

Working with Adolescents: Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Tools You Need!

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Objectives

- Review emotion dysregulation and suicidality in teens
- Review foundation of DBT
- Learn practical application of DBT skills

Teen Emotion Dysregulation and Suicidality

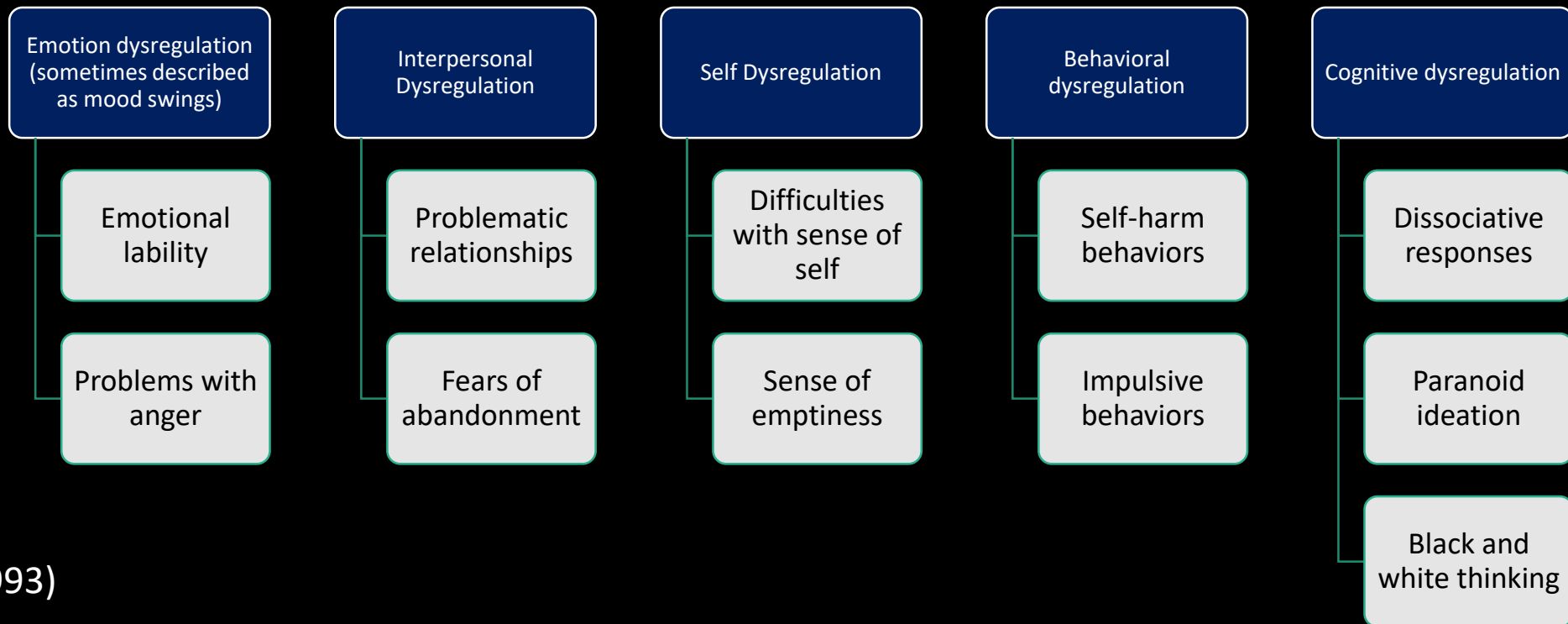
- Emotion dysregulation related to suicide risk in teens
- Suicide = 2nd leading cause of death in youth 15-24 yo
- Suicidal ideation in community: 19.4% (inpatient: 41%)
- Suicide attempt in community: 7.1% attempt (inpatient: 31%)
- Self-harm in adolescents 22.9%
- Regardless of suicide intent, teens who engage in self-harm have 4.27 greater odds of suicide attempt, 1.51 greater odds of death by suicide
- Emotion dysregulation can be modified with evidence-based intervention

DBT Empirical Support

- DBT demonstrates efficacy in stabilizing and controlling self-destructive behavior and improving patient compliance
- Kleim et al., 2010:
 - Examined 16 studies (8 RCTs); results showed moderate effect size for suicidal and self-injurious behavior
- Kothgassner et al., 2021:
 - Examined treatment effect of DBT as compared to TAU for adolescents (12-19 yo) with presenting concern of self-harm, S/I, unstable affect and/or relationships
 - Small to moderate effects for reducing self-harm (hedges $g = -0.44$) and reducing suicidal ideation (hedges $g = -0.31$)
 - Large effects pre-post for reducing self-harm (hedges $g = -0.98$) and reducing suicidal ideation (hedges $g = -1.16$); 21 studies included in meta (5 RCTs, 4 controlled trials, 12 pre-post evaluations)

Borderline Personality Disorders and DBT

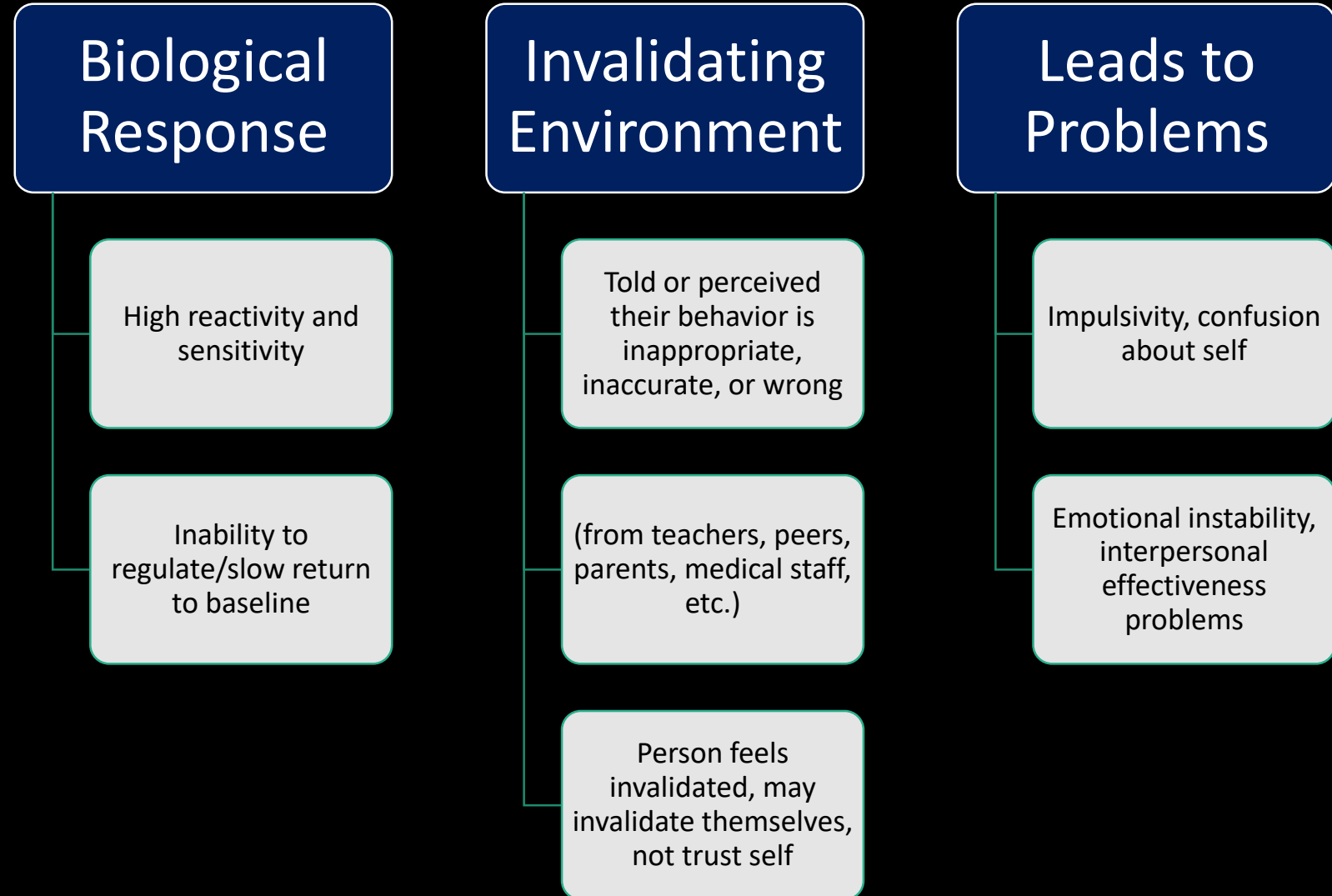
- Marsha Linehan, PhD developed DBT as a treatment for BPD
- Many people who benefit from DBT don't necessarily meet criteria for BPD, but may experience several features:



(Linehan, 1993)

Where does emotion dysregulation start?

Lens from
Bio-Social Theory



What is DBT?

- Effective treatment for people who have difficulty controlling their emotions and behaviors
- Core part of therapy = balancing:
 - Acceptance and Change
 - Nurturing and Challenging
 - Flexibility and Stability
 - Focus on Capabilities and Deficits

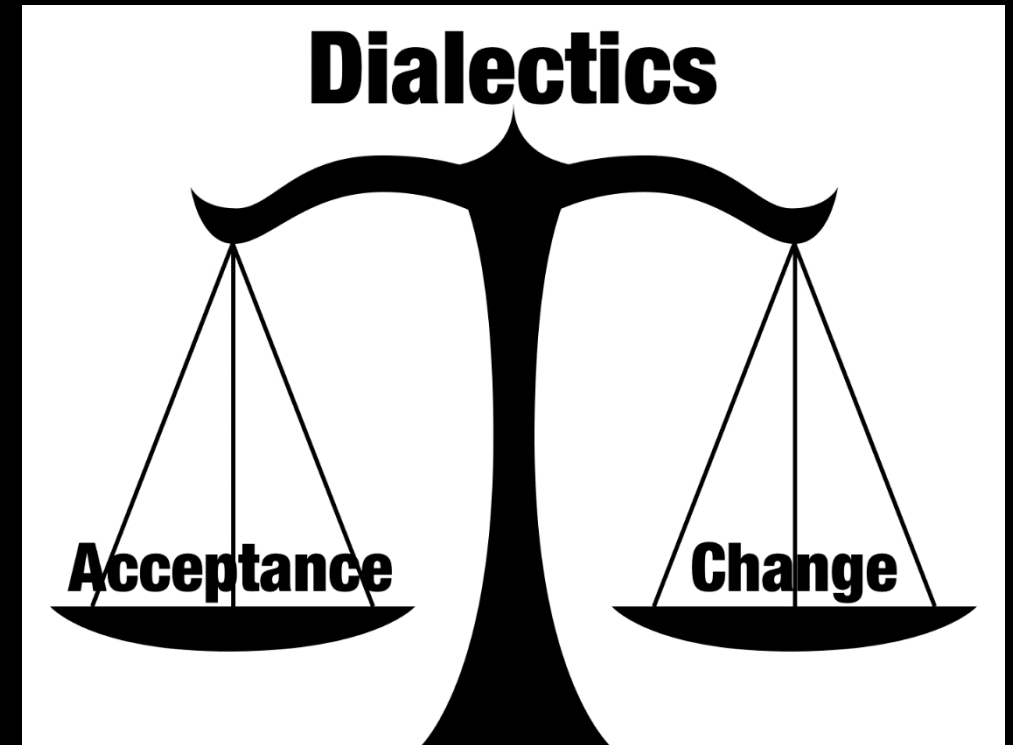
Goal is to REPLACE
unhelpful behaviors
with skillful
behaviors

Goal is to increase
flexibility with
thoughts, emotions,
and behaviors

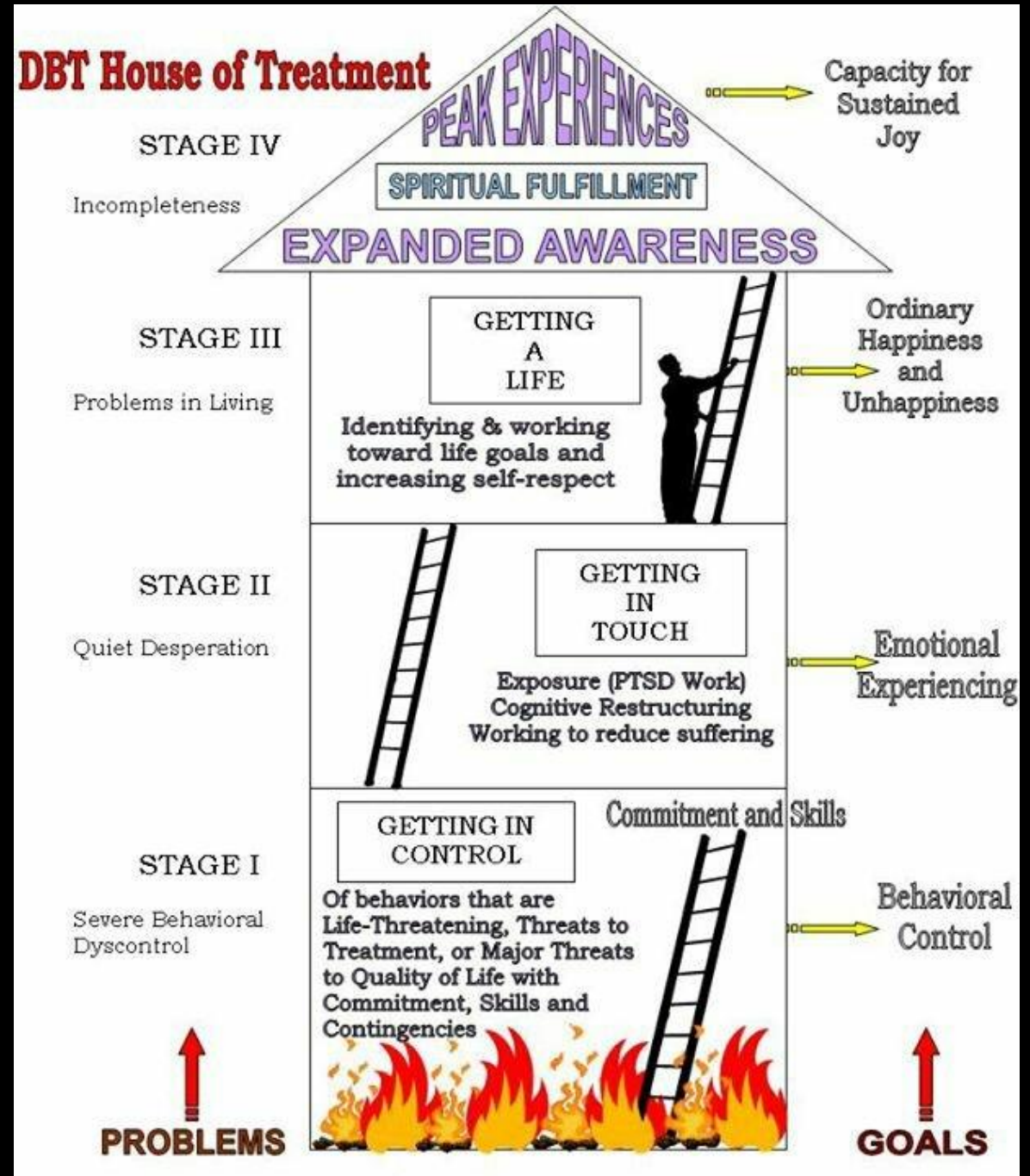
Goal is to create a
LIFE WORTH LIVING

What does DIALECTAL Mean?

- Dialectical = 2 opposite ideas can be TRUE at the same time
- There is more than 1 way to look at a situation
- All people have something different to offer
- Life has both positive (happiness) and negative aspects (anger, sadness) AND all of these aspects are NECESSARY and VALUABLE



- DBT Framework dictates target of treatment:
 - Life threatening behaviors
 - Treatment Interfering Behaviors
 - Quality of Life Behaviors (impulsive behaviors, depression, fighting)





Road to a Life Worth Living

DECREASE

- Confusion About Self
- Impulsivity
- Emotional Instability
- Interpersonal problems
- Personal and Family Dilemmas

INCREASE

- Mindfulness
- Distress Tolerance
- Emotion Regulation
- Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Walking the Middle Path

Case Example “Alex”

- 16 yo female (she/her) with chronic suicidal ideation, frequent self-harm behaviors (cutting), history of suicide attempt (cut wrist when wanting to die, did not result in necessary ER visit)
- Struggles with family relationships, doesn't feel “gotten” by her mother, mother has history of depression/anxiety, and Alex's father is often out of the home due to working as a freight hauler. Parents don't get along. Says she bottles up her emotions and lets them go by yelling at her mom, which results in yelling matches.
- Has more short-term than long-term friends; says she tries to vent to friends and then they leave her; not sure how to keep friends for longer!
- Suggests that nobody knows what to do with her, that she doesn't really have much faith that you can help her either.
- Says she uses self-harm as a way to take the edge off. Says she has tried marijuana too. She hopes she doesn't get caught.
- Strengths: excels academically at school, wants to have good friends
- Alex is seeing you today and presents in crisis: hates mom, hates self, fed up with friends leaving her side, has urges to cut, wants her parents to get along.

DBT is helpful when you can't solve crisis

- If you can solve problem with patient, then problem solve away!
- If you can't (or not right now) then STOP trying to solve it
- This means it's currently an unresolved crisis
- Focus on DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILLS

Road to a Life Worth Living

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graph TD; A[Road to a Life Worth Living] --> B[DECREASE]; A --> C[INCREASE]; B --> D[• Confusion About Self]; B --> E[• Impulsivity]; B --> F[• Emotional Instability]; B --> G[• Interpersonal problems]; B --> H[• Personal and Family Dilemmas]; C --> I[• Mindfulness]; C --> J[• Distress Tolerance]; C --> K[• Emotion Regulation]; C --> L[• Interpersonal Effectiveness]; C --> M[• Walking the Middle Path];
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DECREASE

- Confusion About Self
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- Interpersonal problems
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INCREASE

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- Tolerating distress is surviving the situation without making it worse and making yourself feel worse.
- Tolerating distress is NOT solving problem. It's NOT removing or reducing distress. It's not about FEELING BETTER in moment.
- It's all about NOT making the situation worse.

Crisis first aid kit

Distress Tolerance Skills



Distress Tolerance Skills

- STOP
- TIPP skills
- Self-soothe
- Distracting with ACCEPTS
- Pros and Cons

STOP



S_TOP
T_AKE A BREATH
O_Bserve
P_Roceed

TIPP Skills



Crisis Survival - TIPP



T – Temperature

Change your body temperature using cold water or ice.



I – Intense exercise

Walk quickly. Climb the stairs. Jump up and down. Run on the spot.



P – Paced breathing

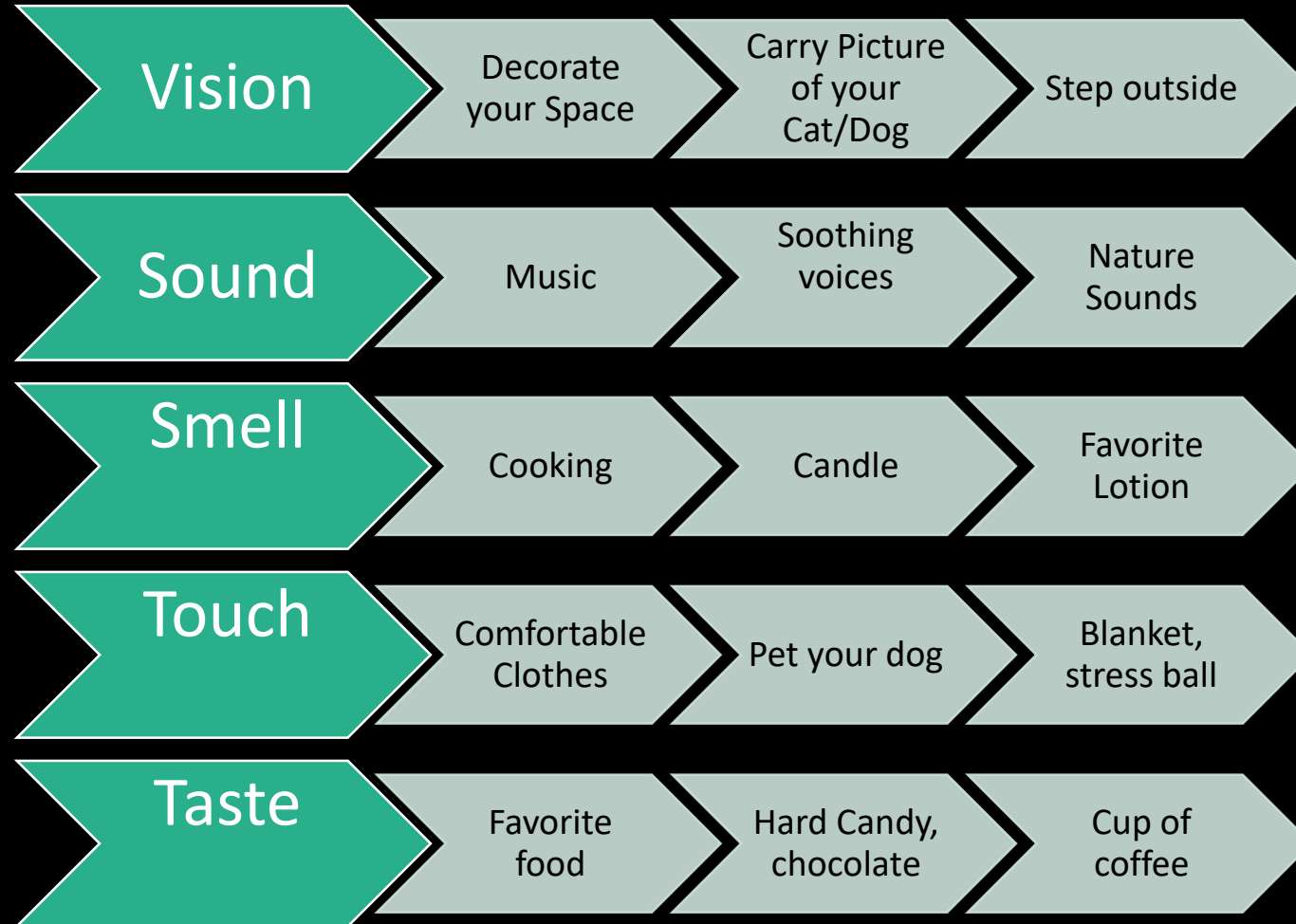
Breathe in to the count of 5, hold then breath out to the count of 7.



P – Paired muscle relaxation

Tense your muscles when breathing in and relax them when breathing out.

Self-Soothe with 5 senses



Self-Soothe “Kit”



DISTRACTION is deliberately turning your attention away from the crisis.

- A wise mind **ACCEPTS**

- Activities
- Contributing
- Comparisons
- Opposite Emotions
- Pushing Away
- Thoughts
- Sensations

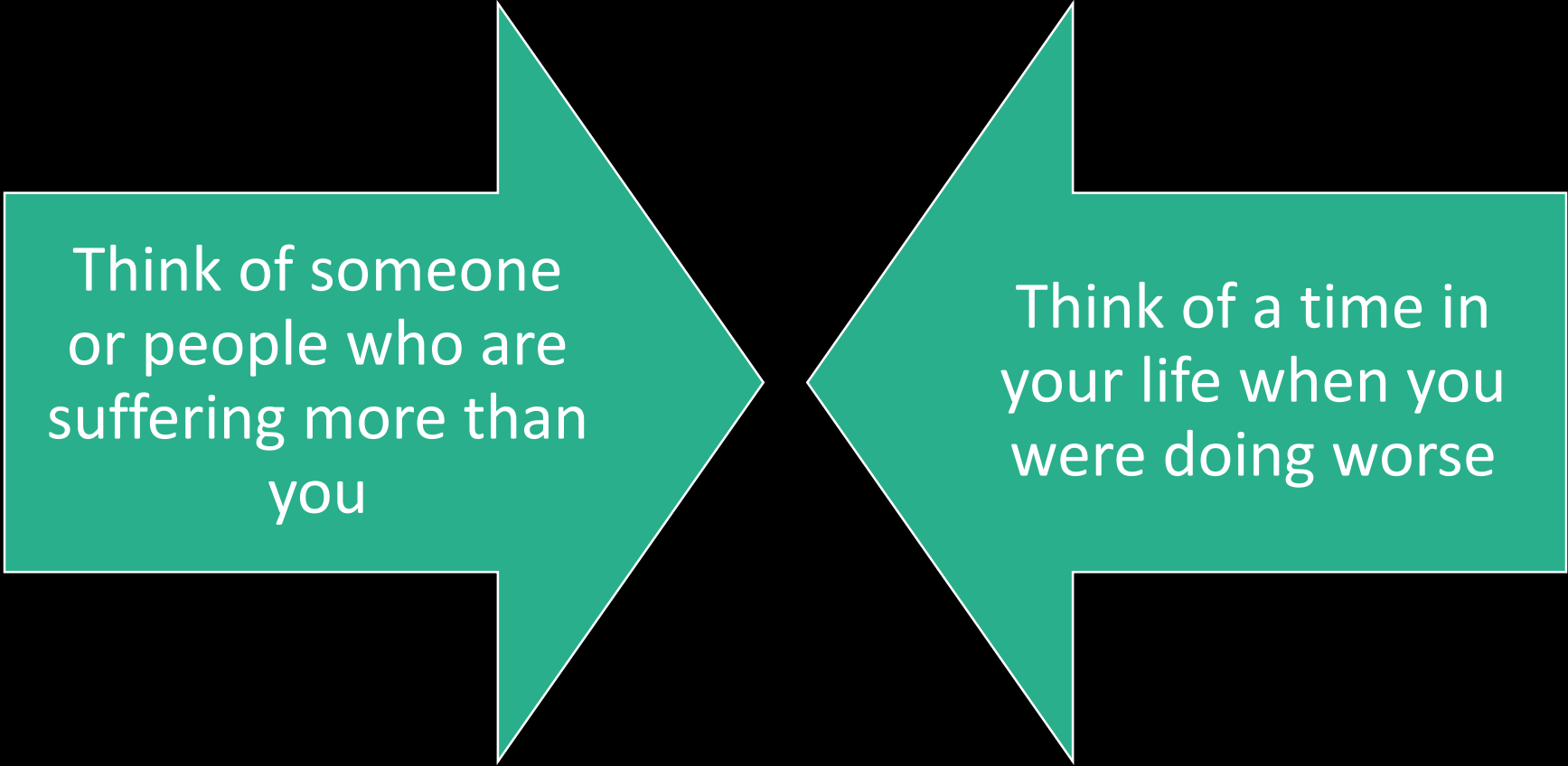
Distracting with Activities

- Use an activity that fits the moment OR what you would be doing if you weren't distressed
 - Sports/Exercise
 - Hobbies/Talents
 - Watch a Movie
 - Go out
 - Be with other people
 - DO NOT talk about the crisis

Distracting by Contributing



Distracting by Comparisons



Think of someone
or people who are
suffering more than
you

Think of a time in
your life when you
were doing worse

Distracting with Emotions

- If angry, watch a comedy
- If scared, watch something daring
- If sad, listen to upbeat music



Distracting by Pushing Away

- Turning Down the Volume
- Putting it on the “Shelf” mentally
- Build imaginary wall so you are cut off from it

Distracting with Thoughts

- Sing song lyrics
- Do the time tables to a number you have to calculate
- Categories

Distracting with Sensations

- Squeeze a rubber ball/stress ball really hard
- Hold ice in your hand
- Take a cold shower
- Listen to music loudly
- Exercise body – fast running, energetic jumping

PROS and CONS

	PROS	CONS
Acting on crisis urges	<p>Pros of acting on impulsive urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Cons of acting on impulsive urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Resisting crisis urges	<p>Pros of resisting impulsive urges, doing what needs to be done, and not giving up.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Cons of resisting impulsive urges, doing what needs to be done, and not giving up.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

A Few Final Tips

- Make sure the distress tolerance skill is close to the intensity of the distress
 - If you have the urge to die, ironing is problem not going to help
- Make sure the timing of the skill matches the situation
 - Distracting with sensations is a great way to get started but doesn't last; so if crisis is long pair with **Activities**
 - Distracting Thoughts lasts for minute to maybe an hour- good for bus, traffic, meetings

Tips continued...

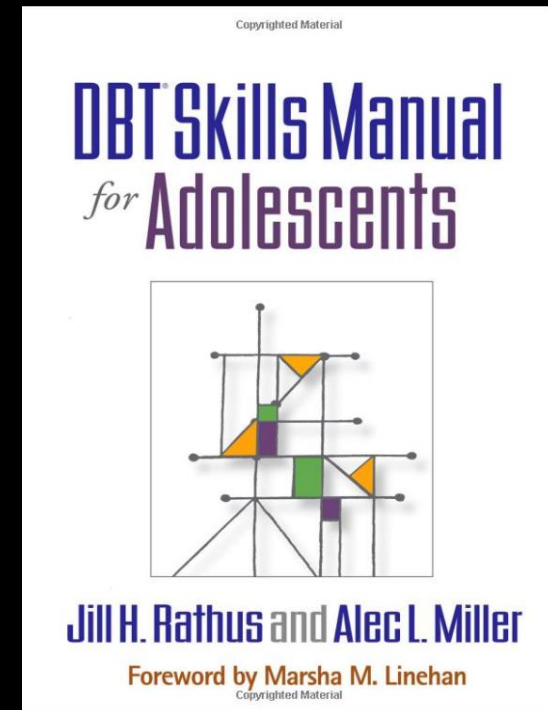
- MIX IT UP and TRY NEW THINGS- Any Distress Tolerance skill **overused** can make things **worse**
 - Soothing with food is not great for someone who may binge eat
 - Hot bath not great for someone who self harms in bathroom
 - Distracting with TV for too long can take over your life
- Avoid Distraction when it is avoidance
 - Sometimes need to stay with the problem such as staying in class or at work
 - Self-Soothe and STOP

What is comprehensive DBT?

- DBT is often considered an intensive treatment
 - “Gold standard” DBT or “comprehensive” DBT includes:
 - Weekly group DBT skills training
 - Weekly individual therapy
 - Access to BH clinician outside of scheduled therapy (usually via phone)
 - Completion of daily/weekly diary cards
 - BH clinicians who deliver comprehensive DBT have completed intensive DBT training and have received specialized supervision prior to delivering this treatment
- DBT skills can be helpful for your patients even if you are not able to deliver comprehensive DBT/set them up with comprehensive DBT

For your arsenal....

- **DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents**
 - Jill Rathus and Alec Miller



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