
Emotion Regulation

SKILLS GUIDE

The Problem

- Many clients see their emotions as facts
- Many clients find their emotions to be unbearable, overwhelming and/or confusing
- Many clients do not have the skills to effectively manage their emotions or manage their emotions ineffectively

Emotional Myths

- Powerful, sometimes subconscious “scripts” we live by
- Teaching clients to identify these scripts can aid them in gaining clarity about their emotional lives and subsequent behaviors
- Identification of these scripts can also allow clients to create challenges to unhelpful or untrue statements

What Clients Gain

- Increased emotion regulation is associated with more positive well-being overall.
- Improved emotion regulation is positively associated with mindfulness.

Considerations

- Clients may feel like they are responding in a disingenuous manner.
- Clients may only partially engage in Opposite Action, which may make it less effective which can reinforce their reasons for not using it.
- Can be very difficult because this skill really pushes against default emotional responses.

Barriers to Emotion Regulation

- Biology
- Lack of effective skills
- Clients act according to fluctuating mood rather than Wise Mind
- Emotional overwhelm
- Emotion Myths

Solution

Goals of emotion regulation skills:

- Help clients to understand and name their emotions.
- Decrease emotional suffering by using skills to not make things worse.
- Decrease the frequency of unwanted emotions

Barriers to Checking the Facts

- Client may be too emotionally dysregulated to access the skills
- Clients did not practice the skill enough
 - May practice part of the skill but not move through to the end
 - Very important to check on the client’s practice because this skill can be complicated

Considerations Cont.

- Clients should not expect that engaging in these behaviors means that they will no longer experience emotional distress
 - Clients struggling with depression and motivation may have trouble with actually doing any action – consider keeping the goals very doable and accessible and gradually move towards more challenging actions
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