsiveness
 - Present moment – grounded in the now
 - Full attention – observing as many aspects of the present moment as possible
 - Non-judgmental – taking the moment as it is with judging whether it “should” be this way or not
 - Willingness – openness to acceptance
 - Responsiveness – demonstrating flexibility to respond to the moment as it presents itself
- Foundation of skills because we cannot appropriately use skills when we are not responding to the present moment.
- In this framework, mindfulness is meant to help with identity confusion, emptiness and dysregulation, as well as increase connectedness.
- Requires the clinician to practice principles in their own life.
- Beyond a technique ultimately mindfulness is a way of living

Open Focus Breathing





Mindfulness “What” skills

“What” skills refer to the tasks of mindfulness:

- Observe
- Describe
- Participate
- Mindfulness skills allow clients to step back from judgment so they can meet the present moment as it is, including their own internal experience.
- Stepping back from judgments can decrease emotion dysregulation.
- Stepping back from judgments can allow clients to more easily access skills.
- Words like “good,” “bad,” “should,” “supposed to” all lead to judgment



Mindfulness “What” skills


[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/
WATCH?V=JUSAQL1_ZXE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUSAQL1_ZXE)



Mindfulness “How” skills

“How” skills refer to the way you engage in these tasks:

- Observe **One mindfully**
- Describe **Nonjudgmentally**
- Participate **Fully/completely**
- These skills give clients direction for the desired approach to the what skills
- The “how” skills are connected to the “what” skills while also requiring their own practice



Mindfulness “How” skills

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=OYDRMPNE93S](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYDRMPNE93S)

Break Out Group



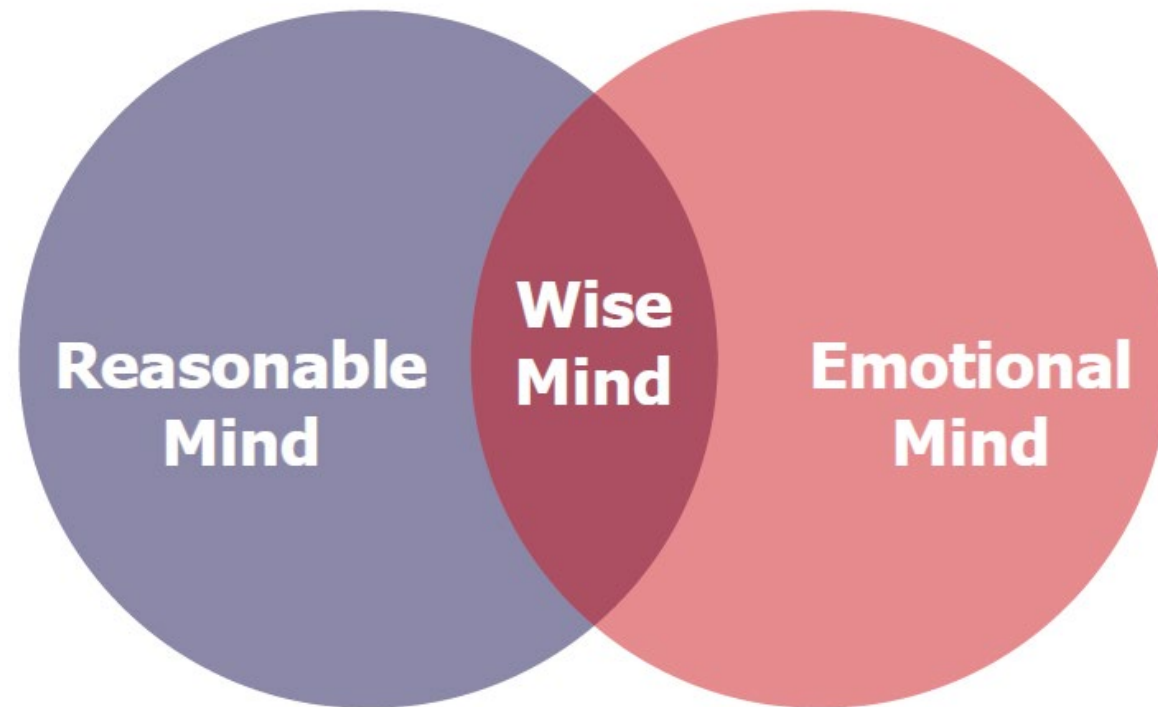
What interrupts the present moment for us?



Three States Mind

- Emotion Mind – part of our mind responsible for emotional reactions
 - Home of love songs and emotional “explosions”
 - Part of the mind that keeps us connected to ourselves, others and our experiences
 - Without our emotions, we lose connection to meaningfulness in our lives
 - Out of control emotions can also disrupt connections and meaning
- Reasonable Mind – part of our mind responsible for logical decisions
 - Straightforward, rational part of the brain
 - We rely on this part of our brains to make plans, organize, follow directions and create strategies
 - Very useful for problem solving
 - When we make decisions only from this place, we lack empathy, connection and consideration for ourselves and others
- Wise Mind – the values driven state of mind
 - Wise Mind takes into account Emotion Mind and Reasonable mind
 - Present oriented and directs behavior in the present according to values
 - Requires calling upon mindfulness skills

Three States of Mind - Foundation of Mindfulness in DBT



More “advanced” Mindfulness skills

- Compassion

- “to suffer together”
- To have compassion means to empathize with someone who is suffering and to feel compelled to reduce the suffering.
- For the self and others
- Often interrupted by judgment, hindsight bias (“hindsight is 20/20”)
- Is a practice

- Middle Path

- Balancing between two seemingly opposite possibilities/realities and finding the resolution
- Not minimizing one or the other truth

- Balancing “being” vs “doing”

- Acting vs not acting

- Radical Acceptance

- Often accepting those truths we resist the most
- Accompanied by physical actions “willing hands”
- Requires complete radical acceptance

Some common pitfalls

- Clinicians underestimate the ambivalence of clients and do not conceptualize its function for clients
- Clinicians have difficulty maintaining the dialectical framework
- Clinicians judge behavior rather than focusing on its effectiveness or lack of effectiveness
- Clinicians do not consistently reinforce effective skill use
- Clinicians recognize negative judgment but not positive ones
- Clinicians don't have a good grasp of the mindfulness skills so they:
 - Don't teach them properly
 - Miss correcting clients
 - Don't understand the difficulty of practicing the skills because they are not practicing them
- Clinicians blame clients for “failing” and do not realize that a treatment can fail a patient, patients do not fail a treatment

Pitfalls continued

- Clinicians spend too much time with the problem of the day and do not teach skills or keep clients accountable for skill use
- Clients do not practice the skills or use them inconsistently.
- Clients practice the skills but not in relevant situations.
- Clients feel invalidated in session and pushed too hard to change.

Poll # 3:

(Choose 1)

Over the next week, I will practice DBT skills in my own life by:

- a. Implementing the 5 options for responding to a problem
 - b. Practicing the mindfulness "what" and "how" skills
 - c. Practicing self compassion
 - d. Noticing the 3 states of mind
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Questions?
