

**EMOTION REGULATION, INTERPERSONAL
EFFECTIVENESS, AND DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILLS
FOR ADOLESCENTS: A TREATMENT MANUAL**

SKILLS HAND-OUTS #1-10

University of Pittsburgh Health Systems

Services for Teens At Risk

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THE FREEZE FRAME: LEARNING TO CONTROL **“UNCONTROLLABLE” EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOR (#1)**

1. Identify a situation in which you lost control of your emotions and/or you behaved in a way that was harmful to yourself and/or others
2. Recall as many details as possible about what happened before, during, and after the problem emotion or behavior.
3. Describe the “who, what, where, and when” of the problem situation; if you have trouble doing this, first try recalling such “irrelevant” details such as the weather; what you were wearing, etc.
4. Focus on the “vulnerability factors” that made you more susceptible to the problem emotions and behaviors (e.g. sleep deprivation, drug use, hunger, physical illness—see the H.E.A.R. M.E. hand-out)
5. As you recall the actual scene/situation where the problem emotion or behavior happened, picture it as if you were viewing a “slow motion instant replay”.
6. As the scene approaches the moment when the problem emotion intensified or the “uncontrollable behavior” happened, “slow time down” so that you can really focus on the details of your experience.
7. When you reach the moment just prior to the problem emotion or behavior, FREEZE THE FRAME and describe your self-talk, thoughts, images, feelings, bodily sensations, and action urges at that moment.
8. Next, ask yourself this question: What needs were you expressing through your emotion or attempting to meet through your behavior, even if the results were negative?
9. What other ways might there have been to take care of these needs?
10. What were the negative consequences for yourself and others, and how can you make amends for these consequences?
11. If you could go back in time and relive this situation, what would you have done differently to help things go better than they did?
12. Replay the situation in your mind so that it has a better outcome— picture yourself using your new knowledge and skills, and imagine how these would have made a difference in how you and others handled the situation.

REMEMBER: “ONCE YOU KNOW YOUR NEEDS, YOU ARE SMARTER. ONCE YOU LEARN NEW TOOLS AND SKILLS FOR HANDLING YOUR NEEDS, YOU ARE MORE POWERFUL”

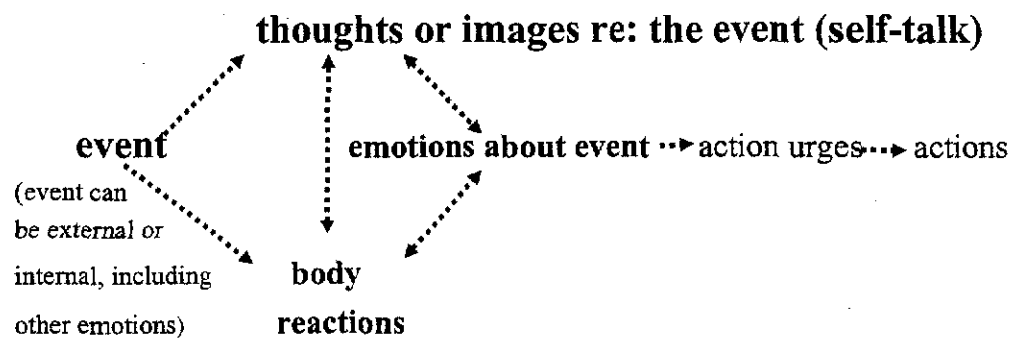
EMOTION REGULATION (#2)

MODEL OF EMOTION

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- The interaction of emotions with thoughts, images, body reactions, & action urges



EMOTION REGULATION (#3)

THREE ASPECTS OF VULNERABILITY TO EMOTION DYSREGULATION

1. A very **FAST** emotional response; it does not take much to get the ball rolling, and the ball gets rolling very rapidly down the hill to the land of dysregulation.
2. A very **BIG** emotional response; emotions are felt and expressed with much intensity, making it difficult to think clearly; when the ball gets rolling down the hill, it quickly becomes a BIG ball—perhaps with jagged edges.
3. A very **SLOW** return to being calm or relaxed; it takes a long time to roll the ball back up the hill; there may have been damage done by the ball as it sped down the hill, so extra distress may have been added to whatever got the ball rolling in the first place.

Until the ball is returned to the top of the hill and order is restored, you are even more sensitive and vulnerable than usual to responding with intense emotion to the next stressor that comes along.

Adapted from Marsha M. Linehan's *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder*. Guilford Press, 1993

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EMOTION REGULATION (#4)

HOW TO REDUCE VULNERABILITY TO NEGATIVE EMOTION: H.E.A.R. M.E.

- H** **health** Take care of your body. See a doctor when necessary. Take prescribed medication.
- E** **xercise** Do some form of exercise every day; try to build up to 20 minutes of sustained exercise.
- A** **void** Stay off non-prescribed drugs like alcohol, pot, and other illegal drugs.
- R** **est** Try to get the amount of sleep that helps you feel good. Try to keep a regular sleep schedule. (see page 2 of this hand-out for sleep suggestions)
- M** **astery** Try to do one thing a day to help yourself feel effective, competent, and in control.
- E** **ating** Do not eat too much or too little. Stay away from foods that make you feel overly emotional. Learn about nutrition and what foods are healthiest for you.

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE SLEEP

1. Establish a regular time for going to bed and getting up in the morning and stick to it even on weekends and during vacations.
2. Use the bed for sleep only, not for reading, watching television or homework; too much time in bed can fragment sleep.
3. Avoid naps during the day.
4. Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol for four to six hours before bedtime. *The first two are stimulants that can make it difficult to sleep. And while alcohol can have a sedating effect at first, it tends to disturb sleep after several hours.*
5. Don't exercise within four to six hours before bedtime. However, working out earlier in the day can actually improve sleep.
6. Avoid fluids just before bedtime so that sleep is not disturbed by the need to use the bathroom.
7. Avoid eating a large meal before bedtime, but a light snack might help sleep. Foods containing tryptophan can also promote sleep (turkey, chicken, yogurt, bananas, warm milk); chamomile non-caffeinated tea can also be soothing.
8. Take a hot bath about an hour and a half before bedtime. The body temperature then begins dropping rapidly, which may help sleep after that time. *(Taking a bath shortly before bed actually increases alertness.)*
9. Do something relaxing in the half hour before bedtime (for example, reading or listening to relaxing music; doing a relaxation exercise or guided imagery, even once you are in bed).
10. Make sure your bed is comfortable and the bedroom is conducive to restful sleep – quiet, at a comfortable temperature, and well ventilated.
11. Do not look at the clock. Obsessing about the time will just make it more difficult to sleep.
12. If you can't fall asleep within 15-20 minutes, get out of bed, go into another room, read or do a quiet activity using dim lighting until you are sleepy again. *(Don't watch TV, which emits too bright a light.)*

EMOTION REGULATION (#5)

MINDFULNESS OF YOUR CURRENT EMOTION

OBSERVE YOUR EMOTION

- NOTE its presence
- Step BACK
- Get UNSTUCK from the emotion

EXPERIENCE YOUR EMOTION

- As a WAVE, coming and going
- Try not to BLOCK the emotion
- Try not to SUPPRESS the emotion
- Don't try to GET RID of the emotion
- Don't PUSH it away
- Don't try to KEEP the emotion around
- Don't HOLD ON to it.
- Don't INTENSIFY it.

REMEMBER: YOU ARE NOT YOUR EMOTION

- Do not necessarily ACT on your emotion
(that is, let destructive ACTION URGES pass)
- Remember times when you have felt DIFFERENT

PRACTICE ACCEPTING YOUR EMOTION

- Do not JUDGE your emotion as wrong, bad, too painful, unfair, embarrassing, etc.
- Do not CRITICIZE yourself for feeling the emotion
- ACCEPT your emotion as it is in the moment

EMOTION REGULATION (#6)

ANGER MANAGEMENT THROUGH OPPOSITE ACTION

- Emotion is strongly influenced by your facial expressions, bodily posture, and actions.
- It is possible to change your experience of an emotion by altering the posture, behavior & facial expressions that go with the emotion. You may be able to slow it down or make it less intense so that you do not behave in a way that makes things worse.
- ANGER, perhaps even more than any other emotion, is strongly affected by facial expression, rate of breathing, muscle tension, and the general urge to take action.
- These physical features are in addition to whatever angry thoughts are fueling the feeling (usually involving “shoulds” and “should nots”, things that do not seem fair, or reactions to feeling embarrassed, put down, or disrespected)

Suggestions for Opposite Actions to Manage Anger:

1. Keep your palms open and arms at your side when inclined to punch or attack; gently touch an object rather than throw it.
2. Whisper when inclined to scream or verbally attack.
3. Breathe deeply and slowly rather than hyperventilating.
4. Do progressive muscle relaxation on tense muscle groups.
5. Relax tense areas of facial expression, such as furrowed eye brows and pursed lips—perhaps closing your eyes and allowing yourself to smile.
6. Let go of thoughts that revolve around “shoulds” and “should nots”; remembering that acceptance is not the same as approval or agreement (see hand-outs on Distress Tolerance).

Adapted from 1) Marsha M Linehan's *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder*. Guilford Press, 1993 and 2) David Wexler's *The Advanced PRISM Workbook*, W.W. Norton & Company, 1993

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INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS (#7)

The Adolescent Assertiveness A.I.D. : An Alternative
to Angry Altercations and Anxious Avoidance

Appreciate

Acknowledge other's perspective

Affirm other's feelings

Accept disagreement

Istatements

Identify feelings

Identify beliefs

Identify wants

Don't criticize

Don't blame or judge others

Don't disconnect

Detective questions

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS (#8)

G. I. V. E. N: Strategies to keep a relationship

(be) GENTLE

(act) INTERESTED

VALIDATE

(use an) EASY MANNER

NEGOTIATE

(be) **Gentle** Be courteous and temperate in your in your approach

No attacks No verbal or physical attacks. No hitting, clenching fists. Express anger directly.

No threats No “manipulative” statements, no hidden threats. No “I’ll kill myself if you..” tolerate a no to requests. Stay in the discussion even if it gets painful. Exit gracefully.

No judging No moralizing. No “If you were a good person, you would..” No “you should..” “You shouldn’t..”

(act) **Interested** LISTEN and be interested in the other person.

Listen to the other person’s point of view, opinion, reasons for saying no, or reasons for making a request of you. Don’t interrupt, talk over, etc. Be sensitive to the person’s desire to have the discussion at a later time. Be patient.

Validate Validate or ACKNOWLEDGE the other person’s feelings, wants, difficulties, and opinions about the situation. Be nonjudgmental out loud: “I can understand how you feel, but..”; “I realize this is hard for you, but..”, “I see that you are busy, and..”

(use an)

Easy Manner Use a little humor. SMILE. Ease the person along. Be light-hearted. Use a “soft sell” over a “hard sell.” Be political.

Negotiate Be willing to GIVE TO GET. Offer and ask for alternative solutions to the problem

DISTRESS TOLERANCE (#9)

PRACTICING ACCEPTANCE

SUFFERING = NOT ACCEPTING PAIN

ACCEPTANCE= 1. LETTING GO OF FIGHTING REALITY
2. TURNING SUFFERING YOU CAN'T COPE
WITH INTO PAIN YOU CAN COPE WITH

ACCEPTANCE ≠ APPROVAL OR AGREEMENT

THREE MYTHS ABOUT ACCEPTANCE:

1. IF YOU REFUSE TO ACCEPT SOMETHING IT WILL MAGICALLY CHANGE
2. IF YOU ACCEPT YOUR PAINFUL EMOTION AND/OR SITUATION, YOU WILL BECOME SOFT OR WEAK AND JUST GIVE UP (OR GIVE IN)
3. IF YOU ACCEPT YOUR PAINFUL SITUATION AND/OR EMOTION, YOU ARE ACCEPTING A LIFE OF PAIN

EXAMPLES OF "ACCEPTANCE SELF-TALK":

1. "I'm doing the best that I can"
2. "I can't do anything for now to change how I feel or to change the situation, so it is better to accept this instead of doing something that could make things worse".
3. "I've survived these types of feelings before, so I can do it again"

DISTRESS TOLERANCE (#10)

SELF-SOOTHING WITH THE FIVE SENSES

- VISION** Watch a sunset; look at a picture or a poster that you like; make one space in a room look special or pretty; look at some pleasant aspect of nature around you; focus on any visual detail of wherever you are, even if the detail is emotionally neutral or bland (e.g. the spots on the wall)
- HEARING** Listen to beautiful or soothing music; sing your favorite soothing song; pay attention to the sounds of nature (e.g. rain, birds, wind); listen to a relaxation tape; focus on an auditory detail of wherever you are, even if the detail is emotionally neutral or bland (e.g. the hum of an air conditioner, the buzz of a fluorescent light bulb).
- SMELL** Put on your favorite perfume, lotion, or cologne; light a scented candle or incense; spray your room with a fragrant air freshener; choose some favorite scented oils; cook or bake food with a soothing smell.
- TASTE** Have a good meal; have a favorite soothing non-alcoholic drink, such as tea or hot chocolate; eat your favorite ice cream or piece of candy; really take the time to taste the things you drink and eat; do so slowly and in moderation.
- TOUCH** Pet your dog or cat; take a soothing bath; brush or braid your hair; hug a friend or family member; notice touch that is soothing-- such as a favorite fabric, stuffed animal or blanket.

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