Eating Disorder Recovery: What does it really look like

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Dialectical Recovery

• Definition of Dialectical: The mind being able to comprehend concepts by understanding and appreciating their polar opposites.

• Dialectical thinking is
  • Being able to think about both sides of the argument
  • Thinking about things both “logically” and “emotionally”
  • Allowing your thoughts to be more “grey” instead of “black or white”

• Dichotomous thinking:
  • Thinking about things only one way, only seeing one side of the argument
  • “Black or white” thinking
  • “All or Nothing” thinking
Fundamentals of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy

• Dialectical Behavioral Therapy is targeted at clients with emotional vulnerability and poor ability to moderate strong emotions.

• Vulnerability:
  • Very high sensitivity to emotional stimuli
  • Very intense response to emotional stimuli
  • A slow return to emotional baseline following emotional stimuli

• 4 fundamentals
  • Distressed Tolerance
  • Mindfulness
  • Emotion Regulation
  • Interpersonal effectiveness skills
4 Tenants of DBT

• Distress Tolerance
  • Radically accepting life, on life’s terms.
  • Mental health is the commitment to reality at all costs.

• Mindfulness
  • Breathing, slowing down, not reacting

• Emotion Regulation
  • We all have emotions, but what degree are you feeling them? Is the degree you are feeling your emotions at appropriate.
  • Validate and listen to all emotions, but also acknowledge that emotions can not run our lives (being mindful and non reactive)

• Interpersonal Relationship Skills
  • Learning how to be authentic, genuine, and connected, validating all your feelings, and still being able to have boundaries with others (it’s hard...we’ll work on it...this is the part of recovery that will take the longest!)
Dialectical Mind

**Wise mind**
Attempts to synthesize and compromise between the logical mind and emotional mind. Uses deepest aspirations to determine the best course.

**Emotional mind**
Uses energy level, feelings, and deep psychological need to guide the individual.

**Logical mind**
Use logic and cause-and-effect reasoning to guide the individual.
So what does having a dialectical recovery mean?

RECOVERY WILL NOT LOOK PERFECT
How is RECOVERY Dialectical?

- How is recovery dialectical?
  - “Having new experiences, choosing new paths that represent a balance of what I need and what I want.”
  - “It is really difficult, but it is the only glimpse of hope I have seen in order to lead an ED free life.”
  - “Eat at least something...it might not be your meal plan but it’s better than nothing. Accepting ups & downs & understanding that you will have downs but it does not mean you have COMPLETELY relapsed.”
  - “Radically Accepting that it is not perfect”
  - “Recovery is about being reasonable. There are things that I will never be able to do with food, and that is okay, but it doesn’t give me an excuse to not eat anything.”
What is the most difficult part of RECOVERY?

• What is the most difficult part of recovery?
  • “Saying what I feel, dedicating personal time for just me, defining and enforcing boundaries”
  • “Doing things I have done before with another approach that isn’t destructive...imagine doing something for 10 straight years and then everyone telling you STOP!, It’s hard and takes time, patience and slip-ups”
  • “Feeling dark emotions.”
  • “Having to process my worse fears and events from my past that my eating disorder helped me bury!”
  • “Forgiving myself after a slip-up and knowing that I have the ability to bounce back.”
  • “Being vulnerable & authentic...and putting myself first”
  • “Stepping down from residential and going into a lower level of care with less support and more environmental triggers”
How to be a Dialectical Supportive Family Member?

- Be supportive, help them with accountability **AND** Respect Boundaries!
- Do research on ways to be helpful **BUT/AND** understand that each individual is different and their eating disorder recovery won’t look the same as a textbook description.
- Be Supportive **BUT/AND** keep REACTIVE comments to yourself
- Attempt to keep “triggers” out of the home **BUT/AND** don’t change your entire life just to keep “triggers” out of the home.
Recovery is about working on yourself.

Everyone struggles and therefore should be working on themselves (including family, friends, therapists etc.).

Goal in Recovery is to discover the “true you” ....community is important .... Keeping boundaries with your community/support group is also important.

What are your values, beliefs and goals in life?

How are your struggles taking you away from those values, beliefs and goals?