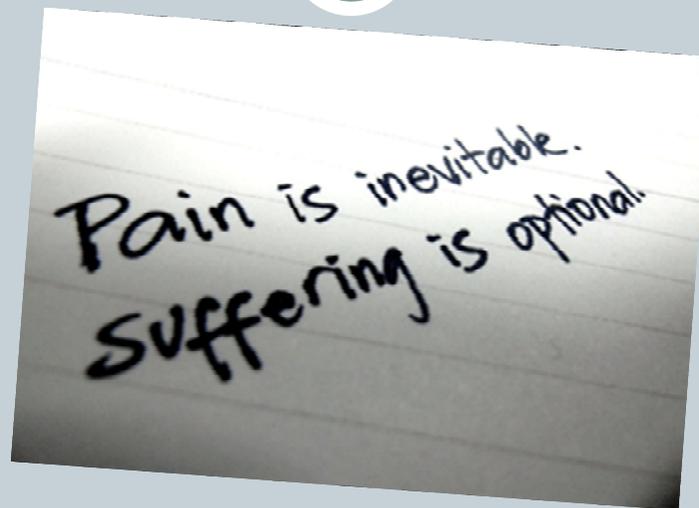




# DBT Fundamentals I: How to Deal with Pain to Avoid Suffering



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# Goals of DBT

## *Goals of DBT*

### ✓ **Decrease**

- ✦ Life-threatening behaviors
- ✦ Therapy-interfering behaviors
- ✦ Quality-of-life interfering behaviors
- ✦ Mindlessness

### ✓ **Increase**

- ✦ Core Mindfulness
- ✦ Distress Tolerance
- ✦ Interpersonal Effectiveness
- ✦ Emotion Regulation

## *What does DBT help with?*

- ✓ **Emotions:** DBT can help you regulate your emotions
- ✓ **Relationships:** DBT can help you get along with people better
- ✓ **Behaviors:** DBT can help you get through painful/hard things without acting out impulsively
- ✓ **Mindfulness:** DBT can teach you to really concentrate on one thing at a time.

# *DBT Assumptions*



- ✓ People are doing the best they can
- ✓ People and children want to improve
- ✓ People need to do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change
- ✓ People cannot fail in DBT
- ✓ People may not have caused all of their own problems, but they have to solve them anyway
- ✓ The lives of group members are painful as they are currently being lived
- ✓ There is no absolute truth



# Main Goal of DBT...



*Create*  
*A LIFE WORTH LIVING...*

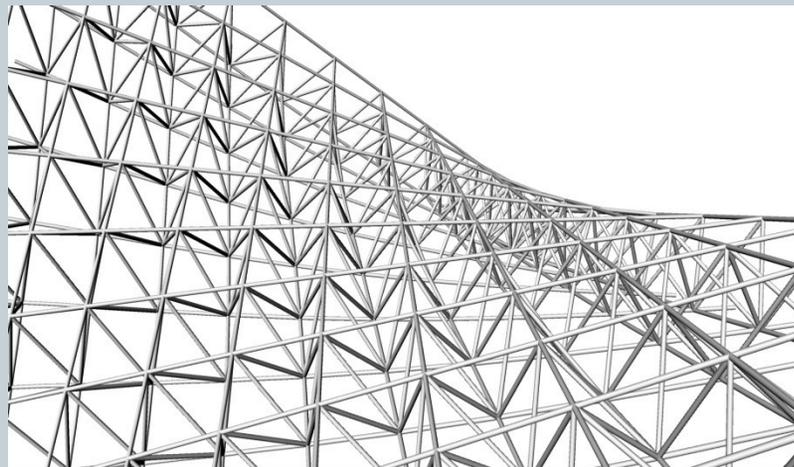
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EJwSHOqIHs>

# Structure of DBT



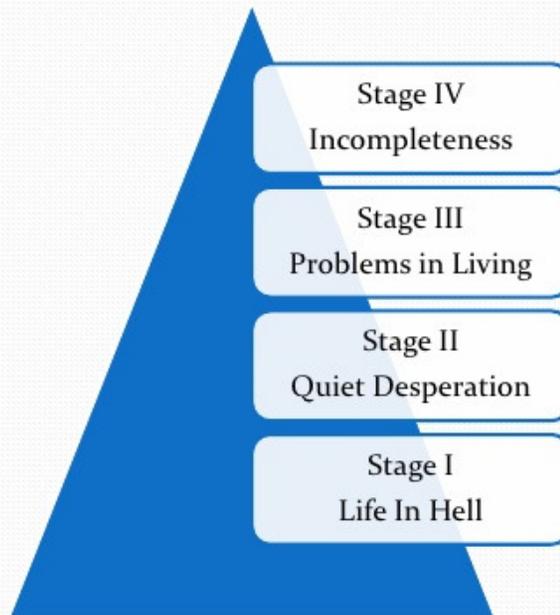
DBT is organized with specific:

- Stages of Treatment
- Targets of Treatment
- Modes of Treatment



# Stages of Treatment

## Stages of Treatment



- Stage I Treatment
  - Life Threatening Behavior
  - Therapy Interfering Behavior
  - Life Interfering Behaviors
- Quiet Desperation
  - Inhibited Grieving
  - Re-Learning to Experience Emotions
- Problems in Living
  - “Ordinary Unhappiness”
- Incompleteness
  - Capacity for Joy (Existential)

# Pre-Treatment Stage

## **Pre-Treatment ‘Stage’ of DBT includes:**

- Orientation to the therapy
- Gaining Commitment to work on suicidal and self-harming behaviors
- Set agreed upon goals for therapy

**Pre-Treatment typically takes 1-2 sessions**



# Stage I:



## Stage I:

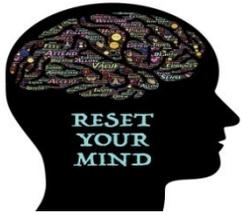
- ✓ Moving from Being Out of Control of One's Behavior to Being in Control (Linehan)
- ✓ Work to develop greater behavioral control with a primary emphasis on the here and now.
- ✓ The treatment focuses on the severe behavioral dysregulation exhibited by the patient.



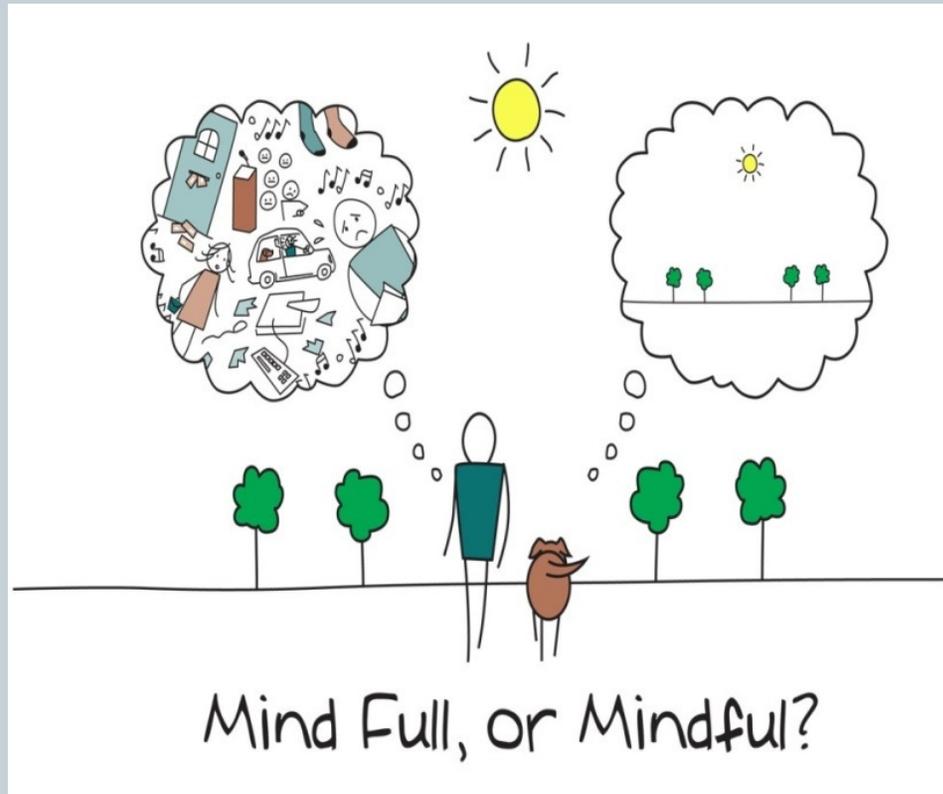
# Stage I Cont...



- ✓ Patients in Stage 1 are typically miserable and their behavior is out of control
  - When patients first start DBT treatment, they often describe their experience of their mental illness as "being in hell."
- ✓ Patients in Stage 1 may be trying to kill themselves, self-harming, using drugs and alcohol, and/or engaging in other types of self-destructive behaviors.
- ✓ The main goal of this stage is to decrease life threatening and other self injurious behaviors.



# Core Mindfulness



# Why Mindfulness?



- The ability to be fully present in the moment without judgment or resistance
- Being more aware of the present moment allows a person to experience:
  - Freedom from suffering
- Research shows that increased mindfulness can help in the following areas:
  - Self-awareness
  - Emotional Reactivity
  - Anger/Stress Management
  - Anxiety/Depression
  - Anxiety/Panic Disorders
  - Insomnia



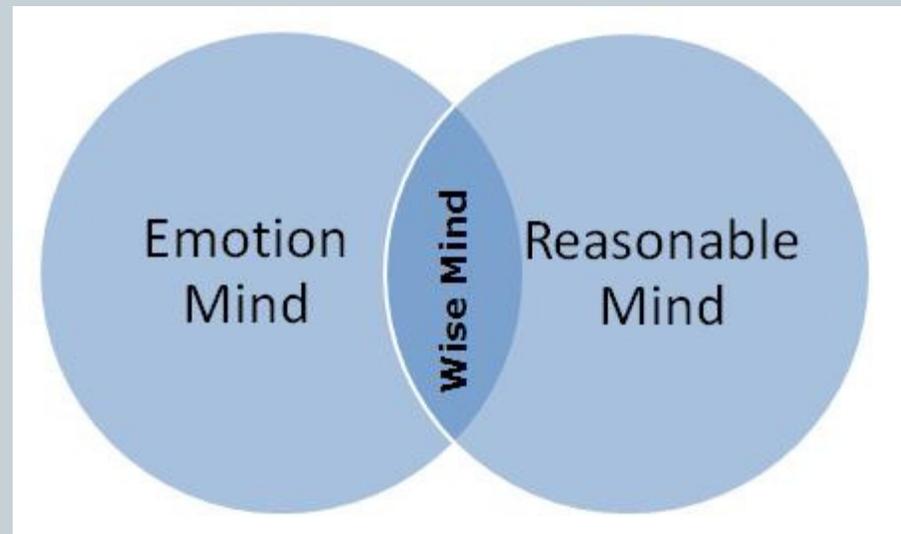
# Core Mindfulness: Three States of Mind



**Emotion Mind**

**Reasonable/Rational Mind**

**Wise Mind**



# Three States of Mind: **Emotion Mind**



- ✓ *Emotion mind* is ruled by feelings and urges
- ✓ When a person is in *Emotion Mind*, their responses are controlled by their emotions and they tend to act on impulses

*Emotion Mind* is not bad and it can be beneficial; we must mediate it with awareness and presence.

-Strazar, 2009

# Three States of Mind: **Emotion Mind**



- When we are controlled by an emotional state, then Emotion Mind takes over. When we impulsively act the way we feel it can lead to out of control and unsafe behavior, which creates chaos, hurt feelings and suffering. When we act on strong emotions, our vision of what is actually happening is blurred and can cause a strong response (stress response: fight/flight/freeze).

# Three States of Mind: Reasonable Mind



- ✓ Facts and logic is the framework to *Reasonable mind*
- ✓ *Reasonable Mind* is important in learning new skills
- ✓ Helps you define a problem and determine a solution
- ✓ *Reasonable Mind* is much easier when you are healthy, strong, and feeling good
- ✓ When you are tired, vulnerable, weak, *Emotion Mind* takes over

# Three States of Mind: **Wise Mind**



- ✓ *Wise mind* is the active integration of emotion mind and reasonable mind
- ✓ Making a decision – thinking it through and LETTING GO
- ✓ Wise mind blends the logic of reasonable mind with the intense emotions of emotion Mind to create a calm state of mind
- ✓ When you can act skillfully and relate what you know to a stressful situation, you are acting in *Wise Mind*
- ✓ As you learn skills, you begin to act intuitively out of *Wise Mind*

# Core Mindfulness Skills

✓ **WHAT SKILLS** (what to do to be mindful)

- Observe
- Describe
- Participate

✓ **HOW SKILLS** (how to remain mindful)

- Non judgmental
- One mindful
- Effectiveness



# Core Mindfulness Skills: **What Skills**



## **Observe:**

- Wordless watching: Just notice the experience in the present moment.
- Observe using all of your senses

## **Describe:**

- Put words on the experience: Label what you observe with words, using only the facts
- Describe only what you observe without interpretations. Stick to the facts!

## **Participate:**

- Throw yourself into the present moment, fully experiencing your feelings



# Core Mindfulness Skills: **How Skills**



## **Nonjudgmental:**

Notice but don't judge. Stick to the observable facts of the situation, using only what is observed with your senses

## **One-Mindfully:**

One-mindfully: Focus your attention on only one thing in this moment

## **Effectively (Do what works):**

Be effective: Focus on what works to achieve your goal





# Distress Tolerance



- ✓ Sometimes emotions become so overwhelming that they cause people to lose control and act impulsively. Dysfunctional behaviors are often uncontrollable responses to emotional pain or attempts to relieve suffering. Dysfunctional behaviors are short-term solutions and can undermine long-term goals.
- ✓ Distress tolerance skills are ways of surviving terrible situations without resorting to dysfunctional behaviors that will make the situation worse. These skills help us experience, tolerate, and accept emotional pain in order to build a life with less suffering and more acceptance of the world as it is.

# Why Bother?



## ✓ **Why Bother Tolerating Painful Feelings and Urges?**

- ✦ Pain is a part of life and can't always be avoided
- ✦ If you can't deal with your pain, you may act impulsively
- ✦ When you act impulsively, you may end up hurting yourself or someone else

# Distress Tolerance Skills



**Distress tolerance contains two sets of skills:**

## **1. Crisis survival strategies**

- ✦ Focusing on pros and cons
- ✦ Self soothing
- ✦ IMPROVE the moment
- ✦ Distract with ACCEPTS
- ✦ TIPP

## **2. Reality acceptance**

- ✦ 2 subsets of skills
  - Basic principles for accepting reality
  - Guidelines for accepting reality



# Crisis Survival Strategies: **Pros & Cons**



- ✓ DBT Pros & Cons are different from the “average” Pros & Cons in that DBT Pros & Cons looks at the Pros & Cons of tolerating distress vs. not tolerating distress. When determining the pros and cons, you are looking at the consequences of potential actions.

## **Key points to keep in mind:**

- ✓ Before an overwhelming urge hits, write out your Pros & Cons and carry them with you
- ✓ When an overwhelming urge hits, Review your PROS and CONS and imagine the positive consequences of resisting the urge. Imagine (and remember past) negative consequences of giving in to crisis urges

# Pros & Cons



	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<b><i>Acting on Crisis Urges</i></b>	Pros of acting on impulsive urges:	Cons of acting on impulses urges:
<b><i>Resisting Crisis Urges</i></b>	Pros of resisting impulsive urges:	Cons of resisting impulsive urges:

# Crisis Survival Strategies: **Self-Soothe**



- ✓ Most of us recognize self-soothe techniques, but many of us have never learned how to effectively self-soothe to make us feel better and to avoid crisis situations from getting worse.
- ✓ These techniques can be used when feeling distressed, when emotions become overwhelming and when you have difficulty managing situations effectively.

# So what is self-soothe in the DBT world?



Self-soothe has to do with comforting, nurturing and being kind to yourself.

Self-soothing deals with all 6 senses:

- 1.Vision:** Doing something that soothes the eyes; looking at beautiful flowers
- 2.Hearing:** Music soothes the mind; Listen to a favorite song
- 3.Smell:** Finding smells that you find soothing; perfume, flowers, cooking, etc.
- 4.Taste:** Peppermint candy, special tea
- 5.Touch:** Very important when it comes to soothing; getting close to someone, put lotions on, feeling clean sheets; pet an animal
- 6.Movement:** Rock yourself gently; stretch; go for a run; do yoga; dance!

# Crisis Survival Strategies: **IMPROVE** the Moment



- ✓ What do you do when everything is going wrong? The world feels like it is literally crushing down around you?
- ✓ We've all been there and it's an awful place to be. Sometimes you just can't change what's going on around you. This skill allows you time when you can step back, separate emotionally, and separate what's actually going on from your thoughts. This is when the tool **IMPROVE** works great! It can help get you centered and allow you to see the situation in a whole different way.

## ✦ **IMPROVE** the moment

- **I**magery
- **M**eaning
- **P**rayer
- **R**elaxation
- **O**ne thing in the moment
- **V**acation
- **E**ncouragement



# IMPROVE the Moment: **I**magery

## **I**magery:

Creating a situation or a scene that is different from the one that you are currently experiencing. Envision in your mind a place that you would like to be...your 'happy' place, a safe place, a relaxing place and let yourself feel that you are in this place.



# **IMPROVE** the Moment: **M**eaning

## **M**eaning:

Finding the meaning in a difficult situation. Making lemonade out of lemons. Very powerful skill to practice!



# IMPROVE the Moment: Prayer

## Prayer:

Praying to your higher power or Wise Mind for the skills to cope with a difficult situation. NOT to fix it.



# IMPROVE the Moment: Relaxation

## Relaxation:

Progressive muscle relaxation, take a bath, massage your muscles, breathe deeply



# IMPROVE the Moment: **O**ne thing in the moment

## **O**ne thing in the moment:

Focus on one thing only. Do not give the difficult situation the power.



# IMPROVE the Moment: *Mini-Vacation*

## **Mini-Vacation:**

Take a break in your mind. Go to the beach, go to your home, anywhere is open to you. It costs no money and has no limits.



# IMPROVE the Moment: **E**ncouragement

## **E**ncouragement:

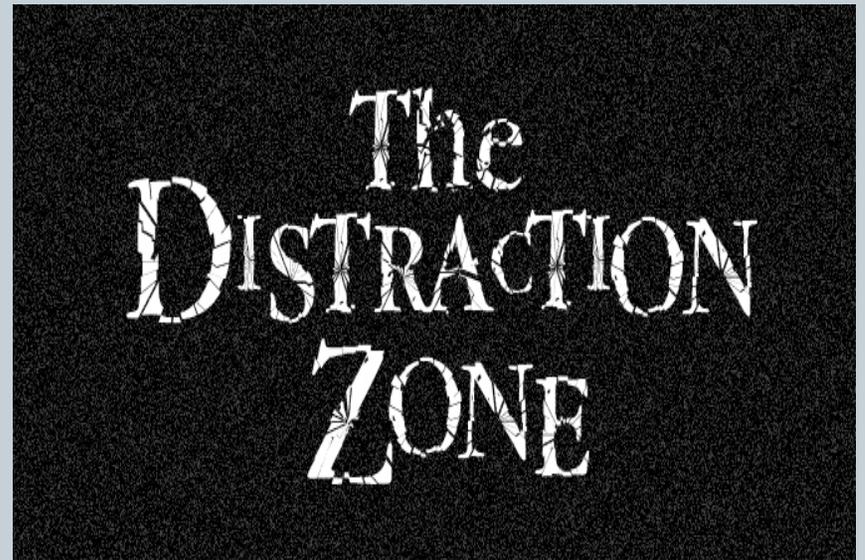
Listen to motivating music, validate your positive qualities, cheerlead you! You deserve it!



## Crisis Survival Strategies: *Distract with **ACCEPTS***

### Distract with *ACCEPTS*

- **A**ctivities
- **C**ontributing
- **C**omparison
- **E**xercise
- **P**ush Away
- **T**houghts
- **S**ensations



## Distract with **ACCEPTS: Activities**

### **Activities:**

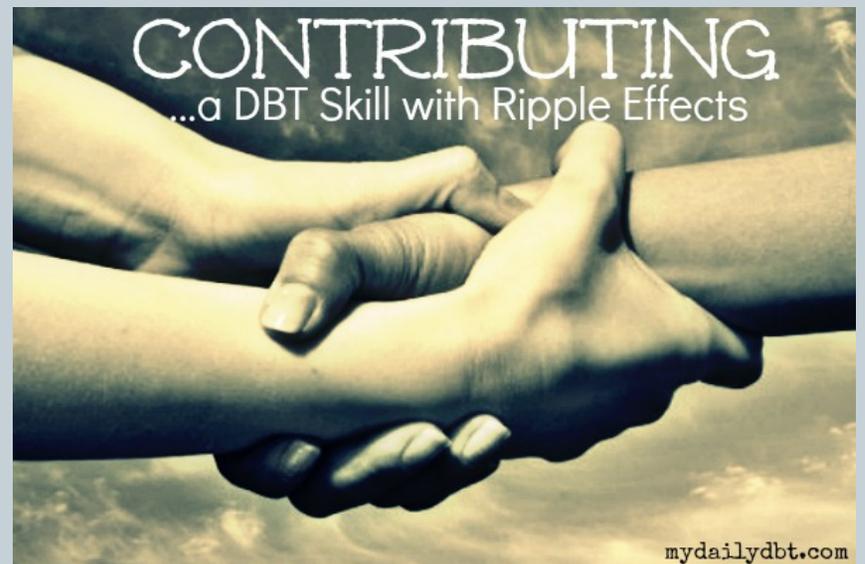
Anything active works here!  
Go for a walk, play games,  
talk or visit a friend, exercise,  
clean, do school work can all  
help you feel better about a  
situation and take your mind  
off of it temporarily.



# Distract with ACCEPTS: **C**ontributing

## **C**ontributing:

Doing kind things for others there is something very healing in making others smile (words or deeds work easily as well.) Kindness towards others creates kindness for ourselves.



# Distract with ACCEPTS: **C**omparison

## **C**omparison:

Compare the current situation to a worse time you've experienced and survived. Compare your current situation to others who have/are surviving worse circumstances.



# Distract with ACCEPTS: **E**motion Switching



## **E**motion Switching:

Anything which changes the emotion your experiencing. Music, Movies, T.V. can be really helpful. Remember to look for shows/songs which are different than what you're feeling.



# Distract with ACCE**P**TS: **P**ush Away

## **P**ush Away:

Push the situation out of mind temporarily. Build a wall between you and situation. Come back to it when your emotions are less intense

When is it a **good** idea to push your feelings and thoughts away?

DBT  
"Pushing  
Away"  
Skill

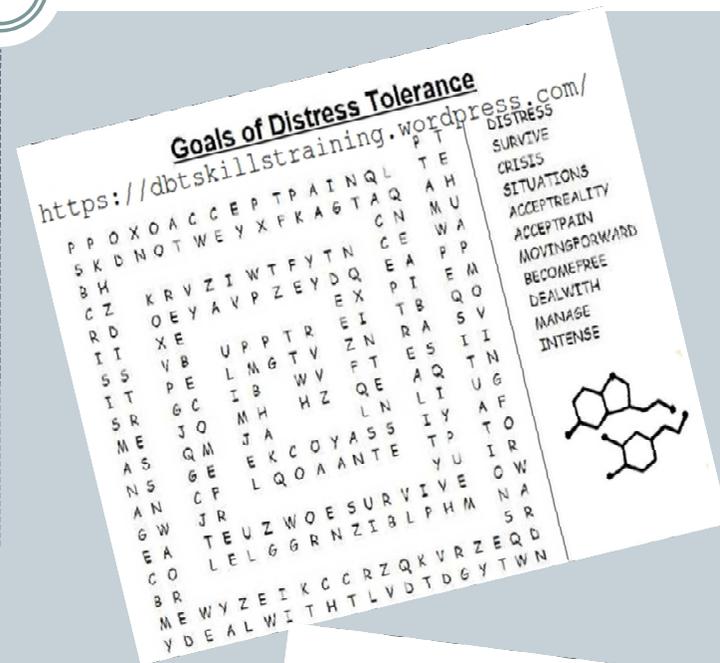


healingfrombpd.org

# Distract with ACCEPTS: Thought Switching

## Thought Switching:

Activate your reasonable mind! Read, do word problems, count, write a story



## Distract with ACCEPTS: **S**ensations

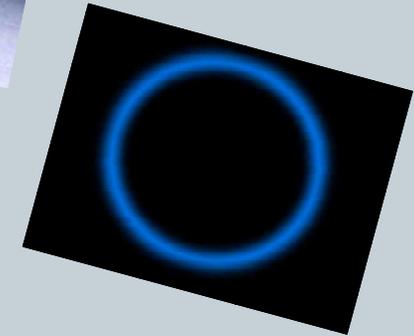
### **S**ensations:

The senses are your friends in this skill. Some scientist list up to 21 senses. For our purposes we will simplify them into 6. Touch, Taste, Hearing, Smell, Vision, and motion. Everyone leans towards one sense over another.



# Crisis Survival Strategies: **TIPP**

**T**-emperature Change  
**I**-ntense Exercise  
**P**-aced Breathing  
**P**-rogressive Muscle  
Relaxation



# Crisis Survival Strategies: **TIPP**



## **TIPP**

**T-emperature Change:** Splash ice cold water on your face and neck. Focus around your eyes. Use a rag in the freezer or an ice cube. If you are chilly afterwards...you win this exercise

- Activates the dive reflex and gets the parasympathetic nervous system to kick in and calm you down (Linenhan, 2011)

**I- ntense exercise:** get your heart rate UP! Dance, jog in place, do push-ups, jump up and down, MOVE! Try 5 minutes of this.

# Crisis Survival Strategies: **TIPP**



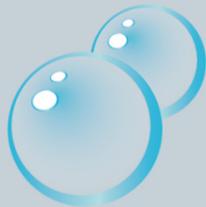
## **TIPP**

**P-aced breathing:** Breathe out longer than you breathe in. Try to see how long you can do each. Oxygen helps your reasonable mind combat emotion mind....like giving Popeye spinach :)

**P-rogressive muscle relaxation:** tighten and release each muscle group. Squeeze your fists. See how many muscle groups you can try this with!

# Crisis Survival Skills

## Creating a Crisis Survival Kit for Home, School or Work



# Distress Tolerance...Reality Acceptance



- ✓ 5 ways of responding when a problem occurs
  1. Solve the problem
  2. Change how you feel about the problem
  3. Accept the problem
  4. Stay miserable
  5. Make it worse
- ✓ Radical acceptance
- ✓ Turning the mind
- ✓ Willingness versus Willfulness
- ✓ Half-Smiling and Willing Hands

# Accepting Reality



## ✓ **Basic principles for accepting reality include:**

- ✦ Radical acceptance
- ✦ Turning the mind
- ✦ Willingness versus Willfulness



## The main difficulties clients have with the skills include:

- Accepting something without necessarily approving of it
- Expecting acceptance to make the pain go away
- Accepting there's a cause for everything even if the cause is not apparent.

# 3 Principles of Radically accepting a situation



## **1) Reality is as it is:**

Accepting reality in the present moment is an important part of building a life worth living. This is incredibly difficult when life is painful because none of us want pain. Through pain is an unavoidable part of life suffering we attached to it is avoidable.

## **2) Everything has a cause:**

Another step toward radical acceptance is remembering that everything has a cause. This idea may be obvious in some situations. Most of us know that a sunburn is caused by staying in the sun too long or that neglecting maintenance leads to major car repairs down the road. But sometimes things in life are so painful and unwanted that it's difficult to see that, they too, have causes. Accepting that everything has a cause even if you don't know what it is can help to reduce the suffering.

## **3) Life can be worth living even if there's pain:**

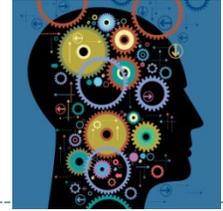
Pain doesn't make life worthless. Often we try to turn from pain is if it will make life better but in fact it does not. It's easier to see that life can be worth living if we live our lives in the present moment. Many of us spend most of our time in the past and future instead of focusing on what's going on right now. This adds the pain of the past and future onto our pain in the present moment which makes things feel heavier than they would be if we lived only in the present.

# Turning the Mind



- ✓ Turning the mind is the second of the three basic principles of accepting reality
- ✓ Choosing to radically accept isn't a single decision but one that you must make again and again
- ✓ To Turn the Mind you must constantly make an active choice to except in a very literal way
- ✓ Remember that Turning the Mind toward acceptance reduces suffering to ordinary pain
- ✓ Think of acceptance like any skill - it gets easier with practice. To practice turning the mind in life means that when you come to a fork in the road, you deliberately choose to accept over and over and over, remembering that acceptance reduces suffering and helps build a life worth living.

# 3 steps for turning the mind



## 1. Notice you're not accepting

- The first step is to notice that you're not accepting.
- Generally the tip off is that you are angry, bitter, or annoyed. You might find yourself engaging in certain thoughts and behaviors or questioning again and again "why me"? Also notice when you find yourself using words like "should have" or "shouldn't have" if so you're judging the situation.

## 2. Make an inner commitment:

- Once you notice that you're not accepting reality as it is in the present moment try to tell yourself that you are going to eventually accept the situation as it is. It can be helpful to literally tell yourself that you're going to turn your mind toward acceptance and then feel yourself make the transition, for even just a moment.

## 3. Do it again:

- The last step is to do it over and over again once you've turned the mind it may bounce right back to unacceptance. You need to walk yourself through the three steps for turning the mind again.

# Willingness vs. Willfulness



Willingness versus willfulness is the third of the three basic principles of accepting reality.

A critical part of learning reality acceptance is being able to distinguish between willingness and willfulness.

# Willingness



## Willingness:

- Willingness is really an attitude toward life. It involves realizing that you are connected to and part of life. When you were willing you were agreeing to be a part of life. You allow the world to be what it is and you make a commitment to active participation in that reality.
  - ✦ *Willingness is not "approval" or "lying down and letting yourself get walked on" but it does require doing what is needed in the current situation or moment.*



# Willfulness



## Willfulness:

- Willfulness is the refusal to accept your connection to life. It involves saying no to life and to reality. When you are willful you impose your will on reality by trying to fix everything or rejecting what is needed in the current situation or moment.

It's like throwing a fit or sitting on your hands when action is called for.



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# Putting it all into practice



**"Pain is inevitable.  
Suffering is optional." -Buddha**

