CHAPTER 1

What Is DBT Skills Training for Emotional Problem Solving for Adolescents (DBT STEPS-A)?

WELCOME TO DBT STEPS-A

DBT Skills Training for Emotional Problem Solving for Adolescents (DBT STEPS-A) is a program for developing emotion management, interpersonal, and decision-making skills in middle school and high school students. Adolescents may face numerous social, developmental, and academic pressures, such as peer rejection, low self-confidence, confusion about self, impulsive behavior, involvement in drugs and alcohol, and issues related to intimacy and sexual relationships. Although schools often do not offer courses on coping with stress and decision making, adolescents' needs for such skills are continuing to grow (Rathus & Miller, 2015). As described in the preface, the DBT STEPS-A curriculum was developed to meet this need. It teaches practical skills for regulating emotions, reducing impulsive behaviors, solving problems, and building and repairing interpersonal relationships.

The DBT STEPS-A curriculum is designed to be taught by general education teachers or by school personnel with some background in adolescent mental health issues, such as health teachers, school counselors, or school psychologists. The curriculum consists of four primary skill areas or "modules" (Mindfulness, Distress Tolerance, Emotion Regulation, and Interpersonal Effectiveness); it is designed for approximately 30 weeks of lessons (1 class per week over two semesters, or twice a week over one semester) taught in standard 50-minute blocks. However, the curriculum is also flexible, so if the situation or circumstances only allow for 20 weeks or perhaps 40 weeks, the curriculum can be modified to fit the time schedule.

DBT STEPS-A is based on the skills training component of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), an empirically supported psychological treatment for adults and adolescents with problems caused by pervasive emotion dysregulation. Originally developed for adults by Linehan (1993, 2015a, 2015b) and adapted for suicidal adolescents by Miller and Rathus (Miller, Rathus, Leigh, Landsman, & Linehan, 1997; Rathus & Miller, 2002; Miller, Rathus, & Linehan, 2007; Rathus & Miller, 2015), DBT with adolescents is a comprehensive intervention that consists of weekly individual therapy, a weekly multifamily skills training group, between-session telephone coaching for skills generalization, and a therapist consultation team. This comprehensive model was used by Mehlum and colleagues (2014) in their recently

published randomized controlled study, which demonstrated the effectiveness of DBT for adolescents with multiple problems. Those receiving DBT, as compared to those receiving enhanced usual care, had significant reductions in self-harm, depression, hopelessness, and borderline personality symptoms after 16 weeks of treatment (Mehlum et al., 2014). The skills taught in DBT have been found to be useful with a wide range of clinical and nonclinical populations (Mazza & Hanson, 2014a, 2014b; McMain, 2013; Hashim, Vadnais, & Miller, 2013). DBT skills can be considered basic social and emotional life skills.

DBT STEPS-A is not a therapy program. Rather, it is the skills training component of DBT modified for students of middle and high school age, to be delivered as a universal social–emotional learning curriculum. We believe that all adolescents, not just those who have difficulties regulating their emotions and behaviors, can benefit from the DBT STEPS-A curriculum. The goal of DBT STEPS-A is to help youth develop their own toolboxes of effective strategies to regulate emotions, solve problems, improve relationships, and enhance their lives.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

This book is divided into three sections. In Part I, we present the rationale for DBT STEPS-A; the research background for its use with adolescents; an overview of its various components, including the lessons and the student handouts; and guidelines for its implementation, both in general classrooms and with more challenging students. In the present chapter, we briefly describe existing social–emotional learning curricula, their limitations for use with adolescents, how DBT STEPS-A addresses those limitations, and the research background for its use with adolescents. We then present a detailed overview of the curriculum, the four skills modules (Mindfulness, Emotional Regulation, Interpersonal Effectiveness, and Distress Tolerance), and the specific skills taught in each module. Chapter 2 examines the practical issues of implementing DBT STEPS-A into a school's overall curriculum, providing assignments and student grading, handling confidentiality issues, and making/enforcing rules of attendance; it also describes the use of the student handouts. Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of how to work with students who may need more intensive services (i.e., those in Tiers 2 and 3, where DBT STEPS-A is the foundational curriculum but other supportive services are recommended to address the students' current needs).

Parts II and III comprise the curriculum content itself. Part II consists of 30 detailed lesson plans for the DBT STEPS-A instructor to follow, as well as all the tests and answer keys. Part III contains all the student handouts (both informational/activity handouts and homework sheets) needed for teaching the class.

THE NEED FOR SOCIAL–EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULA FOR ADOLESCENTS

Social–emotional learning (SEL) curricula are focused on helping students of all ages acquire and practice the skills they need for successfully navigating stressful life events; coping with emotional dysregulation; and developing/ maintaining important family, peer, school, and

intimate relationships. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) highlights SEL as the "processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions" (CASEL, 2013, p. 4). For adolescents, SEL is particularly important because of the many social stressors and developmental factors that are typical for this age group, such as peer rejection, alcohol and drug use, dating and intimacy issues, bullying, social relationships, concerns about physical attractiveness, academic transitions from middle to high school, and becoming more independent of parents.

The stressors adolescents experience can range from mild to severe, and it is rare that an adolescent escapes this developmental stage without any stressful life events or emotional struggles. Problems that typically have a mild impact on academic and social functioning include feeling anxious about asking someone out on a date, skipping a class, managing a workload, or breaking curfew for the first time. Severe problems (which happen less frequently) may include self-harming, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, family conflict/aggression, or being arrested. These are typically either causes or results of intense emotional pain and dysregulation, and they are likely to have a significant impact on an adolescent's social and academic functioning.

The prevalence of mental health issues among adolescents is higher than many people realize. Cook et al. (2015) state that 20% of young adults experience mental problems each year (e.g., depression, anxiety, antisocial behavior)—and this percentage is unfortunately an underestimate, given that problems with academics, dating, intimacy, and other social issues (e.g., peer rejection, bullying) are not included in this number. Furthermore, Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, and Schulenberg (2007) reported data from a national survey indicating that over 50% of high school seniors and nearly 20% of eighth graders reported using illicit drugs in their lifetimes. Thus it appears that the vast majority of youth could use good emotion management, problem-solving, and decision-making skills to navigate the emotional rollercoaster of adolescence.

Unfortunately, the current educational system in the United States is focused on academics, while ignoring the relationship between mental health issues and academic performance (Cook et al., 2010). When it comes to mental health and emotion regulation issues, most schools use a "waiting to fail" approach; as noted in the preface, this means that students must first engage in a problematic behavior before coming to the attention of appropriate school personnel. If the problematic behavior involves alcohol, drugs, or skipping school, punitive measures such as detention or suspension are commonly used—although these have not been shown to be effective (Monahan, VanDerhei, Bechtold, & Cauffman, 2014) and often lead to more problematic behavior.

Instead of using this reactionary approach, schools have begun to recognize that SEL curricula provide a proactive approach since these curricula are designed to help students develop appropriate skills in decision making and emotion management *before* they engage in problematic behavior. SEL curricula in elementary and middle school grades have been shown to reduce the number of disciplinary referrals and suspensions, while also increasing academic performance (Cook, Gresham, Kern, Barreras, & Crews, 2008). The use of SEL curricula therefore offers a "win–win" scenario: Students are not getting suspended or disciplined as much, and therefore are remaining in the classroom more frequently, which leads to more instructional time and learning for the students.

EXISTING SEL CURRICULA

Over the past 10 years, the number of SEL curricula has grown dramatically, as has support for using them (Kilgus, Reinke, & Jimerson, 2015). Several states (e.g., Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Kansas) have developed SEL standards and are working on aligning them with state education standards. Current SEL curricula are categorized by the age level of the intended audience, with substantially more such curricula focused on children in preschool and elementary school than on adolescents in middle and/or high school (CASEL, 2013, 2015). In fact, the *2013 CASEL Guide* (for preschool and elementary school ages) lists 19 SEL programs for elementary school, whereas the *2015 CASEL Guide* (for middle and high school ages) lists only 6 SEL programs for middle school and only 5 programs designed for high school. Table 1.1 lists and describes selected SEL curricula from the *2015 CASEL Guide*. The curricula chosen for this table are designed specifically for middle school (grades 6–8) and/or high school (grades 9–12); have assessment tools for monitoring implementation and measuring student behavior; are taught to all students (Tier 1 or universal level); and have empirical support in the form of specific student outcomes. There are other SEL curricula designed for middle and high school populations; however, CASEL has been recognized as a national leader in establishing competencies for inclusion in SEL programs and has developed a rigorous set of standards to evaluate these curricula (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). The table provides the name of each curriculum, the structure of the curriculum, the intended grade level, targeted behaviors, and student outcomes.

The research investigating SEL curricula designed specifically for adolescents has been limited (Durlak et al., 2011). As we reviewed the *2015 CASEL Guide*, it was striking to note that none of the research studies supporting the middle or high school programs has demonstrated significant student outcomes in the area of reduced emotional distress. At the high school level, only the Student Success Skills curriculum provides free-standing SEL lessons (of which there are eight). The review also highlighted that students in all five high school SEL programs showed significantly improved academic performance; yet only students taking Facing History and Ourselves showed improved SEL skills and attitudes, while only students in the Reading Apprenticeship program showed a reduction in problem behaviors. Similar findings were reported among the four selected middle school SEL programs: Only two of the four programs reported improved SEL skills and attitudes (Student Success Skills; Facing History and Ourselves), and only two of the four showed reductions in problem behaviors (Second Step: Student Success through Prevention for Middle School; Facing History and Ourselves). Finally, only Facing History and Ourselves reported improved positive social behaviors at the middle school level. Thus our examination of the *2015 CASEL Guide*, along with the meta-analysis conducted by Durlak and colleagues (2011), suggests (1) that there are significantly fewer SEL programs designed for middle and high school students than for younger students and (2) that among the existing programs for older students, effectiveness in reducing emotional distress remains largely undocumented.

In two other relevant studies, the utility of implementing SEL curricula among adolescent students is supported (Cook et al., 2008; McMain, 2013). In a review of the meta-analytic literature on social skills training programs for students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders (EBD), Cook and colleagues (2008) reported that two-thirds of such students receiving social skills training programs improved their social competence, com-

TABLE 1.1. Selected SEL Curricula

Curriculum name	Structure	Intended grade level	Targeted behaviors	Outcomes
		Middle school SEL programs		
Expeditionary Learning	Organizational approach; uses teaching practices infused in academic curricula (English language arts)	6–12	Relational character (kindness, honesty, integrity) and performance character (organization, perseverance, craftsmanship)	Grades 6–8: ↑ **academic performance**
Facing History and Ourselves	Teaching practices that are infused in the academic curriculum (history, social studies, or language arts)	6–12	Positive youth development in the form of social and ethical reflection and civic learning	Grades 7, 8: ↑ **positive social behavior,** ↓ **problem behaviors,** ↑ **SEL skills and attitudes**
Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention for Middle School	Free-standing lessons (40 lessons)	6–8	Empathy, communication, problem solving, bullying prevention, substance abuse prevention	Grade 6: ↓ **problem behaviors**
Student Success Skills	Teaching practices and free-standing lessons (8 lessons)	6–12	Goal setting (along with progress monitoring); providing a supportive environment; memory and cognitive skills; emotion management; developing healthy optimism	Grade 7: ↑ **academic performance,** ↑ **SEL skills and attitudes**
		High school SEL programs		
Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline	Teacher training program—uses teaching practices	6–12	Teacher–student interactions, classroom environment, classroom management	Grade 9: ↑ **academic performance**
Facing History and Ourselves	Teaching practices that are infused in the academic curriculum (history, social studies, or language arts)	6–12	Positive youth development in the form of social and ethical reflection and civic learning	Grades 9, 10: ↑ **academic performance,** ↑ **SEL skills and attitudes,** ↑ **teaching practices**
Project Based Learning by Buck Institute for Education	Instructional approach; uses teaching practices focused on designing projects that engage students	6–12	Goal setting, problem solving, self-management	Grade 12: ↑ **academic performance**

(continued)

TABLE 1.1. *(continued)*

Curriculum name	Structure	Intended grade level	Targeted behaviors	Outcomes
Reading Apprenticeship	Teaching practices infused in the academic curriculum (reading, social studies, and science)	6–12	Building community and developing a safe environment; developing identity and self-awareness as a reader; cognitive skills; problem solving	Grades 9, 11: ↑ **academic performance,** ↓ **problem behaviors,** ↑ **teaching practices**
Student Success Skills	Teaching practices and free-standing lessons (8 lessons)	6–12	Goal setting (along with progress monitoring); providing a supportive environment; memory and cognitive skills; emotion management; developing healthy optimism	Grades 9, 10: ↑ **academic performance**

Note. Data from CASEL (2015).

pared to one-third in the control groups. In a related study of a social competence and emotion management skills program, McMain (2013) examined the effectiveness of a DBT-skills-only group versus a wait-list control group over a 20-week period for a clinical population of adults diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. The skills-only group was taught skills from the four DBT modules (Mindfulness, Distress Tolerance, Emotion Regulation, and Interpersonal Effectiveness) plus dialectics. This group showed a greater reduction in anger expression, less impulsive behavior, better distress tolerance, and better emotion management skills than their wait-list peers. The results from the McMain (2013) and Cook et al. (2008) studies suggest that skills training focused on interpersonal and emotion management issues can be an effective strategy for school-based adolescents, especially in the area of reducing emotional distress.

In addition to the lack of outcome research, the existing SEL curricula designed specifically for students of middle and high school ages have some notable limitations. First, they often involve broader systems that go beyond the individual level, such as family and community involvement, the creation of supportive learning environments, and the development of a positive school climate. Although these are important components for improving environments in which individual students may experience social or emotional distress, there are many situational factors in these environments that are outside the students' control. Second, the level of skill specificity being taught is unclear. For example, most of the curricula teach self-awareness and management skills; yet it is difficult to identify what specific skills the students have learned when the lessons are completed. Finally, the curriculum components often adhere to the five core components of CASEL (self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making), which fundamentally represent SEL but do not have an underlying theoretical foundation for their inclusion. Thus our present understanding of how these components interact and how they are related to specific cognitive and/or emotional behaviors remains vague.

WHY DBT STEPS-A?

DBT STEPS-A offers an alternative SEL curriculum that addresses the limitations of the existing SEL approach. First, DBT STEPS-A is a universal curriculum that teaches emotion management strategies, decision-making skills, and interpersonal skills at the individual level. Thus the program does not require the involvement of broader systems, such as family or community.

Second, students are taught skills with a high degree of specificity and with explicit definitions, which are geared toward issues and stressors that adolescents often face. Many of the skills are identified by mnemonics representing the specific skills that are to be used; these mnemonics enhance students' ability to recall the skills and practice them when appropriate.

Third, the skills taught in DBT STEPS-A are drawn from DBT, which is based on Linehan's (1993, 2015a) biosocial theory of pervasive emotional dysregulation. According to this theory, a vulnerable biology coupled with an "invalidating environment" (i.e., lack of support or outright hindrance or mistreatment by family, peers, and/or teachers/coaches) can result in problems in four key areas: difficulty regulating emotions, which leads to confusion about the self, impulsive behaviors, and interpersonal problems. The four DBT skills modules are specifically designed to address deficits in each of these areas.

1. The Emotion Regulation module teaches skills for decreasing unpleasant, distressing emotions and increasing positive emotions.
2. The Mindfulness module teaches skills for increasing self-awareness, becoming less judgmental, and gaining control of one's attention.
3. The Distress Tolerance module teaches skills for making distress endurable, so that an upsetting situation is not made worse by impulsive action.
4. The Interpersonal Effectiveness module teaches skills for asking for something or saying no to another person, while maintaining a good relationship and one's self-respect.

Although the DBT skills were originally developed to remediate severe problems in persons with serious mental disorders, the skills themselves are basic social and emotional life skills that are useful for everyone. Many people learn these skills on their own, but many do not, and others learn some but not all of them. The skills are particularly useful for adolescents, since confusion about the self, difficulty managing emotions, impulsiveness, and interpersonal difficulties can all be aspects of the developmental stage of adolescence.

Finally, preliminary outcome research now empirically supports the effectiveness of implementing the DBT STEPS-A curriculum across multiple middle and high school settings (Haskell et al., 2014; Mazza & Hanson, 2014a, 2014b; Miller, Mazza, Dexter-Mazza, Steinberg, & Courtney-Seidler, 2014). The results of these studies are discussed next. Studies examining the efficacy of the DBT STEPS-A curriculum in school-based populations are ongoing.

Preliminary Research on the DBT STEPS-A Curriculum in School-Based Settings

As a comprehensive treatment for pervasive emotional difficulties, DBT has gained empirical support for its effectiveness from research with adults (Dimeff, Woodcock, Harned, & Bead-

nell, 2011; Harned, Rizvi, & Linehan, 2010; Neacsiu, Rizvi, Vitaliano, Lynch, & Linehan, 2010) and more recently with adolescents (Mehlum et al., 2014). The skills component of DBT as a stand-alone treatment has been recently studied through the use of the DBT STEPS-A curriculum with school-based adolescents, and the findings have been encouraging (Haskell et al., 2014; Mazza & Hanson, 2014a; Miller et al., 2014).

One of the first schools to implement the DBT STEPS-A curriculum was a group of selected inner-city middle and high schools in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, through Mastery Charter Schools. After the first year, the preliminary results comparing pretest versus posttest emotional distress scores looked promising; in particular, ninth graders who received DBT STEPS-A showed a significant reduction in their overall emotional distress scores, compared to those of peer controls (Haskell et al., 2014). In a second preliminary study, Mazza and Hanson (2014b) looked at eighth graders who were attending an alternative school in Battle Ground, Washington, and receiving the first two modules of the DBT STEPS-A curriculum (Mindfulness and Distress Tolerance). Of these students, 80% reported that they would use the skills themselves, and approximately 90% thought that the skills would be useful to others.

Potential Benefits to Schools in Using DBT STEPS-A

Schools that choose to implement DBT STEPS-A receive two related benefits. First, school administrators usually spend a significant amount of time dealing with students who present emotional and/or behavioral problems. Such students often receive disciplinary actions, such as detentions, suspensions, and even expulsions, because of behaviors that violate school rules; they may have made impulsive or poor decisions, perhaps acting out in distress, anger, or other intense emotions. Some of this administrative time is spent meeting with parents, while some of it is spent in teams developing appropriate individualized education plans (IEPs) and intervention strategies. These are "lose–lose" situations for schools because suspended or expelled students are no longer in the classrooms to learn, and because the amount of time school personnel spend on documenting disciplinary actions and reintegration plans is often significant. SEL programs, such as DBT STEPS-A, have been shown to reduce office referrals and disciplinary actions, thus saving valuable school resources (Cook et al., 2008).

The second benefit for schools is the reduction in the likelihood of students' needing specialized placement, such as residential treatment, which can cost districts anywhere from $50,000 to $125,000 per year per student. Because DBT STEPS-A teaches effective skills for emotion management, problem solving, interpersonal effectiveness, and decision making, students who acquire these skills are less likely to need specialized placements due to EBD issues. Again, this can save school districts money while keeping students in schools.

OVERVIEW OF THE DBT STEPS-A CURRICULUM: SKILL MODULES AND SPECIFIC SKILLS

The overall goals of the DBT STEPS-A curriculum are for students to learn skills for managing their emotions, behaviors, and relationships, and to be able to apply (or "generalize") these skills to their lives outside the classroom. Thus the main foci of the DBT STEPS-A curriculum and class are skill acquisition and generalization.

When youth have better control of their emotions, are less impulsive, and have better relationships, they are better able to learn, and the impact of adverse outside-of-school factors on learning is reduced. The life skills learned through DBT STEPS-A can increase students' chances of success in the present and beyond graduation.

Curriculum Sequence

The recommended sequence of skill modules and lessons is shown in Figure 1.1. The first two lessons of the program are introductory lessons that focus on the DBT STEPS-A curriculum structure, four areas where teens typically have problems, the classroom guidelines, and the definition of dialectics. Of the four modules shown in Figure 1.1, the Mindfulness module should be taught first. Because mindfulness skills are the "core" skills—the foundation for all subsequent skills and modules—it is important that students gain a basic understanding of these skills before moving on. Furthermore, the Mindfulness module is taught again before each of the subsequent modules. We recommend teaching Distress Tolerance as the second module, although the order is not set in stone, and some instructors may choose to alter the sequence to fit their particular situations and/or current events.

Table 1.2 provides a list of each DBT STEPS-A lesson by its number, the corresponding skill(s), and the module in which the lesson is being taught. The specific lessons and skills are described in detail below, starting with the two introductory lessons.

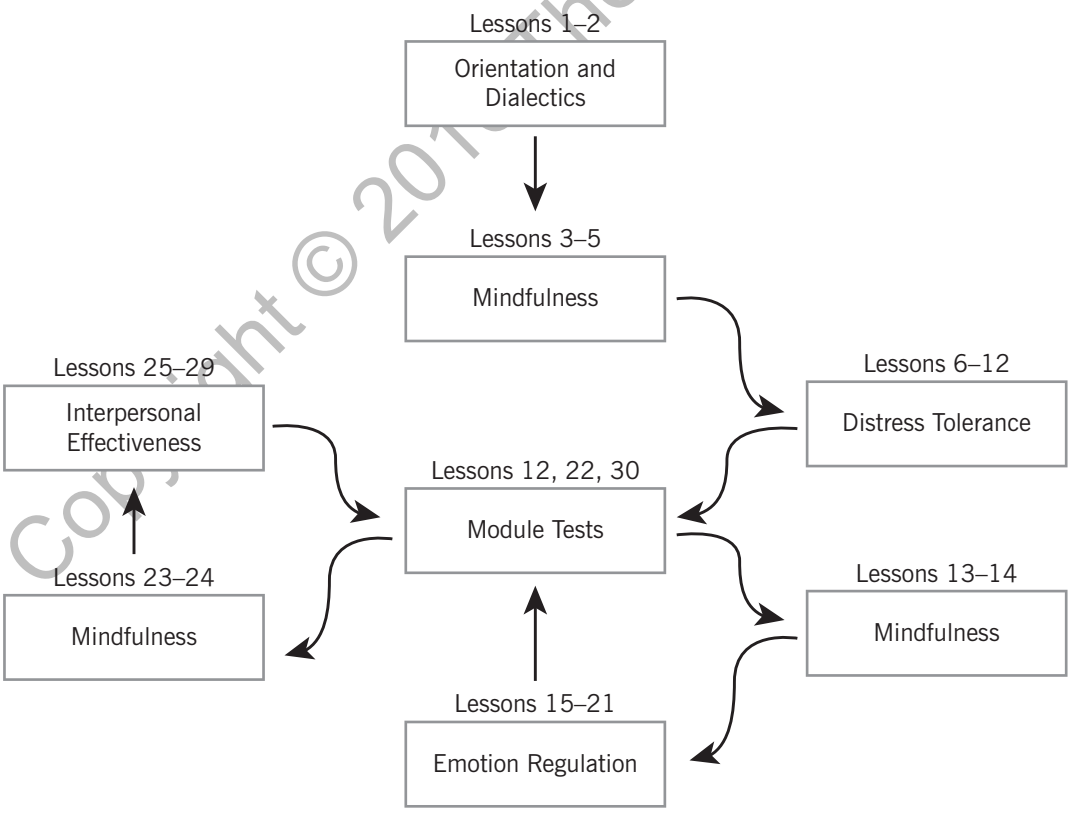

FIGURE 1.1. DBT STEPS-A curriculum: Recommended sequence of the curriculum modules.

TABLE 1.2. List of the Skills and Lesson Numbers

Module	Skill(s)	Lesson no.
Orientation	Classroom guidelines	Lesson 1
Dialectics	Principles of Dialectics	Lesson 2
Mindfulness	Wise mind	Lesson 3
	"What" skills	Lesson 4
	"How" skills	Lesson 5
Distress Tolerance	Intro. to crisis survival, and ACCEPTS	Lesson 6
	Self-soothe and IMPROVE	Lesson 7
	TIP Skills	Lesson 8
	Pros and cons	Lesson 9
	Intro. to reality acceptance and radical acceptance	Lesson 10
	Turning the mind and willingness	Lesson 11
	Mindfulness of current thoughts; Distress Tolerance Test, if given	Lesson 12
Mindfulness	Wise mind	Lesson 13
	"What" and "how" skills	Lesson 14
Emotion Regulation	Goals of emotion regulation; functions of emotions	Lesson 15
	Describing emotions	Lesson 16
	Checking the facts and opposite action	Lesson 17
	Problem solving	Lesson 18
	A of ABC PLEASE	Lesson 19
	BC PLEASE of ABC PLEASE	Lesson 20
	Wave skill—mindfulness of current emotions	Lesson 21
	Emotion Regulation Test	Lesson 22
Mindfulness	Wise mind	Lesson 23
	"What" and "how" skills	Lesson 24
Interpersonal Effectiveness	Goal setting	Lesson 25
	DEAR MAN	Lesson 26
	GIVE	Lesson 27
	FAST	Lesson 28
	Evaluating options	Lesson 29
	Interpersonal Effectiveness Test	Lesson 30

Orientation (Lesson 1)

In Lesson 1, students are introduced to the class, given classroom rules and guidelines, and oriented to the class schedule. They are also oriented to the four main areas in which teens typically have problems (difficulty managing emotions, confusion about self/distraction, impulsive behaviors, and interpersonal problems)—and the four DBT skills modules that can address the problems (Emotion Regulation, Mindfulness, Distress Tolerance, and Interpersonal Effectiveness, respectively).

1. *Difficulty managing emotions.* Adolescents often experience intense, quickly changing emotions, and these can lead to impulsive, emotion-based behaviors. Sometimes teens don't even recognize their emotions or the physical sensations that go along with the emotions. The skills in the Emotion Regulation module teach first how to recognize and name emotions, and then how to decrease unpleasant emotions and increase positive emotions.

2. *Confusion about self/distraction.* Adolescence is a time when students are developing who they are, what they like, their values, and their goals. Peer pressure, social media, and other environmental pressures can make it difficult for teenagers to understand themselves. It is also a time when distraction and loss of focus are problems. Confusion about the self and distraction can be improved by using the skills taught in the Mindfulness module (again, often referred to as "core" mindfulness skills to emphasize their importance). These skills increase self-awareness and control of attention. These skills are necessary for making centered, grounded decisions about the self, as well as focusing the mind (on classwork or other activities).

3. *Impulsiveness.* Teens can engage in a variety of problematic impulsive behaviors—ranging from skipping class, using drugs, and consuming alcohol to risky unprotected sexual behaviors, self-injurious behaviors (e.g., cutting, burning, or hitting oneself), and suicidal behaviors. Sometimes impulsive behaviors function as an escape from painful emotions. The skills taught in the Distress Tolerance module help make distress more endurable so that students do not act impulsively and make the situation worse.

4. *Interpersonal problems.* Many people struggle with how to ask others for things they want, say no to things they don't want, build and maintain long-term relationships, and maintain self-respect during interpersonal interactions. The three primary sets of skills in the Interpersonal Effectiveness module are strategies for increasing success in each of these difficult areas.

Students are then asked to identify specific behaviors that they want to work on increasing and decreasing over the course of the class. Behaviors to be decreased can include missing curfew, skipping class, not doing schoolwork, relationship and family problems, physical or verbal abuse toward others, gambling, drug or alcohol use, and chronic lateness to work or school. Some of these behaviors may seem fine to bring up in class, and others may not. In order to maintain confidentiality and to keep everyone focused, we encourage that the term "target behavior" be used in class discussions, so that students are not tempted to think, "Since this behavior isn't *my* problem, I do not have to pay attention."

Dialectics (Lesson 2)

The underlying philosophy of DBT and of DBT skills is "dialectics." Dialectics is a worldview in which reality as a whole consists of opposing forces—a "thesis" in tension with an "antithesis." A "synthesis" emerges from this tension. From a dialectical perspective, change is constant: A synthesis becomes a new thesis with a new antithesis. Opposites can both be true as parts of the larger whole, and contradictions may not cancel each other out. A premise of dialectics is that no one person can know all of reality, and so one person's truth can only be a partial truth. There is always more to know.

A dialectical perspective can help individuals think, feel, and behave in a balanced way. The fundamental dialectic in DBT is that of acceptance *and* change. We must accept things as they are, including ourselves, *and* at the same time recognize the need to change things, including ourselves. There are change-oriented skills in DBT STEPS-A, such as emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness skills; there are also acceptance-oriented skills, such as mindfulness and distress tolerance skills. The goal of dialectical thinking in DBT STEPS-A is to help students reduce "black-or-white," "all-or-nothing" thinking and increase their ability to recognize that there can be multiple perspectives to any situation. We want students to move away from "either–or" thinking and move toward "both–and" thinking. For example, it is useful for students to remind themselves of this common dialectical statement when the going gets tough: "I'm doing the best I can in this moment, *and* I need to do better."

Recognizing different perspectives does not necessarily mean approving or agreeing with other perspectives; it simply allows us to consider both sides of a situation. Once both sides of a dilemma or conflict can be understood, a search for synthesis can begin. A dialectical synthesis is not simply a compromise. Rather, it is a solution that honors the truth in both sides. For example, when we are stuck in a black-or-white dilemma, the synthesis will *not* be gray, but will be like black-and-white polka dots or like a checkerboard.

Mindfulness (Lessons 3–5, 13–14, and 23–24)

As we've noted, mindfulness skills are the foundation of the DBT STEPS-A curriculum, and the skills in the other three modules build on them. As shown in Figure 1.1, the Mindfulness module is repeated after each subsequent module.

Why Teach Mindfulness Skills?

Mindfulness skills teach youth how to focus their attention, pay attention to one thing at a time, and increase their awareness of the present rather than being distracted by thoughts about the past and future. These are critical skills—not only for regulating emotions, but for studying and for focusing in school. Mindfulness skills also help students notice and label their emotions, thoughts, and urges; doing this increases their self-awareness while reducing potential impulse control problems. Furthermore, these skills help students notice when they are making overly emotional decisions or overly logical ones, and assist them in finding a balance. With greater awareness, student will have more choices and can make more effective decisions. Mindfulness skills can help students enhance their identity, develop future goals, and identify their values.

The DBT core mindfulness skills developed by Linehan (1993, 2015a) are secular. Although Linehan drew from Buddhist practices, the mindfulness skills are not meant to teach Buddhism, spirituality, or any type of religion. The skills help individuals become more aware of living in the present moment and to be more mindful in our current lives. According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, the treatment developer of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, mindfulness is "paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). In contrast, mindlessness is like being on automatic pilot—not being aware of what we are doing or what is going on around us in this one moment. Thus mindfulness skills focus on increasing awareness and control of attention.

According to Linehan (2015a), there are three main goals of mindfulness: (1) Reduce suffering and increase happiness, (2) increase control of our minds, and (3) experience reality as it is.

1. *Reduce suffering and increase happiness.* Research has found that regularly practicing mindfulness has been associated with increased emotional stability (e.g., decreased depression, anxiety, anger) and increased sense of well-being (e.g., improved body image, reduction of physical problems) in both clinical and nonclinical populations (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992; Vøllestad, Nielsen, & Høstmark, 2012; Kaviani, Javaheri, & Hatami, 2011). This does not mean that mindfulness will take away all pain and troubles; it means that mindfulness can help reduce misery and increase overall joy in day-to-day life.

2. *Increase control of our minds.* Being in control of our minds is learning to be in control of our attention. It is being in control of what we pay attention to and for how long. It is the difference between walking or driving home and wondering how we got there and really noticing the route and the experience of driving. The first way is mindlessness. Mindfulness is taking control of what we pay attention to and being aware of it in the present, rather than getting lost in thought.

3. *Experience reality as it is.* Experiencing reality as it is means being present to life as it is, rather than as we think life should be. It is the opposite of avoiding life or escaping problems. Escape often causes even more problems, and suppressing thoughts and emotions can increase their frequency.

Specific Mindfulness Skills

The Mindfulness module teaches seven core skills aimed at increasing students' ability to be more mindful during their everyday interactions: wise mind; the three "what" skills (observing, describing, and participating); and the three "how" skills (nonjudgmentally, one-mindfully, and effectively).

WISE MIND

The first mindfulness skill taught is called "wise mind." Students are first oriented to the three states of mind: "reasonable mind," "emotion mind," and "wise mind." Reasonable mind is acting out of reason and logic in the absence of emotion. Being in reasonable mind may be helpful when one is working on a chemistry experiment in the lab and must add the chemicals very carefully and strategically so that the substances do not explode. Emotion mind is thinking and acting from intense emotion, disregarding all reason and logic. For example, a student named Katy finds out that she received a D on her chemistry final, just as she is about to take her English final. She is so upset that she cannot concentrate on her English final and starts to believe she is going to fail this second exam (and perhaps the whole semester). Wise mind is the synthesis of reasonable mind and emotion mind. It is the place from which we can make wise decisions that acknowledge both our logic and our emotions. It is not a place of compromise; rather, it is a place that allows us to see reality for what it is and experience our emotions about it without becoming overwhelmed. Wise mind is the state of mind in which

Katy can validate her emotions of sadness and fear about the chemistry exam, while also holding the logic that if she skips the English final, she will fall even further behind and most certainly fail. Right now, she only thinks she will fail and does not know it for sure. Once she is able to reach wise mind, she will be able to determine what other skills she can use to help decrease her emotions.

THE "WHAT" SKILLS

The remaining six mindfulness skills—the "what" skills and the "how" skills—focus on how we can practice mindfulness and access our wise mind. The "what" skills are practiced one at a time, not together. We observe or describe or participate.

- *Observing.* To observe mindfully is simply to notice or observe things either inside or outside of ourselves, without putting words on our observations. We observe the world outside ourselves through our five senses. We observe our own thoughts and emotions through our internal sensations. However, we cannot observe the thoughts, emotions, or intentions of other people. We can only observe other people's behaviors and facial expressions.

- *Describing.* To describe is to put an observation into words. We cannot mindfully describe something we have not observed. To describe it mindfully is to stick to the observable facts without judgments, interpretations, or opinions.

- *Participating.* To participate mindfully is to completely engage in an activity completely, throwing oneself into it 100%. To participate means going to a school dance and throwing oneself into the dancing without self-consciousness, without constantly watching to see whether people are looking and wondering what they think.

THE "HOW" SKILLS

As the names of these skill groups indicate, the "what" skills are *what* we do; the "how" skills are *how* we observe, describe, or participate. Unlike the "what" skills, the "how" skills—nonjudgmentally, one-mindfully, and effectively—are to be practiced together.

- *Nonjudgmentally.* To observe, describe, or participate nonjudgmentally means just that: not to judge. To describe, for example, is to verbalize only what one sees, without evaluating it as good or bad. Judgments tend to fuel the intensity of emotions; therefore, the more judgmental thinking and communicating are, the more intense the emotions are likely to be.

- *One-mindfully.* One-mindfully means doing only one thing at a time in the moment; it is the opposite of multitasking. It is focusing attention on this moment, rather than on what might happen in the future or what has happened in the past.

- *Effectively.* Last, acting effectively means doing what works—that is, choosing actions that move one toward his or her long-term goals. It is the opposite of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face, similar to doing something based on principle, even though it moves one further away from his or her goals.

Distress Tolerance (Lessons 6–12)

The next module is Distress Tolerance. The skills in this module help students cope with emotional distress so that they do not act impulsively and make matters worse. Students must have some ability to tolerate distress in order to consider using other effective skills, such as those from the Emotion Regulation module.

Why Teach Distress Tolerance Skills?

The goal of the distress tolerance skills in DBT STEPS-A is to reduce impulsiveness across different environments. Ultimately, this means fewer outbursts, conflicts, skipped classes, and aggressive incidents in school. Thus the reduction of impulsiveness through distress tolerance strategies has significant benefits in reducing disciplinary issues and concerns, while also enhancing academic progress.

The distress tolerance skills are divided into two categories: the crisis survival skills and the reality acceptance skills. A person can use crisis survival skills when dealing with a major problem or crisis that cannot be solved right away. If the crisis is causing the individual to experience a significant amount of distress (about 65 or higher on a scale of 0–100), and the person is in danger of acting from emotion mind in an ineffective way, then crisis survival skills should be employed.

Crisis Survival Skills (Lessons 6–9)

Several sets of crisis survival skills are taught in the DBT STEPS-A curriculum: distracting with wise mind ACCEPTS; IMPROVE the moment; self-soothing with the five senses, plus movement; TIP skills; and pros and cons. Several of these skill names are mnemonics standing for a variety of distraction methods. Crisis survival skills are not intended to eliminate distress, nor do they solve the problem causing the distress. These skills only make distress more tolerable in the short term and reduce the likelihood of making the situation worse. They are not to be used to escape or avoid problems over the long term.

DISTRACTING WITH WISE MIND ACCEPTS (LESSON 6)

The ACCEPTS skills are methods for distracting from a painful situation by mindfully participating: Activities, Contributing, Comparisons, Emotions, Pushing away, Thoughts, and Sensations. The key here, and with all other skills in DBT STEPS-A, is for students to engage in the skills *mindfully*. Through participating one-mindfully in other behaviors, students will be able to distract themselves from their current problems and emotions (As we all know, it is not effective to practice distraction all the time. The Emotion Regulation module teaches effective skills to help students tolerate and experience emotions as well.).

IMPROVE THE MOMENT (LESSON 7)

The IMPROVE skills focus on how to get through the current moment: Imagery, Meaning, Prayer, Relaxation, doing only One thing in the moment, taking a brief Vacation, and Encouragement.

SELF-SOOTHING WITH THE FIVE SENSES AND MOVEMENT (LESSON 7)

The premise of self-soothing is to make distress more tolerable by engaging in sensual comforts, such as looking at something beautiful (vision), listening to favorite music (hearing), lighting a scented candle (smell), eating a favorite food (taste), or having a warm bath (touch). Movement (walking, yoga, tai chi, etc.) is also used as a form of self-soothing.

TIP SKILLS (LESSON 8)

The TIP skills are ways to reduce intense emotions quickly for a brief amount of time. They work by activating the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). The PNS is the body's physiological emotion regulation system that calls the body into rest (i.e., heart rate slows down, blood pressure decreases, saliva production decreases, pupils constrict, and digestion increases). Activation of the PNS counters the effect of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS), which is the "fight-or-flight" system that calls the body into action.

TIP stands for three ways that one can activate the PNS—by changing body Temperature, using Intense exercise, and engaging in Paced breathing.

- *Temperature.* Putting the face in a bowl of cold water can activate the PNS.

- *Intense exercise.* Intense exercise (e.g., running, power walking, jumping jacks, air boxing, sit-ups, push-ups) can quickly decrease intense emotions. It's best to exercise for 20 minutes mindfully; the PNS will be activated once the exercise stops and the body slows down.

- *Paced breathing.* Paced breathing entails slowing down the breath and engaging in deep breathing where the exhale is longer than the inhale. Typically, the goal is 4 seconds for the inhale and 6–8 seconds for the exhale. This will decrease the total number of breath cycles per minute to between 5 and 7 breaths per minute. The average pace of breathing for a teenager is about 12–16 breaths per minute.

PROS AND CONS (LESSON 9)

The skill of pros and cons is a decision-making strategy that is useful for a wide variety of issues. Within the Distress Tolerance module, students use it to determine the short- and long-term advantages and disadvantages of engaging in problematic impulsive behaviors (i.e., the students' target behaviors). This model of pros and cons is different from the typical model, in that the pros and cons of engaging in a target behavior and the pros and cons of not engaging in it must both be identified. This results in a four-cell list rather than a two-column list. By comparing the pros and cons of acting on urges with the pros and cons of tolerating the urges, students are able to identify effective reasons for tolerating their urges and acting skillfully. The long-term pros of tolerating the urge usually outweigh the short-term pros of acting impulsively. Pros and cons are best completed when a student is not distressed and in advance of emotional situations. The list should then be kept handy so it can be referred to when impulsive urges arise. Once students decide that they are going to tolerate their urges and not act on their emotions, then they can use one of the other crisis survival skills to help them tolerate the urges (e.g., distracting with wise mind ACCEPTS, IMPROVE the moment, or self-soothing).

Reality Acceptance Skills (Lessons 10–12)

The second half of the Distress Tolerance module focuses on skills for accepting reality. Whereas the crisis survival skills focus on tolerating distress in the short term, the reality acceptance skills focus on tolerating distress for problems that cannot be solved in the longer term—either because the past cannot be changed, because present circumstances are outside our control, or because solutions are only possible in the future. Before we can change reality, we must first see and accept reality as it is. Reality acceptance skills are tools for how to make the best of a bad situation. These skills are radical acceptance, turning the mind, willingness, and mindfulness of current thoughts.

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE (LESSON 10)

Radical acceptance is acknowledging and accepting reality as it is, rather than how we think it should be or want it to be. "Radical" refers to accepting something "all the way," completely, 100%. We must be able to see the facts without judgment in order to begin acceptance. The key concept behind radical acceptance is that pain in life is inevitable, but suffering is optional. Fighting a difficult reality (non-acceptance) adds suffering and misery to pain.

For example, a student named Tom is expelled from school for cheating when he did not cheat. As a result, he has missed 6 months of school, has had to repeat the school year, has not been able to attend school functions, and has lost contact with many of his friends. This is a painful situation. But when Tom fights the reality by insisting that "It shouldn't have happened," or asking "Why me?", he adds suffering to his pain. Fighting reality does not change reality. Acceptance of reality does not mean approval or passivity. Accepting what has happened does not mean that Tom agrees with the expulsion or gives up. Although acceptance may bring up much anger, sadness, and grief about the loss, it can also move Tom toward completing schoolwork in order to catch up, get back on track, repair old relationships, or build new ones.

Acceptance is about letting go of all the "shoulds" in our lives, such as "Things should be easier," "It shouldn't have happened this way," or "I should be able to do the things I want to do." Acceptance means acknowledging the reality of our lives, such as "My parents do have the right to place restrictions on me," "Everything is caused, so this could not have happened any other way unless I [or someone else] did something different earlier," or "I may not have caused all the problems in my life, *and* I still have to solve them."

TURNING THE MIND (LESSON 11)

Radical acceptance is not a one-time skill. Once something is radically accepted, it is probably not accepted forever. Acceptance can come and go, and when we find ourselves in a place of nonacceptance, we must turn our minds back to acceptance. Turning the mind is choosing to turn toward accepting reality, like coming to a fork in the road and turning toward the road of acceptance. Signs that we have gone back to nonacceptance and are rejecting reality include anger or willfulness.

For example, on Monday a student named Erica may be able to radically accept that she did not get the lead in the class play; then on Thursday she sees the student who has the lead make mistakes, and she gets angry again that she wasn't picked. Erica will have to use the skill

of turning the mind to turn herself back toward acceptance. She may have to do this over and over again to let go of the suffering. Turning the mind may need to occur once a year, once a month, once a week, once an hour, or 30 times a minute. Students must practice being mindful to notice when nonacceptance of reality reappears.

WILLINGNESS (LESSON 11)

Willingness is the skill of doing what is needed in any given situation. It is similar to the skill of acting effectively from the mindfulness "how" skills. Willingness is often easier to teach by contrasting it with willfulness. Willfulness is refusing to tolerate the moment, to act as if it is not occurring. Willfulness can take the form of sitting on our hands, being passive at a time when action is called for. Willfulness can also take the form of trying to control things that are out of our control. For example, a student named Nia might try to get her friends to see the movie she wants to see, when everyone else wants to see a different movie. When Nia doesn't succeed, she may go with everyone else but complain, making them unhappy. Willfulness is the inability to move from our own stance. It is doing something grudgingly. Willingness is doing what is needed nonjudgmentally and without reservation. It is doing and acting completely from wise mind.

MINDFULNESS OF CURRENT THOUGHTS (LESSON 12)

Mindfulness of current thoughts is the final skill taught in the Distress Tolerance module. We have all had painful thoughts, and dwelling on those thoughts tends to increase our distress and pain. It's understandable to want to push painful thoughts out of our minds, to suppress them. This can help temporarily, but research (Wegner, 1989) has found that thought suppression tends to increase the frequency of the suppressed thought. Mindfulness of current thoughts is the opposite of trying to change or suppress thoughts; it is about allowing thoughts to come and go out without holding on to them or trying to push them away. All thoughts are mental events, neural firings of the brain. In this sense, all thoughts are essentially the same. Mindfulness of current thoughts is mindful observing and describing of a thought as just a thought. Through observing thoughts, we gain distance from them and can watch them come and go without holding on to them or believing that "Since I thought it, it must be true." We can let go of analyzing the thoughts.

Emotion Regulation (Lessons 15–21)

After the Mindfulness module is revisited briefly, the Emotion Regulation module is taught. It is designed to help students acquire a better understanding of emotions and develop a greater capacity to regulate their emotions. This module includes skills to reduce unpleasant emotions (vulnerability to emotion mind) and skills to increase positive emotions.

Why Teach Emotion Regulation Skills?

Emotion regulation skills are crucial for adolescents, especially those who may be emotionally sensitive and reactive, and for whom calming down from emotional arousal does not come easily. Developing the ability to make decisions that are not made under emotional duress

provides these students with a greater likelihood of making effective decisions. Whereas the mindfulness skills and the distress tolerance skills are both acceptance-based sets of skills, the skills taught in this module and the Interpersonal Effectiveness module are considered change-based skills.

There are four categories of emotion regulation skills: (1) understanding and naming emotions, (2) changing emotional responses, (3) reducing vulnerability to emotion mind, and (4) letting go of emotional suffering.

Understanding and Naming Emotions

GOALS OF EMOTION REGULATION AND FUNCTIONS OF EMOTIONS (LESSON 15)

The Emotion Regulation module begins by teaching students that basic emotions are biologically hard-wired and serve important functions. They motivate and prepare us for action; for instance, fear involves physiological arousal that urges us to move away from what is feared. Emotions communicate to and influence others through our facial expressions and our verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Finally, emotions give us information about ourselves and our environment. The goal of the module is not to get rid of emotions, but rather to understand and manage them better.

DESCRIBING EMOTIONS (LESSON 16)

Students are then taught how to observe and describe the parts of the emotion system, as shown in the model of emotions (depicted in Handout 16.1). This model presents an emotion as a full-system response that includes vulnerability factors; a prompting event; thoughts or interpretations about the event; internal physiological responses and action urges; external responses such as facial expressions and behaviors; and consequences of actions. Being able to observe and describe the process helps students identify the specific emotion. Changing any one part of the emotion system can change the emotion or reduce its intensity.

Once students are able to understand and label their emotions, they must decide whether they want to change their emotion or continue to experience the emotion.

Changing Emotional Responses

CHECKING THE FACTS (LESSON 17)

Thoughts and interpretations of a prompting event can intensify or change an emotion; they can be also what prompts an emotion in the first place. Interpretations, however, can be wrong. We may think we see a snake in our path and jump away from it, heart pounding. On second look, it turns out to be a stick, and we start to calm down. The skill of checking the facts asks students to make sure that what they think happened actually did happen. Revising an initial interpretation to match the facts more closely can change the initial emotion.

OPPOSITE ACTION (LESSON 17)

The skill of opposite action focuses on changing an emotion by acting opposite to the emotion's action urge or behavior tendency. Every emotion naturally comes with an action urge.

For example, when we are angry, we often have the urge to attack; if we are scared, we have the urge to avoid; and when we are sad, we tend to want to withdraw. Changing behavior can change the emotion. This skill is based on empirically supported treatments for depression and anxiety disorders that call for getting active in the case of depression, and approaching rather than avoiding for phobias and other anxiety disorders. The key to opposite action is that students must engage in the opposite action 100%; maintaining thoughts of frustration and anger while smiling at someone will not reduce or change the emotion associated with the other person. Furthermore, the goal must be to change the emotion.

PROBLEM SOLVING (LESSON 18)

When painful emotions are caused by a situation or life problem, solving the problem is the best way to change the emotion. This skill includes a seven-step problem-solving process.

Reducing Vulnerability to Emotion Mind: ABC PLEASE

The third set of emotion regulation skills focuses on preventing painful emotions from starting by decreasing vulnerability to emotion mind. These skills are known by the mnemonic ABC PLEASE.

ACCUMULATING POSITIVES (LESSON 19)

Increasing positive experiences relieves stress and builds emotional resilience. Students are encouraged to accumulate positives in the short term by doing at least one thing every day that they find pleasant and enjoyable. They are also encouraged to plan for the long term by identifying their personal values, choosing long-term goals based on those values, and identifying specific steps they can take now to begin moving toward those goals.

BUILDING MASTERY (LESSON 20)

Building mastery is as important as accumulating positives. Building mastery is the skill of engaging in activities that are difficult but not impossible. By engaging in and completing difficult tasks on a regular basis, individuals will increase their overall sense of self-confidence, self-worth, and competence. These activities may include tasks that are not particularly enjoyable, but that confer a sense of accomplishment and pride once they are completed.

COPING AHEAD OF TIME WITH EMOTIONAL SITUATIONS (LESSON 20)

The next skill involves selecting and rehearsing coping skills in advance of a situation that is likely to trigger difficult emotions. Advance rehearsal increases the likelihood that a person will actually carry out that behavior during the emotional situation, and it reduces the likelihood that the person will become emotionally overwhelmed. There are two methods of rehearsing in advance: imaginal practice and *in vivo* practice. *In vivo* practice is practice as close to the actual situation as possible, such as role-playing the situation with another person. Imaginal practice is imagining the situation and engaging in the skills. Research (Atienza, Balaguer, & Garcia-Merita, 1998, Jeannerod & Frak, 1999; Kazdin & Mascitelli, 1982) has

found that imaginal practice can be as effective as live practice for some behaviors. This is true for athletes practicing new skills, as well as individuals who know they are going to experience an emotionally difficult situation.

PLEASE SKILLS (LESSON 20)

The PLEASE skills decrease vulnerability to emotion mind by taking care of the body. PLEASE stands for the following: treat PhysicaL illness, balance Eating, Avoid mood-altering drugs, balance Sleep, and get Exercise. Although the PLEASE skills are essentially commonsense practices, teens and adults often overlook them or do not make the connection between these health-related behaviors and their moods. They are among the most important skill sets, and we stress their importance to our students.

Letting Go of Emotional Suffering

THE WAVE SKILL—MINDFULNESS OF CURRENT EMOTIONS (LESSON 21)

There are times when a student must experience a difficult emotion in order to respond effectively. In such situations, the student should use the "wave" skill, which is also referred to as "mindfulness of current emotions." In the Distress Tolerance module, the students learn how to distract from their emotions and emotion-based behavioral urges. At times, distraction is very effective; however, it is just as important for students to learn how to experience and tolerate their emotions as well. This skill will teach students how to be mindful of and experience the physical sensations that accompany emotions, without distracting themselves from or avoiding them.

Interpersonal Effectiveness (Lessons 25–29)

The last module of the DBT STEPS-A curriculum is Interpersonal Effectiveness. It is taught after the Mindfulness module lessons have once again been reviewed. The overall goal of the Interpersonal Effectiveness module is to help students develop and maintain better interpersonal relationships by improving assertiveness, reducing conflict, and increasing self-respect.

Why Teach Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills?

It is no surprise that one often hears that the event prompting an intense emotional or problem behavior was an interpersonal situation. These situations can include problems with boyfriends or girlfriends, teachers, family members, or friends. Thus the Interpersonal Effectiveness module is extremely important. The interpersonal effectiveness skills benefit all types of relationships: peer to peer, student to teacher and staff, and family. Strains from school problems such as peer exclusion, bullying, or not connecting with teachers can be reduced with good interpersonal effectiveness skills. In addition, improving overall interpersonal effectiveness among students creates the potential for an overall change in the culture of students' (and perhaps also staff members') interactions throughout the school. The interpersonal effectiveness skills help students learn how to ask effectively for things they want or say no to things they don't want, while maintaining or improving the relationship and maintaining self-respect.

Specific Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

OVERVIEW AND GOAL SETTING/PRIORITIZING (LESSON 25)

The first lesson in this module teaches how to identify and prioritize three main goals in any given interpersonal situation: (1) "objectives effectiveness," or being able to ask for things students want or say no to things they do not want; (2) "relationship effectiveness," or maintaining and even improving the relationship when asking or saying no; and (3) "self-respect effectiveness," or maintaining and improving self-respect in the interaction. All three goals may be met in any interpersonal situation; however, each situation may differ in the degree to which the goals can be met. Students are taught to consider the three goals listed above and rank their importance for an interaction. When it is not possible to obtain all the goals, prioritizing them allows students to emphasize one set of skills over another to obtain the most important goal in a given situation. In the subsequent lessons, skills that correspond to each of these goals are then taught.

OBJECTIVES EFFECTIVENESS SKILLS: DEAR MAN (LESSON 26)

The objectives effectiveness skills are assertiveness skills that individuals can use to ask for things they want or say no to things they do not want. DEAR MAN is a mnemonic for this set of skills: Describe the situation, Express your emotion or opinion, Assert your request, Reinforce the other person ahead of time, stay Mindful of this moment, Appear confident, and Negotiate as needed.

RELATIONSHIP EFFECTIVENESS SKILLS: GIVE (LESSON 27)

The DEAR MAN skills can be thought of as what to say to obtain an objective. The GIVE skills can be thought of as how to say it to maintain or improve the relationship with the other person in both the short and long term. GIVE is a mnemonic for be Gentle, act Interested, Validate, and use an Easy manner. Students are taught to consider how they want the other person to feel about them after the interaction is over.

SELF-RESPECT EFFECTIVENESS SKILLS: FAST (LESSON 28)

The FAST skills can be thought of as how to ask or say no in order to maintain or improve self-respect in the interaction. FAST stands for be Fair, no Apologies, Stick to values, and be Truthful. As compared to the GIVE skills, students are taught to consider how they want to feel about themselves after the interaction is over. Students' values identified during the Emotion Regulation module (as they accumulate positives in the long term—part of the A of ABC PLEASE) are relevant here.

EVALUATING OPTIONS (LESSON 29)

Finally, being interpersonally effective also includes being able to determine the intensity with which to ask for things or say no to someone else. In some situations, it is imperative to ask firmly and not to take no for an answer; in other situations, it is more effective to ask softly and take no for the answer. The final set of skills in this module, evaluating options, describes

the factors that should influence the intensity of asking or saying no and how to weigh them. These 10 factors are (1) your own or the other person's capability to give what is asked; (2) your priorities; (3) the effect of your actions on your self-respect; (4) your and the other person's moral and legal rights in the situation; (5) your authority over the other person or the other person's authority over you; (6) the type of relationship you have with the person; (7) the effect of your action on your long-term versus short-term goals; (8) the degree of reciprocity, or give and take, in the relationship; (9) whether you have (or the other person has) done adequate homework to prepare; and (10) the timing of your request or refusal. Students will weigh these factors to determine the intensity of asking for something or saying no after they have prioritized their goals for the interpersonal situation.

CONCLUSION

The 30 lessons (tests included) constitute the DBT STEPS-A curriculum. The recommended sequence of delivery has been provided: starting with Mindfulness, proceeding to Distress Tolerance and then Emotion Regulation, and finishing with Interpersonal Effectiveness. However, instructors can use a sequence of Mindfulness, Interpersonal Effectiveness, Emotion Regulation, and Distress Tolerance. The decision of which module to implement after Mindfulness is based on the teachers' familiarity with or knowledge of the students in the class. The specific lessons and student handouts are provided in Parts II and III, respectively.

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New York, NY 10001
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