

# DBT Skills Group

- **Goal of this group:** Learn DBT skills to help manage strong emotions, unhelpful behavior urges, improving relationships, and navigate stressful situations in your life, and to achieve readiness for trauma exposures
- **Daily Format:**
  - Brief mindfulness exercise
  - Review of previous day's skills practice
  - Learn and try out new skills
  - Assign outside practice

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# *Mindfulness Practice*

# ***Skills Practice Review: Check the Facts***

- Complete Check the Facts worksheet with a past moment you think this skill would have been helpful for
- Practice noticing the difference between facts and judgments in our thoughts and speech
- Practice Check the Facts worksheet in a challenging but realistic moment

# ***DBT Skills Categories***

- Mindfulness
- Distress Tolerance
- **Emotion Regulation: Skills that help us catch and respond to emotions before they become overwhelming.**
- Interpersonal Effectiveness



*Today's Skill:*  
***Opposite Action***

# *Common emotion action urges*

Emotion	Message	Action Urge
• Fear →	“There is danger”	Run away/avoid
• Anger →	“My goal is being blocked”	Attack
• Sadness →	“I’m coping with a loss”	Withdraw/Isolate
• Shame →	“I will be rejected or judged if people know this about me”	Hide/avoid

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Once we determine  
*that an emotion  
doesn't fit the facts,  
what do we do?*

# *Acting on the wrong emotion urge can make our distress worse!*

## Example:

- Lashing out in anger
  - In the moment, fuels our anger even more
  - Damages relationship, causing more anger or sadness
  - Possibly leads to guilt, embarrassment about how we acted

## Example:

- Avoiding leaving the house out of fear of being in public
  - Fear of public spaces remains the same or gets worse
  - Increase in loneliness & sadness
  - Shame due to self-comparison



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*What do we  
do instead?*

We want something that will  
meet our needs in the  
moment

AND

reduce the emotion urge  
intensity so that it is easier to  
not act on it

# *Doing the opposite of our urge can change our emotion for the better:*

## Example:

- Feeling afraid of leaving the house but going out anyway
  - May feel less anxious once we are out and notice we are still safe
  - Fear decreases over time the more we go out

## Example:

- Feeling depressed and wanting to isolate but instead meeting a friend
  - Feeling a bit better, more connected
  - May increase enjoyment by doing something fun with friend

# ***Why does this happen?***

- *Myth:*
  - “I need to wait until I feel like doing something to do it”
  - i.e. trying to change the emotion before changing the behavior
  - You might be waiting a long time...
- *Reality:*
  - **When our emotion doesn't fit the situation, we need to change our behavior to fit the situation instead.** Then the emotion will follow!

# Opposite Action

- Acting opposite to emotional urges **repeatedly** and **all the way**, to reduce emotion intensity & prevent it from increasing further
  - **Repeatedly:** doing the same opposite action over time until the emotion that doesn't fit the facts decreases
  - **All the way:** Doing the fullest, most complete opposite of the original urge (or working up to this over time)

# ***When does Opposite Action work best?***

## **When the emotion or its duration/intensity do not fit the facts**

- Feel disgusted with myself when think about my trauma so shower excessively
- A friend made a critical comment to you months ago → still furious and acting on urge to make passive-aggressive comments to them

## **When acting on an emotion urge would not be effective**

- Feel too depressed to get out bed, but know that showering and changing clothes would help you feel better and staying in bed makes you feel worse

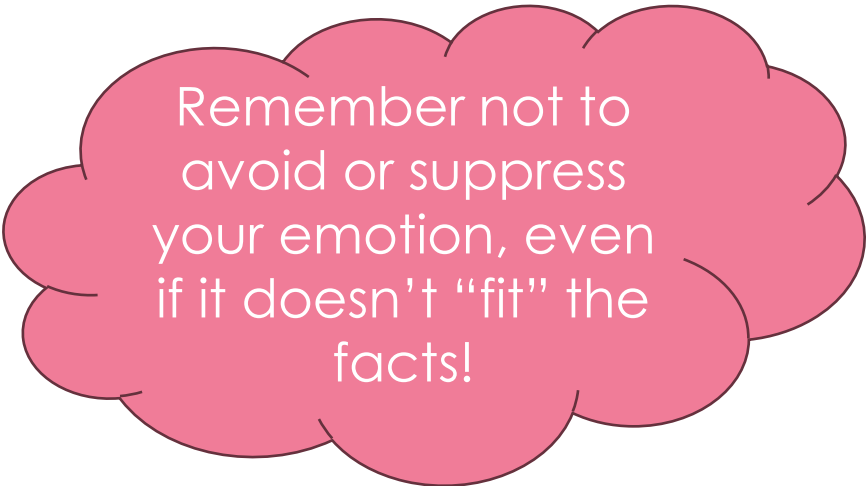
## **When knowing the facts does not change the emotion**

- Knowing not *all* men are dangerous, but still feel afraid of and avoid them
- Knowing a loved one accepts you, but still feel ashamed and hiding true self

# ***How to do Opposite Action***

1. Identify the emotion you want to change
2. Use Check the Facts skill to see if this emotion fits
3. Identify action urges
4. Use Wise Mind to determine whether acting on urge is effective

## ***IF NO to 2 and/or 4:***



Remember not to  
avoid or suppress  
your emotion, even  
if it doesn't "fit" the  
facts!

5. Identify opposite action
6. Act on it all the way
7. Repeat until emotion changes

# ***How do we identify the opposite action?***

**EVERY EMOTION HAS AN ACTION URGE.**

**CHANGE THE EMOTION BY ACTING OPPOSITE TO ITS ACTION URGE.**

Consider these examples:

<b><u>EMOTION</u></b>	<b><u>ACTION URGE</u></b>	<b><u>OPPOSITE ACTION</u></b>
Fear	Run away/avoid	Approach/don't avoid
Anger	Attack	Gently avoid/be a little nice
Sadness	Withdraw/isolate	Get active
Shame	Hide/avoid	Tell the secret to people who will accept it

Also: see “Figuring Out Emotion Specific Opposite Action” handout!



# *Anxiety*

Friend hasn't responded to your message for what feels like a long time and you are worrying that they might be mad at you.

**Urges**

**Opposite Actions**





# ***Sadness***

You notice an aspect of your life that trauma has made more difficult and have intrusive thought “my life will never get better.”

**Urges**

**Opposite Actions**



# *Anger*

Shopping at the grocery store and someone bumps their cart into yours.

**Urges**

**Opposite Actions**



# ***Shame***

Boss points out an error in some work you submitted.

**Urges**

**Opposite Actions**



# *Guilt*

You accidentally say something hurtful to your partner in the heat of the moment and afterwards feel extremely guilty for hurting their feelings.

**Urges**

**Opposite Actions**



# ***Disgust***

Experience a trauma flashback and notice increasing feeling of body being “disgusting” or “dirty.”

**Urges**

**Opposite Actions**

# ***Homework***

- Review the Emotion Specific Opposite Action handout
- Practice Opposite Action to **any** urge that you don't find effective
  - Does not have to be a high distress moment
  - Ex. Spending time outside if the urge is to stay in bed
  - Ex. Catching yourself scrolling social media & put phone down
- Optional advanced practice:
  - Practice Opposite Action to a trauma-related distressing emotion