

A Break Down of “Finding a Balance” Skills Training

This group is designed to help individuals who are struggling to cope with emotions and difficult life situations which cause them. It consists of four main modules addressed below. Each new group member commits to complete at least one ‘round’ of the four modules. This helps the member learn the skills in the most complete fashion. With the combination of these skills, the members may become well equipped to cope with life stressors. The members work on learning the mechanics of the skills in group and work on the specifics and more intimate issues in individual sessions. The group is an open/closed group. This means new group members may begin when the group begins a new module.

The following is an explanation of each module:

Mindfulness

This is the most important of all the modules and is why it is reviewed between the other three modules in the skills training cycle. Mindfulness teaches the group member how to become more aware of his/her emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and events surrounding them. This is the glue which holds the other skill sets together as the group member needs to use mindfulness to know what other skill to use and how. The main skills taught here are Wise Mind and the What/How skills.

Interpersonal Effectiveness

This module teaches the group members how to effectively ask for help and say no when necessary. It teaches the members about how to set boundaries appropriately while maintaining his or her relationships and self respect. Skills in this set are called DEAR MAN, GIVE, and FAST.

Emotional Regulation

This module is key in helping the member learn how to manage their emotions. In DBT, we do NOT teach members to ‘get rid of’ or ‘avoid’ their emotions. We teach the members how to cope with and manage their emotions in a healthy manner. We also teach them about how to use their emotions in the way they were originally designed: survival mechanisms for one’s environment. In this module, the skills focus on identifying the cycle of emotions, identifying the function of emotions, reducing physical vulnerability of emotions, experiencing current emotions, building positive emotions and opposite action to an emotion.

Distress Tolerance

This module is especially helpful when a member is in the middle of a crisis. It focuses on how to get through tough life situations in the most healthy and helpful way possible for the member. Sometimes we can’t push for change in our lives, but need to accept certain things. We do not teach members to accept situations as being ‘good’, rather to accept that some situations are reality and can’t be changed. It teaches members that even though they sometimes can’t change a situation, they do have control on how they react to the situation and allow their emotions to come down from its extreme levels. These skills are called (wise mind distracts with) ACCEPTS, IMPROVE (the moment), Self Soothe, Awareness breath, Half-Smile, and Radical Acceptance.