



Linden Oaks

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

A part of Edward-Elmhurst Healthcare



Managing School Anxiety with Dialectical Behavior Therapy

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Objectives

- Defining anxiety
- School refusal versus school truancy
- Brief overview of the DBT modules:
 - ✓ Mindfulness
 - ✓ Interpersonal Effectiveness
 - ✓ Emotion Regulation
 - ✓ Distress Tolerance
- Building a DBT school action plan

Definition of Anxiety

- "A feeling of worry, nervousness or unease typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome." (Merriam-Webster's)
- Anxiety is a normal emotion and common experience.
- It is one of the most basic of human emotions.
- In general, anxiety serves to motivate and protect an individual from harm or unpleasant consequences.

When Anxiety Becomes a Problem

- Constant or excessive anxiety disrupts their daily activities and quality of life
- Moves you away from your values:
 - ✓ Friendships/family relationships/role-modeling
 - ✓ Education
 - ✓ Religion/spirituality
 - ✓ Self-care
 - ✓ Hobbies/interests
- Anxiety disorders are so common that more than 1 in every 10 Americans will suffer with one at some point in their lives.

Anxiety Disorders (DSM-V)

- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Selective Mutism
- Specific Phobia
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Unspecified Anxiety Disorder

Obsessive Compulsive and Related Disorders (DSM-V)

- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Body Dysmorphic Disorder
- Hoarding Disorder
- Trichotillomania (Hair Pulling)
- Excoriation Disorder (Skin Picking)
- Unspecified Obsessive Compulsive and Related Disorder

Trauma and Stressor Related Disorders (DSM-V)

- Reactive Attachment Disorder
- Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Acute Stress Disorder
- Unspecified Trauma and Stressor Related Disorder

Common Physical Sensations, Urges and Impulses Associated With Anxiety

- Heart palpitations
- Chest tightness
- Numbness/tingling
- Fidgeting
- Short of breath
- Dizziness
- Blurred or distorted vision
- Nausea
- Sweating
- Butterflies stomach
- Having a lump in your throat
- Headaches
- Difficulties concentrating
- Suicidal thoughts/plans/actions
- Self harm urges/behaviors
- Substance use
- Restrict/binge eat
- Aggressive urges/acts
- Avoidance/isolation
- Run away/hide
- Nap/sleep

Sources of Anxiety in Schools

- A situation in which physical safety is at risk
- A situation in which self-worth is threatened
- Concern about physical appearance
- A new situation
- Judgment or evaluation by others
- Frustrating subject matter
- Excessive classroom demands
- Classroom tests
- Concern about the future

Signs of Anxiety

- Intense physical sensations, like stomach aches or headaches
- Asking to stay home from school
- Leaving class frequently to go to social workers office or bathroom
- Unwilling to engage in school related activities (homework, clubs, sports)
- Struggles with concentration/focus/retrieving information

Effects of Anxiety on Learning

- Decreased ability to pay attention and concentrate to what needs to be learned.
- Decreased ability to process information effectively (e.g., organizing or elaborating on it).
- Decreased ability to retrieve information and demonstrate skills that have been previously learned.

School Refusal versus School Truancy (Freemont, 2003)

School Refusal (Anxiety)	School Truancy
Severe emotional distress about attending school	Lack of excessive anxiety or fear about attending school
Parents are aware of absence, child tries to persuade parents to allow child to stay home	Absence is concealed from parents
Absence of antisocial behaviors	Frequent antisocial behavior, such as lying, breaking rules or stealing
Child usually wants to stay home, as they consider it safe and secure	Child prefers to be away from home
Child expresses willingness to do schoolwork, however anxiety may present itself while completing it	Lack of interest in schoolwork and unwillingness to conform to academic expectations

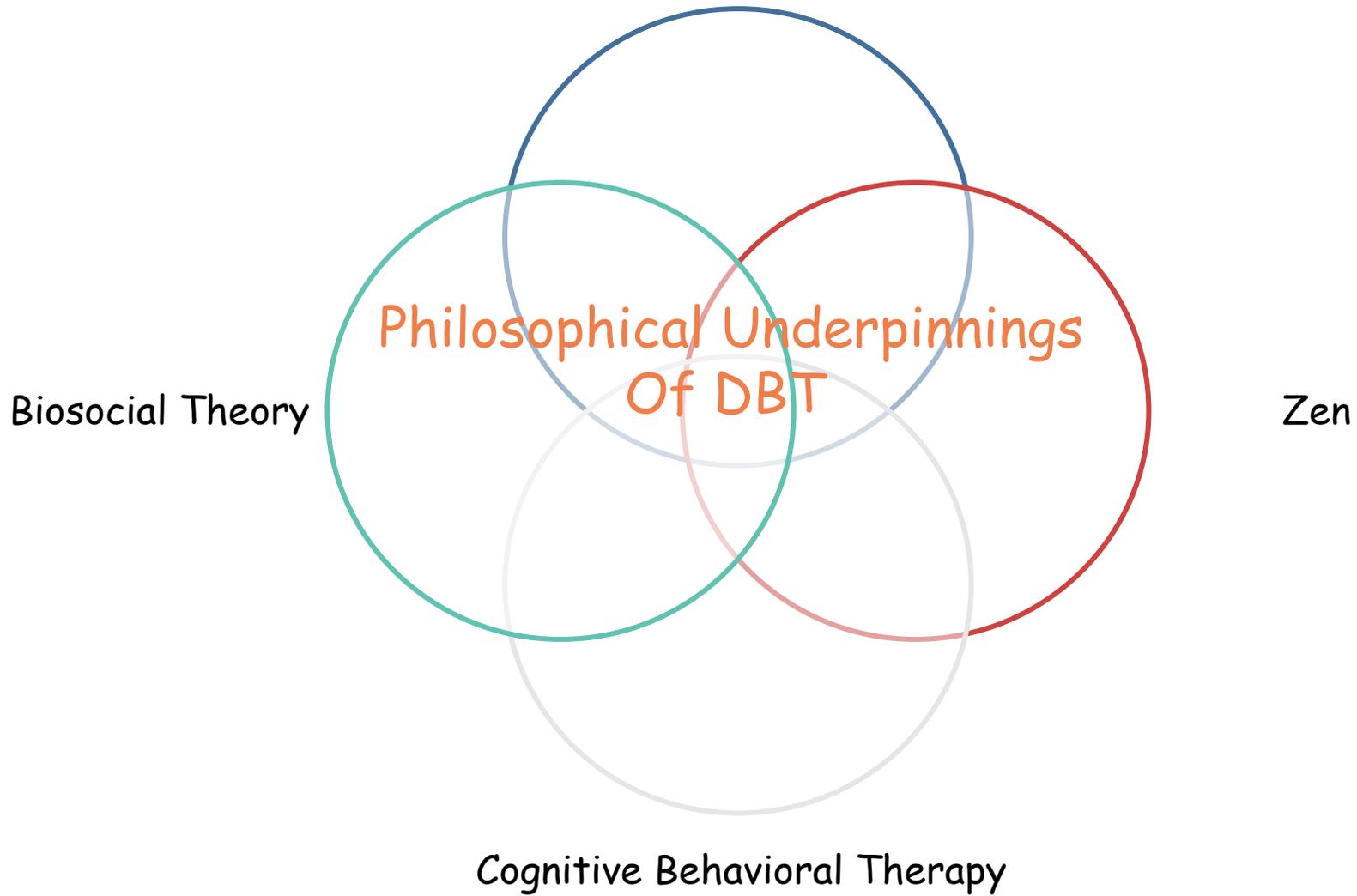
4 Types of School Refusal (Kearney and Silverman, 1993)

- To avoid school related stimuli that provoke negative affectivity (anxiety, depression or somatic complaints)
- To escape aversive social and/or evaluative situations (social phobia or performance anxiety)
- For positive reinforcement with intangible rewards, such as attention or sympathy (separation anxiety disorder)
- For tangible rewards outside of school (oppositional defiance disorder, conduct disorder or substance abuse)

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy

- A multi-modal psychosocial treatment approach
- Developed by Marsha M. Linehan, Ph.D. from the University of Washington, Seattle
- Linehan focused treatment on
 - ✓ extreme emotional sensitivity,
 - ✓ unrelenting crises and management of high risk suicidal behaviors.
- For people grappling with the above, establishing and maintaining a treatment focus is challenging.
- DBT was created to be an organized, systematic approach to structure therapy and to enhance clinical decision making.

The Dialectical



Goals of Skills Training

- General goal: to learn and refine skills in changing behavioral, emotional, and thinking patterns associated with problems in living, that is, those causing misery and distress
- Behaviors to decrease:
 - ✓ Interpersonal chaos
 - ✓ Labile emotions, moods
 - ✓ Impulsiveness
 - ✓ Confusion about self, dysregulation

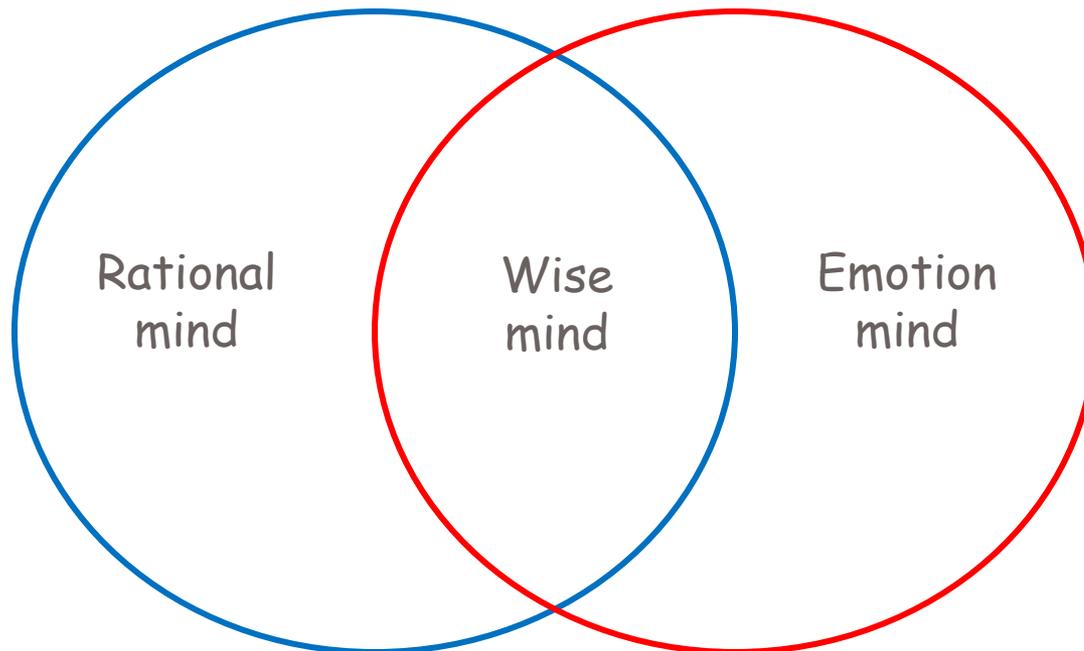
The Core Four Skills

- Mindfulness
- Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Emotion Regulation
- Distress Tolerance



- Wise Mind

Wise Mind



3 primary states of Mind

- **Emotion Mind:** thoughts are "hot," opinion dominates, reason and logic difficult to access, facts are distorted to be congruent with current affect, motivation to act
- **Rational Mind:** thoughts are "cool," intellect and facts dominate, reason and logic prevail, behavior is planned, problem solving overdrive
- **Wise Mind:** a combination of emotional access and logic, adds intuitive knowing to emotional experiencing and logical analysis, balance, practice skills

Core Mindfulness

- Mindfulness means paying attention, in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally. - Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Goals of mindfulness:
 - ✓ Reduce suffering and increase happiness
 - ✓ Increase management of your thoughts
 - ✓ Experience reality as it is

Core Mindfulness Skills

- “What” skills
 - ✓ **Observe:** watch thoughts, feelings and actions, as well as notice your experience without reacting
 - ✓ **Describe:** put words on the experience and put experiences into words
 - ✓ **Participate:** enter into your experience, let yourself get involved in the moment, actively practice your skills until they become part of you
- “How” skills
 - ✓ **Nonjudgmentally:** ungluing oneself from evaluative opinions, focus on the facts
 - ✓ **One-Mindfully:** obtaining and maintaining focus without fragmenting, let go of distractions and bring self back to activity
 - ✓ **Effectively:** “walking with integrity” and doing what is necessary and right, no matter how difficult

Interpersonal Effectiveness

- Maximize the chances that a person's goals in a specific situation will be met without damaging either the relationship or the person's self-respect.
- Goals of Interpersonal Effectiveness:
 - ✓ Be skillful in getting what you want from others, as well as getting your needs met
 - ✓ Maintain, strengthen, repair or create relationships
 - ✓ End unhealthy relationships
 - ✓ Walk the middle path
 - Find balance in relationships
 - Balance acceptance and change in relationships

Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

- **Relationship Effectiveness:** keeping or improving relationships with GIVE (Gentle, Interested, Validate, Easy Manner)
- **Self-Respect Effectiveness:** keeping or improving self-respect with FAST (Fair to self, Apologies, Stick to Values, Truth)
- **Objective Effectiveness:** getting your objective or goals met in a situation with DEAR MAN (Describe the situation, Express emotion, Assert needs, Reinforce others, mindfulness, Appear confident, Negotiate)

Emotion Regulation

- Many individuals experience emotional dysregulation in that they are frequently emotionally intense and labile. They can become intensely angry, frustrated, depressed, anxious, etc. very quickly, they hold on to that high level of emotion for a long time, and it can take a very long time to come down from the emotional experience.
- Emotion regulation skills work towards keeping individuals at lower emotional levels.
- Goals of Emotion Regulation:
 - ✓ Understand emotions you experience and decrease the frequency of unwanted emotions
 - ✓ Decrease emotional suffering
 - ✓ Reduce emotional vulnerability

Emotion Regulation Skills

- **Observe and Describe Emotions:** understand and name your emotions
- **Accumulate Positive Experiences:** participate in pleasurable activities in order to increase the ability to access positive emotions
- **Build Mastery:** engage in at least one activity per day to increase a sense of accomplishment
- **Cope Ahead of Time with Emotional Situations:** describe the situation that may prompt problem behavior, decide coping skills to be used, imagine the situation, including coping effectively, practice calming skills after imagining scenario
- **Taking Care of your Body:** with PLEASE (Treat physical illnesses, Balance eating, Avoid mood altering substances, Sleep, Exercise)
- **Increasing Mindfulness to Current Emotion:** observe your emotion: notice its presence, step back, get unstuck
- **Taking Opposite Action:** change the emotion by acting opposite to its action urge, for example: sadness - get active

Distress Tolerance

- Distress tolerance emphasizes learning to bear pain skillfully, which most approaches have paid little attention
- Goals of Distress Tolerance
 - ✓ Survive emotional situations
 - ✓ Accept reality
 - ✓ Become free of having to satisfy the demands of any unhealthy urges

Distress Tolerance Skills

- **Acceptance Strategies** are skills to reduce suffering by letting go of struggles and engaging in life:
 - ✓ Willingness
 - ✓ Turning the Mind Towards Acceptance
 - ✓ Radical Acceptance
- **Crisis Survival Skills** focus on tolerating painful events, urges, impulses, unwanted thoughts, feelings when individuals cannot control the situation
 - ✓ STOP
 - ✓ TIPP
 - ✓ Distracting (ACCEPTS)
 - ✓ Improve the Moment (IMPROVE)
 - ✓ Self-Soothing
 - ✓ Thinking of Pros and Cons

Acceptance Strategies

- **Willingness:** moving body towards values while carrying any discomforts (unwanted thoughts, feelings and physical sensations) lightly
- **Turning the Mind:** the mind and body are more willing to move towards values however the mind continues to struggle
- **Radical Acceptance:** letting go of things you cannot control, as well as pain creates suffering only when you refuse to accept the pain
 - ✓ Pain x lack of acceptance = degree of suffering

STOP: What to in a crisis

- Stop
- Take a step back: practice breathing exercises
- Observe: thoughts, feelings, urges, situations, other people
- Proceed mindfully: move towards values and let wise mind make decisions

TIPP to Change Your Body Chemistry

- **Tip the Temperature** of your face with cold water
 - ✓ “Dive response” to slow heart rate and reduce blood flow to nonessential organs so it flows to brain and heart
 - ✓ Cold shower, ice pack, splash cold water on face
- **Intense exercise**
 - ✓ Expend excess energy
 - ✓ Jumping jacks, high knees, running, dancing
- **Paced breathing**
 - ✓ Breath deeply from belly
 - ✓ Out breath slower than in breath
 - ✓ Average: 5 seconds in and 7 seconds out
- **Paired with muscle relaxation**
 - ✓ Body scan
 - ✓ Progressive muscle relaxation

Distracting (ACCEPTS)

- **Activities:** exercise, hobbies, games, sports, walk dog, jumping jacks, ride bike, active video games, dance, jump rope, yoga, high knees
- **Contributing:** volunteer, make a gift, surprise someone, chores, cook/bake, help team mate, coach, babysit, call friend/talk about them
- **Comparison:** moving towards values vs avoidance, day 1 of treatment vs current progress, unhealthy urges vs healthy behaviors
- **Emotions:** joke book, comedies, music, quotes, bubble bath, body scan
- **Pushing Away:** mentally stepping back from situation by using imagination, such as pain in box, emotion draining from body, defusion
- **Thoughts:** reading, homework, puzzles, paint, ABC game, word searches, Sudoku, cross words, count backwards by 13, 20 questions, I spy
- **Sensations:** hold ice in hand (touch), spicy food (taste), loud music (sound), spices (smell), optical illusions (sight)

IMPROVE the Moment

- **Imagery**: imagine relaxing scene, imagine coping, fantasy, nature, memories, vacation, dance routines, moving towards values, sport plays
- **Meaning Making**: identify values underneath the distress, explore reasons to be willing to experience discomfort
- **Prayer/Meditation**: connect with higher power, increase in trust, support, hope, contact with present, calm physical sensations, grounding
- **Relaxation**: body scan, yoga, breathing exercises, walking, 4 square breathing, singing, dancing, get fresh air, play with hair/jewelry/clothes
- **One Thing in the Moment**: bring self back to present moment by doing one thing at a time, 100% focus, use 5 senses to get grounded
- **Vacation**: (1) 15-20 minute break, (2) practice skill (3) return to experience
- **Encouragement**: self-cheerlead, quotes, poems, DBT phrases, song lyrics, encouraging words from family and friends

Self-Soothe

- **Vision:** flowers, candle/watch flame, food, art, pictures of family/friends/pets, star gaze, walk/drive mindfully, you tube videos, books, dance performances, television, movies, celebrities, nature
- **Hearing:** listen to soothing music, sounds of nature (waves, birds, rainfall, leaves rustling), sing your favorite song, play musical instrument, friends/family voices, audio books
- **Smell:** favorite perfume or cologne, lotion, spray fragrance in the air, scented candles, potpourri, bake cookies/bread/cupcakes, cook favorite meal, mindfully walk in nature, wax melts
- **Taste:** favorite meal, soothing drinks (herbal tea, hot cocoa, chocolate milk), treat yourself to a dessert, mints, gum, water, hard candy, chocolate. *remember to eat and/or drink mindfully
- **Touch:** bubble bath, pet dog/cat, fresh clothes from dryer, get a massage, soak your feet, put lotion on, cold compress on forehead/back of neck, soft material, brush hair/run fingers through hair, hug family member/friend, fidget toy/stress ball/bendy stick, small stuffed animal

Thinking of Pros and Cons

- Make a pros and cons of tolerating the distress
- Focus on long-term goals
- Remember times when pain has ended
- Think of short term and long term effects of tolerating the distress
- Make the lists ahead of time and review during a crisis

DBT Crisis Kit

- Crisis skills kit of objects
- Index card listing non-object skills
- Anxiety ladder with a list of skills to practice when experiencing low anxiety/moderate anxiety/high anxiety

Crisis Kit of Objects

- Crosswords/word searches/Sudoku/logic puzzles
- Pictures of family/friends/pets
- Favorite smelling lotion/perfume/cologne
- Chap stick/lip gloss
- Gum/mints/candy
- Fidget toy (stone/squishy toy/cloth/coins)
- Ear buds/playlist of high energy songs/soothing songs
- Deck of playing cards
- Silly putty/Play-doh
- Pen/paper/journal
- Coloring pages/markers/crayons
- Cinnamon stick/tea bags/wax melts
- Book/magazine/jokes/poetry
- Shell for ocean sound plus fidget
- Inspirational quotes/lyrics/poems
- Travel sound machine
- Water bottle

Index Card of Skills

- 4 square breathing, follow your breath, value breathing, count your breaths
- Leaves on a stream, clouds in the sky, bubbles, watch thoughts
- ABC game
- 20 questions, I Spy, tic tac toe
- DBT phrases: ride the wave, get out of your future, move towards values
- Count backwards by 7's from 1,000
- Exercise: jumping jacks, high knees, push-ups
- Imagine calming scenes, nature, moving towards values
- You Tube videos of animals or babies, watch clips of movies or television shows
- 5/4/3/2/1 with five senses
- Cook, bake, eat mindfully

Anxiety Ladder

- Patients identify different levels of their anxiety by creating an anxiety ladder.
- The ladder is a scale of physical sensations/urges/impulses/thoughts that patients report they experience when they have anxiety.
- The scale is from 1 to 10 with 10 being the worst amount of anxiety that patients have ever experienced.
- Patients identify a crisis zone. The typical crisis zone is between 7 and 10, however it does vary.

Step 1: Identify the physical sensations, urges and impulses that are experience when anxious

COMMON PHYSICAL SENSATIONS	COMMON URGES AND IMPULSES
<p> Crying Loss of appetite Dizziness Numbness/tingling Chest tightness/discomfort Hot/cold flashes Flush skin/blushing Sleep problems Loss of breath/heavy breathing Unreality Detached from self Nausea Muscle tension Racing thoughts Butterflies in stomach Nail biting/lip biting Fast heartbeat Sweating Having a lump in your throat Blurred or distorted vision Difficulty concentrating Fidgeting Headaches/Migraine Tapping foot/shaking leg Playing with hair/clothes/fingers Panic attack </p>	<p> Suicidal thoughts Suicidal plans Suicidal actions Suicide attempt Self-harm urges Self-harm behaviors Picking urges Picking behaviors Substance use urges Substance use behaviors Restrict/binge food intake urges Restrict/binge food intake behaviors Physical aggressive urges Physical aggressive actions Verbal aggressive urges Verbal aggressive actions Impulsive behaviors urges Impulsive behaviors actions Isolation Run away/hide Nap/sleep Opting out </p>

Step 2: Put the experiences in order on the scale of 1-10
 Step 3: Add favorite skills to each section (low, moderate and high)

	PHYSICAL SENSATIONS/ URGES/IMPULSES	SKILLS TO PRACTICE
10	Self-harm behaviors	ABC game Self-soothe kit Stress ball/Silly Putty
9	Panic attack	Vacation (support system) Word searches Gum/mints/candy
8	Self-harm urges	Count backwards by 7 Draw/color Imagery of calming scene
7	Stomach ache/nausea	Defusion (Leaves on a stream) Follow your breath Opposite action
6	Chest tightness/heavy breathing	5-4-3-2-1 with your 5 senses Drop anchor 4 square breathing
5	Heart racing	Body scan Acceptance of feelings Increase positive experiences
4	Muscle tension in neck/shoulders	Beginner's mind
3	Racing thoughts	Observe/describe your experience Participate/get engaged in situation Ride the wave (sit with it)
2	Playing with clothes/hair	Willingness One-mindedly (100% focus on one activity)
1	Leg/foot tapping	

DBT School Action Plan

- The goal is for patients to practice skills in the classroom to manage their anxiety, however they may need to take a Vacation.
- DBT skill of Vacation: break to guidance office
 - ✓ If patients anxiety reach and/or stay in the crisis zone and they have practiced at least 5 crisis skills in class, it is recommended for them to be able to take a break to the guidance office to practice skills with school staff.
 - ✓ During this break, it would be helpful for school staff to not discuss the cause of the anxiety and/or triggers in detail, as asking these types of questions may result with more rumination/obsessive thinking and increase the anxiety.
 - ✓ The break is intended to practice skills to decrease anxiety in order to return to class. Patients should only be taking a break when they are in their crisis zone.

DBT School Action Plan (Cont.)

- Returning to class:
 - ✓ As soon as their anxiety number have lowered and they are out of their crisis zone they should go back to class.
 - ✓ The goal is for the break to last no more than twenty minutes. Patients may need to continue to practice skills once they return to the classroom as their anxiety may be in the moderate to low range.
 - ✓ Again, the goal of the break is to get them out of the crisis zone, not to have the anxiety eliminated altogether.
 - ✓ They may frequently visit the guidance office in the beginning of implementing the action plan, as their tolerance to distress may have decreased.

Book recommendations for school staff

- The Expanded Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Training Manual by Pederson
- DBT Skills in Schools: Skills Training for Emotional Problem Solving for Adolescents (DBT STEPS-A) by Mazza, Dexter-Mazza and et.
- The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety by Forsyth and Eifert

Book recommendations for parents

- Parenting your Anxious Child with Mindfulness and Acceptance by McCurry
- Parenting a Child Who Has Intense Emotions by Harvey and Penzo

Contact Information

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