

DBT Emotional Regulation

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Hello, and welcome to UHCL Counseling Center's online Dialectical Behavioral Therapy skills group titled "All the Skills".

Dialectical behavioral therapy is an empirical therapy. Dialectical behavioral therapy, or DBT, is influenced by the philosophical perspective of dialectics, which means two things can seem opposite, but both can be true and coexist at the same time. In DBT, the core is to balance acceptance and change. There are sets of acceptance skills as well as change skills. These skills are further divided into four different skill modules. Those modules are mindfulness, emotional regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance. Our hope for these skills modules is to teach you DBT skills to help you live in the moment, develop healthy ways to cope with stress, manage your emotions, and improve your relationship with others. This module, emotion regulation, is to help you manage your emotions. Others for presentation today, please feel free to pause the video, fast forward, or rewind as needed. We may watch this video as many times as you desire.

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Our outline for today's module is as follows and we hope by the end of this you'll be able to better understand the purpose of emotions, reduce vulnerability to your emotions, and even change your emotional responses in certain situations.

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Let's begin with understanding emotions. Why do we have them? There are three main reasons or three main ways to understand emotions.

Motivation and organization. Emotions motivate behavior. There's a way to act with certain emotions that can be hardwired for us. They help us prepare for action. Think of the fight or flight response. They help us save time. We don't have to think through a situation because we can feel it. This is especially beneficial if we're in danger. In fact, strong emotions can help us overcome obstacles in life i.e. Mind over environment. You think of examples where people develop superhuman strength in life saving situations, etcetera.

Our emotions also help communicate and influence individuals around us. For example, our facial expressions are hardwired part of emotions. Those communicate faster than words. If you see someone frowning or see someone scowling, then you typically have an idea of what they might be feeling in that moment. When we want to say something it can be hard to change our feelings about it, and so communicating our emotions can influence other people and help express ourselves better.

And lastly, our emotions provide information for ourselves. It can be self-validating. Emotions give information about what's happening. However, sometimes, extreme emotions are often treated like facts. For example, if I feel incompetent, then I must be incompetent. If I feel guilty about something then I must be. That's not necessarily true but it give us a good start to give us an idea of what's going on in our internal world.

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Describing emotions. Emotions vary in intensity. For example, the feeling of joy can be described as grateful, which is low intensity, or thrilled, which is high intensity. Right now, we're going to go through some different ways to describe emotions.

Words. What words describe the emotion? What words would you put if you had to think of an emotion?

Events. What events prompt the emotion? For example, pick an emotion in your mind. A last time when you felt an intense feeling. Describe what happened, but leave the emotion out of the description. Just recall the events.

Interpretation of those events. How do you interpret the events? What are your thoughts, assumptions, or beliefs of the event that led to the emotion?

Biological changes and experience. What did this feel like for you? Describe how it feels to you through actions, reactions, or your physical or bodily responses.

Expression and actions. How did you communicate it? Describe how others would be able to tell you're feeling this way. For example, how would others look at your facial expressions?

And then after or side effects. What happened as a result of feeling an intense emotion? Describe what happens to you for you after you felt and identified that emotion.

When we've gone through these different steps, ask yourself "Which part of this was the hardest for you?" For example, think of the last time you felt an emotion or an event where you couldn't identify the emotion and then try and use these tools to identify it. We encourage you to do this on your own time or to talk to a therapist about it if you have questions.

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Reducing vulnerability to emotions. That is, how can I have less unpleasant emotions and how can I increase pleasant emotions?

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What makes it hard to regulate our emotions, and how do we reduce that? There were several different areas. One is Biology. Taking care of our health, seeing a doctor, taking medication, etc. Lack of skills can also make it hard to regulate emotions. For example, this question of what am I supposed to do when I feel that way? Hopefully throughout the rest of our modules, both in this one and in the module titled "Distressed Tolerance", you'll have some good skills to know what to do. Reinforcement of emotional behavior can also make it hard to make regulate emotions. For example, the environment can reinforce certain emotional reactions, and it can be hard to use skills when hyperarousal or hypo arousal. That is, it can be hard to regulate our emotions in really intense or really depressing situations. Lastly, emotional myths can make it hard to regulate our emotions. Emotional myths are mistaken beliefs about emotions that get in the way of regulating. For example, there's a myth that having emotions is bad, or weak, and unless emotion should be avoided. In reality, all emotions, even extreme emotions, are a part of who we are and we should continue to feel them and try and regulate.

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Let's talk about changing our emotional responses, that is, how do we check the facts?

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So in checking the facts, what's the emotion I want to change? What's the event prompting my emotion that led to this reaction? What are my interpretations and thoughts or assumptions about the event that led to this emotional reaction? As for example this. Ask yourself, am I assuming a threat? Am I assuming catastrophe? Does my emotion and its intensity fit the facts of the event or situation that led to it?

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Alternatively, one of the most powerful skills to learn from emotional regulation is called opposite action. There are seven steps for opposite action. To begin with, let's identify and name the emotion you want to change. It could be emotion now will check the facts and review the facts of what led to the situation that caused the emotion. Well, identifying describe your action urges. That is, what would you want to do or how would you want to behave if you were feeling that emotion? Well, ask ourselves, is expressing or acting on this emotion effective in a situation, not whether it's right or wrong, but would this make the situation better? Note if the emotion doesn't fit the facts or acting on the emotion would not be effective, then we can continue to use our opposite action skill. We can identify opposite actions to our action urges, essentially doing the opposite thing. For example, if I'm noticing that identifying the emotion of anger, I've reviewed the situation in which I became angry, and I've determined that acting on that anger or those action urges would involve yelling at the other people involved. Perhaps yelling would not improve the situation. I can identify an opposite action to my action urge in this case. Maybe the opposite action would be walking away instead of yelling or calmly speaking to another person. I can then act opposite all the way to my action urges, and I repeat acting opposition to these action urges until the emotional state changes. That is, I can continue to walk away from the situation until I've calmed down or I continue to speak in a calm manner rather than yelling and acting in anger.

Let's continue to discuss opposite action for a moment, because this is such a valuable skill to have. Let's look at several emotions as examples. The first is fear. So opposite action to fear would be doing what you're afraid of doing and doing it over and over and over again until you are no longer afraid. That is, let's consider approaching events places, tasks, activities, or people you're afraid of. Doing things to get yourself a control, a feeling of control or mastery, and when feeling overwhelmed, make a list of small steps or tasks you can do, and then do the first thing on that list. Remember though- All opposite actions should still be effective in the situation. In some instances fear is warranted and we don't want to act on fear that would lead to safety violations.

Let's use another emotion. How about guilt or shame? So, when guilt or shame is justified. That is, we've checked the facts. We can use our opposite action for guilt and shame. Let's repair the transgression, saying you're sorry, apologizing, working to make things better. You can do something nice for the person offended, or for someone else if that's not possible. You can commit to avoiding that mistake in the future, learning from it, accept the consequences of these actions gracefully, and then let them go. Instead of continuing to make the situation worse. When guilt or shame is unjustified, that is, if we check the facts and there's no reason to feel guilt or shame. Then, do what makes you feel guilty or

shamed over and over and over again. This is our opposite action. In this instance, we do want to approach instead of avoiding.

For feelings of sadness or oppression, our opposite action is to get active. That is, to approach, not to avoid. We don't want those feelings of sadness or depression to keep us away from the things that make life worth living. We want to instead do our opposite action by continuing to engage in the behaviors and actions that make us feel confident and self competent; things that continue to give us pleasure.

Lastly, let's talk about anger again and opposite action. We can gently avoid the person you're angry with rather than verbally or physically attacking. We can avoid thinking about them rather than ruminating on the situation. In fact, we can even for opposite action of anger, do something nice rather than mean or attacking. Something nice could involve imagining sympathy or even empathy for the person that's upset us, rather than taking a stance of blame.

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For emotional regulation. In addition to our opposite action skill, we also have basic problem solving skills which are always beneficial for emotional regulation. We can follow this checklist in identifying and describing the problem situation. Again, reviewing the checking all the facts of the situation, how was it objectively? Identify your goal in solving the problem. What would you want to occur? Brainstorm solutions to occur and then choose a solution that fits the goal and is likely to work. From there you want to put the solution into action and then finally evaluate the results of the solution. If the results do not solve the solution we can return back to identifying our goals and then brainstorming and repeat the process as many times as necessary. So to summarize, with module on emotional regulation, you have learned the benefits purposes of emotion in communicating and influencing others, in organizing and motivating your own behavior, and in validating your own experiences. You've learned to use the opposite action skill, to change feelings, as well as basic problem solving to hopefully remedy situations.

Thank you for joining us for this module.