

Behaviorism

Changing Behaviors: Do You Want to Increase or Decrease?

Handout 1

- A) REINFORCERS:** Consequences (experiences including actions, feelings, thoughts) that result in an *increase* in a behavior in a particular situation.

2 Types of Reinforcement:

- a) Increase frequency of a behavior by providing a "rewarding" consequence (e.g., praise, a smile, an A on an English test, a compliment).
- b) Increase frequency of a behavior by removing or stopping an aversive (negative/unwanted) experience. For example you might increase the act of cleaning up your room in order to stop the nagging from your parent. It is relief. You are relieved that the nagging has stopped. (e.g., You are more likely to take more aspirin if headaches go away; more likely to hurt yourself if it takes away negative emotions (*in the short term). You must consider alternatives that can replace aspirin or cutting (distress tolerance skills; rubber band)

Don't forget about SELF-REINFORCEMENT (self-rewards).

- B) PUNISHMENT:** Actions that result in a decrease in a behavior.

2 Types of Punishment:

- a) *Effective* punishment: Actions used to decrease behaviors that do not have natural consequences (e.g., coming home after curfew, hitting younger sibling). Natural consequences include: failing test after not studying (if person truly cares about grades). (e.g., after adolescent breaks curfew, parent forbids her to go out late the next day.)
- b) *Ineffective* punishment: Actions used to decrease behaviors that are not specific, not time limited, not appropriate for the crime, and that have already established significant natural consequences. E.g., After adolescent breaks curfew, the parent forbids her to go out for at least the next two months, and consistently reminds her of her mistake. Ineffective punishment does not teach people what they did was wrong or what they need to do differently next time. Beware of overusing self-punishment.

- C) EXTINCTION:** Refers to the reduction in the likelihood of a behavior because reinforcement is no longer given. Remember: Extinguishing a behavior that has been reinforced can result in a behavioral burst, which is a temporary increase in the behavior you are trying to extinguish.

- D) SHAPING:** Refers to reinforcing small steps heading in the right direction.

Behaviorism

Practice Exercises

1) Identify behavior that you want to increase (USE reinforcement):

Yourself: _____

Someone else: _____

2) What did you do or say to apply reinforcement?
(Do not forget to apply shaping- reinforcement of small steps)

Yourself: _____

Someone else: _____

3) What was the outcome?

Yourself: _____

Someone else: _____

Validation

Handout 1

WHAT IS VALIDATION?

- Validation *communicates to another person* that his or her responses (feelings, thoughts, actions) make sense and are *understandable to you* in a particular situation.
 - Acknowledgment (observing and describing non-judgmentally).
I can see that you are really upset right now.”
 - Acceptance
“I know you are upset” “I am upset” (That’s it...you don’t need to say anything else.)

WHY SHOULD I VALIDATE? WHY BOTHER?

- It shows that you are listening.
- It shows that you understand.
- It communicates understanding in a nonjudgmental way.
- It is good for relationships.
- It can decrease the intensity of conflicts.

WHAT SHOULD I VALIDATE?

- Yourself, others, relationships.
- Feelings and thoughts (“inside” the person) that are valid (and makes sense to the average person in the same situation).
- Behaviors (actions) that are valid (makes sense to the average person).

Validation

Handout 2

REMEMBER:

- Validating is not necessarily agreeing.
- Validating does not mean that you like what the other person is doing, saying, or feeling.

How can I validate another person (or myself)?

- 1) Actively listen and pay attention to him or her (or yourself).
(e.g., make eye contact with them, nod your head when they talk to you; be mindful of yourself)
- 2) State his or her feelings descriptively without passing judgment.
(e.g., "It looks like you're upset." or "You have a sad look on your face.")
- 3) Respond in a way (action) that takes him/her (or yourself) seriously.
(e.g., if s/he says they want to be alone for a little while say "OK," then walk away and let them calm down before re-approaching him/her. If s/he is crying, give them a tissue.)
- 4) Show tolerance; see that the person's (or your own) behavior, emotion, or action, makes sense given his/her (or your own) life circumstances and history, even if you do not approve of the behavior, emotion, or action itself.
- 5) Be mindful of yourself, the other person and the relationship; do not judge.
- 6) Use interpersonal effectiveness skills (GIVE skills).

List self-validating statements:

List validating statements to say to someone else:

Validation

Practice Exercises

DIRECTIONS:

Choose two situations during the week in which you used your validation skills with **someone else** (situation 1) and **yourself** (situation 2)

SITUATION 1:

Who did you validate? _____

What was the situation in which you chose to use your validation skills?

What EXACTLY did you say or do to validate the other person?

What was the outcome?

How did you feel afterwards?

Would you say or do anything differently next time?

SITUATION 2 (SELF-VALIDATION):

Who did you validate? Self _____

What was the situation in which you choose to use your validation skills?

What EXACTLY did you say or do to validate YOURSELF?

What was the outcome?

How did you feel afterwards?

Would you say or do anything differently next time?

Miller, Rathus, & Landsman (1999). DBT Multifamily Skills Training Manual for Suicidal Adolescents. Adapted from Marsha L. Linehan's *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality*. Dixon, CA: Guilford Press, 1993.

Dialectics

What Is It? What's The Big Deal?

Handout 1

It is a helpful way to view the world.

- a) It teaches us that there is always more than one way to see a situation and always more than one way to solve any problem.
- b) It considers all people to have unique qualities and different points of view.
- c) It stresses the importance of not looking at the world in absolutes - black and white, all or none, ways.
- d) It points out that only change is constant.

**Acceptance
AND
Change =
MIDDLE PATH**

Acceptance

e.g. _____

Change

e.g. _____

It helps us find our way to the middle path.

- a) Two things that seem like opposites can both be true.
(e.g., You are doing the best you can (acceptance) AND you need to do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change (change).)
(e.g., You are tough (firm/strict) AND you are gentle (soft/flexible).)

(e.g., _____
AND _____)

- 2. Accepting this idea can help pave the way toward a middle path.

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Dialectics

Hints for Finding the Middle Path

Handout 2

WAYS TO THINK AND ACT DIALECTICALLY:

- 1. Move away from “either-or” thinking to “both-and” thinking.**
Avoid words like “always” and “never.”
Be descriptive.
For example, instead of saying, “Everyone always treats me unfairly,” say
“Sometimes I am treated fairly AND at other times I am treated unfairly.”
- 2. Practice looking at other points of view.**
There are always at least two sides to a story.
Find the kernel of truth in each one.
- 3. Remember that no one has the absolute truth (DBT assumption).**
- 4. Use “I feel _____” statements.**
Instead of “You are this way or that way” statements or “That’s just the way it is” statements.
Be descriptive.
- 5. Accept that different opinions can be legitimate (although you do not have to agree with them).**
For example, “I see your point of view even though I do not agree with it.”
- 6. Do not assume that you know what is in someone else’s head. Check out your assumptions**
For example, “Why did you say that? What did you mean by that?”
- 7. Do not expect that other people can read your mind.**
For example, “What I am trying to say is...I feel _____ about...”

Dialectical Dilemmas

Finding the Middle Path - Balance

Handout 3

Mark down on this line where you are and where your parent/adolescent is (s = self; fm = family member),

Too loose-----Too strict

△

HAVING CLEAR RULES AND ENFORCING THEM CONSISTENTLY
AND AT THE SAME TIME
BEING WILLING TO NEGOTIATE ON SOME ISSUES

ASK YOURSELF:

If I want to be less loose I need to

AND AT THE SAME TIME

If I want to be less strict I need to

Dialectical Dilemmas

Finding the Middle Path - Balance

Handout 4

Mark down on this line where you are and where your parent/adolescent is (s = self; fm = family member).

**Making light of
Problem behaviors**

**Making too much of
normal adolescent behavior**

Δ

RECOGNIZE WHEN A BEHAVIOR "CROSSES THE LINE"
(i.e., causing major problems in his/her school work, family life, or social life)
AND TRY TO GET HELP FOR THAT BEHAVIOR
AND AT THE SAME TIME
RECOGNIZE WHICH BEHAVIORS ARE PART OF NORMAL ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

ASK YOURSELF:

If I want to take these problem behaviors more seriously I need to?

AND AT THE SAME TIME

If I do not want to make too much of normal adolescent behavior I need to?

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Dialectical Dilemmas

Finding the Middle Path - Balance

Handout 5

Mark down on this line where you are and where your parent/adolescent is (s = self; fm = family member).

Holding on too tight-----**Forcing independence**

△

GIVING YOURSELF/YOUR ADOLESCENT GUIDANCE, SUPPORT, AND RULES TO HELP
YOURSELF/THEM FIGURE OUT HOW TO BE RESPONSIBLE WITH YOUR/THEIR INCREASED
FREEDOM

AND AT THE SAME TIME

SLOWLY GIVING YOURSELF /YOUR ADOLESCENT GREATER AMOUNTS OF FREEDOM AND
INDEPENDENCE WHILE ALLOWING AN APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF RELIANCE ON OTHERS

ASK YOURSELF:

If I want (myself or my adolescent) to be more independent I need to?

AND AT THE SAME TIME

If I want (myself or my adolescent) to be more dependent I need to?

Learning to Think Dialectically

Practice Exercise 1

Circle the dialectical statement:

- a) Everyone always treats me unfairly.
- b) In some situations, I feel that I am not being treated fairly.
- c) Everyone is always fair to me.

- a) I see the situation one way and you see it a different way.
- b) I am right.
- c) You are wrong.

- a) No one ever listens to me.
- b) People are always available to me and listen to whatever I feel.
- c) Sometimes I do not feel listened to and it is very frustrating.

- a) I may not have caused all of my problems, but I need to solve them anyway.
- b) It is not my fault that I have these problems so I am not going to even try.
- c) All of my problems are my own fault.

- a) I don't trust anyone.
- b) I trust some people and I find it very difficult to trust other people.
- c) I can trust anyone.

- a) It is hopeless. I just cannot do it.
- b) This is a breeze....I got no problems.
- c) This is really hard for me but I am going to keep trying.

- a) I hate you for doing what you did. I am never going to talk to you again.
- b) It's not a big deal if they hurt me.
- c) You really hurt my feelings, I am angry with you. And, I still love you.

Dialectical Dilemmas

Finding the Middle Path

Practice Exercise 2

DIRECTIONS:

- 1) Mark down on each line the place where:
 - a. you would like to be (SG = self goal), and
 - b. you would like your family member to be (FM = family member goal).
- 2) Think and write down: How am **I** going to get there?

1) Too loose-----Too strict

Δ

2) Making light of Problem behaviors-----Making too much of normal adolescent behavior

Δ

3) Holding on too tight-----Forcing independence

Δ

HOW AM I GOING TO GET TO SELF-GOAL

Self- Goal 1? _____

Self- Goal 2? _____

Self- Goal 3? _____

Dialectical Dilemmas

How Do Parents and Teenagers Find the Middle Path?

Extra Handout for Therapists Only

TOO LOOSE VS. TOO STRICT

(Excessive leniency v. authoritarian control)

Target: Increasing authoritative discipline and decreasing excessive leniency.

Target: Increasing adolescent self-determination and decreasing authoritarian control.

MAKING LIGHT OF PROBLEM BEHAVIORS VS.

MAKING TOO MUCH OF NORMAL ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR

(Normalizing pathological behaviors v. Pathologizing normative behaviors)

Target: Increasing recognition of normative behaviors and decreasing pathologizing of normative behaviors.

Target: Increasing identification of pathological behavior and decreasing normalization of pathological behaviors.

PUSHING AWAY VS. HOLDING ON TOO TIGHT

(Forcing autonomy vs. Fostering dependence)

Target: Increasing individuation and decreasing dependence.

Target: Increasing effective reliance on others and decreasing excessive autonomy.