Modified Dialectical Behavioral Therapy: Interventions to Enhance Emotional Regulation Skills and to Decrease Challenging Behaviors in Adults with I/DD
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CIDD Chills Skills – Modified DBT Group

- Two Groups on Thursday Afternoon – 1 hour each
- Seven clients in group #1 and six clients in group #2 (3 men and 10 women; age range early 30’s to late 50’s; one African American and twelve Caucasian; 4 live in apartments with supports; 8 live in group homes; 1 lives in community).
- **Diagnosis – Group #1**
  - Down syndrome; Anxiety and Depression
  - Down syndrome and Depression
  - I/DD, ADHD and Anxiety x2
  - I/DD, Borderline PD and ADHD
  - I/DD, Intermittent Explosive Disorder; Somatic Complaints (possible PTSD/ASD/Depression/Anxiety)
  - I/DD, Mild Depression (periods of selective mutism)
- **Diagnosis Group #2**
  - ASD, Anxiety, OCD
  - ASD and Depression
  - Turner’s syndrome, mixed depression and anxiety
  - I/DD and Impulse Control
  - CP, OCD and Anxiety
  - CP, Depression and Anxiety
- Clients in group #1 have 30-minute individual therapy sessions every Thursday before or after group. Five out of six member in group #2 have individual therapists (not necessarily at CIDD).
- Group #1 has been running for almost four years with the most of the same clients. Group #2 is in its second year.
- Agenda: Gratitude Journal; Meditation/Yoga; Check-in (one joy/one challenge); Skill Lesson and activity (practice, role play, art, etc.); Music/Dance
- One person graduated from the group #1 after completing all four modules, but continues to see me once a month for individual therapy. He has made significant improvement with anxiety, boundaries and interpersonal relationships.
- We started out doing weekly homework assignment sheets, but did not seem to get a good return rate on those. We do encourage clients to practice skills and check-in with them each week at group and at individual sessions (if they have them).
- We have weekly DBT planning meetings where we plan future sessions and process previous session or specific client issues related to group.
- All my clients have my phone number and know they can call if they need support.
- We celebrate birthdays, holidays, and do a graduation ceremony at the end of each module
- New referrals go through a screening process. We start and end each module with a pre/post-test.
What is DBT?

- DBT stands for Dialectical Behavior Therapy
- DBT is a specific type of cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy (CBT) created in the 1980’s by Marsha Linehan, Ph.D., an American Psychologist
- An evidence based model of therapy that uses skills training and the therapeutic relationship to manage strong emotions, distorted thinking and behavioral dyscontrol.
- A bio-psycho-social approach to psychotherapy that modifies traditional behavioral approaches and combines them with Buddhist concepts like acceptance and mindfulness.
- Uses group work (skills training), individual therapy and self-monitoring to change target behaviors.
- Originally created for the treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder, it is now used in a variety of treatment settings with a range of individuals, conditions or mental health disorders (i.e., dual diagnosis, substance use, eating disorders, complex trauma, suicidal adolescents; ASD, and IDD).
- DBT has been described as being designed for the severe and chronic, multi-diagnostic, difficult to treat clients with both Axis I and Axis II disorders.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)

- CBT teaches individuals how their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors influence each other.
- CBT teaches individuals to use this relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behavior to their advantage.
- This approach believes that positive change in one factor (changing a thought or behavior) can lead to positive changes in all factors.
- Evidence-based approach that has been proven to help individuals with various mental health issues such as depression, anxiety disorders or substance use problems. Also used with individuals with high functioning ASD (Michelle Garcia Winner’s Social Thinking methodology).
- CBT is structured, goals-oriented and focused on the present.
- CBT teaches skills and strategies like problem-solving or realistic thinking to help individuals make changes to their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

- DBT is based on CBT, with greater focus on emotional and social aspects.
- DBT was developed to help people cope with extreme or unstable emotions and harmful behavior.
- DBT is an evidence-based approach which helps individuals regulate emotions, cope with stress and improve interpersonal relationships.
- It started as a treatment for borderline personality disorder, and current research shows it may help with many different mental health issues or concerns, particularly with self-harm.
- The key differences between CBT and DBT are validation, acceptance and relationships.
- DBT teaches individuals that their experiences are real, and it teaches them how to accept who they are, regardless of challenges or difficult experiences.
- Relationships are important in DBT – including the relationship between the client and the DBT practitioner
- Validation and acceptance is critical in the therapeutic relationship as well as in peer to peer relationships in group.

What is Dialectics?

- The idea that two opposite or contradictory ideas can exist at the same time. Simply said: It means two opposing things being true at once.
Thinking dialectically means we maintain openness to contradictory and/or polarized thoughts and points of view. We work to blend these thoughts into a “truth” which best explains the reality at the moment.

Examples:
- You love your family member, but you are angry because they are always late.
- As a parent you are often doing the best you can AND you are still wanting to do better.
- Teenagers want to do things on their own AND they still rely on their parents.
- We accept the client where they are AND we still push them to change.

DBT therapists understand and validate, what clients are doing based on who they are, what they have been taught or what is in their history AND we believe that they can also become more skillful to have a better life.

Five Main Tasks of the DBT Therapist
- Work to expand client capabilities.
- Motivate the client to engage in new behaviors.
- Generalize the use of the new behaviors.
- Establish a treatment environment that reinforces progress.
- Maintain capable and motivated therapists.

Three Components Needed to Accomplish These Tasks
- Individual psychotherapy
- Skills training group
- Phone coaching
- Supervision/case consultation groups

DBT is a Strengths-Based Approach to Working with Clients
- People are active participants in the helping process (empowerment).
- All people have inherent strengths, often untapped or unrecognized.
- Strengths foster motivation for growth.
- Strengths are internal and environmental (supports/resources).

DBT’s Bio-Social Theory
Biological dysfunction in emotion regulation system + Invalidating environment = Pervasive Emotional Dysregulation
What is the impact on individuals with I/DD?

Social Risk Factors
- Closest relationships can often be paid staff friendships may be few and/or unsatisfying Lack of family involvement
- Challenges with social interaction, especially nuanced skills like small talk and flirting
- History of loss, including staff
- Experience of marginalization, prejudice, and stigma
- Experience of being taken advantage of
- Discouraged from having romantic relationships Lack of sexual contact and/or knowledge
- Stressful social interactions associated with increased psychological distress

Environmental Risk Factors
- History of multiple placements Institutionalization
- Unfulfilling job placements or day programs
- Limited access to enrichment activities
- Lack of financial independence
- Lack of privacy
✓ Strict routines and lack of choice
✓ Service providers from different disciplines and agencies

➢ Cognitive Risk Factors
✓ Challenges with abstract thinking Difficulty with perspective-taking Reduced memory for learned coping skills
✓ Impaired reasoning and problem-solving
✓ Limited executive functioning (multi-tasking, planning, organizing)
✓ Receptive language deficit Difficulty identifying “why” they are experiencing an emotion

➢ Psychological Risk Factors
✓ Taught to be “compliant” and discouraged from doing tasks independently, leading to experience of helplessness
✓ Experience of shame around having a disability
✓ Fear of new experiences due to feeling incapable
✓ Not having a “voice,” even if verbal, due to others not consulting them in decisions that impact them
✓ Being “bailed out” of challenging situations and not being given the opportunity to learn from mistakes History of abuse, bullying, and/or rejection
✓ Defense mechanisms may be primitive (fight or flight)
✓ Impaired capacity for insight, resulting in an external focus for the cause of emotional distress

➢ Stress Risk Factors
✓ Stress – mental or emotional tension due to any event perceived by the individual to be demanding, straining, or challenging
✓ Chronic stress can impact physical and mental health
✓ Levels of stress may be higher
✓ Fewer resources or coping skills to deal with stress

What Do We Know About the Treatment of Individuals with I/DD?

- High rates of abuse and neglect including physical, sexual and emotional
- High rates of bullying
- Victims of violent crimes
- Family stress can turn into family violence
- Co-occurring mental health challenges
- Institutionalization
- Restraint and seclusion
- Abandonment and isolation
- Excluded from society – one of the most marginalized populations
- Discrimination, prejudice, and microaggressions
- Person not seen for who they are – see disability first
- No advocates – don’t learn how to self-advocate
- Invalidated

Graphic - https://janinafisher.com/flip-chart.html
Trauma Leads To:
- Emotional Dysregulation
- Intolerance to Stress
- High Anxiety
- Distorted Thoughts
- Easily Triggered – Reactive – Unprocessed Memories
- Poor Interpersonal Relationships
- Agitation – Aggression – Verbal/Physical
- Violence - Suicide/Homicide
- Withdrawal/Isolation
- Low self-esteem/confidence
- Helplessness/Hopelessness
- Poor Sleep – Nightmares
- Somatic Complaints/Illness
- Addictions
- Co-occurring Mental Health Issues

What is Invalidation?
- The negation that a person or their feelings or opinions are invalid and wrong.
- Invalidation includes:
  ✓ Blaming
  ✓ Judging
  ✓ Denying
  ✓ Criticizing
  ✓ Minimizing feelings or experiences
  ✓ Implies the person is wrong, overreacting, or lying.
- Invalidation = Emotional Abuse
- Invalidation = Trauma

Why use DBT with Individuals with I/DD?
- DBT teaches modulation of extreme emotions thus reducing negative behaviors that can result from these emotions.
- DBT teaches the individual to trust their own emotions, thoughts and behaviors.
- DBT is a skills-based model that is consistent with psychoeducational and habilitative practice
- DBT is fundamentally non-pejorative (non-belittling or negative) in its language and positive in its aspirations without blaming the victim.
- DBT has a strong focus on teaching individuals to advocate for themselves – developing problem-solving, communication, assertiveness and self-advocacy skills, a sense of independence and a feeling of empowerment.
- Skills can be reinforced and used by family members and group home/support staff.

The Core of DBT

Validation and Problem-Solving form the core of DBT.
- All other strategies are built around them.
- Validation strategies are acceptance-based
- Engaging the client in understanding actions, emotions and thoughts.
- Problem-solving strategies are change-based
Looking at behavior, committing to change and taking the steps to change.

- Validation is not necessarily agreeing.
- Validation does not mean you like it.
- Only validate the valid!

Validate:
- Emotions – feelings, wanting, suffering, difficulties
- Thoughts – beliefs, opinions
- Actions
- Abilities – Strengths

Problems Solving:
Chain Analysis - Examines events and situational factors leading up and following a problematic response.

What is Validation? The recognition or affirmation that a person or their feelings or opinions are valid or worthwhile.

Adapting Psychotherapy/Group Therapy for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Myth: Psychotherapy is not effective for people with I/DD
Truth: If adapted/modified psychotherapy can be effective for people with I/DD!

- Provide information in a variety of different modes
  - Both auditory and visual
  - Uses all senses (unless sensory issues)
  - Videos/Drawings/Visuals
- Simplify language
  - Directive and active approaches
  - Change complicated terms – teach to your audience
  - Ask if a word or concept is understood – give examples
- Concrete activities
  - Modeling, role-plays, art, clay, mirrors, games
  - Break things into smaller parts
  - Give real life examples
- Maintain structure
  - Group guidelines – expected vs. unexpected behaviors
  - Consistent agenda format
  - Allow time for sharing
  - Deal with conflicts in “real time”
  - End on positive note – music/dance
- Strength-based instruction
- Concrete skills building
- Built-in-repetition of key information
- Share with family, group home and/or support staff – helps to generalize learning and practice of the skills.
  (Also, can be helpful to family or support staff).
- Ask for feedback from clients
- Incorporate their interests
- Be Creative/Have Fun!

VALIDATE!!


Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Model of Change/Healing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL</th>
<th>MENTAL</th>
<th>SPIRITUAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hot bath or shower</td>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>Reach out for support</td>
<td>Meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep breathing</td>
<td>Cry</td>
<td>Affirmations</td>
<td>Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk in nature</td>
<td>Talk to therapist/friend</td>
<td>Visualize a stop sign</td>
<td>Pray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation/Yoga</td>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>Read a book/journal</td>
<td>Be in nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to body Exercise</td>
<td>Get a manicure/pedicure</td>
<td>Talk to a friend</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a nap</td>
<td>Sing/Dance</td>
<td>Watch a movie</td>
<td>Listen to music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scream into a pillow</td>
<td>Listen to a meditation</td>
<td>Do a puzzle or craft</td>
<td>Practice mindfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/sexual health</td>
<td>Affirmations</td>
<td>Do a thought record</td>
<td>Attend a faith-based Community Yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat healthy food</td>
<td>Write in journal</td>
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Self-Care
Four Main DBT Skills

Core Mindfulness Skills

- Mindfulness is a core DBT Skill and is woven into all of our group sessions.
- Studies have shown that mindfulness skills are effective at reducing depression, anxiety, chronic pain and addictive behaviors.
- Practicing mindfulness regularly can increase tolerance to distressful situations, increase relaxation and can improve one’s ability to cope with difficult situations.

How we use these skills

- Awareness
- Acceptance
- Action
- = Change!

Three States of Mind

Core Mindfulness Skills
Each group starts with a mindfulness activity: Music, Guided Meditation (You Tube); Yoga; Movement

- What Skills – helps us know what to do
  - Observe/pay attention to the present moment
  - Describe – thoughts and feelings = Self-Awareness
  - Participating – being totally present when engaging in an activity = Awareness

- How Skills – helps us to know how to do it
  - Non-Judgmentally – be gentle with self and others = empathy
  - One-Mindfully – do one thing at a time = focus and attention
  - Effectively – focus on doing what works – choosing actions that move you to your goals – do the best you can in the moment

Emotional Regulation
Defined as a complex process that involves initiating, inhibiting, or modulating one's state or behavior in a given situation. For example: We have a subjective experience (feelings), cognitive responses (thoughts), emotion-related physiological responses (example heart rate or hormonal activity), and emotion-related behavior (bodily actions or expressions).

Emotional Regulation Skills
- Teach how to identify, describe and understand emotions and emotional experiences.
- Teach how to reduce vulnerability to negative emotions.
- Teach how to reduce emotional suffering.
- Teach how to increase positive emotions.

BRING IT DOWN! TURN IT AROUND!

Core Emotional Regulation Skills - Skill #1
Teach About Emotions – Developing awareness requires identifying and understanding emotions

- Goal: Develop Inner Awareness:
  - Identify Our Emotions
  - Understand Our Emotions
  - Learn How Emotions Show Up in Body
  - Learn to Regulate Own Emotions
  - Learn The Difference Between Thoughts and Emotions
  - Learn How Our Thoughts and Emotions Impact Our Own Behavior

- Goal: Develop Outer/Other Awareness:
  - Understand Others Have Emotions
  - Understand Others Have Thoughts
  - Understand How Our Behavior Impacts Others Thoughts, Emotions and Behavior

- Teach Primary Emotions
  - FLASH = FEAR - LOVE - ANGER - SAD – HAPPY

- Learn Emotion Recognition
  - Facial Expressions – Emotion Posters; Reading Faces; Mirrors
  - Tone of Voice - Emotions Games

- Teach Secondary Emotions – that come out of primary emotions – Emotion Wheel
The Zones of Regulation


THE SIZE OF MY EMOTIONS

- Scale 1-10 or 1-5 visual.
- List what type of problem is 10, 5, 1
Discuss descriptions of problems and determine where they fit on scale.
Define what makes a problem big or small.
What types of emotions are associated with different levels of problems?
Discuss how different problem levels impact a situation over time.
Discuss how to sort out and analyze that little problem.
How many people does it take to solve this problem?

Five Point Scales Can Be Created for Different Issues – Examples

TEACH ABOUT HOW FEELINGS SHOW UP IN THE BODY - BODY MAPPING/DRAWINGS

How does Anger show up in the body?  How does Fear show up in the body?

TEACH THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

Teach about Thoughts
Talking Bubbles
- Words that come out of my mouth.
- Public - other people can hear my talking bubble words.
- Talking bubble words can affect how other people feel.

**Thinking Bubbles**
- Words that I think inside my head
- Private - no one can hear my thinking bubble words
- Thinking bubble words are secret, so they cannot hurt other people's feelings.

- Having a thought vs. blurring it out
- Thinking and Saying Thoughts – Green = Okay; Yellow = Caution; Red = No (Leave it in your thought bubble).

**TEACH ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOR**

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**Core Emotional Regulation Skills – Skills #2**

**Opposite Action**
- This skill helps a person identify whether or not these actions make sense in the moment and what to do about them.
- Doing the opposite of your impulse that’s consistent with a more positive emotion.
- Affirmations and Inspirations – looking at or drawing motivational statements or images.
- Doing something funny or cheering – funny movies, TV, books
Check the Facts

- This skill helps a person to identify whether they are blowing things out of proportion or placing too much importance on their emotions when it’s happening.
- This skill helps to reduce the intensity of the emotions.

Ask the following questions to “check the facts”:

- What event triggered my emotion?
- What interpretations or assumptions am I making about the event?
- Does my emotion and its intensity match the facts of the situation? Or does it just match my assumptions of the situation?
- What do I know about _______________?

Core Emotional Regulation Skills – Skills #4

A – Accumulate Positive Emotions:
- Increase positive experiences and pleasant activities
- Build a “Life Worth Living” by making long term changes that make more positive events more possible
- Be mindful of positive experiences;
- Be “unmindful” of worries; o DO NOT THINK ABOUT when something will end, whether or not it is deserved or how much will be expected now.

B – Build Mastery:
- Do things that create a sense of accomplishment.

C- Cope Ahead of Time with Emotional Situations:
- Figure out effective responses in advance of situations.
Core Emotional Regulation Skills – Skills #5

P.L.E.A.S.E.
- This skill helps a person understand the link between body and brain.
- This skill helps a person that they can manage their emotions if they also manage their health and body.

Remember to:
- PL – Treat Physical Illness
- E – Eat Healthy
- A – Avoid Mood-Altering Drugs
- S – Sleep Well
- E – Exercise

Following these suggestions helps to keep one’s body healthy and happy, which makes it easier to keep one’s mind happy and healthy.

Core Emotional Regulation Skills – Skills #6

Paying Attention to Positive Events
- Humans are surprisingly good at filtering out the positive and focusing on the negative. It’s natural, but it’s not helpful!
- This skill helps a person pause and refocus onto the positive if they are paying too much attention to the negative.
- This skill encourages practicing by doing one small, positive activity every day, focusing on the good parts of the activity as it is being done.
- This skill helps ignore minor issues and notice the enjoyment, pleasure, and fun!

Some small, positive activities include:
- Have a good unrushed meal.
- Watch a movie.
- Visit with friends or family.
- Visit a local attraction like a zoo or museum.
- Go for a walk.
- Put on headphones and do nothing but listen to music.
- Have a picnic.
- Give yourself a relaxing night in.
- Try a new hobby.

Distress Tolerance Skills - (Coping with Stress)
- Teaches strategies that focus on how to tolerate distress, without engaging in impulsive and self-destructive behaviors.
- Focuses on distraction and self-soothing techniques, and strategies to handle manage and eventually come to radically accept difficult situations or traumatic events in their lives.
Core Distress Tolerance Skills – Skill #1

![STOPP, TAKE A BREATH, OBSERVE, PULL BACK, PRACTICE WHAT WORKS]

Core Distress Tolerance Skills – Skill #2

TIPP Skills - help make the emotions during a crisis feel more manageable.
- Temperature
- Intense exercise
- Paced Breathing
- Paired Muscle Relaxation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIXQOb4klUw&t=5s

➢ Temperature
During a crisis, our body tends to feel hot. Changing your body temperature by splashing cold water on your face, standing in front of the AC, squeezing an ice cube, or eating/drinking something cold can help cool you down both emotionally and physically.

➢ Intense Exercise
Doing an intense activity to match your feelings can help give an outlet to excess anxious energy. You don’t have to be an Olympian- you can run around the block, do jumping jacks until you are worn out, or run up and down some stairs. Increasing oxygen flow helps decrease stress levels.

➢ Paced Breathing
Slow, deep breathing soothes the nervous system and increases oxygen flow. The key is to breathe out longer than you are breathing in. There are many different breathing techniques and everyone swears that theirs’ is the most effective one- so just pick one that works for you.

➢ Paired Muscle Relaxation
When you tighten a muscle and then allow it to rest, it will be more relaxed than it was before you tightened it. Relaxed muscles require less oxygen, so your heart rate and breathing will naturally slow down. Muscle relaxation also helps with being mindfully aware of your body- which is another big module in DBT.

Core Distress Tolerance Skills – Skill #3

ACCEPTS

Wise Mind ACCEPTS:
Activities – keeping attention on other things
Contributing – taking care of others
Comparisons – to worse situations
Emotions – opposite to what one is feeling
Pushing Away – decrease contact with painful cues
Thoughts – thinking of other things
Sensations – intense other sensations interfere with the physiological component of current negative emotions

DISTRACT
Do something else
Imagine something else
Sense – generate sensations to interrupt your focus on pain
Think about something else
Remember times when things were better
Accept that pain is part of life
Create meanings
Take opposite action. Do the reverse of what you feel or what you are thinking

Core Distress Tolerance Skills – Skill #4
IMPROVE
The IMPROVE skill helps you tolerate distress or frustration without making it worse, and ideally, aims to make it better. It’s important to use when you can’t do anything about the crisis at hand, but might feel helpless, hurt or frustrated because you can’t solve the problem or change the situation. For many people, life itself feels like a constant crisis, so using this skill to get through the feeling and gain confidence is important.

Imagery
Meaning
Prayer
Relaxation
One Thing in the Moment
Vacation
Encouragement

Core Distress Tolerance Skills – Skill #5
PROS AND CON LIST
• Making sensible decisions can be difficult, especially when you're not in Wise Mind.
• Using a pros and cons list can be helpful in weighting out the consequences of your decision.
• It's common to have urges to engage in self-harm behavior or other self-destructive behavior while in emotional crisis.
• Make a pro and con list to decide if you should act on an urge, or tolerate an urge.
• It can be as simple as a few bullet points in your mind or you can dig deep and make a lengthy list on paper.
• Ask in this moment, which behavior is best for you?
• This skill can be useful in fighting impulsive urges and their negative outcomes.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SI6C2Obzgc

Core Distress Tolerance Skills – Skill #6
SELF-SOOTHE  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uIANt2_A8A

Use Body’s Senses
• Sight
• Hearing
• Taste
• Touch
• Smell
• Movement

Use Sensory Tools
• Be mindful of noise sensitivity use ear plugs, headphones
• Be mindful of bright lights, flashing lights; use sunglasses, hat or visor.
• Be mindful of smells – aromas such as deodorant, laundry detergent, perfumes, food, etc.
• Be mindful of tactile sensitivities such as clothing, fabrics, creams/lotions, water, foods, etc.
• Have various fidgets available for the need to touch, self-soothe, and focus.

Core Distress Tolerance Skills – Skill #7
RADICAL ACCEPTANCE  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_795UX9VJ8

Radical - Complete and total Acceptance - Acknowledgement of what is. Accept with your mind, your heart, and your body.
➢ A feeling that a burden has lifted
➢ A feeling of freedom
➢ A feeling you are ready to move on
➢ Radical acceptance transforms suffering into ordinary pain.

Options for painful problems:
➢ Solve the problem
➢ Change how you feel about it
➢ Accept it
➢ Stay miserable

Interpersonal (Relationship) Effectiveness Skills

The ability to interact with others.

The goals of DBT’s interpersonal effectiveness skills are:
➢ Building and maintaining positive relationships.
➢ Learning how to effectively deal with conflict situations.
➢ Learning how to get along with others while also asserting your own needs and wants in the relationship
➢ Learning to balance your own needs and the needs of others while maintaining self-respect and keeping effective relationships with others.
➢ Learning how to self-advocate.
Initial Skills

Boundaries

- Establishing healthy boundaries in a relationship allows both people to feel comfortable and develop positive self-esteem.
- In order to establish boundaries, you need to be clear with the other person who you are, what you want, your beliefs and values, and your limits.
- A lot of times, we tend to focus on adjusting to others, taking time away from focusing on ourselves.
- Setting boundaries for yourself that reflect who you are and who you ultimately want to be will only enhance your relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthy</th>
<th>Unhealthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling responsible for your own happiness</td>
<td>Feeling incomplete without your partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships exist outside of the relationship</td>
<td>Relying on your partner for happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open and honest communication</td>
<td>Game-playing or manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respecting differences in your partner</td>
<td>Jealousy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking honestly what is wanted</td>
<td>Feeling unable to express what is wanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting endings</td>
<td>Unable to let go</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Core Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills – Skill #1

DEAR MAN  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el_O72aTZzE

Describe the current situation
Express your feelings and opinions about the situation
Assert yourself by asking for what you want, or saying “no” clearly
Reinforce or reward the person ahead of time: explain consequences
Mindfully keep your focus on your objectives: Don’t get distracted.
Appear confident and effective: Let them know with your eyes/body you are paying attention
Negotiate: Be willing to give to get

Additional Skills
“i” Statements
I statements tend to:
✓ Place responsibility with you, the speaker
✓ Clarify your position, feelings or opinions
✓ Build trust by giving others information about yourself
✓ Are less threatening

YOU Statements tend to:
✓ Elicit a negative or defensive response
✓ Place blame or put people down
✓ Come off as being accusatory or preachy

Core Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills – Skill #2

Gentle: Be courteous and gentle in your approach; no attacks, threats or judging.
Interested: Listen; be interested in the other person.
Validate: Validate the other person’s feelings, wants, difficulties, and opinions about the situation.
Easy manner: Use a little humor; smile; be calm and comfortable in the conversation.

Core Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills – Skill #3

F A S T
Fair
• Be fair to yourself and others.

Apologies
• Don’t look ashamed.
• No apologizing for being alive, or making a request.
• No apologies for having an opinion or for disagreeing.
Stick to values
- Don’t sell out your integrity.
- Be clear on what you believe is the moral way to act or think.

Truthful
- Don’t lie
- Don’t act helpless
- Don’t exaggerate
- No excuses
- Own it
- No blame

Additional Skills: #1 - Automatic Negative Thoughts - A negative thought that pops into your brain

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Your Inner Critic</th>
<th>wants you to block everyone out of your life, to be a “lone ranger” and to quit when things get tough. He tells you life isn’t fair:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Give up if you don’t get it right the first time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. You aren’t going to succeed so why try?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Don’t ask for help – no one will help you anyway.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. If something goes wrong – blame someone else.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. You deserve to be angry.</td>
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Additional Skills: #2 - Non-Judgmental Thinking

Judging is often a short hand way of stating a preference. “Judgments are spontaneous and often inaccurate interpretations of our environment that influence our thinking and behavior.”

For example, if we judge a piece of clothing as pretty or beautiful we are stating a preference for that thing. If we say it is ugly, then that is short hand for “I don’t prefer that.” The problem is that we sometimes forget that our judgments are not facts, but are only our own preferences and opinions based on our own experiences.

- We can judge ourselves
- We can judge others
- How does this make us feel about ourselves? About others?
- Examples of judgments about ourselves/about others
  - There is a spot on my face so I am ugly
  - I ate too much so I am fat
  - I failed a test so I am stupid
  - I tripped so I am clumsy
  - That person is crying so they are weak
- That person has an opinion that is different than mine so they are stupid
- That person said something I don’t like so they hate me.
- That person did not laugh at my joke so they are mean.
- She is ugly
- She is too fat.
- She as too many children.
- He is too old.
- He is not smart.
- He wears weird clothes.

Forming judgments is a spontaneous process and there are times when we need to make judgments. However, in order to reduce emotional reactivity, it’s important to become aware of your own judgmental thinking and to develop the ability to think non-judgmentally.

**A NONJUDGMENTAL STANCE/NONJUDMENTAL THINKING:**

- This is when we judging something as neither good nor bad.
- Everything simply is as it is.
- Focusing on just the facts.
- Mindfulness teaches individuals to observe and describe their own behavior, which is necessary when any new behavior is being learned, when there is some sort of problem, or a need for change.
- Mindfulness skills are intended to improve an individual’s abilities to observe and describe themselves and their environment non-judgmentally, which enhances the ability to participate in life effectively.

**Exercises in Cultivating a Non-Judgmental Stance**

1. **Focus on Language**

Because it is so difficult to maintain a non-judgmental stance during times of stress and crisis, you may want to identify certain common judgmental words and phrases that trigger you to stop and observe your thinking.

- **Frequently used judgmental words include:**
  - “right,” “wrong,” “fair,” “unfair,” “should,” “shouldn’t,” “stupid,” “lazy,” “wonderful,” “perfect,” “bad,” and “terrible.”
- **Identify your common self-judgments:**
  - I’m bad, stupid, lazy, and weak, not worth it etc.
- **Turn that self-judgment into a nonjudgmental descriptive statement.**
  - When X happens (Describe the situation.)
  - I feel  X (Use a feeling word)
  - **Examples:** “When someone yells at me, I feel helpless and afraid.” Or “When I make a mistake, I feel anxious and ineffective.”
2. **Focus on Breathing.**
   - Bringing your focus to your breathing helps you calm, relax and slow down your thinking. It enables us to get in touch with the present moment and let go of all the thoughts and judgments about the past and future.

3. **OBSERVE - Notice Your Thoughts**
   - Bring your attention to your thoughts and judgments when you are doing simple activities, like eating. Notice the thoughts you have about the food, as you eat it. Don’t try to counter your judgments, just notice that they are there. Notice the fact that you made a judgment and then let it go, rather than acting upon it. Keep it in your thought bubble!

4. **OBSERVE - Notice How Your Thoughts Create Your Emotions**
   - Judgments tend to activate extreme emotions = reactivity.
     - Examples of judgments leading to strong emotional reactivity:
       - You judge that someone has been disrespectful to you. You get angry.
       - You judge that you are a failure. You get upset.
       - You judge that someone is more attractive. You feel jealous.
   - If you want to live a less judgmental and stressful life, you must first become aware of your own automatic thoughts and judgments. Learning to think non-judgmentally takes practice. You have to be aware of when judgmental thinking occurs and practice bringing your attention to just the facts.
     - Example of reactivity:
       - What happened: My housemate is yelling at me in front of my friends about a few dishes I left in the sink.
       - Immediate Thoughts: She is shouting at me because she is angry, and because she thinks I am lazy.
       - Immediate Reaction: Get angry, shout back and the situation gets worse.
     - Example of observing:
       - What happened: My housemate is yelling at me in front of my friends about a few dishes I left in the sink.
       - Mindful Thoughts: She has raised her voice, she is angry, my friends are watching what is happening.
       - Mindful Reaction: Observe that I cannot change the fact that she is angry, and is embarrassing me in front of my friends. (Do not judge her and do not judge yourself. Do not try to figure out or assume why she is acting this way). I am not lazy, despite the fact that she might be trying to make me think I am. I cannot change her opinion of me. I can only change my opinion of myself (Do not react. Do not shout back so the situation does not get any bigger).

5. **Things to Remember:**
   - Do not take on other people’s issues – her anger is not my problem in this situation and therefore I should not allow it to affect my behavior.
   - We can **CHOOSE** the way we think about things, and this affects our emotions.
• Tips:
  o Avoid name calling.
  o Avoid words that put others down such as “ugly, lazy, weird, useless’ (Notice all of these words are negative and therefore judgmental.
  o Don’t panic if you find yourself judging, just observe that you are judging and let it go.
  o Observe, just deal with the facts.

Your Inner Coach wants you to be the best that you can be. Your inner coach helps you by telling you, sometimes life is tough but:

1. Try your best, even if it's new or scary.
2. Lots of adults are here to help you and look after you. Ask if you need help.
3. It is okay to make mistakes.
4. Be a problem solver – try something different if the first way didn’t work.
5. Take responsibility for your mistakes and your victories.
6. Holding onto anger only hurts you in the long run.

#2 Self-Talk

Types of Self-Talk and Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of self-talk</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calming/Relaxing</td>
<td>“Take a deep breath,” “Don’t worry, take your time and slow down.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance Worry</td>
<td>“I hope I don’t do too badly,” “This is too hard.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>“Bend your knees,” “Stop, stop! Balance.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Doubts in Ability</td>
<td>“I can’t do this,” “I’m no good at balancing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivational</td>
<td>“Yes! Come on, let’s go!” “I know I can do it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>“This makes me mad,” “Why do I bother?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>“Don’t think about anything, just concentrate.” “Focus on your feet and find the best position.”</td>
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STO P P SKILL

STOP (the negative thought)

TAKE A BREATH (take a pause)

OBSERVE:

- What am I thinking?
- What am I reacting to?
- What am I feeling in my body?

PULL BACK:

- Look at things a different way.
- See the bigger picture.
- Is this fact or opinion?
- Am I making a smart guess or a wacky guess (an assumption?)
- How would someone else see this?
- Ask someone for a suggestion.

PRACTICE WHAT WORKS

- Think of a new thought!
- Ask yourself: what’s the best thing to do for me?
- Ask yourself: what’s the best thing to do for others?
- Ask yourself: what’s the best thing to do for this situation?

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**
  
  __________________________

- **Result 1**
  
  __________________________

- **Result 2**
  
  __________________________
Getting a Clear Picture: Taking one Step at a Time

1. Notice my breath
2. Check my surroundings
3. Body check
4. Label and rate my feelings
5. Notice my thoughts
6. Notice my urges

0 1 2 3 4 5
Think of one thing at a time

Don’t Judge Yourself
The idea that we are social thinkers everyday whether it is at home or in the community. We should be aware that people around us have thoughts and feelings. It includes sharing a space with others effectively and understanding the perspective and intentions of others.

The idea that the whole body (eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, bottom, and brain) needs to be focused on the group in order to listen and show you are listening.

EXPECTED BEHAVIORS - Understanding that a range of hidden rules exist in every situation and people are responsible for figuring out what those rules are and then following them. By doing so, we keep other people thinking good thoughts about us. Doing what is expected is different based on where we are and who we are with.

UNEXPECTED BEHAVIORS - Failing to follow the set of rules, hidden or stated, in the environment. People who don’t follow the rules are doing what is ‘unexpected’ and people may have “uncomfortable” or ‘weird’ thoughts about them.
What impressions are we making & what are they telling us?

Your eyes are ‘tools’ that help you figure out your environment and what other people might be thinking about. It puts the emphasis on the group members becoming good observers and to use the clues to make smart guesses about what other people might be thinking about. They are encouraged to use this information to adapt their thinking, words, and behavior. Also, if you use your eyes to look at a person, it makes them feel that you are thinking about what they are saying or doing.

YOUR BODY IS IN THE GROUP/YOUR BODY IS OUT OF THE GROUP - When someone’s body is turned into the group and they look like they are working as part of the group. We notice when somebody’s body is not part of the group.

YOUR BRAIN IS IN THE GROUP/YOUR BRAIN IS OUT OF THE GROUP - We notice when somebody’s is in the group and their brain is paying attention. We think that person is doing a really good job participating in the group. We also notice when somebody’s body is in the group, but it does not appear like their brain is part of the group. It does not appear that their brain is thinking about the
BEING A “THINKING OF YOU” PERSON VERSUS A “JUST ME” PERSON - These terms are used to define the difference between cooperating in a group versus just focusing on one’s own needs.

SOCIAL DETECTIVE - Everyone is a social detective. We are good social detectives when we use our eyes, ears, and brains to figure out what others are planning to do next, or what they are presently doing and what they mean by what they say. We use our eyes, ears, brains to figure out people and places.

SMART GUESSES - This is when we use all of our tools to figure things out and then make guesses based on what we know about the world.

WACKY GUESSES - If we forget and don’t think about what we know and see, then we just make a random guess without having any information.

• Think  - using clues in our brain
• Know - what we can prove true
• Guess - smart guess or wacky guess
BIG PROBLEM / LITTLE PROBLEM - Not all problems should get the same emotional reaction. Group members use a rating scale (1-5) to help understand the range of their emotions and behavior. Big problems call for stronger emotions and help. Little problems are called ‘glitches’ and can be worked out by yourself or with one or two others (if you stay flexible).

FLEXIBLE THINKING vs. RIGID THINKING

- Flexible Thinking is a very important social skill.
- The ability to think flexibly:
  - Helps people to get along with others
  - Helps groups to be more effective
  - Helps people solve problems
  - Helps people try new ways of doing things
- Rigid thinking is like having a rock brain, where one follows a rule all the time or cannot see different ways of doing things.
- Rigid thinkers stay stuck in their way and their way only!

FLEXIBLE THINKING - Needed to interpret verbal and nonverbal information based on different points of view or different contexts. This is the opposite of having a rock brain, where one follows a rule all the time or cannot interpret subtle different meanings in language or expression.
Superflex: A Superhero Social Thinking Curriculum by Stephanie Madrigal and Michelle Garcia Winner (2008)
www.socialthinking.com

- This curriculum teaches strategies to outwit and outsmart various social challenges, represented by “Unthinkable” characters.

- It is important clients make the distinction that these characters are:
  - Fictional, (especially for individuals who have difficulty differentiating reality from fantasy).
  - Imaginary – for individuals who can imagine the can have super flexible thinking and will use the strategies in the curriculum to access their own super flexible powers. This is a very different concept then pretending to be a superhero in play.
  - NOT EVIL VILLAINS, which implies that, if an individual is working on defeating these Unthinkables, then there is something wrong or evil about them. They are simply caricatures of thoughts.
  - Clients need to know that defeating an “Unthinkable” is something that happens in their brain and is not a battle with their bodies.
  - Clients need an understanding the difference between thoughts and feelings.
  - Clients need to be familiar with the Social Thinking Vocabulary Terms and Concepts.
  - Clients need to have a set of “go to” calming strategies in place.
  - Thinkables are characters that embody various coping strategies.
THE UNTHINKABLES - Comic characters who try to make people inflexible and have other challenges such as distractions, getting off topic, and stuck on topics. The group member learns how they have Superflexible capacities in their brains that can overcome a Team of Unthinkables.
THE THINKABLES - Comic characters who help to make people flexible and overcome their Unthinkable challenges. Group members learn how they have Super-flexible capacities in their brains that can overcome the Unthinkables. This can be done by stopping their Unthinkable thoughts and calling in Brakesters and the team of Thinkables to help change their thoughts so they can become a Superflex.
My Five Step Superflex Power Plan

**Step #1: Decider**
Stop, decide, and describe your unthinkable

**Step #2: Brakester**
STOP! PAUSE!
Take a breath
Use your wise mind to think about what to do next.

**Step #3: Social Detective**
Observe the situation and the people in it.
What are the facts?
What do you know to be true?

**Step #4: Captain Choice**
and Flex DoBody
Make a Choice
Be Flexible: Do your strategy!

**Step #5: Cranium Coach**
Use self-talk to tell yourself
“I have done well!”
“I can be flexible!”

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**SUPERFLEX’S VERY COOL FIVE-STEP POWER PLAN**
Superflex and his five Power Foes can help you defeat the unthinkable invading your brain!

**POWER 1**
**DECIDER**
Use your step, decide and describe which unthinkable is trying to empower your superflexible thinking. Sometimes (in fact, most of the time) there’s more than one unthinkable. If you’re not sure which unthinkable you’re trying to defeat, ask a supporter, a parent or someone else for help.

**POWER 2**
**SOCIAL DETECTIVE**
Use your eyes, ears and brain to gather all the critical clues to move to the next step.

**POWER 3**
**BRAKESTER**
Use your stop and think about the hidden rules. This will help you figure out the expected behaviors for the situation.

**POWER 4**
**FLEX Do Body**
Use your strategy. Use your flexible thinking to choose the right strategy or strategies from your toolbox to do what’s expected. This helps you carry out your plan to defeat that pesky unthinkable.

**POWER 5**
**CRANIUM COACH**
Use self-talk to tell yourself you’ve done well, using new strategies, or coach yourself to keep trying. Go ahead and identify the yourself “good job” when you use any of the first four powers, even if you weren’t able to completely defeat your unthinkable.
Skills for Grief

- Time
- Stay busy
- Take walks
- Write grief letter
- Listen to music
- Attend ceremonies
- Talk to someone
- It’s okay to not talk about it
- Deep breathing
- See a counselor
- Write down memories
- Create a memory book
- Hobbies
- Prayer/Meditation Self-care
- Be kind to self
- Feelings are ok
- It is ok and normal to cry
- Other ideas:
### DBT CHEAT SHEET

#### BODY SENSATIONS
- TIPP
- Self-Soothe

#### BEHAVIORS
- Opposite Action
- STOP
- Pros/Cons
- Problem Solving
- DEAR MAN/GIVE/FAST

#### DISTRESS TOLERANCE
- "I have the capacity to tolerate my own distress."
- Pros and Cons
  - Temperature
  - Intense physical exertion
  - Paced breathing
  - Paired muscle relaxation
  - Stop what you’re doing
  - Take a breath/pause
  - Observe the situation
  - Proceed mindfully/Effectively
- Activities
- Contributing
- Comparisons
- Emotion Opposites
- Pushing Away
- Thoughts
- Self-soothe with the 5 senses
- Imagery
- Meaning
- Prayer
- Relaxation
- One thing at a time
- Vacation

#### EMOTIONS
- ACCEPTS/Distract
- Mindfulness of Emotions
- Half-Smile/Willing Hands
- Radical Acceptance
- Create Positive Emotions
- Build Mastery

#### THOUGHTS
- Mindfulness of Thoughts
- Check the Facts
- ACCEPTS/Distract
- IMPROVE

#### EMOTION REGULATION
- Identify/label emotions
- Mindfulness of emotions
- Check the Facts
- Behavior Chain Analysis
- Problem Solving
- Opposite Action to Emotion Urges
- Managing Extreme Emotions/Skills Breakdown
  - TIPP, Distract, Self-Soothe, IMPROVE

#### REALITY ACCEPTANCE SKILLS
- Pain + Non-acceptance = Suffering
  - Radical Acceptance
  - Turning the Mind
  - Practice Willingness
  - Half Smile, Willing Hands
  - Notice Willfulness
  - Mindfulness of Current Thoughts

#### COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS
- All or nothing/black and white thinking
- "Should" statements
- Overgeneralizing
- Mental filter
- Disqualifying the positive
- Jumping to conclusions
- Catastrophizing or minimization
- Emotional reasoning
- Labeling
- Personalization

#### INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS
- Describe
- Express
- Assert
- Reinforce
- Mindful
- Appear confident
- Negotiate
- Gentle
- Interested
- Validate
- Easy manner
- Fair
- Apology free
- Stick to values
- Truthfulness

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I'm doing the best I can and I can always do more, work harder and do better.
Modified Dialectical Behavioral Therapy: Interventions to Enhance Emotional Regulation skills and to Decrease Challenging Behaviors in Adults with I/DD

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Bibliography


