There is something very important that I want to express before we learn anything about "skills."
Here it is:

THE SKILLS YOU WILL LEARN ARE SKILLS THAT ARE MADE AVAILABLE TO YOU
SO THAT YOU HAVE MORE CHOICES.
THAT'S IT....
THERE IS NO SKILL YOU WILL LEARN THAT YOU MUST USE OR THAT YOU HAVE TO USE.

THE GOAL OF THIS MODULE is to learn how to bear pain skillfully. This module is NOT about working things out or changing things: It is about accepting and tolerating things. The skills you will learn can help you survive and do well in terrible situations without resorting to behaviors that will make the situation worse.

The ability to tolerate and accept distress is an essential mental health goal for at least 2 reasons:
- Pain and distress are part of life; they cannot be entirely avoided or removed. The inability to accept this fact leads to increased pain and suffering.
- If you want to change, you must learn to tolerate distress. Otherwise, impulsive actions will interfere with efforts to change.

Inability to tolerate distress = impulsive actions = difficulties making desired changes

Distress Tolerance Skills constitute a natural progression from mindfulness skills. They have to do with the ability to accept, in a nonjudgmental fashion, both oneself and the current situation.

Adapted from the work of Marsha Linehan
Pati Anderson, MC, LPC, PLLC 3/07
Distress Tolerance is:
- The ability to perceive one's environment without putting demands on it to be different;
- Willingness to experience your current emotional state without attempting to change it; and
- Observing your own thoughts and action patterns without attempting to stop or control them.

**There are two sets of distress tolerance skills:**

- **Crisis Survival Skills** help you tolerate and survive crises.
  - Distracting
  - Self-Soothing
  - Improving the Moment
  - Pros and Cons

- **Reality Acceptance Skills** help you to accept life as it is in the moment.
  - Guidelines for Accepting Reality
    - Observing Your Breath
    - Half-Smiling
    - Awareness
  - Accepting Reality
    - Radical Acceptance (a complete acceptance from deep within)
    - Turning the Mind (choosing to accept reality as it is)
    - Willingness (being willing to be present, in the moment, without trying to master, direct, control, or manipulate)

What do YOU want to learn in this module??????

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CRISIS SURVIVAL SKILLS

WHAT IS A CRISIS?

A crisis starts with a problem...and grows!!!

HOW DO YOU RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO A CRISIS?

1. Solve the problem, OR
2. If you can't solve the problem right away, get through it without making things worse.

Following are concrete skills in how to tolerate and survive a crisis situation when the crisis cannot be changed right away. The basic idea of Distress Tolerance Skills is to learn how to get through bad situations without making them worse.

THESE SKILLS WILL HELP YOU GET THROUGH A CRISIS. IN ADDITION, IF USED REGULARLY, THEY CAN HELP YOU AVOID CRISIS SITUATIONS!

1. Distracting
2. Self-Soothing
3. Improving the Moment
4. Pros and Cons

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1. DISTRACTING. Distraction skills help reduce contact with events that set off emotions. There are 7 sets of Distracting Skills. They can be remembered with the phrase:

Wise Mind ACCEPTS

- Activities
- Contributing
- Comparisons
- Emotions
- Pushing away
- Thoughts
- Sensations

**Activities** can work to change or alter negative emotions in a number of ways. Activities distract attention and fill short-term memory with thoughts, images, and sensations that are different than the thoughts, images, and sensations that contribute to negative emotion. Activities affect the way we react physiologically and emotionally. (Sometimes, the more strenuous, the better!) Examples:

- Exercise, involve yourself in a hobby, clean, go to an event, call or visit a friend, play computer games, surf the internet, go for a walk, play sports, go out for a meal, garden, walk the dog, read, watch tv, listen to music, do homework.

**Contributing** refocuses attention from yourself to what you can do for others. It can increase a sense of meaning in life, and improve the moment. It can enhance self-respect. Examples:

- Do volunteer work, make dinner for a friend, give something to someone else, make something nice for someone, do a surprising/thoughtful thing, smile!

**Making Comparisons** can refocus your attention from yourself to others, but in a different way. Comparing oneself to: others who are experiencing the same situation, or; to others less fortunate, or; to your own past experiences that were worse than the one you are in right now (and remembering how you got through it!) can help you to see your situation in a more positive light. Another way to use this skill is to think of things for which you are GRATEFUL.

**Generating opposite Emotions** replaces the current painful emotion with different (and less painful) emotions. You can change your emotions by recognizing what emotion you
are having and doing something, or changing your behavior, to generate an opposite emotion. Make sure the activity creates a DIFFERENT emotion. Examples:

- Read an optimistic book or story; go to a funny movie or watch a scary video;
- listen to upbeat music, read a joke book, go to the store and read funny greeting cards.

**Pushing away** from a situation can be done by leaving it physically or by blocking it in one’s mind. Leaving the situation decreases contact with the emotional triggers that are connected with the situation. This is a technique that should not be used unless it is necessary. It takes one mentally away from what is causing the emotion and can be a way of dissociating or depersonalizing. Here are 2 specific ways to use this skill:

1. Imagine yourself putting the disturbing issue on a shelf, locked away in a box (Think about Al Gore’s “lock box!”) It can’t come out until you purposely get the box down from the shelf, unlock the box, and take it out to look at it.

2. Get a spiral notebook. Write down two questions:
   - Can I solve this right now?
   - Is this a good time to work on it?

   If your answer to either question is “no”, write the troublesome issue down and put the notebook away. Later on, get a timer, get your notebook out, and think about the issue for 30 minutes. You might use a 5-part model to describe and understand the issue and its impact on you. Then put the notebook away again.

**Distracting with other Thoughts** fill your short-term memory with other thoughts so that you no longer react to the negative emotion. Examples:

- Focus on one positive thought over and over again (e.g. “This is temporary...I can get through this...This won’t kill me.”); count to 10; count colors or see how many times you can find your favorite color in a painting or garden (anything); work puzzles; think about something you are looking forward to.

**Intense other Sensations** can help you focus your attention on something else and distract from painful emotions. Examples:

- Hold an ice cube in your fist until it melts, stand under a cold shower, listen to very loud music, put rubber band on wrist, pull out, and let go.

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PERSONAL CRISIS SURVIVAL SKILLS

DISTRACT

WITH

WISE MIND ACCEPTS

ACTIVITIES

CONTRIBUTING

COMPARISONS/Being GRATEFUL

Opposite EMOTIONS

PUSHING AWAY

Other THOUGHTS

Intense other SENSATIONS

Adapted from the work of Marsha Linehan
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2. SELF-SOOOTHING. Self-soothing has to do with comforting, nurturing, and being gentle and kind to oneself. Be mindful when you practice these skills: participate; stay in the moment. A way to remember these skills is to think of soothing each of the 5 senses: Vision, Hearing, Smell, Taste, and Touch. Consider making yourself a personalized "self-soothing kit" with one item from each sense. Decorate the box!

Sometimes we may have difficulty with self-soothing. We may believe that we don't deserve soothing, kindness, and gentleness. We may feel guilty or ashamed when self-soothing. We may believe that we should get soothing from others. Self-soothing is something one does for oneself, for one's own emotional well-being. On the flip side, some people self-soothe too much which can lead to its own set of difficulties.

Vision - Buy one beautiful flower; make one space in a room pretty; light a candle and watch the flame; set a pretty place at the table, using your best things, for a meal; go to a museum with beautiful art; look at nature around you; go out in the middle of the night and watch the stars; walk in a pretty part of town; fix your nails so they look pretty; look at beautiful pictures in a book; go to a ballet or other dance performance, or watch one on TV. Be mindful of each sight that passes in front of you, not lingering on any.

Hearing - Listen to beautiful or soothing music, or to invigorating and exciting music; pay attention to sounds of nature; sing your favorite songs; hum a soothing tune; learn to play an instrument; call your therapist's voice mail to hear a human voice. Be mindful of any sounds that come your way, letting them go in one ear and out the other.

Smell - Use your favorite perfume or lotions, or try them on in the store; spray fragrance in the air; light a scented candle; put lemon oil on your furniture; put potpourri in a bowl in your room; boil cinnamon; bake cookies, cake or bread; walk in the park and mindfully breathe in the fresh smells of nature. Stop and smell the roses!

Taste - Have a good meal; have a favorite soothing drink such as herbal tea or hot chocolate (no alcohol); treat yourself to a dessert; put whipped cream on your coffee; sample flavors in an ice cream store; suck on a piece of peppermint candy; chew your favorite gum; get a little bit of special food you don't usually spend the money on, such as fresh-squeezed orange juice. Really taste the food you eat; eat one thing mindfully.

Touch - Hold and rock yourself like you would a baby, with one palm to your stomach and one to your chest; take a bubble bath; put clean sheets on the bed; pet your dog or cat; have a massage; soak your feet; put creamy lotion on your whole body; put a cold compress on your forehead; sink into a really comfortable chair in your home; put on a silky blouse, dress or scarf; brush your hair for a long time; hug someone. Experience whatever you are touching; notice touch that is soothing.

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PERSONAL CRISIS SURVIVAL SKILLS

SELF-SOOTHE

MINDFULLY WITH YOUR 5 SENSES

VISION

HEARING

SMELL

TASTE

TOUCH

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3. IMPROVING THE MOMENT is replacing immediate negative events with more positive ones. Some strategies for improving the moment are cognitive techniques such as changing appraisals of oneself (encouragement) or the situation (finding meaning, imagery). Some involve changing body responses to events (relaxation). Prayer and focusing on one thing in the moment have to do with acceptance and letting go. A way to remember these skills is the word “IMPROVE.”

- Imagery
- Meaning
- Prayer
- Relaxation
- One thing in the moment
- Vacation
- Encouragement

Imagery can be used to go to a safe and secure place. You can create a situation different from the one that you may be in. This can be very helpful during flashbacks. For Imagery to be useful, you have to practice it when you are not in a crisis enough times to get it firmly down as a skill. You can also use imagery to imagine that you are coping with the situation effectively. This can actually increase your ability to cope effectively with a crisis in real life.

Finding or creating Meaning helps many people in crisis. This is based on the idea that people need to find or create meaning in their lives to survive terrible suffering (making lemonade out of lemons). It is important to remember that sometimes life is unfair for reasons that no one can understand. You do not have to assume that there is a purpose to your suffering, although some people may see it this way.

The essence of Prayer is the complete opening of oneself to the moment. This is very much like radical acceptance. Try to get in touch with your emotional pain before you begin your prayer.

Relaxing is changing how the body responds to stress and crisis. People often try to control a negative situation by tensing their body. When we think about how our body communicates with our mind, we can help our mind accept the situation. Relaxing is a skill that takes a lot of practice.

Focusing on One thing in the moment can be very helpful in the middle of a crisis; it can provide time to settle down. The secret is to remember that the only pain you have
to survive is "just this moment." We all often suffer much more than is required because we recall past suffering and ruminate about future suffering we may have to endure. But, in reality, there is only "just this moment."

Everyone needs a "Vacation from adulthood" once in a while. It should only last from a few moments to no longer than a day. If you have responsibilities, taking a vacation means that you will have to get someone else to take over your duties for a while. When we take a vacation, we still have to take it responsibly. That means, we do not take them at inappropriate times, and we do not stay on vacation too long.

Encouragement is cheerleading oneself. How would you talk to a friend if they were coming to you for advice? Talk to yourself as though you were talking to someone for whom you care. Or, talk to yourself the way you would want someone else to talk to you.

***Read through the following list of "Cheerleading Statements" one by one. Mark the ones you like. Then go back through the list, pick your "Top 10," and list them on page 14.***

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Pati Anderson, MC, LPC, PLLC  3/07
PERSONAL CRISIS SURVIVAL SKILLS
IMPROVE THE MOMENT

With IMAGERY

By finding MEANING

With PRAYER

With RELAXATION

By doing ONE thing in the moment

By taking a brief VACATION

Adapted from the work of Marsha Linehan
Pati Anderson, MC, LPC, PLLC 3/07
4. THINKING OF PROS AND CONS

Thinking of Pros and Cons can be used in a variety of ways, including solving problems and helping you to make decisions. Solving the problem may help avoid crisis situations.

1. Use Pros and Cons to help you decide whether or not to tolerate a distressing situation without making it worse (i.e. by doing something impulsive/self-destructive).
   a. Make a list of the pros and cons of tolerating the distress. Make another list of the pros and cons of not tolerating the distress—that is, of coping by hurting yourself, abusing alcohol or drugs, or doing something else impulsive and self-destructive.
   b. Focus on long-term goals, the light at the end of the tunnel. Remember times when pain has ended.
   c. Think of the positive consequences of tolerating the distress. Imagine in your mind how good you will feel if you achieve your goals, if you don’t act impulsively.
   d. Think of all of the negative consequences of not tolerating your current distress. Remember what has happened in the past when you have acted impulsively to escape the moment.

2. Pros and Cons are a great skill to use when you need to make a decision or are having trouble trying to decide what to do. It’s a very Reasonable Mind activity that can help you to make sense of things, to motivate you, to see things clearly so you can act from Wise Mind.
   a. Think about the pros, or the advantages of option #1.
   b. Then think about the cons, or the disadvantages of option #1.
   c. Repeat the above for option #2.
   d. Examples: examine the pros and cons of going to school vs. not going to school; taking job A vs. taking job B; talking to a friend about a problem vs. not talking to her.
URGE MANAGEMENT
WHEN URGES STRIKE.....
DELAY!!!

1. RATE THE INTENSITY OF YOUR "URGE" FROM 0-10.

2. SET A TIMER FOR 15 MINUTES.

3. IN THE MEANTIME...........
   o USE SKILLS MINDFULLY: INTENTIONALLY SHIFT YOUR ATTENTION FROM THE "URGE" TO SOMETHING ELSE. CHOOSE A RELATIVELY PLEASANT ACTIVITY THAT IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE ACTION OF THE "URGE", AND/OR OPPOSITE TO THE INTENTION OF THE "URGE"
     ▪ DISTRACT
     ▪ SELF-SOOTHE
     ▪ IMPROVE THE MOMENT
     ▪ PROS AND CONS

4. CHECK INTO YOUR "URGE" INTENSITY.
   o IF YOUR "URGE" IS THE SAME OR HIGHER...RESET THE TIMER FOR 15 MINUTES AND TRY ANOTHER SKILL.
   o IF YOUR "URGE" HAS DECREASED, AND YOU CAN ACT FROM WISE MIND, GO ON WITH YOUR DAY!

Adapted from the work of Marsha Linehan
Pati Anderson, MC, LPC, PLLC 3/07
REALITY ACCEPTANCE SKILLS
PREPARING YOUR BODY AND MIND
FOR RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

Reality Acceptance Skills are the skills that you need when something painful happens (or has happened) that you cannot change: You can’t solve it, you can’t make it go away, and you can’t turn it into a positive. Learning and practicing the reality acceptance skills can help decrease the suffering associated with pain and distress. This is true whether the pain is emotional, physical, minor, or major. Following are three sets of skills that will help prepare your body and mind for accepting reality. As with all skills, these are best practiced (initially) during times when you are feeling okay or during relatively low stress situations.

Observing-Your-Breath Exercises. Focusing your attention on your breath can help you to accept and tolerate yourself, the world, and reality as it is. Observe your breathing as a way to find wise mind; as a way to take hold of your mind; and as a way to let go of judgments, non-acceptance, and fighting reality. You can practice this exercise anywhere at anytime. Focusing on the breath is the essence of mindfulness. Examples:

1. Deep breathing. Lie on your back or sit comfortably. Breathe evenly and gently, focusing your attention on the movement of your stomach. As you begin to breathe in, allow your stomach to rise in order to bring air into the lower half of your lungs and abdomen. As the upper halves of your lungs begin to fill with air, your chest begins to rise and your stomach begins to lower. Don’t tire yourself. Continue for 10 breaths. The exhalation will be longer than the inhalation.

2. Counting your breath. Sit, lie down, or take a walk. As you inhale say to yourself “I am inhaling, one (1).” When you exhale, say to yourself “I am exhaling, 1.” When beginning the second inhalation, “I am inhaling, 2.” After slowly exhaling, “I am exhaling, 2.” Continue for 10 repetitions, and then start the count backwards to 1. Whenever you lose count (and you will 😃), notice any judgment thoughts and return to “I am inhaling, 1.”

Adapted from the work of Marsha Linehan
Pati Anderson, MC, LPC, PLLC 3/07
3. Following your breath while listening to music. Listen to a piece of music. Breathe long, light, and even breaths. Follow your breath; be master of it while remaining aware of the movement and sentiments of the music. Do not get lost in the music, but continue to be master of your breath and yourself.

4. Following your breath while carrying on a conversation. Breathe long, light, and even breaths. Follow your breath while listening to a friend's words and to your own replies. Continue as with music.

5. Breathing to quiet the mind and body. Sit cross-legged on the floor or sit in a chair with your feet on the floor, or lie flat on the floor. Half-smile. Follow your breath. When your mind and body are quiet, continue to inhale and exhale very lightly. Be aware that "I am breathing in and making the breath and body light and peaceful. I am exhaling and making the breath and body light and peaceful." Continue for three breaths, giving rise to the thought, "I am breathing in while my body and mind are at peace. I am breathing out while my body and mind are at peace." Maintain this thought in awareness from 5 to 30 minutes, according to your ability and to the time available to you. The beginning and end of the practice should be relaxed and gentle. When you want to stop, gently massage the muscles in your legs before returning to a normal sitting position. Wait a minute before standing up.

6. Can you think of other times when this exercise might help you to "accept reality?"

Following your breath while saying encouraging statements to yourself.

Half-Smiling Exercises. Half-smiling is accepting and tolerating with your body. This skill can help you to regulate what you're feeling by "leading with your body." Emotions are partially controlled by facial expressions. By adopting a half-smile and a serene, accepting face people can control their emotions somewhat. They can feel more accepting if their faces express acceptance.

When you turn the corners of your mouth up into a "half-smile" (or full smile), your cheek muscles send a message to your pituitary gland that you are laughing, and your pituitary gland sends a message to your brain to release dopamine, one of the "feel good" hormones. A tense smile is a grin (and might tell your brain you are hiding or masking).

Adapted from the work of Marsha Linehan
Pati Anderson, MC, LPC, PLLC 3/07
To half-smile, relax (by letting go or by tensing and then letting go) your face, neck, and shoulder muscles; then half-smile with your lips. A half-smile is slightly upturned lips with a serene facial expression. Remember, your body communicates to your mind.

EXERCISE

1. Sit very still. Try to make a very impassive face - one with no expression - and experience how that feels.
2. Next, try to relax the muscles of the face - from the forehead, to the eyes, to the cheeks, and to the mouth and jaw - and experience how that feels.
3. Now, turn the corners of your mouth up: Half-smile and experience how that feels. Do you notice any differences?
4. Exercises to try:
   a. Half-smile when you first awake in the morning. Hang a sign or picture on the wall or ceiling so that you see it right away when you open your eyes. This will serve as your reminder. Use these seconds before you get out of bed to take hold of your breath. Inhale and exhale 3 breaths gently while maintaining a half-smile. Follow your breaths.
   b. Half-smile during your free moments, for no particular reason at all. Anywhere you find yourself sitting or standing, half-smile. Look at a child, a leaf, a painting on the wall, or anything that is relatively still, and smile. Inhale and exhale quietly three times.
   c. Half-smile while listening to music. Listen to a piece of music for 2 or 3 minutes. Pay attention to the words, music, rhythm, and sentiments of the music you are listening to (not your daydreams or memories of other times). Half-smile while watching your inhalations and exhalations.
   d. Half-smile when irritated. When you realize "I'm irritated," half-smile at once. Inhale and exhale quietly, maintaining a half-smile for 3 breaths.
   e. Half-smile in a lying down position. Lie on your back on a flat surface without the support of mattress or pillow. Keep your two arms loosely by your sides and keep your two legs slightly apart, stretched out comfortably before you. Maintain a half-smile. Breathe in and out gently, keeping your attention focused on your breath. Let go of every muscle in your body. Relax each muscle as though it were sinking down through the
floor, or as though it were as soft and yielding as a piece of silk hanging in the breeze to dry. Let go entirely, keeping your attention only on your breath and half-smile. Think of yourself as a cat, completely relaxed before a warm fire, whose muscles yield without resistance to anyone's touch. Continue for 15 breaths.

f. Half-smile in a sitting position. Sit on the floor with your back straight, or on a chair with your two feet touching the floor. Half-smile. Inhale and exhale while maintaining the half-smile. Let go.

g. Half-smile when experiencing "negative" emotions. Examples include: while driving, when arguing or annoyed with someone, when doing something you don't want to do, when thinking about someone you don't like, when feeling crummy and you really don't know why.

h. Other ideas???

Awareness Exercises are mindfulness exercises and can be very helpful in daily life as well as in the middle of a crisis. DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THIS SKILL!!! When practiced every day, awareness exercises can help develop a more accepting state of mind overall. To practice this exercise, think "mindfulness" and using your "5 senses."

a. Awareness of the positions of the body.
b. Awareness of connection to the universe or being in nature.
c. Awareness of taking a slow-motion bath or shower.
d. Awareness while making tea or coffee, washing the dishes, cooking dinner, washing the car.
e. Practicing awareness with meditation.
f. How would you like to try this skill?

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Pati Anderson, MC, LPC, PLLC 3/07
REALITY ACCEPTANCE SKILLS
THAT WORK FOR ME

Observing-Your-Breath Exercises

Half-Smiling Exercises

Awareness Exercises
ACCEPTING REALITY
Goal of this skill: Freedom from suffering

TRUE OR FALSE?

Things will magically change if I:

____ don’t accept something
____ simply refuse to put up with it
____ throw a tantrum or refuse to believe it; then things will be okay
____ resist with enough willpower
____ wait long enough
____ blame others
____ stuff it
____ minimize it
____ engage in “impulsive behaviors”

Why do we believe these forms of denial will help?

★ What kind of skill can help us tolerate the really, REALLY hard issues in our lives?
★ It is hard to “accept or tolerate” many things that happen to us, e.g. the way a loved-one died, the way your parents acted, or the way others have treated you.
★ Natural reactions include shame, guilt, and anger.
★ These feelings can engulf emotion mind.
★ Because our minds do not want to allow painful thoughts into consciousness, we often avoid painful thoughts.
★ When avoidance becomes extreme, it turns into denial.
★ Denial keeps from consciousness the awareness of suffering.
★ Impact? (examples: an alcoholic is in denial of how their behaviors hurt themselves and others; denying or refusing to accept that it is hot in Phoenix in the summertime keeps you from doing what’s effective to keep yourself cool; denying or refusing to accept that you are depressed or have a toothache keeps you from seeking help)
PAIN: WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

★ Pain is a necessary part of living; it can be emotional and it can be physical. It is nature's way of signaling that something is wrong or that something needs to be done.
★ Physical pain warns us that something is wrong and can motivate us to act, e.g. hand on hot stove causes person to move hand quickly.
★ Pain of grief causes people to reach out to others who are lost. Without it there would probably be no societies or cultures. No one would look after those who are sick, would search for loved ones who are lost, or would stay with people who are difficult at times.
★ Pain of anger helps people overcome obstacles or change the status quo.
★ Pain of fear makes people avoid what is dangerous.
★ What are the pros and cons of never having painful emotions? Would you like people who never had painful emotions?

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PAIN AND SUFFERING?

1. Pain creates suffering only when one refuses to ACCEPT the pain.
2. Radical acceptance is the way to stop PAIN from turning into SUFFERING. With skills, pain can be tolerated without turning it into suffering.

PAIN + NOT ACCEPTING THE PAIN = SUFFERING

3. Pain can be difficult or almost impossible to bear, but suffering is even more difficult.
4. Suffering comes when people resist reality as it is at the moment.

There are only 4 responses to pain:

1. Solve the problem. End the painful event. Leave the situation.
2. Try to change the way you feel about the problem. You could try to figure out a way to take a negative in your life and make it into a positive.
3. Accept the problem.
4. Stay miserable.

Adapted from the work of Marsha Linehan
Pati Anderson, MC, LPC, PLLC 3/07
Reality Acceptance skills are the skills that you need when painful events happen in your life and you can't change the painful event. You can't solve it. You can't make it go away. You can't turn it into a positive. It is a negative that just won't become a positive - you are miserable. When that happens, practice reality acceptance.

3 Basic Principles of Accepting Reality

Radical Acceptance
Turning the Mind
Willingness

1. **RADICAL ACCEPTANCE** complete and total accepting from the mind, heart, and body.

   ★ Radical - arising from or reaching a root or source; drastic; extreme
   ★ Accept - to receive willingly (not to be confused with approval or judging something as good); acknowledging truth; recognizing what is; enduring the inevitable
   ★ Radical Acceptance can't be totally explained because it comes from the inside.
   ★ Radical Acceptance transforms suffering into pain.

3 parts to Radical Acceptance. ACCEPT THAT:

1. The event has actually happened: reality is what it is
2. Every event or situation has a cause
   ★ It happened for some reason. You may not know what the reason or cause is, but there is a reason. (Think: sequence of events)
   ★ Opposite of saying "why me" or things "should not" be the way they are
   ★ Acceptance = "everything should be as it is"
   ★ Acceptance is about saying "yes." Yes to acceptance, yes to the universe, yes to "what is."
3. Life can be worth living even with pain; to go from "unendurable agony" to "acceptable pain." You want to accept that you can move through it.

★ Some thoughts on radical acceptance:
   ★ Bargaining with God is not acceptance
   ★ Accepting is not approving

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**Accepting does not mean you can't change it**
**Accepting can also be called "recognizing" or "acknowledging"**
**Accepting does not mean that you will be approving, resigned, or passive**
**If you want to change something, you have to accept it first. If you deny it, how are you going to change it?**

Exercise: You hate the color purple. You arrange to have someone paint your room pink. They paint it purple. What are your options?

1. 
2. 

2. **TURNING THE MIND** toward the "acceptance" fork in the road: accepting vs. rejecting. How do you do it? First:
   1. Notice (that you're not accepting something). Tip-off: anger, bitterness, "Why Me?" trying to escape reality, block things out, covering up how you are really feeling with other things.
   2. Make an inner commitment to accept. The inner commitment is the "Turning Your Mind" to the road of acceptance (vs. the road of rejection). Go within yourself and turn your mind toward acceptance.
   3. Do it again. You may have to do it over and over many times in a minute or many times a day.

3. **WILLINGNESS vs WILLFULNESS**
   1. **Willingness** is accepting what is, together with responding to what is, in an effective or appropriate way. It is doing what works. It is doing just what is needed in the current situation or moment.

   2. **Willfulness** is imposing one's will on reality - trying to fix everything, or refusing to do what is needed. It is the opposite of doing what works. What to do when feeling willful:
      a. Just notice it: observe and describe ("willfulness has shown up!")
      b. Radically accept the willfulness (accept that it is really there)
      c. Turn the mind (turn your mind toward willingness, toward acceptance, participating in reality, just as it is)
d. If you are having trouble being willing:
   i. Try an awareness, breathing, or half-smile exercise.
   ii. Try a willing posture: open hands, relaxed body. Notice the difference you feel with this posture vs. "closed" posturing, e.g. arms and legs crossed, tense/stiff body.
   iii. Practice "just listening" to another person's point of view. Willfulness is when you say NO and refuse to take part in the conversation. It doesn't mean that you approve or agree! Exercise:
       Person #1 makes a statement.
       Person #2 repeats back the statement EXACTLY.
       If not repeated exactly, person #1 repeats.
   iv. Ask yourself "what's the threat?....what's the catastrophe?"

Discussion

Discuss some reasons why one would not want to use this skill of radical acceptance. What are the pros and cons?

Discuss metaphors for willingness vs. willfulness:

1. Life is like hitting baseballs from a pitching machine. A person's job is just to do her best to hit each ball as it comes. Refusing to accept that a ball is coming does not make it stop coming. Willpower, defiance, crying, or whimpering does not make the machine stop pitching the balls; they keep coming over and over and over. A person can stand in the way of a ball and get hit, stand there doing nothing and let the ball go by as a strike, or swing at the ball.

2. Life is like a game of cards. It makes no difference to a good card player what cards he or she will get. The object is to play whatever hand one gets as well as possible. As soon as one hand is played, another hand is dealt. The last game is over and the current game is on. The idea is to be mindful of the current hand, play it as skillfully as possible, and then let go and focus on the next hand of cards.
REALITY ACCEPTANCE WORKSHEET

Use your mindfulness skills over the next several weeks to start to notice/record:

A. Realities that I am refusing to accept:

1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
3. __________________________________________
4. __________________________________________
5. __________________________________________

B. How I experience SUFFERING when I refuse to accept reality:

1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
3. __________________________________________
4. __________________________________________
5. __________________________________________

C. What WILLFULNESS and WILLINGNESS feel and look like for me:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willful Behaviors</th>
<th>Willing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(What kinds of things do I do?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. __________________________</td>
<td>1. __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. __________________________</td>
<td>2. __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. __________________________</td>
<td>3. __________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Willful Body and Emotion Sensations:
(How do I feel on the inside?)

1. 
2. 
3. 

### Willful Body and Facial Expressions
(How do I look on the outside?)

1. 
2. 
3. 

D. I notice that I become willful when (situations):

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

E. My best strategies for Turning My Mind to WILLINGNESS include:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

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Adapted from the work of Marsha Linehan
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