The Development of an Online Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Skill Building Seminar for Individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder
by
Leah Nielsen

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DEDICATION
For my sister, Stace
My inspiration that continues to inspire

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I would like to acknowledge my two wonderful parents, Susan and Steve, for the unconditional love and support they have provided me with in my life, and throughout my four years in the Behavioural Psychology program. I would also like to acknowledge my close friend, Emily. Our friendship began in the second year of this program, and it has developed into a friendship that I will treasure for a lifetime. I would like to thank all of my friends and family for the love and encouragement that was given throughout this journey.
ABSTRACT

It is estimated that 6% of the general population meet the criteria for borderline personality disorder (BPD), and the prevalence rate is even higher after reviewing other individuals receiving some form of mental health treatment (Grant et al., 2008). 8 to 11% of individuals that participate in outpatient services meet the criteria for the disorder as well (Widiger & Frances, 1989). Since this disorder is associated with intense symptoms such as impulsive behaviours, self-injury, emotion dysregulation, and suicide, it is crucial that mental health professionals provide maximum opportunity for these individuals to receive treatment. Unfortunately, due to a variety of factors, not all individuals are able to receive appropriate intervention.

It was hypothesized that creating an online version of the community group “Managing Powerful Emotions” would be helpful in preparation for a future study. This future study will compare the effectiveness of online dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) to the effectiveness of live group sessions of DBT. The online seminar that was created (E-MPE) focuses on psychoeducation, useful techniques and skill building modules for those who have difficulty in regulating their emotions. This thesis concentrated on the development of the seminar, and not its implementation. This is a major limitation since no evaluation data could be collected to determine the efficacy of the seminar. However, a psychiatry resident is planning to conduct a study that will test this hypothesis. Strengths, limitations, a multilevel challenges section, contributions to the field, and recommendations for the future research are further discussed and explored.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Overview

Many mental health professionals and those in similar fields have often stated that individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) are “difficult” patients to successfully treat (Brassington & Krawitz, 2006). The diagnosis itself is stigmatised and has a negative connotation (Koenigsberg et al., 2000). Clients that meet the criteria for this disorder can be particularly resistant to traditional treatment approaches (Allness & Knoedler, 2003). This population could have this negative reputation due to their unstable and sometimes dramatic symptoms such as significant emotion dysregulation, unstable relationships, and polarized thinking patterns (Coifman, Berenson, Rafaeli & Downey, 2012). According to recent research by Rizvi, Steffel, and Carson-Wong (2012), 75% of individuals with BPD attempt suicide at least once, and 8 to 10% die by suicide, (Black, Blum, Pföhl, & Hale, 2004; Gunderson, 1984; Linehan, Rizvi, Welch, & Page, 2000); this suicide rate is much higher than the general public rate.

Given that individuals with BPD experience symptoms that can negatively affect many aspects of their lives, it is important that maximum treatment opportunities are made available. One treatment that has been shown to be effective with the BPD population is dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) (Gratz, 2007). DBT is an approach that encompasses cognitive-behaviour therapy and mindfulness strategies; it is taught in numerous settings – individual, group, inpatient and outpatient.

Since DBT has been proven to be effective in aiding the BPD population, it is vital that this form of therapy is offered to individuals experiencing the negative symptoms associated with this disorder. Unfortunately, many people who could benefit from intervention are not able to access individual or group therapy. One reason for this would be waiting lists; approximately 1 million individuals are on waiting lists for general publicly funded treatment (Brown, Parker, & Godding, 2002). Having a number of individuals placed on a waiting list creates a need for other ways to provide the crisis survival skills that are offered in a live therapeutic environment. Another reason would be anxiety; it is not uncommon for individuals with BPD to experience trauma that causes symptoms of a number of anxiety disorders, (Van Dijke, Ford, Van der Hart, Van Son, Van der Heijden, & Buhring, 2012). Anxiety has been known to interfere with one’s functioning, including attendance of therapy sessions. Waiting lists and anxiety are just two factors that can hinder an individual from receiving DBT. Therefore, it is important to reach out to those in the population who are not receiving therapy. Providing basic DBT skills online would help bridge the gap for those who cannot access therapy in person, and could possibly even motivate some to attend therapy after having gained some knowledge of the skills and techniques used in therapy.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the present project is to aid a psychiatric resident that is associated with the agency. The resident is planning to conduct a study that specifically compares DBT skills offered online to DBT skills offered in a live group therapy setting. In order to assist the resident
in conducting this study, a template was developed with the online skills group. The template focused on and corresponded with the community group “Managing Powerful Emotions”.

**Hypothesis**

By creating this DBT skills template, it was hypothesized that the psychiatric resident will submit the template online to carry out an important comparison study. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that the template will aid BPD clients without access to live therapy, by teaching them basic DBT skills, and providing them with a layout that corresponds to a live session.
Chapter II: Literature Review

The present literature review focuses on the diagnosis and symptoms of BPD, and how this can affect one’s life. DBT and its effectiveness when working with the BPD population was also examined. Finally, other literature that has utilized online therapy was reviewed, providing a rational for the use of internet-based DBT.

Borderline Personliy Disorder (BPD)

“Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a complex psychiatric disorder characterized by affective instability, interpersonal dysfunction, identity disturbance, impulsivity, and self injury” (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Individuals with BPD have a wide array of complex symptoms, such as their inability to control strong emotions, which can make them vulnerable to the experience of stress (Coifman et al., 2012). The after effect of experiencing stress (i.e. how one reacts to it) is another component as well. Selby and Joiner (2012), state that it is not uncommon for those diagnosed with BPD to display dysregulated behaviours. These behaviours are difficult to manage and have the capability of causing serious harm to the individual. Some common dysregulated behaviours include substance abuse, binging, purging, reckless driving, overspending and self-harm (Selby & Joiner, 2012). Attempts to manage a stressful event or a powerful emotion can generate these kinds of risky or impulsive behaviours (Coifman et al., 2012). Not all individuals with BPD engage in dysregulated behaviours; however, many other components of BPD listed, like unstable relationships and identity disturbance, can negatively affect many aspects of an individual’s life.

Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT)

In recent years, there have been a variety of psychotherapies developed for individuals meeting the criteria of BPD. The most effective treatment for BPD has been shown to be dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT)(Gratz, 2007). Marsha Linehan originally created DBT to attend to suicidal behaviour displayed in women, but it is now successful in treating individuals with BPD. Not only has it been shown to be effective with the BPD population, DBT also has been valuable when treating depressive disorders, eating disorders and substance use disorder (Brassington & Krawitz, 2006).

DBT can also be valuable in treating distressed college students that have suicidal ideation. In a study conducted by Pistorello, Fruzzetti, MacLane, Gallop, and Iverson (2012), 63 college students were involved in an analysis that compared the effectiveness of DBT with an optimized control condition. Each of the participants were seeking services due to their reports on experiencing general issues and suicidal ideation. The authors randomly assigned the participants to two different conditions: a DBT condition, or an Optimized Treatment as Usual (O-TAU) condition. The DBT condition mainly involved skills training, coaching, and group therapy sessions while the O-TAU condition consisted of weekly individual therapy, group supervision and as-needed between sessions (individual and family). Results of this study indicated that reductions in suicidality and frequency of suicidal thoughts occurred in the DBT condition. It was also reported that DBT was considerably better at generating positive results in comparison to the O-TAU condition with regards to depression, suicidality and distress.
displayed in the participants. These findings demonstrate the effectiveness of DBT when treating suicidal, multi-problem college students (Pistrello et al., 2012).

DBT combines cognitive-behavioural therapy techniques, the practice of mindfulness, and an acceptance-based way of thinking (Andión et al. 2012). All of these techniques combined can aid the individual in numerous ways. According to Bedics, Atkins, Comtois, and Linehan (2012), DBT clients are taught different ways to evaluate themselves more appropriately, to better tolerate disapproval and to decrease self-invalidation. The therapy puts emphasis on acceptance and shaping more adaptive behaviours while challenging clients to attain knowledge using problem solving and other skills learned during training (Low, Jones, Duggan, MacLeod, & Power, 2001).

For the purpose of this present paper, the main focus was on the skills/techniques used in DBT. These skills include the modules: Distress Tolerance, Emotion Regulation, Interpersonal Effectiveness and Mindfulness (Rizvi, Steffel, & Carson-Wong, 2012).

Distress Tolerance

The first module in skills training involves teaching clients to tolerate and endure crisis situations when they cannot be changed immediately. BPD clients’ inability to tolerate stress is often linked to avoidance behaviour (Gratz, Rosenthal, Tull, Lejeuz, & Gunderson, 2006). Distress Tolerance has four categories which address ways to cope with bad situations and to counteract avoidance behaviour; they include: distracting, self-soothing, improving the moment, and focusing on the pros and cons. These strategies can help clients effectively manage a distressing moment or short period of time, without making the situation worse.

Emotion Regulation

Individuals with BPD often have difficulty controlling intense emotions. Gratz and Roemer (2008) define emotion dysregulation as “maladaptive ways of responding to emotions (regardless of their intensity/reactivity), including nonaccepting responses, difficulty controlling behaviors in the face of emotional distress, and deficits in the functional use of emotions as information”. The emotion regulation module includes skills that are essential in teaching clients to accept their emotions and to avoid engaging in maladaptive behaviours (i.e. substance use or self-harm) as a way to cope with intense emotions (Gratz et al., 2006). Professionals often use worksheets to encourage clients to better identify not only the emotion that they are experiencing, but also the prompting event that triggered the emotion, their interpretation of the event, and the after effects. The homework surrounding the topic of emotion regulation challenges clients to examine their emotions intently, and to change the behaviours associated with that emotion to more healthy ones.

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Interpersonal effectiveness skills are taught to help individuals better understand social situations, relationships and some of the difficulties they may be having in these areas of their lives. Coifman et al. (2012) state that people who meet the criteria for BPD have been shown to be exceptionally sensitive to rejection from others, and often experience great interpersonal stress as a result. The skills mainly focus on getting clients to prioritize one’s objectives, relationship and self-respect.
Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the core teaching of the Buddhist tradition; its simplicity of being able to relate to experience is often misleading (Germer, Siegel & Fulton, 2005). It mainly involves purposely focusing your attention only in the present. Mindfulness skills taught in DBT groups address some core symptoms of BPD, such as impulsive behaviour and identity confusion. According to Low et al. (2001), teaching clients to be more aware and to be mindful in their experiences reduces dissociative and impulsive behaviours. It helps clients be more present with their surroundings and thoughts, even if they are negative.

Online Therapy/Online Skill-building Groups

Internet use has become a norm in today’s society, and so the use of online therapy and self-help skills are becoming more popular. The reason for this popularity is not solely based on the economical or time efficient advantages, but also on the prevention of barriers individuals face when receiving services.

Internet-based therapy is useful to address a number of different barriers. For one, various health care systems have expanded their accessibility of services by providing telemedicine to different sorts of illnesses, especially for individuals living in pastoral areas (Fernández-Aranda et al, 2009). This aids the obvious geographical barrier for those, for example, who live far away from the agencies that provide the services they need.

Additionally, approximately 1 million people alone are on waiting lists for publicly funded treatment. This statistic does not include a large proportion of other individuals who are in need of professional services, and are not receiving them. It is also noted that individuals choose not to receive services based on other dynamics. Blankers, Koeter, and Schippers (2011) state that numerous factors contribute to individuals not receiving alcohol treatment due to stigmatization, lack of professional availability, insurance costs, or lack of motivation to seek help. All of these factors can also apply to other forms of treatment as well. For example, individuals with BPD often experience anxiety symptoms (Coifman et al., 2012). According to Rector, Kocovski, and Ryder (2006), people with social phobia and anxiety have fears of attending group therapy due to thoughts that support the notion that their own anxiety will have negative effects on the other participants in the group. Clients experiencing social anxiety report fear of feeling apprehension, and thus, make others feel frustrated or uncomfortable (Kocovski & Ryder, 2006). These feelings of anxiety, and the other mentioned factors may hinder the therapy and/or skills building process for many individuals. By focusing on the insufficiently addressed population through providing online skills, it could aid the wide range of individuals that are not receiving services face-to-face.

In a study conducted by Fernández-Aranda et al. (2009), the short-term effectiveness of a Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) program offered online to individuals diagnosed with Bulimia Nervosa (BN) was analyzed. The participants consisted of 62 females, all diagnosed with BN, the purging subtype. The online program corresponded with a CBT self-help manual; it guided the participants through a seven-step psychoeducational model while asking them to work individually for 4 months and to keep in contact with a coach. The outcomes revealed that
patients who went through the internet-based therapy program had “a decrease in the mean number of vomiting episodes” (Fernández-Aranda et al., 2009, p. 38). Results of this study proposes that an online self-help approach can be an effective way to treat BN, especially for those who display less severe symptoms.

The study conducted by Ferandez-Aranda et al. (2009) is an innovative contribution to the literature as it addressed new technologies used to treat this population. It is important to note that 35.5% of the participants had dropped out of treatment during the first 8 weeks subsequent to intervention. The authors predicted this, as they previously mentioned how self-treatments are too demanding to achieve (Fernández-Aranda et al., 2009). This proposes that individuals who display higher persistence along with some emotional stability will have the right amount of attachment with the procedure in order to reach success.

In regards to substance abuse, Blankers et al. (2011) compared the use of internet self-help and online therapy to no treatment for problematic alcohol use. Two hundred five individuals participated in the study. Each participant completed an AUDIT form online that provided researchers with the participants’ final scores and their drinking frequencies, which indicated an unhealthy amount at baseline (Blankers et al., 2011). One intervention was a 4-week daily self-guided treatment program that was automated and interactive. Each participant was provided with feedback on their personal alcohol consumption via visual display (i.e., graphs), and was also provided with psychoeducation and specific skills. The next intervention was very similar, but was more intense as it involved 40-minute chat-therapy sessions and homework assignments. After a 3-month and 6-month follow up, participants showed less alcohol consumption in comparison to baseline. As a whole, researchers discovered that both interventions were effective in reducing alcohol consumption in comparison to no treatment.

Although Blankers et al. (2011) confirmed positive results, it was noted that 70% of participants were involved in the 3-month follow-up assessment, and only 60% at the 6-month. This could be deemed a limitation to the study in that the results were not maintained. Providing researchers with better follow-up results with a higher participant completion rate would be valuable to the internet-based therapy literature.

Summary

In summary, BPD is a multifaceted psychiatric disorder (Hallquist & Pilkonis, 2012) and often requires attention from a variety of health professionals. DBT has been proven to be an efficacious treatment to aid those who meet the criteria (Gratz, 2007). However, due to the numerous factors interfering with individuals receiving any treatment, such as geographical barriers, anxiety, waiting lists, and lack of motivation, it is vital that innovative treatment options are provided.

There is little research that evaluates the effectiveness of internet-based DBT; however, other online approaches have been reviewed and validated as effective in the present literature review. The current thesis focuses on creating a DBT skills template with the intention of submitting them online; this will contribute to and hopefully, extend the literature surrounding the use of online DBT.
Chapter III: Method

Purpose

Individuals who are experiencing intense emotions and have difficulty managing their powerful emotions can benefit from learning practical tools to understand their feelings and exercise control. Unfortunately, due to a variety of factors not all individuals receive treatment. One main factor is limited resources with regards to physical space and staffing. For this reason, individuals are placed on a waiting list to attend the community groups; consequently, this can have negative impacts on the individual.

An electronic version of the agency’s community group “Managing Powerful Emotions” (E-MPE) is a resource that can potentially meet the needs of the clients without having them physically attend treatment in a group setting (See Appendix C). The present project has been created to contribute to a study that will test the effectiveness of E-MPE by comparing the outcomes of participating in this electronic seminar with the outcomes of participating in the community group, “Managing Powerful Emotions” at the agency site. It will also provide agency staff with information regarding a possible new approach in treating clients.

Materials

Materials needed for this template include a computer, or electronic device that has access to an Internet connection. An email is also required for contact purposes.

Participants

This electronic seminar is designed for individuals who experience intense emotions and feel that they do not have the skills to manage their powerful emotions effectively in their everyday life. Participants should be a minimum of sixteen years old, and should show an interest in learning new tools and coping strategies that are outlined in the seminar. Referrals from a health professional are accepted, although many people refer themselves.

Control group: Participants chosen for the control group will be clients attending the community groups at the agency, in a group setting.

Experimental group: Participants chosen for the experimental group will be the individuals who were placed on a waiting list to receive live services at the agency or individuals who requested services from the Personality Disorder Service but were unwilling, or unable to attend groups in person.

Informed Agreement

Before the clients partake in the online sessions, they will first be required to sign an informed agreement form provided by agency staff. This will ensure that clients understand the terms and conditions of the process. It will state that the online sessions are time-limited and a skills development program; since the online sessions are not long-term psychological support, clients must agree to rely on their family doctor or supports from other mental health professionals when participating in the sessions (See Appendix A).
Design

This electronic seminar was created by the author as part of an applied thesis in the Bachelor of Applied Arts in Behavioural Psychology degree program, while on a 14-week field placement. The author took part in a 10-week agency community group, which allowed for note-taking on the delivery and the response from the therapist and clients. The focus of this 10-session electronic seminar developed for the current project highlights psycho-educational and skills building. At the beginning of each week, participants will be presented with information on a topic (i.e., Mindfulness), and then are provided with skills that will help them cope in their everyday life (i.e., Worksheets). After each session, the participant will be assigned homework that they will submit to the facilitator electronically. Contact between the facilitator and client will primarily be via email.

An electronic psycho-educational group would allow individuals the opportunity to learn vital information and skills in managing negative symptoms, without physically attending a community group.

Procedure

The following chart is an outline of each session of the seminar (E-MPE):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Homework Given</th>
<th>Other Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Goals of Emotion Regulation</td>
<td>• Emotion Mindfulness Worksheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Two kinds of Emotional Experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Mindfulness</td>
<td>• Emotion Mindfulness Worksheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Theory of Emotions</td>
<td>• Myths about Emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emotional Awareness Sentence Completion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>• Emotion Dysregulation</td>
<td>• Emotion Regulation Homework Sheet</td>
<td>• An example guide to complete the homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheet was provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Ways to Describe Emotions</td>
<td>• Emotion Regulation Homework Sheet • Notice and Describe Emotions Experienced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>• Steps to Enhance Constructive Emotions • Adult Pleasant Events Schedule</td>
<td>• Emotion Regulation Homework Sheet • Building Pleasant Events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>• Letting go of Emotional Suffering • Dandelion Story</td>
<td>• Being Mindful of your Emotion Homework Sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>• Changing Emotions by Acting Opposite</td>
<td>• Acting Opposite to Current Emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>• Empathy Definition • Empathy Mindfulness • Personal States or Dispositions that Limit an Individual's Ability to Exercise Empathy</td>
<td>• Emotion Regulation Homework Sheet • Empathy Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>• Emotion Regulation Review • Emotion Regulation</td>
<td>• Keep Practicing Skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E-MPE was created for use in a future comparison study. It is anticipated that this study will use a repeated measures design. The participants in both the control group and the experimental group will be administered a “Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale” (DERS) (See Appendix B), pre- and post-intervention. In regards to interpretation, higher scores suggest that the individual has greater difficulty with emotion regulation (Gratz & Roemer, 2004).
Chapter IV: Results

Final Product

The final product of this thesis includes a 10-session electronic seminar (E-MPE) that consists of information on regulating emotions (See Appendix C). DBT skills and specific homework worksheets are distributed throughout the sessions. The topics and homework sheets were chosen based on the literature review, and are in direct accordance with the information and skills taught in the “Managing Powerful Emotions” community group offered at the agency site.

Since E-MPE was created for use in a future study, the seminar could not be evaluated because of timing and research constraints. Therefore, no pre- and post-evaluation measures were recorded.
Chapter V: Discussion

Thesis Summary

This thesis was originally created to assist a psychiatric resident who is associated with the agency. Providing the resident with an electronic version of a DBT skills building group contributes a major component to the future study that will be conducted. Since the creator had opportunity to observe, participate and facilitate the “Managing Powerful Emotions” group with actual clients, it provides the resident with an accurate depiction of what the group entails.

At this time, a few important gaps were identified that inspired the creation of this electronic seminar, and the conduction of a comparison study. First, it was noted that individuals in need of treatment often have barriers that prevent them from receiving treatment. Some barriers include waiting lists (Brown et al., 2002), anxiety (Van Dijke et al., 2012), lack of transportation, and work schedules. Second, although there is literature based on the effectiveness of using CBT online, there is a scarce amount on the effectiveness of the use of DBT online. Therefore, the goal of this thesis was to directly address both of these deficiencies by developing an electronic seminar. It was determined that the seminar would help decrease these gaps by providing clients with at-home treatment, while first testing the effectiveness of the seminar in a comparison study. As well, this thesis would also be of benefit to the agency for training and reference purposes.

Strengths

A major strength to this thesis is that it incorporates materials (i.e., teaching notes and homework sheets) developed not only from the literature, but also from collaboration with the agency staff that have experience in working with a wide range of clients. This is beneficial to include in the seminar since the materials have been deemed effective by the literature, and by experienced therapists.

Another strength of this thesis is the implied accuracy. The creator had great opportunity to observe and take notes on the delivery of the information being taught, as well as the response from numerous clients. By taking notes each session, it allowed the creator to develop an electronic layout that most resembled that of an actual live session.

A final strength involves the transferability of the seminar. Although the intended population for this seminar includes individuals diagnosed with BPD, this seminar could be helpful to a wide range of individuals. It is known that emotion dysregulation is a common symptom in a broad array of psychopathological issues, and is not specific to Axis I and II disorders (Gupta, Rosenthal, Mancini, Cheavens, & Lynch, 2008). Therefore, this kind of treatment could be of benefit to other groups of individuals who experience issues in managing their powerful emotions.

Limitations

Although this electronic seminar has the potential to be valuable to those experiencing
the negative symptoms associated with BPD, there are also obvious limitations. For one, due to time constraints, the study being conducted was not carried out in time; thus, the effectiveness of the electronic seminar was never evaluated. Consequently, no formal method of data collection was used.

Another major limitation is that the electronic seminar is based solely on materials and notes taken from group therapy sessions. Since this seminar is to treat individuals who are unwilling or unable to attend group therapy, E-MPE is lacking important qualities that group therapy offers (i.e. group discussions and feelings of connectedness). There were also certain therapeutic techniques that the author observed but could not include in the seminar due to the online approach. For example, the group leader would begin each session with a mindfulness exercise in which all of the participants would do together, followed by a group reflection. It could be argued that techniques like these enhance the effectiveness of the therapy, and without inclusion of these techniques could be detrimental to the online approach.

As previously mentioned, there is little literature on the effectiveness of using online DBT. Although E-MPE was developed to narrow this gap, the lack of literature could also be deemed a limitation. Perhaps DBT concepts and delivery methods can only be effective when practiced in person, instead of by contact through an electronic device. The lack of literature and experimental studies on this topic limits this thesis in that it was developed on implications.

Multilevel Challenges to Service Implementation

**Client level.** The purpose of developing an electronic seminar is to provide individuals maximum opportunity to learn about emotion dysregulation and to develop new skills to better their lives. Maximum opportunity includes allowing clients to receive treatment from the comfort of their own home. However, receiving treatment online includes requirements that not all individuals can meet. For example, reading, typing, and using email are all requirements that limit the targeted population, and therefore, could have negative effects at the client level.

**Program level.** Implementing treatment at the agency in a group setting can be generally challenging; carrying out treatment electronically poses its own set of challenges. For example, in order for DBT to be effective, staff and clients must be motivated. Unmotivated clients can sometimes change their perspective once entering a group setting, and seeing other participants experience positive results. However, receiving treatment electronically could be challenging in that there is little interaction with others, and more independent work is required. Although receiving treatment in a group setting requires individuals to actively participate and do homework outside of the session, the effort involved in completing an electronic seminar may deter some individuals from completing all 10 sessions.

**Organization Level.** Agencies within the community are often limited in resources. Even though agencies typically offer services provided by a variety of professionals (i.e., psychiatrist, therapists, counsellors, social workers), the staff are often at their capacity with clients in having large caseloads. Standardized online seminars reduce the number of staff needed, as well as the time and effort in delivering the material in a group setting. However, online seminars still require time from a professional facilitator to keep in regular contact electronically with clients, and to give them feedback on their skill building homework. Since
professionals often have a heavy caseload working directly with clients, keeping in regular communication with clients enrolled in the online seminar could result in a lower priority at the organization level. Thus, ensuring that clients receive the best service can sometimes be a challenge.

**Societal Level.** Psychoeducation and skills training can have an impact at a societal level. Generally, the goal of many online seminars is to teach individuals skills in hopes that these skills will generalize to different circumstances, settings, or events. All individuals experience emotions. Learning how to better understand one’s own emotions, and ways to manage negative emotions are skills that have the capacity to better one’s life. The generalization and maintenance of emotion regulation skills can not only aid an individual’s emotional suffering, but also can provide better opportunity for success (i.e., better ability to develop meaningful relationships, increasing professional development goals in the workplace).

**Contribution to the Behavioural Psychology Field**

The field of Behavioural Psychology is based on a behavioural framework and has shown effectiveness in regards to building life skills with a wide range of individuals in a variety of settings. A major component within the Behavioural Psychology Field involves research of empirically based articles in search of the use of “best practices”. This thesis, first and foremost, was designed for the utilization in a future study, and consequently, has the potential to contribute to the literature.

In addition, a major goal that graduates from the Behavioural Psychology program strive for is providing clients with interventions that work to improve their functioning and overall quality of life. This thesis contributes to that goal in providing a different and unique treatment approach. Developing an online seminar that resembles group sessions provided in the local community reaches out to a wider range of individuals that are unable or unwilling to attend the live sessions.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As previously mentioned, this thesis was designed to assist a psychiatry resident in implementing a future study. The purpose of the study will be to test the effectiveness of the electronic seminar, by implementing it to a control and experimental group. Due to time constraints, the author and the resident could not work directly together in the implementation of the seminar, and no outcomes have been concluded thus far. The author still remains in contact with the resident, and is interested in reviewing the results from the planned experiment in the near future.

In addition to the anticipated research, it would be interesting to conduct a different comparison study in which the different kinds of skills in DBT were being compared (i.e., Emotion Regulation Training and Distress Tolerance). Using the electronic and online approach is unique, and may work well for technology-oriented individuals. However, the understanding of which material and skills are effective, and which ones are deemed not effective, would be of great benefit to the agency.
References


Appendix A: Informed Agreement

INFORMED AGREEMENT
Skills-Building Seminar
Electronic-Managing Powerful Emotions (E-MPE)

I, ____________________________, am planning to participate in the skills-building seminar E-MPE offered by the Personality Disorders Service.

Please check each box to confirm you have read, understand, and agree with the following:

☐ The facilitator is required to protect my confidentiality; however, staff is required to report child abuse and sexually-abusive health professionals, even without my consent, and the facilitator may report to others if they think I am at immediate risk of seriously harming myself or others.

☐ The facilitator of the seminar will assume that they have consent to release my information to other health professionals within my circle of care unless I tell them otherwise. (Circle of care may include family physicians, therapists, etc., who you will be asked to identify at the time of registration or at any given time throughout participation, if it is deemed necessary).

☐ The seminar is a time-limited skills development program, not long-term psychological support. I will continue to rely on my family doctor and other supports during and after participating in this group.

☐ I understand that I will benefit most by participating and completing homework for all sessions. If I miss three sessions, I understand I will be asked to no longer participate.

☐ This seminar is designed to teach me new skills for dealing with my emotions and I am aware this kind of program may not be helpful for everyone. If I do not believe this is benefiting me, I may terminate my participation at any time. Similarly, if staff do not believe the seminar is helpful to me, I will be encouraged to find a more appropriate type of treatment.

Participant Signature _________________________

Date _________________________

Witness _________________________
# Appendix B: Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)

Please indicate how often the following statements apply to you by writing the appropriate number from the scale below on the line beside each item:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I am clear about my feelings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I pay attention to how I feel.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) I experience my emotions as overwhelming and out of control.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) I have no idea how I am feeling.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) I have difficulty making sense out of my feelings.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) I am attentive to my feelings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) I know exactly how I am feeling.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8) I care about what I am feeling.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9) I am confused about how I feel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10) When I’m upset, I acknowledge my emotions.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) When I’m upset, I become angry with myself for feeling that way.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) When I’m upset, I become embarrassed for feeling that way.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) When I’m upset, I have difficulty getting work done.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) When I’m upset, I become out of control.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) When I’m upset, I believe that I will remain that way for a long time.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) When I’m upset, I believe that I’ll end up feeling very depressed.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) When I’m upset, I believe that my feelings are valid and important.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) When I’m upset, I have difficulty focusing on other things.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) When I’m upset, I feel out of control.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) When I’m upset, I can still get things done.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) When I’m upset, I feel ashamed with myself for feeling that way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale:
- 1: almost never
- 2: sometimes
- 3: about half the time
- 4: most of the time
- 5: almost always

% of time:
- (0-10%)
- (11-35%)
- (36-65%)
- (66-90%)
- (91-100%)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>almost never</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>about half the time</th>
<th>most of the time</th>
<th>almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(0-10%)</td>
<td>(11-35%)</td>
<td>(36-65%)</td>
<td>(66-90%)</td>
<td>(91-100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22) When I’m upset, I know that I can find a way to eventually feel better.
23) When I’m upset, I feel like I am weak.
24) When I’m upset, I feel like I can remain in control of my behaviors.
25) When I’m upset, I feel guilty for feeling that way.
26) When I’m upset, I have difficulty concentrating.
27) When I’m upset, I have difficulty controlling my behaviors.
28) When I’m upset, I believe that there is nothing I can do to make myself feel better.
29) When I’m upset, I become irritated with myself for feeling that way.
30) When I’m upset, I start to feel very bad about myself.
31) When I’m upset, I believe that wallowing in it is all I can do.
32) When I’m upset, I lose control over my behaviors.
33) When I’m upset, I have difficulty thinking about anything else.
34) When I’m upset, I take time to figure out what I’m really feeling.
35) When I’m upset, it takes me a long time to feel better.
36) When I’m upset, my emotions feel overwhelming.
Appendix C: Electronic – Managing Powerful Emotions (E-MPE)

Are you interested in a skills training program intended to help you better regulate your emotions?

The Electronic Managing Powerful Emotions seminar may be appropriate for you.

**E-MPE**

This 10 session electronic program will help you:

- Identify and label your emotions
- Understand the purpose of your emotions
- Recognize what activates and intensifies your emotions
- Understand the relationship between emotions and behaviour

This seminar contains materials gathered from the Personality Disorder Service, and all notes were taken from staff at the agency during the Managing Powerful Emotions community group.
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SESSION ONE

This is the first session of Managing Powerful Emotions.

To begin, I want you to ask yourself:

Do you think that some feelings are better than other?

It is very common for people to think that anger or sadness, for example are “bad” feelings.

However, these emotions themselves are not bad; it is how we react and what we do with the emotion that is important. Each emotion we feel gives us information, and the goal is to understand the purpose of our emotions... not to get rid of them.

Let’s go over other main GOALS of emotion regulation training:

1. To understand your emotions
   • Identify (observe and describe) emotion.
   • Understand what purpose emotions have for you.

2. To decrease your emotional vulnerability
   • Reduce negative vulnerability (vulnerability to emotion mind).
   • Increase certain positive emotions (those that make you feel confident and in control).

3. To decrease emotional suffering
   • Let go of painful emotions by using mindfulness.
     • Change painful emotions through acting opposite.

4. To increase empathy and emotional attachment
   • Increase mindfulness of empathy.
     • Understand and decrease barriers that interfere with empathy.
     • Increasing empathetic behaviours and emotional attachment.
Does this sound like this skills program will be helpful for you?

Since this is course is learning to manage your powerful emotions, it is important to learn about the two kinds of emotional experiences:

1. The first kind primarily involves reactions to events outside of ourselves, so things that happen in the environment.

   For example:

   - being angry at someone for criticizing
   - feeling happy that a loved one is coming to visit
   - being surprised that it’s a nice day when rain was predicted
   - losing a game

2. The second kind primarily involves reactions to our own thoughts and feelings.

   For example:

   - Guilt about feeling angry
   - Anger at being unable to remember something
   - Shame at not doing well on a task
   - Pride at winning a race

The two kinds of emotional experiences also often relate to whether an emotion is considered a primary emotion or a secondary emotion.

- **Primary Emotions** - the initial emotion that you feel from something that happened in your environment.
- **Secondary Emotions** - the emotion that you feel as a result of the primary emotion.

For example: feeling shame because you got angry.

*In this example: anger is the primary emotion, and shame is the secondary emotion.*

A person can get angry for being angry, or depressed for being depressed, or angry for feeling fear. In these three cases, anger, depression, and anger are the secondary emotions.
Neither the primary nor the secondary emotions are good or bad, but to get back to the original problem and work on solving it, it is necessary to deal with the primary emotions.

At the end of each session, a homework sheet will be assigned that will be reviewed at the beginning of next session.

**HOMEWORK**

Listed below is an “Emotion Mindfulness” worksheet.

During the next week, try and notice any strong emotion that you experience.

Record the emotion on the worksheet.

When recording the situation, your thoughts before, during and after - try to be as SPECIFIC as possible.

---

**EMOTION MINDFULNESS**

Fill out the sections listed below by describing what you observed about yourself in relation to a particularly strong emotional experience.

- **The Emotion I Experienced:**

---

- **The Situation or Context in Which the Emotion Occurred:** (What Started it, What was Going on...)

---
What My Thoughts Were – Before, During and After the Emotional Experience:

The Effect of the Emotion and My Thoughts on My Behaviour:
SESSION TWO

Let’s start this session by reviewing the material from the first session:

What are the two kinds of emotional experiences?

______________________________________________________________________________

In general, how did you find completing the “Emotion Mindfulness” worksheet for homework?

______________________________________________________________________________

Were you able to pinpoint what your thoughts were before, during and after you experienced your emotional response?

______________________________________________________________________________

During this session, we will be discussing “Mindfulness”.

Do you have any previous experience with Mindfulness? If so, what are your thoughts on the experiences you have had?

______________________________________________________________________________

If you have no previous experience with Mindfulness, this is an introduction:

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. -Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1990.

You may be thinking “how do I accomplish being mindful?”

Mindfulness =

Focused attention + An interested, Non-judgmental attitude
Focused attention:

- On immediate experience, in the present moment
- Return to the present when the mind wanders
- It means bringing your awareness to the present moment and keeping it there. This is sustained attention. This leads to feeling very alert to the here-and-now.
- The mind likes to wander a lot. So, to sustain your attention you will need to be able to switch your attention back to the present when it wanders away.
- When your mind wanders during mindfulness exercises, notice that it has gone somewhere else, notice where it has gone, and then gently return your attention back to the present.
- With practice, you will become more aware of what goes on in your mind and can relate to your thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations in a different way.
- You may learn to step back from them and start to see them as experiences that you have, rather than "who you are."

An interested, non-judgmental attitude:

- Observe experience with openness and acceptance
- Notice and let go of judgments
- Being mindful is observing your experience in the present moment with openness, acceptance, and interest.
- This means being nonjudgmental about what you experience.
- Notice it, and acknowledge it, but don't judge it.
• If you find yourself judging, accept that you are judging without giving yourself a hard time. Then gently return your attention to the present.

Mindfulness sounds easy enough, but is actually very challenging and requires a lot of practice. As humans, it is very natural to have thoughts throughout the day that are not focused in the present.

For example: Let’s say that you are washing the dishes. While washing the dishes, you notice that you’re having worried thoughts about the upcoming weekend, or perhaps you are ruminating about an event that happened at work that upset you.

In this example, mindfulness can help you stay focused on the present so you are not feeling upset as a result of your worried thoughts.

Focusing your attention on how the water feels on your hands, the texture of each dish you wash, the temperature of the water etc. will help you stay in the “here and now”.

Mindfulness also involves being non-judgmental:

BEING NON-JUDGMENTAL:

Judging is evaluating something as good or bad, as valuable or not, as worthwhile or worthless. Not judging in this way is central to mindfulness. There are many ways to be judgmental.

Judging can be a shorthand way of

• Describing consequences: Instead of describing consequences, you might label something as good or bad. Saying "Mindfulness is bad" may be a way of saying, "When I practice mindfulness, I can't be (hyper)vigilant to everything and I feel scared." Or, "When I'm being mindful I'm aware of tension in my body and I don't like that feeling."

• Comparing things to a standard: Saying that mindfulness is useless may mean that it is not like relaxation or other focusing techniques.

• Stating a preference: Saying that a mindfulness exercise is "terrible" usually just means that it wasn't to your liking. The problem is that, over time, people forget that it's a judgment and take it as a statement of fact. This type of judging can make others feel that if they don't agree, they are wrong.
Judging can be a way to avoid taking responsibility

- If you don't like what someone is doing, saying what they're doing is "bad" may be avoiding the real reason you want them to stop. The real reason may be that you don't agree with them, don't believe in it, or don't want the consequences. Perhaps they're hurting your feelings. Judging is a way to avoid owning and expressing your feelings.

There is a difference between a statement of fact and a judgment. Saying, "My mind keeps wandering" may simply be a statement of fact. But if you think, or suggest by your tone of voice, that a wandering mind is bad, or wrong, then you are judging.

*Much like the previous session, an “Emotion Mindfulness” worksheet is listed below.*

**HOMEWORK**

*For homework, try and notice any strong emotion that you experience.*

*Record the emotion on the worksheet.*

*THIS TIME, try and use mindfulness throughout the week, and when filling out your homework sheet.*

*Specifically in the last section of the worksheet, record what you did mindfully to help regulate or cope with your emotion.*

*Be specific when recording what you did, and also write about if you experienced any difficulty with being mindful.*
EMOTION MINDFULNESS

Fill out the sections listed below by describing what you observed about yourself in relation to a particularly strong emotional experience.

☐ The Emotion I Experienced:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

☐ The Situation or Context in Which the Emotion Occurred: (What Started it, What was Going on…)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

☐ What My Thoughts Were – Before, During and After the Emotional Experience:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
The Effect of the Emotion and My Thoughts on My Behaviour:
The Skills I could Use to Help Regulate this Emotion?
SESSION THREE

Overall, how did your homework go from session two?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Did you notice any differences from your first Emotion Mindfulness worksheet compared to the second one you completed?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Did you have any difficulties in being mindful (i.e. wandering thoughts or being judgmental)?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Was mindfulness helpful to you at some point during the week, if so, under what circumstance?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

When completing your homework, did you have any trouble with naming the emotion that you are experiencing?

Sometimes, our emotions can be so intense and powerful, that we can’t even put a name to the emotion.

During this session, we will touch on the theory of emotion as well as the 6 basic emotions.

THEORY OF EMOTIONS

There is a wide range of emotions that one can feel, however we will focus on six primary emotions, which are:

1. Anger
2. Sadness
3. Happiness
4. Surprise
5. Fear
6. Disgust

Everyone is born with the potential or biological readiness for these emotions. All other ones are learned or are a combination of the basic emotions.

Emotions are complex and involve many components.

1. Emotions come and go. They are like waves in the sea. Most emotions only last from seconds to minutes.

Can you tell when an emotion comes and/or goes? Have you ever noticed how long your emotions last? Are some emotions easier to detect than others? If so, which ones and why?

2. Emotions are self-perpetuating. Once an emotion starts, it keeps restarting itself. When an emotion seems to stay around, it is called a “mood”.

What are some things that we do to “restart” an emotion?
Some examples of how one “restarts” an emotion could be:

- **Telling a friend about it** (venting to a friend can sometimes be helpful, but it can also have a different effect. It can be potentially harmful if you experience that same emotion when speaking about it)

- **Rumination** (thinking about a past or future event or situation that triggers a strong emotional reaction can restart an emotion)

Do you have any questions so far about the six different emotions or restarting emotions?

This next section will focus on emotional awareness. As previously stated, putting a name to how you are feeling can sometimes be a challenge.

Try filling out this next worksheet to help you become more aware of yourself, and your emotions. Write down things that you do, the people that are involved, the thoughts you may have etc. and try to be specific:
EMOTIONAL AWARENESS SENTENCE COMPLETION

The following sentences or statements all relate to feelings or emotions. Please complete the sentences as to how it relates to you.

1. I know I feel happy when....

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

2. When I am pleased with myself, I tend to....

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

3. I know I feel sad when....

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

4. When I feel lonely, I tend to....

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

5. When someone criticizes me, I feel....

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

6. When I hurt someone, I feel....

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

7. Life seems most painful when....
8. Life seems most promising when....

9. One of the ways I contribute to my own frustration is....

10. When someone shows kindness to me I feel....

11. One of the ways I make it difficult for people to care about me is to....

12. Sometimes when I am angry, I will....

13. Sometimes when I'm hurt, I will....

14. Sometimes when I'm afraid, I will....

15. The feeling or emotion I like experiencing the most is....
16. The feeling or emotion I dislike experiencing the most is....

17. I avoid my feelings by....

18. I deny my feelings by....

19. If I allowed people to really know me, I would feel....

20. When I show parts of me I don't like, I feel....

21. If someone tells me they care about me, I feel....

Some find this worksheet to be a challenge, while others have no difficulty in completing this emotional awareness worksheet. Regardless, this has been assigned because we can learn to recognize and manage our feelings by how we react (what behaviours we engage in).
Did anything surprise you when completing this worksheet? If so, what?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Now that we have a greater awareness of our emotions, we should discuss how there are common myths about emotions in our society.

One myth example could be “Emotions are really stupid”. Of course, many know that is false. However you may feel that it is true sometimes when you are experiencing an intense emotion.

All emotions are there for a reason; they give us important information each day.

Read through the worksheet below that contains myths about emotions.

**HOMEWORK**
For homework, you are to challenge these myths using one sentence.
For instance:
Myth: “Emotions are really stupid”,
Challenge: “Emotions are there for a reason” or “Everyone has emotions”.

**WEEK 3**

**MYTHS ABOUT EMOTIONS**

1. There is a right way to feel in every situation.

CHALLENGE: ________________________________

2. Letting others know that I am feeling bad is weakness.

CHALLENGE: ________________________________
3. Negative feelings are bad and destructive.

CHALLENGE: _________________________________________________________

4. Being emotional means being out of control.

CHALLENGE: _________________________________________________________

5. Emotions can just happen for no reason.

CHALLENGE: _________________________________________________________

6. Some emotions are really stupid.

CHALLENGE: _________________________________________________________

7. All painful emotions are a result of a bad attitude.

CHALLENGE: _________________________________________________________

8. If others don’t approve of my feelings, I obviously shouldn’t feel the way I do.

CHALLENGE: _________________________________________________________

9. Other people are the best judge of how I am feeling.

CHALLENGE: _________________________________________________________
10. Painful emotions are not really important and should be ignored.

CHALLENGE: ____________________________________________________________

SESSION 4

How did your homework go from the previous session?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

Was coming up with challenges to any of the myths a difficult for you?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

Did you believe any of the myths? If so, which one(s)?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

During this session, we will be discussing something called Emotion Dysregulation.

You may or may not be familiar with this term, but to break it down:

**Emotional Vulnerability + Invalidating Environment = Emotion Dysregulation**

Individuals who experience emotion dysregulation often do not understand why they cannot tolerate certain emotions, and how their lives became so disrupted.
What do you think Emotional Vulnerability is?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

What about an Invalidating Environment?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Emotional Vulnerability:
Biological reasons for this could range from genetic influences, problems while in the uterus, to early childhood environmental effects on development of the brain and nervous system.

Characteristics of Emotional Vulnerability:
1. Emotional sensitivity (to a wide range of stimuli)
2. Emotional intensity (is high)
3. Slow return to baseline (long-lasting reactions)

Characteristics of the Invalidating Environment
1. The expression of private experiences, that is, how the child thinks, feels and understands the world - are not validated - instead they are often punished or trivialized.
2. When the child tries to interpret her own behaviour - including her motivation or intention - it is dismissed.
3. This sends the message that she is wrong about her description and understanding of her own experience - particularly about what is causing her emotions, beliefs or actions.
4. The child’s receives the message that there is something wrong with her.

To elaborate on invalidation, it basically means that a person’s feelings are being attacked or questioned. The effect of invalidation is that the individual feels as though their feelings are “wrong”.

Resulting Emotion Dysregulation
Usually invalidating environments have little tolerance for negative emotions (anger, sadness, fear, shame). The child is taught to control emotional expressiveness (i.e., not be a needy child) and limit demands on others. So, the child quickly learns that she suffers less if she “controls” her emotions and doesn’t ask for anything from the environment.
Effects of Invalidation:

1. Rigid, primitive beliefs about self and others develop (e.g., all/none).
2. Problems regulating emotions leads to feeling out of control and impulsive behaviours.
3. The child doesn’t learn to tolerate distress or to form realistic expectations or goals.
4. When a child doesn’t trust her own emotional and cognitive responses, she tends to rely on others to see how she “should” react and to define reality.
5. Extreme emotional displays become necessary to get a response from the environment.

Do you have any general or specific questions after going through those concepts?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Now that we have touched on important concepts of Emotion Dysregulation, let’s discuss tools that will assist us in regulating emotions.

Emotion Regulation worksheets are designed to break down a specific event, or circumstance that has caused or is causing you to experience intense emotions.

For example, have you ever felt overwhelming anger towards a family member or a friend over a minor event? Have you ever felt like your reaction or emotions do not match a particular situation?

An Emotion Regulation sheet will give you information about your thoughts, feelings and behaviours that you may not be even aware of.

Below, you will find a “Guide to Emotion Regulation Sheet” that will give you a description into filling out each section of the worksheet.
GUIDE TO EMOTION REGULATION HOMEWORK SHEET
Observing and Describing Emotions

NAME: ___________________________ DATE: ___________________________

Select a current or recent emotional reaction and fill out as much of this sheet as you can. If the prompting event for the emotion you are working on is another emotion that occurred first (for example, feeling afraid prompted getting angry at yourself), then fill out a second homework sheet for that first emotion. Write on a separate page if you need more room.

EMOTION NAMES (anger, sadness, fear, joy, guilt/shame) INTENSITY (0-100): ______________

PROMPTING EVENT for my emotion: (who, what, when, where) What started the emotion?
Be as specific as possible and use the first person (I, me, my). What was said or done? Was there a look, action or gesture? Try to narrow it down to the moment that prompted your emotional reaction. With practice, you’ll be able to quickly name the prompting event. You can also use Emotion Sheets prior to events (e.g., family holidays) to help prepare for situations that could be difficult.

INTERPRETATIONS (beliefs, assumptions, appraisals) of the situation?
When the event occurred, what thoughts went through your mind - even those you would never admit to aloud? Try not to censure yourself, even if you think you are over-reacting. What did you imagine the person was thinking of you? Why do you think they said or did that? You don’t actually know what was in their mind, but what were your assumptions or beliefs? What would it mean if what you thought was really true? How do these beliefs relate to your ability to survive now, or in the past?

BODY CHANGES and SENSING: What am I feeling in my body?
People cut off any feelings in their bodies to control any unwonted emotional arousal. Emotions are full system responses, that is, all systems are responding when there is a strong emotional reaction. The mind/body connection is vital to tolerating and managing what one feels.

Breathing - fast, slow, deep, shallow
Heartbeat - racing, slow, pounding, faint
Jaw - clenched, slack
Hands - cold, clammy, sweaty, shaky
Skin - tingling, goose bumps, crawling...
Stomach - cramped, rolling, like a kick in...

Muscles (shoulder, neck, back, hands)- tight, limp, heavy
Throat - dry, tight, hard to swallow
Presence - spaced out, jumpy, drowsy, alert
Head - dizzy, achy, spinning
Eyes/eyesight - sore, blurry, extra sharp
Hearing - dull, pounding, noisy
BODY LANGUAGE: What is my facial expression? posture? gestures?

What would other people see if they were looking at you. Were you standing still or pacing? Did you make eye-contact? How were you holding your body? The message your body sends may be different from what you are feeling. People tend to believe non-verbal messages before the verbal messages, so you can be misunderstood if your body language does not reflect what you’re feeling.

ACTION URGES: What do I really feel like doing? What do I want to say?

What you want to say might be different from what you did say. But if you could say or do anything, what would it be? Tell the person how they make you feel. Then tell them what you think of them. The use of earthy language can be helpful. The urge to act is part of the emotion, so keep writing until you get in touch how you really feel; what you usually avoid.

What I SAID OR DID in the situation: (Be specific).

Immediately after, what did you say or do? Then what? Follow your activities through the day until you went to bed. Did you try to shove the feelings away by exploding, eating too much or too little, sleeping too much or too little, using substances, spending too much money, etc.? Or, did you behave sensibly and appropriately?

What AFTER EFFECT does the emotion have on me (my state of mind, other emotions, behaviour, thoughts, memory, body, etc.)?

Depending on what you said or did in the situation, the after-effects will look different. If you stayed with your emotion, and didn’t hurt yourself with it, you probably felt other emotions related to the experience (perhaps more vulnerable feelings). This is good and means that you are working with, and learning to tolerate, these feelings. If you used maladaptive ways of coping, you may feel shameful, angry, hopeless - or you may feel numb.

FUNCTION OF EMOTION What purpose did the emotion serve? Was the purpose to:

- **Communicate** to others? Let someone know that you liked/didn’t like, what they said or did?
- **Influence** others? Trying to get someone else to feel or act differently? If so, how?
- **Motivate** you to take action? Do something you hadn’t thought of, or have been putting off?
- **Force** you to pay attention? Let you know that something was going on that you weren’t aware of (could be something good or bad)? Did it warn you that the situation was dangerous or unhealthy for you?
- **Cover** another emotion? Did the emotion cover up more vulnerable feelings? Was it easier to feel angry than afraid? Was it easier to feel sad than angry? If so, attend to the hidden emotion; for example, do another emotion sheet.
Before you are assigned to complete an Emotion Regulation sheet for homework:

It is important to note to stick to one emotion per sheet.

- Often times, one event can elicit a combination of emotions.
- For example, if you are feeling angry, sad and perhaps fearful, choose only one of those to record on your worksheet.

**HOMEWORK**

You will find an Emotion Regulation Worksheet attached below, please fill it out for homework to discuss for the next session.
Week 4

EMOTION REGULATION HOMEWORK SHEET
Observing and Describing Emotions

Name: ___________________________ Week Starting: ___________________________

Select a current or recent emotional reaction and fill out as much of this sheet as you can. If the prompting event for the emotion you are working on is another emotion that occurred first (for example, feeling afraid prompted getting angry at yourself), then fill out a second homework sheet for that first emotion. Write on a separate page if you need more room.

EMOTION NAMES: ___________________________ INTENSITY (0-100): _______________

PROMPTING EVENT for my emotion: (who, what, when, where) What started the emotion?

_________________________________________________________________________

INTERPRETATIONS (beliefs, assumptions, appraisals) of the situation?

_________________________________________________________________________

BODY CHANGES and SENSING: What am I feeling in my body?

_________________________________________________________________________

BODY LANGUAGE: What is my facial expression? posture? gestures?

_________________________________________________________________________
**ACTION URGES:** What do I feel like doing? What do I want to say?

---

What **I SAID OR DID** in the situation: (Be specific).

---

What **AFTER EFFECT** does the emotion have on me (my state of mind, other emotions, behavior, thoughts, memory, body, etc.)?

---

**FUNCTION OF EMOTION:**

________________________
________________________
________________________
________________________
________________________
________________________
SESSION 5

Emotion regulation sheets can be challenging, and do require practice. How was it completing your first sheet?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Did you have difficulty with any particular section (i.e. interpretations)? If so, which one(s)?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

When completing certain sections of the sheet, did any unexpected emotions arise?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Emotion regulation sheets will be used, and assigned for homework each session from now on. Please refer to the “Guide to Emotion Regulation Homework Sheet” that was provided in the previous session, and feel free to ask questions throughout.

During session 3, we discussed the 6 primary emotions:

1. Anger
2. Sadness
3. Happiness
4. Surprise
5. Fear
6. Disgust

When someone asks, “how are you feeling?” your response may not include one of those emotions. For example, you may be feeling a sense of “frustration” or “worry”.

For the purpose of emotion sheets, and to help you really understand what emotion you are feeling - we will focus on “ways to describe emotions” listed below.

WAYS TO DESCRIBE EMOTIONS

Listed below is a variety of words that fall under categories that may help you better describe an emotion you are feeling.

LOVE WORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love</th>
<th>Compassion</th>
<th>Longing</th>
<th>Adoration</th>
<th>Desire</th>
<th>Lust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affection</td>
<td>Enchantment</td>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>Arousal</td>
<td>Fondness</td>
<td>Attraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infatuation</td>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Tenderness</td>
<td>Charmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liking</td>
<td>Warm</td>
<td>Sentimentality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you think of any others?___________________________________________

POSSIBLE PROMPTING EVENTS FOR FEELING LOVE:

- A person offers or gives you something you want, need, or desire.
- A person does things you want or need the person to do.
- You spend a lot of time with a person.
- You share a special experience together with a person.
• You have exceptionally good communication with a person.

**JOY WORDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joy</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
<th>Glee</th>
<th>Pride</th>
<th>Amusement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enthrallment</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Rapture</td>
<td>Bliss</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Relief</td>
<td>Cheerfulness</td>
<td>Euphoria</td>
<td>Jolliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Contentment</td>
<td>Excitement</td>
<td>Joviality</td>
<td>Thrill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delight</td>
<td>Exhilaration</td>
<td>Jubilation</td>
<td>Triumph</td>
<td>Eagerness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaiety</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Zaniness</td>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>Gladness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>Zeal</td>
<td>Elation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Can you think of any others?* ________________________________

**POSSIBLE PROMPTING EVENTS FOR FEELING JOY:**

• Being successful at a task.
• Achieving a desirable outcome.
• Getting what you want.
• Receiving esteem, respect, or praise.
• Getting something you have worked hard for or worried about.
• Receiving a wonderful surprise
• Things turning out better than you thought they would.
• Reality exceeding your expectations.
• Having very pleasurable sensations.
• Doing things that create or bring to mind pleasurable sensations.
• Being accepted by others.
• Belonging (being around or in contact with people who accept you).
• Receiving love, liking, or affection.
• Being with or in contact with people who love or like you.

**ANGER WORDS**

Anger  Disgust  Grumpiness  Frustration  Dislike  Hate  
Scorn  Aggravation  Resentment  Grouchiness  Spite  Rage  
Outrage  Revulsion  Annoyance  Exasperation  Fury  Irritation  
Hostility  Bitterness  Ferocity  Vengefulness  Wrath  Jealousy  
Contempt  Torment  Loathing  Destructiveness  Envy  Cruelty  
Agitation  Mean-spiritedness  

*Can you think of any others?* ____________________________

**POSSIBLE PROMPTING EVENTS FOR FEELING ANGER:**

• Losing power
• Losing status.
• Losing respect.
• Being insulted.
• Not having things turn out the way you expected.
• Experiencing physical pain.
• Experiencing emotional pain.
• Being threatened with physical or emotional pain by someone or something.
• Having an important or pleasurable activity interrupted, postponed, or stopped.
• Not obtaining something you want (which another person has).

**SADNESS WORDS**

Woe  Pity  Grief  Defeat  Misery  Unhappiness  
Agony  Hurt  Neglect  Dismay  Sorrow  Displeasure  
Anguish  Gloom  Isolation  Sadness  Crushed  Depression  
Insecurity  Suffering  Alienation  Melancholy  Distraught  Homesickness
Can you think of any others? __________________________________________________

POSSIBLE PROMPTING EVENTS FOR FEELING SADNESS:

• Things turning out badly
• Bring rejected or excluded
• Getting what you don’t want
• Not getting what you have worked for
• The death of someone you love; thinking about the deaths of people you love
• Being disapproved of or disliked; not being valued by the people in your life
• Being separated by someone you care for or value
• Things being worse than you expected
• Losing a relationship
• Not getting what you want and believe you need in life; thinking about what you have not gotten that you wanted or needed.

FEAR WORDS

Fear  Fright  Panic  Apprehension  Horror
Shock  Anxiety  Hysteria  Tenseness  Distress
Jumpiness  Terror  Dread  Nervousness  Uneasiness
Edginess  Overwhelmed  Worry
Can you think of any others? ____________________________________________

POSSIBLE PROMPTING EVENTS FOR FEELING FEAR:

• Being alone (e.g. walking alone, being home alone, living alone).
• Being in a new or unfamiliar situation
• Being in the dark
• Being in a situation where you have been threatened or gotten hurt in the past, or where painful things have happened.
• Being in a situation somewhat like one where you were threatened or got hurt in the past, or where painful things have happened.
• Being in situations where you have seen other people be threatened, get hurt, or have something painful happen.

SHAME WORDS
Shame Discomposure Humiliation Mortification
Contrition Embarrassment Insult Regret
Culpability Guilt Invalidation Remorse

Can you think of any others? ____________________________________________

POSSIBLE PROMPTING EVENTS FOR FEELINGS OF SHAME:

• Doing (feeling or thinking) something you, or people you admire, believe is wrong or immoral.
• Being reminded of something wrong, immoral, or "shameful" you did in the past.
• Exposure of a very private aspect of yourself or your life.
• Having others find out that you have done something wrong.
• Being laughed at, made fun of.
• Being criticized in public, in front of someone else; remembering public criticism.
• Others attacking your integrity.
• Being betrayed by people you care about.
• Failing at something you feel you are (or should be) competent to do.
• Being rejected or criticized for something you expected praise for.
• Having emotions that have been invalidated.

Did you find these ways to describe emotions helpful?

When filling out your Emotion Regulation Sheets, this may be helpful to review in order to pinpoint a specific emotion.

For example, if you feel that your primary emotion is “humiliation”, then you would simply write “shame”, since it is under that category.

**HOMEWORK**

For homework, along with completing another Emption Regulation Sheet, you are also going to be asked to #1. Notice an emotion you are feeling, and #2. Describe that emotion similar to what we went over during this session.
SESSION 6

Were you able to notice and record your emotions during this past week?

____________________________________________________________________________

What were some of the emotions that you experienced (they could be positive or negative)?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Did you find the previous session helpful in recording the emotion(s) for your Emotion Regulation Sheet?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

What are you learning most about yourself from doing these sheets?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Important to note: You may have noticed the differences between the “action urges” section, from the “what you actually did” section of the sheet.

• What you fill out in each section will differ, and this is showing that you have control over your behaviour in every situation.

• Although you may have the initial urge to do something, like a reflex – you always have the choice to act differently.
During this session, we are going to work on building positive experiences.

- Building positive experiences includes doing things that you enjoy day-to-day.
- Many people argue that they have too many barriers preventing them to partake in enjoyable activities.
- Your challenge this next week, and from now on, will be to increase the positives in your life.

**STEPS TO ENHANCE CONSTRUCTIVE EMOTIONS**

**BUILD POSITIVE EXPERIENCES**

**SHORT TERM:** Do pleasant things that are possible now.

- INCREASE pleasant events that create positive emotions.
- Do ONE THING every day from the Adult Pleasant Events Schedule (see below)

**LONG TERM:** Make changes in your life so that positive events will happen more frequently. Build a “life worth living”.

- Work towards goals: GATHER POSITIVES.
  - Make a list of what you want.
  - List small steps towards each goal.
  - Take the first step.
- ATTEND TO RELATIONSHIPS
  - Mend old relationships.
  - Seek out new relationships.
  - Nurture current relationships.
• AVOID AVOIDING. Avoid giving up.

BE MINDFUL OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

• FOCUS attention on and acknowledge positive events when they happen.
• REDIRECT yourself when your mind wanders to the negative.

BE UNMINDFUL OF WORRIES
DON’T think about: when the positive experience WILL END, whether or not you DESERVE it, or about how much more might be EXPECTED of you.

Above it is mentioned that you should do one thing each day from the Adult Pleasant Events Schedule.

• Attached below, you will find this schedule.
• It consists of pleasant events that one can practice.
• They are just ideas, some small, some big.
• Feel free to add more events to this schedule, to make it your own.

**Adult Pleasant Events Schedule**

1. Taking a long bath or shower.
2. Planning my career.
3. Getting out of (paying on) debt.
4. Collecting things (coins, stamps, shells, etc.).
5. Going on vacation.
6. Thinking how it will be when I finish school.
7. Recycling old items.
8. Going on a date.
9. Relaxing.
10. Going to a movie in the middle of the week.
13. Listening to music.
15. Buying household gadgets.
16. Lying in the sun.
17. Thinking about what I want to do in the future.
18. Laughing.
19. Thinking about my past trips.
20. Listening to others.
21. Reading magazines or newspapers.
22. Hobbies (sewing, needlework, writing etc.).
23. Spending time with good friends.
24. Planning a day’s activities.
25. Meeting new people.
27. Saving money.
29. Going home from work.
30. Eating.
31. Practicing karate, judo, and yoga.
32. Thinking about retirement.
33. Repairing things around the house.
34. Working on my car (bicycle).
35. Remembering the words and deeds of loving people.
36. Wearing sexy clothes.
37. Having quiet evenings.
38. Taking care of my plants.
40. Going swimming.
41. Art/drawing/painting/doodling.
42. Exercising
43. Collecting old things.
44. Going to a party.
45. Thinking about buying things.
46. Playing golf.
47. Playing soccer.
48. Flying kites.
49. Having discussions with friends.
50. Having family get-togethers.
51. Riding a motorbike.
52. Sex.
53. Running track.
54. Going camping.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Singing around the house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Arranging flowers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Practicing religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Losing weight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Going to the beach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Thinking I’m an OK person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>A day with nothing to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Having class reunions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Going skating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Going sail boating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Traveling abroad or in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Painting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Doing something spontaneously.</td>
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<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Doing needlepoint, crewel. etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Sleeping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Driving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Entertaining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Going to clubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Thinking about getting married.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Going hunting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Singing with groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Flirting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Playing musical instruments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Doing arts and crafts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Making a gift for someone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Buying records.</td>
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<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Watching boxing, wrestling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Planning parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Cooking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Going hiking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Writing stories, poems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>Sewing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Buying clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Going out to dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>Working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Discussing books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Sightseeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Gardening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Going to the Beauty Parlour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Early morning coffee and newspaper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Playing tennis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Kissing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>Watching my children play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>Thinking I have a lot more going for me than most people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
99. Going to plays and concerts.
100. Daydreaming.
101. Planning to go to school.
102. Thinking about sex.
103. Going for a drive.
104. Listening to a stereo.
105. Refinishing furniture.
106. Watching TV.
108. Going bike riding.
109. Walks in the woods
110. Buying gifts.
111. Traveling to national parks.
112. Completing a task.
113. Collecting shells
114. Going to a spectator sport. (auto racing, horse racing).
115. Eating gooey, fattening foods.
116. Teaching.
117. Photography.
118. Going fishing.
119. Thinking about pleasant events.
120. Staying on a diet.
121. Playing with animals.
122. Flying a plane.
123. Reading a book or article.
124. Acting.
125. Being alone.
126. Writing diary entries or letters.
127. Cleaning.
128. Taking children places.
129. Dancing.
130. Going on a picnic.
131. Thinking “I did that pretty well after doing something”.
132. Meditating.
133. Playing volleyball.
134. Having lunch with a friend.
135. Knitting
136. Thinking about having a family.
137. Happy memories.
138. Lighting Candles
139. Playing cards.
140. Solving riddles.
141. Having a political discussion.
142. Playing softball.
143. Seeing pictures or slides.
144. Playing guitar.
145. Thinking religious thoughts.
146. Lighting candles.
147. Listening to the radio.
148. Getting a massage.
149. Saying “I love you”.
150. Thinking about my good qualities.
151. Buying books.
152. Taking a sauna or a steam bath.
153. Going skating.
154. White-water canoeing.
155. Going bowling.
156. Doing wood or leather or bead work.
157. Fantasizing about the future.
158. Taking ballet, tap dancing.
159. Debating.
160. Sitting in a sidewalk café.
161. Having an aquarium.
162. Erotica (sex books, movies).
163. Going horseback riding.
164. Thinking about becoming active in the community.
165. Doing something new.
166. Making jigsaw puzzles.
167. Thinking I’m a person who can cope.
168. Smudging.
169. Working on the computer.
170. Praying.
OTHER?: __________________________

Do some of these events stand out to you? If so, which ones?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

HOMEWORK
Along with an Emotion Regulation Sheet - Please complete the “Building Pleasant Events” sheet for next week (see below).
Feel free to print numerous copies of this sheet, as it will be helpful to keep track of from now on.
What I did each day to promote a “life worth living”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Pleasant Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SESSION 7

How did you find the “Building Positive Events” sheet?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Were you able to engage in at least one activity from the Adult Pleasant Events Schedule per day?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Which activities did you choose to do?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Which ones did you find most helpful? How so?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

In today’s session, we are going to focus on “letting go of emotional suffering”.
During session two, we discussed Emotion Mindfulness – which is similar to what we will review today.
Letting go of emotional suffering involves observing your emotions, experiencing your emotions, and finally learning to accept your emotions.
LETTING GO OF EMOTIONAL SUFFERING:
MINDFULNESS OF YOUR CURRENT EMOTION

**OBSERVE YOUR EMOTION**

- ACKNOWLEDGE its presence.
- Take a step BACK.
- Separate yourself from the emotion.

**EXPERIENCE YOUR EMOTION**

- As a WAVE from the ocean, coming and going.
- Try not to DENY the emotion.
- Try not to AVOID it.
- Don’t try to BANISH the emotion.
- Don’t FORCE it away.
- Don’t try to MAINTAIN the emotion.
- Don’t HOLD ON to it. Let it run its course and leave.
- Don’t EXAGGERATE it.

**REMEMBER: YOU ARE NOT YOUR EMOTION**

- You DO NOT have to act on the emotion.
- Remember the times you have felt DIFFERENT.

**PRACTICE LOVING YOUR EMOTION**

- Don’t JUDGE your emotion or yourself.
- Practice WILLINGNESS.
- Radically ACCEPT your emotion for what it is.

*Attached below, is a story that can help you remember the concepts discussed above.*
Here is a story that was adapted from a book authored by Anthony de Mello, S. J. (1983). This story is great in helping to illustrate the concept of acceptance and loving our emotions.

A man bought a new house and decided that he was going to have a very beautiful lawn. He worked on it every week, doing everything the gardening books told him to do. His biggest problem was that the lawn always seemed to have dandelions growing where he didn’t want them.

The first time he found dandelions, he pulled them out. But, alas, they grew back. He went to his local gardening store and bought weed killer. This worked for some time, but after summer rains, alas, he found dandelions again. He worked and pulled and killed dandelions all summer.

The next summer he thought he would have no dandelions at all, since none grew over the winter. But then, all of a sudden, he had dandelions all over again. This time he decided the problem was with the type of grass. So he spent a fortune and had all new sod put down. This worked for some time, and he was very happy.

Just as he started to relax, a dandelion came up. A friend told him it was due to the dandelions in the lawns of his neighbours. So he went on a campaign to get all his neighbours to kill all their dandelions. By the third year, he was exasperated. He still had dandelions. So, after consulting every local expert and garden book, he decided to write the U.S. Department of Agriculture for advice. Surely the government could help.

After waiting several months, he finally got a letter back. He was so excited. Help at last! He tore open the letter and read the following: “Dear Sir: We have considered your problem and have consulted all our experts. After careful consideration, we think we can give you very good advice. Sir, our advice is that you learn to love those dandelions.”
What are your thoughts on the “Dandelion Story”?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Did any thoughts or emotions arise after reading the story?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

**HOMEWORK**

For homework, please complete the worksheet below or use a separate sheet of paper.

- When experiencing an emotion, try and follow the steps listed
- Rate the intensity of your emotion 1-100.
- 1(being weak intensity) to 100(being very strong intensity)
- Describe your mindful experience in as much detail as possible
BEING MINDFUL OF YOUR EMOTION

Homework Sheet

OBSERVE MY EMOTION
☐ I notice my emotion and try to name it
☐ I step back from my emotion, get unstuck

EXPERIENCE MY EMOTION: let it come and go, like a wave
☐ I don't try to get rid of it
☐ I don't try to hang onto it

REMEMBER I AM NOT MY EMOTION
☐ I do not have to act on it
☐ I remember the times when I felt different

ACCEPT MY EMOTION
☐ I don't judge it
☐ I accept that it has a purpose

SITUATION 1
Prompting event:

Emotion ___________________________ Intensity _________

Experience of being mindful of my emotion and the step I found most difficult:

SITUATION 2
Prompting event:

Emotion ___________________________ Intensity _________

Experience of being mindful of my emotion and the step I found most difficult:
SESSION 8

Were you able to experience an emotion being fully mindful?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Which emotion(s) did you experience, and what was the intensity of these emotions?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Were you able to recognize the steps that were the most difficult?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

During today’s session, we will discuss changing our emotions by acting opposite.

Have you ever been afraid of doing something and managed to conquer that fear?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Most people have at least one fear that they have conquered in their lifetime – this question was to prompt a memory when conquering a fear was possible.

It is the natural tendency to AVOID, when we are afraid of doing something.

Avoidance may be a temporary solution, but often does not make us feel better, or make the problem(s) go away.

Acting opposite is a technique that can be very helpful when experiencing a negative emotion or event.
Week 8

CHANGING EMOTIONS BY ACTING OPPOSITE

FEAR
• Do what you are afraid of doing…again and again
• APPROACH people, places, and things you are afraid of.
• Do things to give yourself a sense of competence and mastery.
• When overwhelmed, make a list of small steps or tasks you can do. DO THE FIRST THING on the list.

GUILT OR SHAME
When Guilt or Shame is Justified:
• REPAIR the violation.
  • Say you’re sorry. Apologize.
  • Try to make things better; do something nice for the person you offended (or for someone else if that is not possible).
• PROMISE to avoid that mistake in the future.
• RECEIVE the consequences gracefully and then LET IT GO

When Guilt or Shame is Unjustified (Emotion does not fit your Wise Mind values)
• Do what makes you feel guilty or ashamed…again and again
• APPROACH, don’t avoid.

SADNESS OR DEPRESSION
• Get involved. Approach rather than avoid people or situations.
• Do whatever makes you feel capable and good about yourself.

ANGER
• Avoid who you are angry with rather than attacking them. (Avoid thinking about them rather than having obsessive thoughts).
• Do something NICE rather than being hurtful or aggressive.
• Use compassion and understanding for the other person rather than blaming them.
HOMEWORK
Please fill out the “acting opposite to current emotion” worksheet for homework

Try writing a few different prompting events and emotions on a separate piece of paper

MANAGING POWERFUL EMOTIONS

ACTING OPPOSITE TO CURRENT EMOTION

WORKSHEET

Behaving in a way that is opposite to your action urge can change your emotions. If you are feeling fear, your action urge may be to avoid, or run. Forcing yourself to approach what frightens you, not avoid it, can help reduce your fear. Acting opposite does not mean trying to get rid of your emotion. Stay aware of your emotion, but try not to give in to your action urge. This can be very helpful with fears you want to overcome, anger you want to handle differently, or guilt that is not justified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompting Event:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotion:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action urge:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way I acted opposite:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I would have felt while engaging in my action urge:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I would have felt, in the long run, if I had given in to my action urge:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I felt after acting opposite:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SESSION 9

How many times during the last week were you able to “act opposite”?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Did you run into any extreme difficulty when attempting to act opposite from your action urge?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Was there a pattern in how you felt, after acting opposite to different events?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

During today’s session, we will discuss Empathy, and things that can interfere with one feeling a sense of empathy

Week 9

EMPATHY DEFINITION

Empathy is commonly defined as one's ability to recognize, perceive and directly experientially feel the emotion of another. As the states of mind, beliefs, and desires of others are intertwined with their emotions, one with empathy for another may often be able to more effectively define another's modes of thought and mood. Empathy is often characterized as the ability to “put oneself into another’s shoes”, or experiencing the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself, a sort of emotional resonance.

Sympathy is the feeling of compassion for another, the wish to see them better off or happier, often described as “feeling sorry” for someone.

Sympathy is, “I’m sorry for your sadness, I wish to help.”

Empathy is, “I feel your sadness.”
Empathy involves understanding how people feel by considering — or being mindful — of other people’s verbal and non-verbal communication. It means being able to observe and describe, imagine and understand other people’s behaviours and how they might feel. It also involves showing other people that you understand how they feel by acknowledging their feelings and demonstrating that you care and your concern.

Now that we better understand the definition of empathy, we will now review what empathy consists of:

**Week 9**

**EMPATHY MINDFULNESS**

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**THERE ARE 4 CONCEPTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONCEPT OF EMPATHY:**

1. **Recognizing** the feelings of another as well as one’s own feelings.
2. **Understanding** how the individual might be feeling.
3. **Feeling/Identifying**— knowing or imagining what it must feel like to experience those feelings.
4. **Showing**— responding with care and concern.

**EMPATHY DEPENDS ON THE ABILITY TO ACCURATELY PERCEIVE OTHER PEOPLE’S EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CUES.**

**EXTERNAL RESPONSES** include what people say, how they say it, and what behaviour or emotion they are displaying while they speak.
There are three things to look for in external cues:

1. **The content** - what was said

2. **The delivery** - how it was said

3. What **actions** accompanied the words

**INTERNAL RESPONSES** include how and what people think about situations and what they’re telling themselves (self-talk).

*Although we would like to think of ourselves as empathetic beings, sometimes there are things in our lives that get in the way of this.*

Can you think of a time where you maybe weren’t empathetic and realized after the fact?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

*Listed below, are some things that can interfere with people’s ability to be empathetic:*
Week 9

PERSONAL STATES OR DISPOSITIONS THAT LIMIT AN INDIVIDUAL’S ABILITY TO

EXERCISE EMPATHY

- **Being Self-Involved (not paying attention):** People who are selfish, self-centered or self-involved are usually only interested in their own problems, needs or goals and usually don’t pay attention to someone else’s needs or feelings.

- **Being Overly Emotional:** When someone is very emotional – for instance, very angry, it’s difficult to focus on other people’s needs or feelings.

- **Being Emotionally Numb/Not Experiencing Their Own Feelings:** Because of early experiences (for example, being discouraged from crying), someone might have turned off their feelings - if you cannot experience your own feelings, it’s difficult to imagine and understand how someone else might feel.

- **Fear of Feelings:** Refusal to acknowledge having any fear (or perceived negative emotions such as doubt, guilt, shame, concern, anxiety, dread or pity) because these emotions may be too difficult to cope with or the individual is afraid to show weakness. This type of thinking also reflects the fear of a negative evaluation from others.

- **Fear of Trust:** These types of distortions lead one to see trust as a weakness that might make her dependent and vulnerable. This lack of trust extends to both major and minor issues, and leaves the person always suspecting that they’ll be let down or taken advantage of by others. Often, people will check to see if friends are disrespecting them or talking about them.

- **Being Intellectually Detached- Over-emphasis on Thinking Mind:** Sometimes when a situation is extremely emotional, people try to think their way through the situation in a detached logical manner- this can make it difficult to imagine and understand how
someone else might be feeling. It’s important to use both Thinking Mind and Emotion Mind to get to Wise Mind.

• **Being Under the Influence:** When people are drunk or high on drugs they might not be able to relate to the feelings of other people. They might become self-involved, overly emotional or emotionally numb.

• **I Can’t:** This type of statement often means, “I won’t even try”. It’s a refusal to try new behaviours such as attempting to relate to the feelings of others. “I can’t” statements often suggest an individual who is “closed” to new ideas or ways of behaving.

Can you relate to one or more of these states that have gotten you into trouble in the past?

**HOMEWORK**

Along with another Emotion Regulation Sheet, please try and practice empathy over this next week.

• Be mindful of when you are being empathetic

• Did you notice external and/or internal cues?

• What were they?

• Write down your experience of empathy on a piece of paper
SESSION 10

Were you able to practice empathy in some way over the week?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Describe your experience?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Did this experience bring up any emotions for you? If so, what emotions were they?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

By now you should be very comfortable in filling out Emotion Regulation Sheets, have you found these helpful throughout the course of this seminar?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

For our last session, let’s do some review, and leave you with a helpful tool that you can refer back to in times of trying to manage your powerful emotions.

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WEEK 10

EMOTION REGULATION REVIEW

The goals of emotion regulation training

1. To understand your emotions.
   • Identify (observe and describe) emotion.
   • Understand what purpose emotions have for you.
2. To decrease your emotional vulnerability.
   • To prevent negative emotional states by reducing the likelihood of being overly emotionally sensitive (emotion mind) and increasing emotional hardiness.
   • Learn to increase positive emotions and thus reducing negative emotional sensitivity.
3. To decrease emotional suffering.
   • Let go of painful emotions by using mindfulness.
   • Change painful emotions through acting in a manner opposite to them.
4. To increase empathy and emotional attachment.
   • Increase mindfulness of empathy.
   • Understand and decrease barriers that interfere with empathy.
   • Increasing empathetic behaviours and emotional attachment.

**Mindfulness**

Mindfulness = Focused attention + an interested, non-judgemental attitude

**Being Non-judgemental**

Regulating Your Attention

**Attending with a Particular Attitude**

Know common myths about emotions and be able to identify a challenge for these myths.

“There is always a right and wrong way to feel in every situation.”

Model for describing emotions

• To learn how events, emotions, cognitions and behaviours are interrelated and the influence they have on each other.
Ways to describe emotions

- To be able to find the words to describe the characteristics of your own emotions.

The function of emotions

1. Communicate to others or influence them.
2. Force you to pay attention.
3. Motivate you to take action.
4. Cover another emotion.

Emotion Regulation Review

Week 10

Reducing Vulnerability to Problem Causing Emotions: How to Stay Out of Emotion Mind

- Treat Physical Illness
- Balance Eating
- Avoid Mood-Altering Drugs
- Balance Sleep
- Get Exercise
- Build Mastery

Steps to Enhance Positive / Constructive Emotions

- Build positive experiences (short term / long term).
- Be mindful of positive experiences.
- Be unmindful of worries.

Adult Pleasant Events Schedule

- Do more of the things that make you feel constructive emotions such as love, pride, self-confidence, calm, etc.
Letting Go of Emotional Suffering: Mindfulness of Your Current Emotion

- Observe your emotion.
- Experience your emotion.
- Remember: you are not your emotion.
- Practice loving/accepting your emotion.

Changing Emotions by Acting Opposite

Act contrary to your emotion, not to mask or hide emotions. For example: When you want to leave out of anger, hurt feelings, or panic ---stay! Do what you are afraid of! When you are depressed, get active! When you feel guilty figure out if it is justified and either repair it or do it over and over and over (if not)!

Understanding Empathy

- **Recognizing** the feelings of another as well as one’s own feelings.
- **Understanding** how the individual might be feeling.
- **Feeling/Identifying** – knowing or imagining what it must feel like to experience those feelings.
- **Showing** – responding with care and concern.

*All of these things were covered in this 10-week seminar. Hopefully the concepts, tools and techniques have been useful for you, and practical to use in your everyday life.*

To end, here is a list of things that would be beneficial to review more than once.

### Emotion Regulation Skills Assumptions

The following assumptions summarize the approach of emotion regulation and offer you clues about how to approach your work with managing your feelings. Come back to this list if you find that your emotions continue to increase in intensity no matter what you do. You may find that you are violating one or more of the assumptions, and the list may help you back on a more helpful course of emotional recovery.
1. Your emotions serve important purposes. They help you to react quickly, to protect you from threat, to bond you to others, and to add colour and excitement to your life.

2. Emotions, in order to serve the important survival and humanistic functions for which they were designed, must be experienced and acknowledged.

3. Avoidance of emotions has paradoxical effects: the more you engage in avoidance and escape from your emotions, the more powerful and urgent the emotions become.

4. Feelings are always right. It’s what you do with them and how you react to them (how you think about them and how you behave because of them) that can be hurtful or maladaptive.

5. Feelings are not values. Values are thoughts, ideals, and principles. Feelings are a form of sense, like touch, taste, smell, and sight. They are ways of experiencing the world. They are holistic, residing in the body, mind, and spirit, not just the head.

6. You must first stay with an emotion, allow its recognition and internal expression, before you attempt to move on to a different emotion. You must first “be here” before you rush “there.”

7. Feelings are not exactly the same as action urges. Just because you feel anger does not mean you will necessarily strike out. Feelings prompt actions and increase the propensity for action, but feelings do not necessarily have to be acted upon.

8. You are not your emotion. What you feel is only one (important), aspect of who you are. Your identity, who you are, is not the same as what you’re feeling.

9. When you are in high arousal (heart pumping fast, muscles tight, short and shallow breaths, thoughts that you must do something quickly to change what is happening), your emotions are not likely to provide the most useful and wise advice to you (unless you’re under immediate physical attack).

10. Emotion regulation skills require practice and patience. If emotion regulation were easy, you would not need this list. Like all important and useful things, you must work hard and consistently to produce lasting effects.
11. Emotion regulation is not about insight. It’s about emotional and behavioural strategies. Don’t just think about emotion regulation tools - use them daily.

12. Emotion regulation skills are processes. It’s not like throwing on a light switch. Humans develop feelings for survival purposes. Processing the world using emotions introduced variability and unpredictability in the human species, and this in itself increases the probability of survival of the human species. It defines our tenacity, creativity, group bonding and commitment, competitiveness, and ability to love and protect one another. Because of this, no one technique or strategy will always work - even with the same person having the same feeling in the same situation as before. Fortunately, there are many techniques. If one does not work this time, try a different one. Go back to one that failed before. It may work this time.