



Dialectics

T-TIME

Who struggles with black-and-white thinking?


Examples:

Because my progress is slow, I will never get better

If I can't trust someone completely, they are not safe

Feeling strong emotions means I am out of control

Consequences?



What are DIALECTICS?

- Alternative to B&W thinking
- **Recognizing two opposite things being true at the same time, finding the synthesis or balance between the opposites**
- Helpful because:
 - Allows us to walk a middle path to cope, get unstuck, and make changes
 - Will show up everywhere in this program, from therapy content to the language we use

Examples of Opposite Sides That Can Both Be True

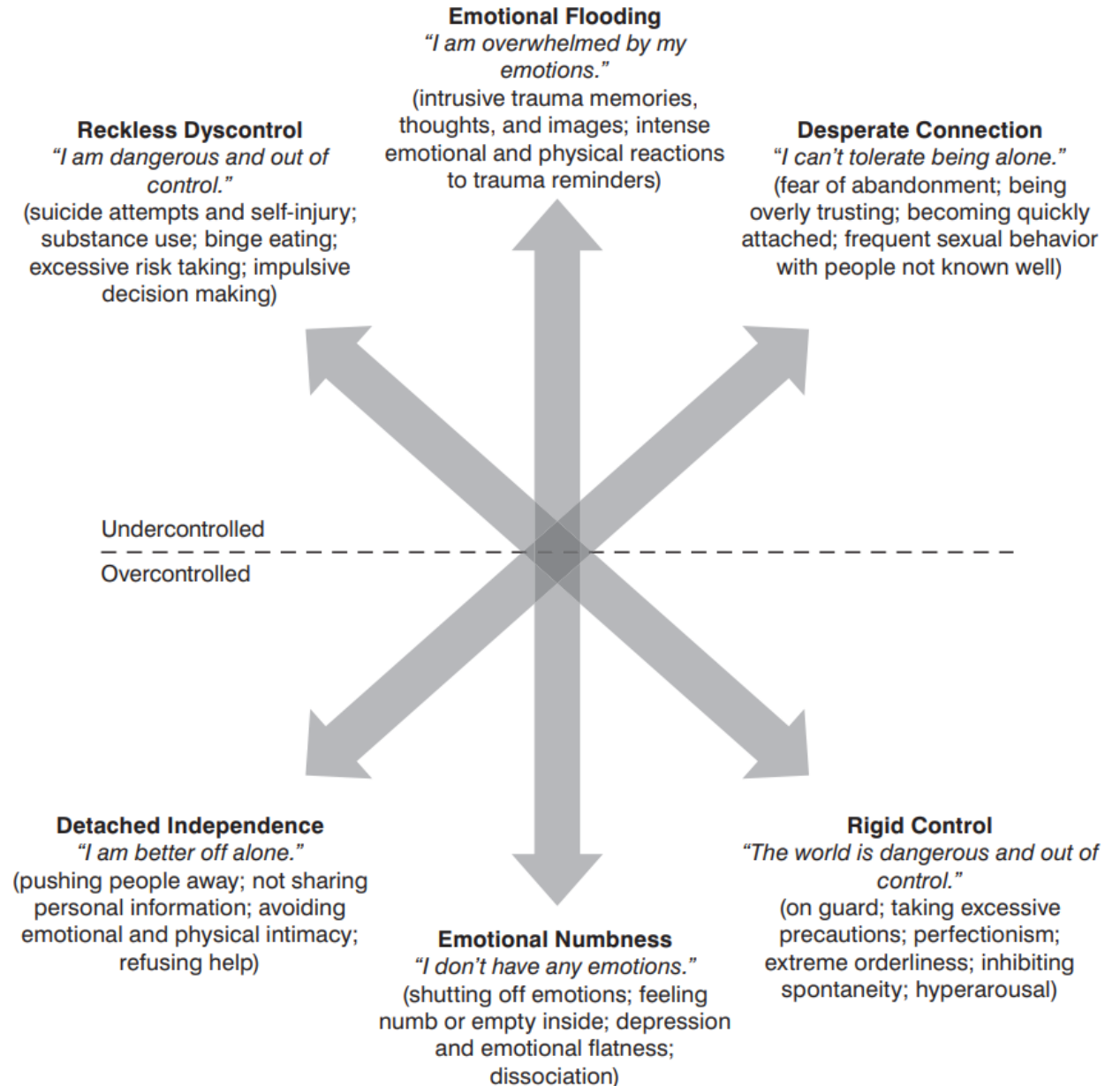
- ☐ 1. You can want to change and be doing the best you can, AND still need to do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change.
- ☐ 2. You are tough AND you are gentle.
- ☐ 3. You can be independent AND also want help. (You can allow somebody else to be independent AND also give them help.)
- ☐ 4. You can want to be alone AND also want to be connected to others.
- ☐ 5. You can share some things with others AND also keep some things private.
- ☐ 6. You can be by yourself AND still be connected to others.
- ☐ 7. You can be with others AND be lonely.
- ☐ 8. You can be a misfit in one group AND fit in perfectly in another group. (A tulip in a rose garden can also be a tulip in a tulip garden.)
- ☐ 9. You can accept yourself the way you are AND still want to change. (You can accept others as they are AND still want them to change.)
- ☐ 10. At times you need to both control AND tolerate your emotions.
- ☐ 11. You may have a valid reason for believing what you believe, AND you may still be wrong or incorrect.
- ☐ 12. Someone may have valid reasons for wanting something from you, AND you may have valid reasons for saying no.
- ☐ 13. The day can be sunny, AND it can rain.
- ☐ 14. You can be mad at somebody AND also love and respect the person.
- ☐ 15. (You can be mad at yourself AND also love and respect yourself.)
- ☐ 16. You can have a disagreement with somebody AND also be friends.
- ☐ 17. You can disagree with the rules AND also follow the rules.
- ☐ 18. You can understand why somebody is feeling or behaving in a certain way, AND also disagree with his or her behavior and ask that it be changed.

**Your own
examples?**

DBT Treatment Assumptions

- **We are doing the best we can AND need to need to do better, try harder to change**
Ex) slept through alarm and was late to check-in – was doing my best to be there, had alarm set – and I still ended up over sleeping.
- **We may not have caused all our own problems, AND we have to solve them anyway**
Ex) I was so tired this morning because my friend called me late needing support/was up late with my kid, and then I couldn't fall asleep due to racing thoughts/trauma nightmares. And I still need to figure out how to get to PHP on time to work on this (e.g., learn skills to set boundaries, cope with symptoms, problem-solve alarm)

Dialectical Reactions to Trauma



Dialectical Reactions to Trauma

Dialectical Reactions to Trauma, cont'd

- Synthesis goals
 - Experience full range of **emotions** without avoiding, using skills to change intensity of emotions when needed
 - Accurately assess danger and make **behavior** decisions to reduce risk of harm without overly restricting life
 - Connect to and depend on **other people** AND tolerate being alone; accurately read trustworthiness of others
- What would these look like in your life?

Tips for Practicing Dialectics

- **Mindfully notice B&W thinking, rephrase with dialectic**
 - *I am telling myself that because I didn't work tonight I am lazy. Both working AND resting are important.*
- **Turn “but” into “AND”**
 - *I am terrified of being abandoned AND I could learn to cope if my relationships end.*
- **Let go of extremes (e.g., always/never>sometimes)**
 - *My emotions SOMETIMES overwhelm me, AND I am learning to better cope with them.*
- **Play devil's advocate – look for and validate the kernel of truth on both sides**
 - *It makes sense why I am fearful of crowds given my trauma, AND I also recognize that in my daily activities I am more or less safe.*