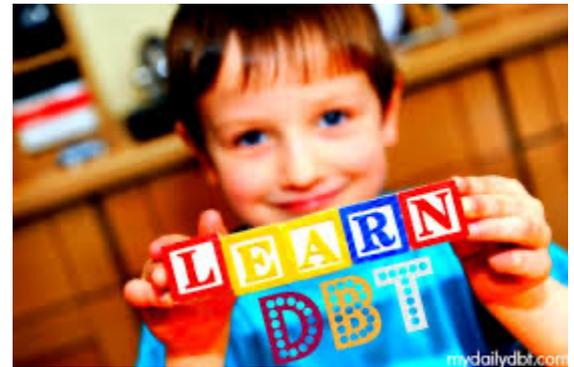


Effective Parenting “DBT Style”

- Assumptions about yourself
 - You are doing the best you can
 - You can do better

Finding Your Wise Mind



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Adapted from *Parenting a Child Who Has Intense Emotions* by Pat Harvey and Jeanine Penzo

DBT Assumptions about your Child

- Your child is doing the best he can
- Your child needs to do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change
- Your child wants to do things differently and make things better
- Your child must learn new behaviors in all important situations in his life
- Family members should take things in a well-meaning way and not assume the worst
- There is no absolute truth

Learning to believe the assumptions

- Repeat a challenging assumption to yourself, even if you don't fully believe it
- At times when it seems relevant and/or when you're having a difficult time, think about a helpful assumption
- Repeat the words of the challenging assumption to yourself
- Remind yourself what the assumption means whenever it seems appropriate

Exercise: Practicing the Assumptions

- Look at the DBT assumptions and think about how treating them as facts might change how you think, feel, and behavior
 - Which assumption do you think will help you the most?
 - Which assumption challenges you the most and why?

Exercise: Practicing the Assumption

- Think about one situation in which believing an assumption would change what you would do or how you would feel toward your son or daughter
 - Describe the situation
 - Write down an assumption you would use
 - Describe a possible new response
 - Describe what you think would be the outcome of the new response

Finding Wise Responses

- Skills to help you see with new eyes
 - Stand back and look at what is happening. Observe the situation
 - Put words to the situation or experience, describing it so that you can separate the reality of the situation from your assessment of or feelings about it
 - Attend to the situation with full awareness. Be actively and fully involved in whatever you are doing in the present moment

Skills to Guide Wise Responses

- Helps you to see with new eyes and develop wise ways of thinking, communication and behaving
 - Thinking in a nonevaluative way
 - Doing what works
 - Focusing all of your energy on one thing in the moment

Thinking in a Nonevaluative Way

- Phrases that Judge

“That is not appropriate behavior”

“You are such a good boy”

“He’s very disruptive”

“I wish he wasn’t so difficult”

“You are terrific”

- Phrases that Describe

“Your behavior is ineffective and will not help you get what you want”

“Thank you for doing what I asked”

“He interrupts his sibling when they’re doing their homework”

“He breaks the rules at home & appears not to listen to me”

“I really like that you share things with me”

Exercise: Describing your Child in Nonevaluative Terms

Use descriptive rather than judgmental language.

Picture your child standing in front of you and ask yourself the following questions:

What does your child look like?

What does your child enjoy

How does your child spend his day?

Does he have a talent for art, performing, athletics?

Exercise: Focusing on One Thing with Full Attention

- Pick an activity that you do often and try doing it with your full attention and without distractions
- Choose an activity from the list below
 - Eat something very slowly, paying attention to how it feels in your mouth and how it tastes
 - Spend time with your child without answering the phone or talking to anyone else. Hear what your child is saying and see if you can repeat it to yourself.
 - Look at something in your purse or pocket that you look at quite often. See if you can find out something new about it.

Validation

The act of letting someone know that you understand, acknowledge, empathize with, and accept his thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the context of his own life experiences” (Linehan, 1993)

Why Validate?

- Lets your child know that you
 - are listening and taking him seriously
 - can understand his behavior within the context of his life circumstances
 - accept him
- A validated child may be less intense and more willing to discuss his feelings

Validation includes

- Sitting quietly and listening
- Actually telling someone you are listening carefully
- Expressing an acknowledgment of someone's feelings
- Trying to understand what someone is feeling or telling you

But, it doesn't mean that you necessarily agree with or like those feelings or behaviors

Validation Helps You To

- De-escalate emotional situations
- Communicate effectively with your child
- Listen in a way that allows your child to talk more, share more, and listen more
- Enable family members to feel more positive about each other
- Helps you to remain calm in the face of your child's emotionality

Learning to Make Validating Statements

- Step 1: Find a way to act wisely
 - Take a moment before responding
 - Observe the situation
 - What do you need to do for yourself to slow down your response time (ie deep breaths)
 - Determine your goal
 - Respond wisely and try not to react emotionally

Learning to Make Validating Statements (cont.)

- Step 2: Look at your child with new eyes
 - Remember to remind yourself your child is doing the best under the circumstances.
 - Try to determine what emotion your child is feeling. If you don't know maybe ask?
 - Consider what may be leading to the present behavior
 - Think about what is going on for your child. Is this situation bringing up difficult memories?

Learning to Make Validating Statements (cont.)

- Step 3: Explore what may be getting in the way
 - Think about the vulnerabilities or concerns you bring to the situation.
 - Be aware of your thoughts and feelings about the situation
 - Consider whether the event has triggered old memories or old feelings in you
 - Determine whether you're judging your child or yourself in this moment

Learn to Make Validating Statements: Validation Practice Worksheet

- Step 4: Make a validating statement
 - This is what my child is doing (observe and describe the situation) _____
 - These are my thoughts and feelings about what my child is doing _____
 - I can accept my child when I remember that he's doing the best he can. I can let him know that I am hearing him by saying: _____
 - The outcome of this situation is _____

Effective Communicating and Interacting

- Calming yourself and your child is the first step
- Then you will be ready to:
 - Assess your goals
 - Develop priorities
 - Feel effective

Assessing your Goals

- What do I want to accomplish now?
- What is the most important goal I have?
- How do I want both of us to feel when this is over?

Developing Priorities

- Do you want to set limits or give your child a consequence for his behavior?
- Do you want to find out what was upsetting your child in the first place?
- Do you want to talk to him about more effective ways of expressing his feelings?
- Don't be afraid that your child may respond to your limits with anger
- Stay focused on the situation at hand
- When it's over, let it go

Feeling Effective

- Look at your behaviors and avoid judging yourself too harshly
- You are doing the best you can if you are able to:
 - Say what you want to say
 - Validate your child
 - Respond wisely
- Even if your child continues to respond emotionally, you are most likely doing the best you can under the circumstances

Importance of Balanced Parenting

- Extreme responses are rarely effective and are usually made when feeling emotional
- Extreme responses tend to confuse your child especially if you vacillate between different extreme responses
- When your thinking is rigid you limit your ability to learn or teach new behaviors

Dialectical (balanced) Thinking

- Thinking in a balanced way helps you to
 - View behaviors within a whole context
 - Entertain different perspectives in others and within oneself
 - Recognize that two things that seem like opposites can both be true
 - Find less extreme and more effective ways to think
- When parents think dialectically they
 - Become less rigid
 - Become more balanced
 - Are able to develop entirely new ways of thinking

Thinking and Acting Dialectically

- Use phrases like “sometimes” and “some people” instead of “always” & “never”
- Think in terms of both/and instead of either/or
- Remind yourself that other opinions can be legitimate even if you don’t agree with them
- Describe situations by make “I feel ---” rather than “You are ----” statements

Examples of Balanced Thinking

- Acceptance and Hope
- Independence and Assistance
- Choices and Limits
- Giving In and Choosing Priorities

Unbalanced Parental Responses

- Wanting to ignore certain problematic behaviors or excuse them because you think everyone is doing it
- Deny that your child has emotional responses to provide you with short-term relief
- Finding it exhausting to set limits and consequently set fewer of them
- Finding it difficult to differentiate between developmentally appropriate behaviors and worrisome behaviors
- Be so afraid of your child's impulsivity and poor judgment that you may not want to give him any freedom or responsibility
- Be excessively controlling because of your fear of what might happen to your child

Changing Unbalanced Patterns

- Stand back and observe what is happening and then find a wise response
- Ask yourself if your response is effective and/or helpful
- Slow down your automatic response
- Look at your child's behavior from his point of view and try validating him
- Evaluate possible alternative responses
- Balance your thinking to be less confrontational, less rigid and more effective

“Parenting is a marathon, not a sprint”

- Finding balance and responding wisely means thinking in a holistic way that integrates emotion and reason
- Accepting that you can have different emotions at different times- or even at the same time- will make it easier for you to parent and to love your child
- You don't have to accomplish all of your goals or fulfill all of your responsibilities to be effective.
- Remember, you do the best you can, *and* you can learn to do it better