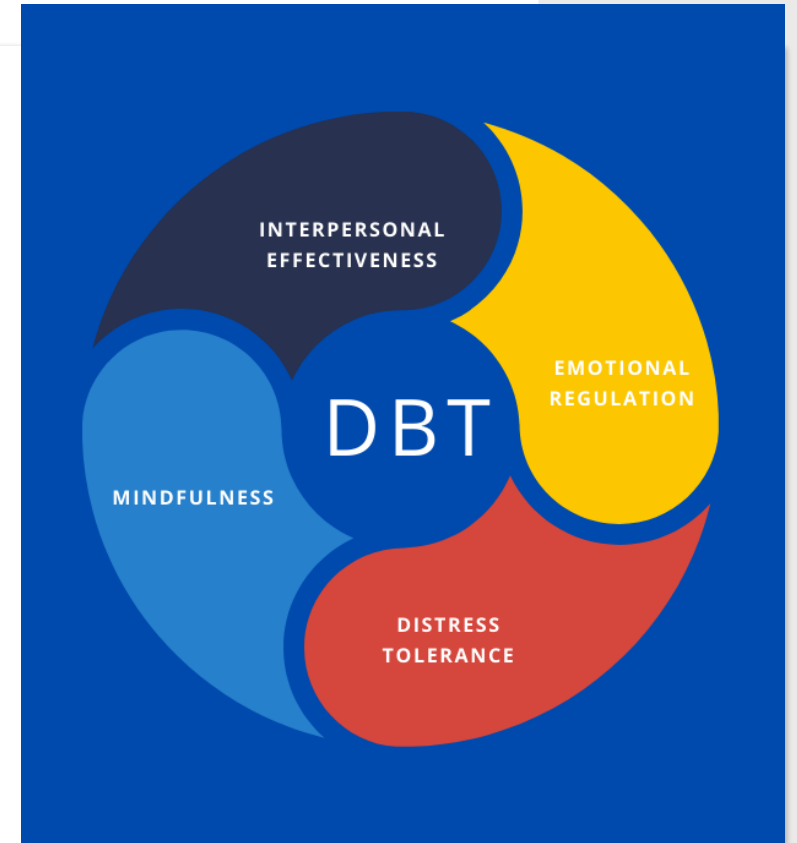


Dialectical Behavioral Therapy: Accumulating Positive Memories/Emotions

October, 2023

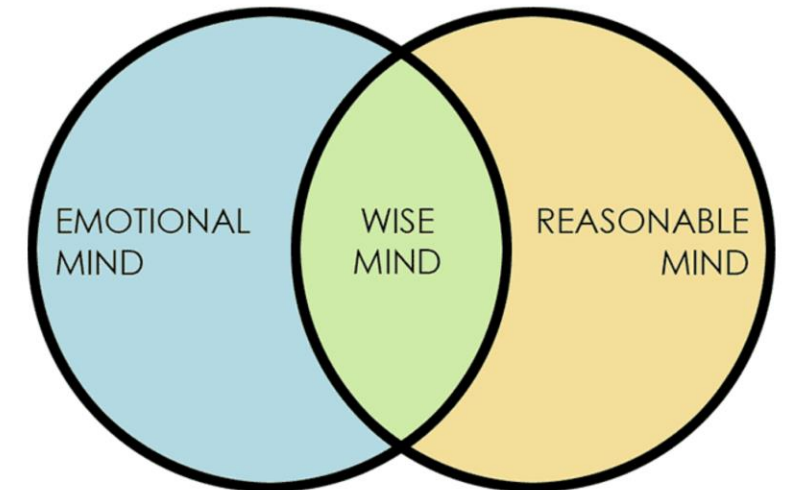
DBT


- 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





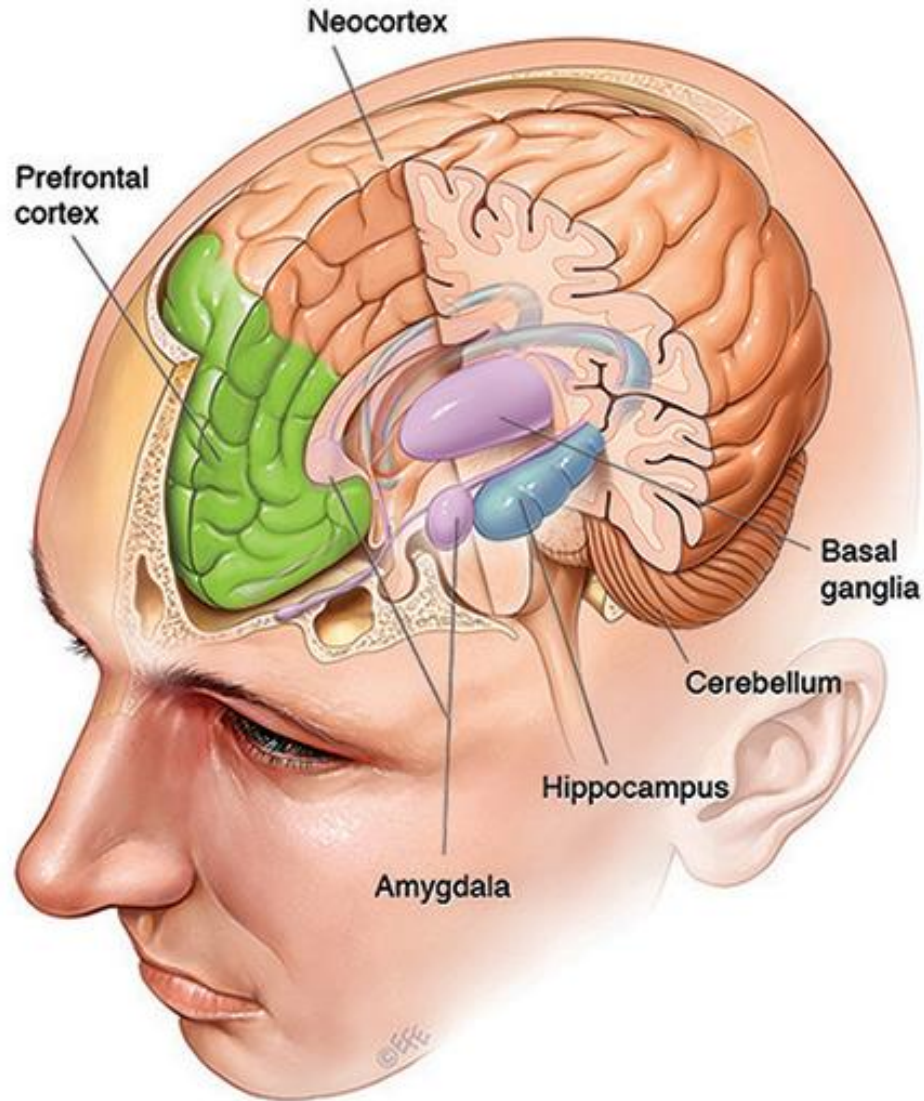
A-B-C

- **Accumulate Positive Emotions**
 - Short-term – do pleasant things that are possible NOW
 - Long-term – Make changes in your life so that positive events will happen more often in the future.
- **Build mastery** – Do things that make you feel competent and effective to combat helplessness and hopelessness
- **Cope ahead of time with emotional situations** – Rehearse a plan ahead of time so that you are prepared to cope skillfully with emotional situations.

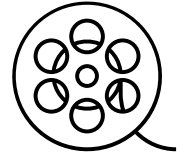
Accumulating Positive Emotions - Key Ideas

- Recalling and reexperiencing positive memories is a powerful tool for helping us both **regulate our emotions** and **counteract negative memories**.
- Recalling and retelling our positive stories – in rich detail – can **make us and others feel better**, and provide an easily-accessible **coping tool**.
- We can create **new positive memories** by choosing to do things that make us feel better, and then **experiencing them “mindfully”**.

Memory & the brain – 2.5 million gigabytes



NOT like a movie projector



- Hippocampus – episodic memories (e.g., coffee last week)
- Neocortex – memory details, thoughts, understanding
- Amygdala – emotional associations and fear-based/trauma/survival memories

Recalling and re-experiencing memories

- Recalling memories can have powerful impacts on our **current thoughts, feelings,** and even **physical/body state.**
- When we recall and examine memories, we **strengthen the neural connections** to these memories, in ways that both help and harm.

- There is a negative bias towards memory recall overall – we tend to remember bad more than the good (especially in our 20's). **Why do you think we have this bias?**
- Sometimes, recalling positive moments from the past can be difficult. **Why might this be?**



- Remembering **happy memories**, in as much detail as possible, can change your mood, feeling, thoughts, and your body responses (tension, heart rate, breathing, etc.)
- This recall is also a key tool for **emotional regulation**, and is used in EMDR, Somatic Experiencing, and many trauma-focused therapies.
- It is also a wonderful exercise for **job and career exploration** to identify what matters, and what makes you happy.

Exercise 1: Recalling and retelling

- Think of a positive memory – a time when you felt happy, secure, serene, confident, fulfilled, or inspired.
- Try to remember details – who was with you? Where were you? What did you feel? What were the tastes, smells, sounds, touch that you can remember? How was the weather?
- Share your story with your partner or small group – with as much detail as you remember. Try to bring this to life.
- Discuss how it feels to tell this story. Ask how your partner felt listening to this story? Did anything come up that feels important?

Experiencing positive moments *mindfully*

Be **unmindful** of worries, such as...

- When the positive experience will end.
- Whether you deserve this positive experience.
- How much more might be expected of you now.
- How much more you used to enjoy this.

Instead:

- Focus your attention on positive moments **when they are happening**.
- No multitasking...focus on **one thing** at a time.
- **Refocus** your attention when your mind wanders to the negative.
- Participate and engage **fully** in each experience.

Exercise 2: Create new Positive Memories

- On your own: Identify something you will do in the next few days that you would enjoy. At home, outside. With/without others.
- Homework: Actually do this.
- As you experience this, work on being fully present, aware of what is going on.
- Bonus. Write down what this experience was like. By hand is even more effective, but any act of recording in words helps anchor it.

Bottom line: Build positive experiences NOW

- Increase pleasant events that lead to positive emotions
- Do one thing each day that is a pleasant event for you.
- Remember to practice opposite action: Avoid Avoiding. :)
- Be *mindful* of pleasant events.



Thoughts – Feelings – Behavior – Physical

