

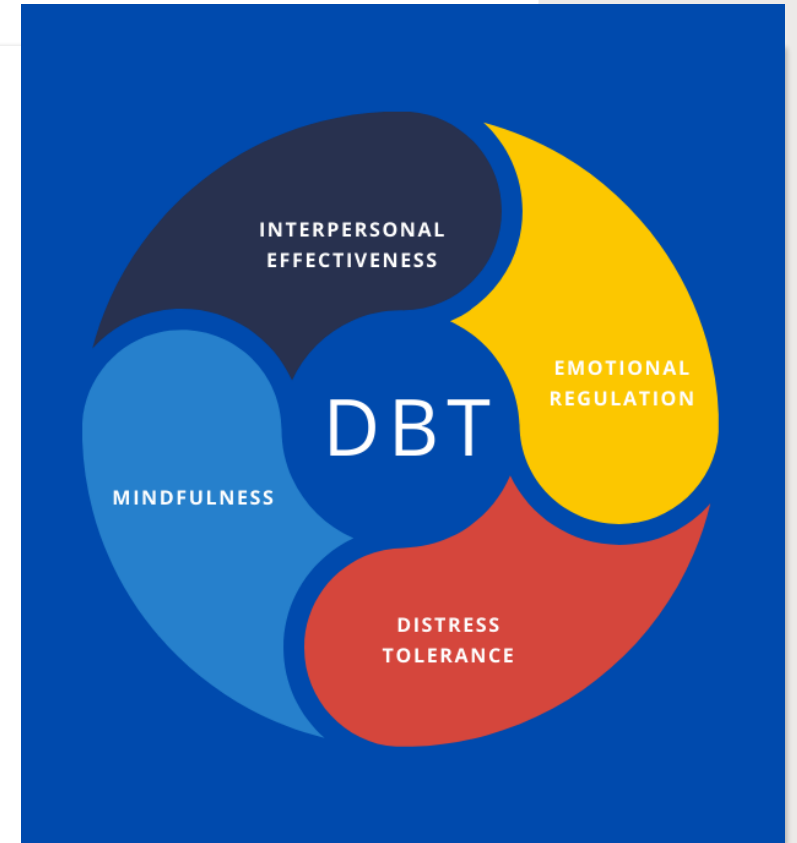
# Dialectical Behavioral Therapy: Opposite Action

October, 2023



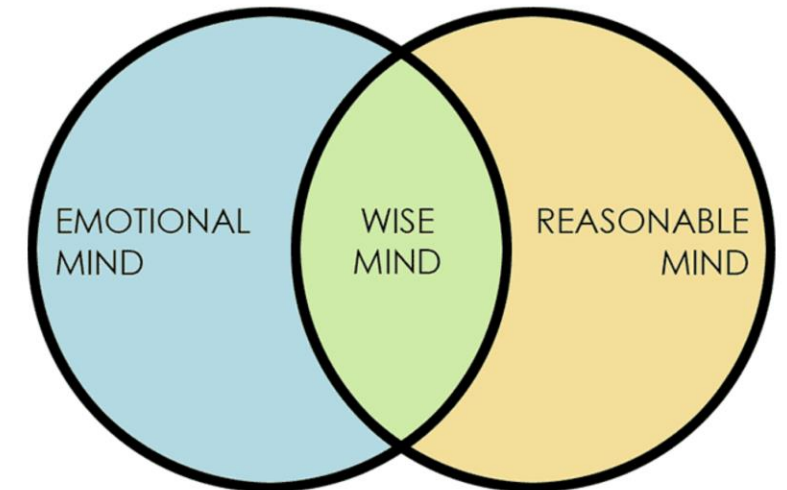
# DBT

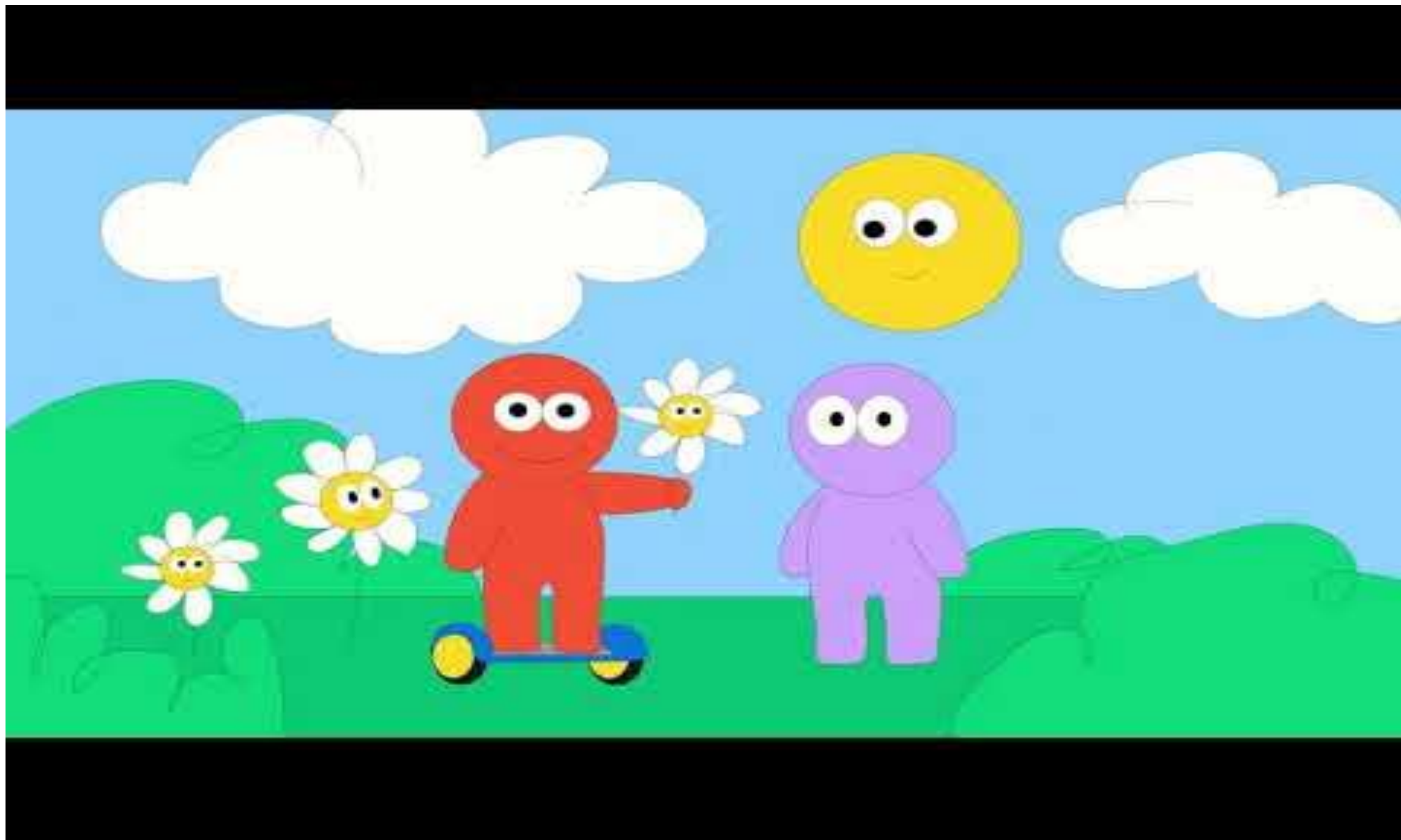
- Definition: Everything is fundamentally comprised of opposites – and the healing comes in exploring the middle spaces in the dialectic
- Purpose: designed to help us better cope with **extreme sets of emotions** - very repetitive – necessary for rewiring our brain
- Very research-based, commonalities with **CBT**...but when the **stakes are higher** and reframing of thoughts is **too difficult**



# DBT

- Starting point is **Wise Mind**, between reasoning mind and emotional mind – at our best when we're able to access both and not be ruled by either
- Most of the skills involve taking a **pause**
- Helps **disarm** the thought that we're a horrible person (that people may have been reinforcing our entire life) - or that other people are horrible people
- **Most useful:**
  - when we need to buy time,
  - to prevent things come getting worse,
  - to help when our emotions are telling us to do something extreme - something we'll later regret





# Link for Opposite Action video

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDWn-cqKKrg>

# Opposite Action Summary

**Purpose:** When you want to change an emotion you're having, especially when acting on the emotion would do you harm/no good.

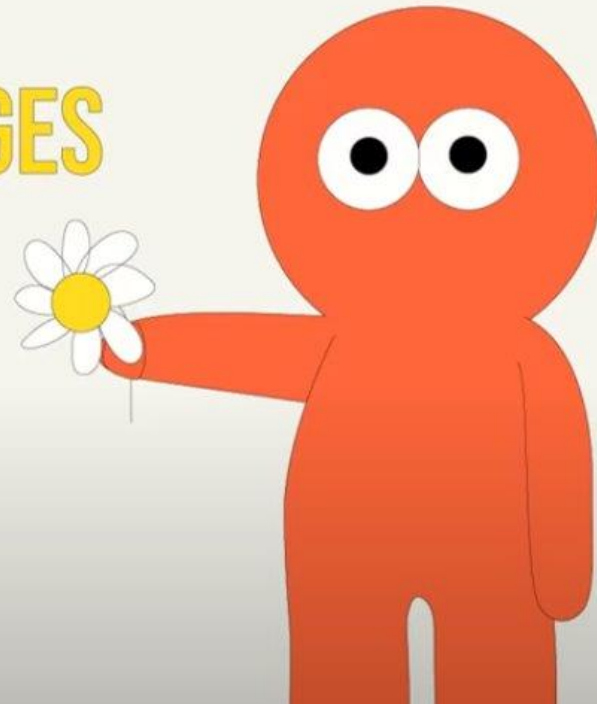
**What it looks like:** Do the exact opposite of what your urge is telling you to do. Do it as many times as you can.

**Note:** It helps to do it *all the way* – AND, start with whatever you have access to in the moment.



# Opposite Action Steps

1. IDENTIFY THE EMOTION
2. DESCRIBE THE URGE
3. IDENTIFY THE OPPOSITE URGES
4. ACT OPPOSITE ALL THE WAY
5. AND REPEAT UNTIL YOUR EMOTIONS CHANGE



# Opposite Action Exercise (pp19 – 27 of DBT manual)

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1. Identify an emotion you experience strongly (fear, anger, sadness, shame, guilt, love, jealousy, envy, disgust) that:
  - Does not “fit the facts” of the situation (eg – irritation fits when you are cut off in traffic; road rage does not)
  - Acting on this emotion would NOT help you
2. Identify the urges that come with the emotion (e.g. - fear & the urge is to isolate)
3. Identify 2 opposite actions you can try in order to change your emotion (one you have done before & one you could try)

\*\*Bonus – if time, write about how you can go "all the way" with your opposite actions.



# Example

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## **ANGER**

Anger FITS THE FACTS of a situation whenever:

- A. An important goal is blocked or a desired activity is interrupted or prevented.
- B. You or someone you care about is attacked or hurt by others.
- C. You or someone you care about is insulted or threatened by others.
- D. The integrity or status of your social group is offended or threatened.
- E. Other example: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow these suggestions when your anger is NOT JUSTIFIED by the facts or is NOT EFFECTIVE:

### **OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Anger**

Do the OPPOSITE of your angry action urges. For example:

1. GENTLY AVOID the person you are angry with (rather than attacking).
2. TAKE A TIME OUT, and breathe in and out deeply and slowly.
3. BE KIND (rather than mean or insulting).

# Example

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## **ALL-THE-WAY OPPOSITE ACTIONS for Anger**

### **4. IMAGINE UNDERSTANDING and empathy for the other person.**

Step into the other person's shoes. Try to see the situation from the other person's point of view.

Imagine really good reasons for what has happened.

### **5. CHANGE YOUR POSTURE.**

Unclench hands, with palms up and fingers relaxed (WILLING HANDS).

Relax chest and stomach muscles.

Unclench teeth.

Relax facial muscles. Half-smile.

### **6. CHANGE YOUR BODY CHEMISTRY.**

For example, do paced breathing by breathing in deeply and breathing out slowly.

Or, run or engage in another physically energetic, nonviolent activity.

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3. Identify 2+ opposite actions you can try in order to change your emotion (one you have done before & one you could try)

\*\*Bonus – if time, write about how you can go "all the way" with your opposite actions.

After working individually, share you reflection in breakout groups & then debrief as large group.