A modified DBT group therapy manual

For clinicians working with adolescents and young adults experiencing substance misuse
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Welcome

Triple Care Farm and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education are pleased to be able to provide a group therapy program for working with young people with substance misuse issues and other complex needs.

Mission Australia’s Triple Care Farm is a residential drug and alcohol treatment program in the Southern Highlands of NSW. The program works with young people aged 16-24 years, providing psychosocial supports that encourage its ‘students’ to live a better life in line with their substance use goals.

Triple Care Farm has been providing a modified Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) group program for over seven years. Together with the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, Triple Care Farm now presents in this manual, the strategies and group work protocols it has found to be the most effective over that time. Although designed specifically for the Triple Care Farm student group, and to be delivered within a 12 week timeframe, Triple Care Farm and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, recognise the potential for wider clinical utility, and encourage service providers to access the program for use in the treatment of a range of substance misuse harm minimisation goals in a range of different clinical settings.

This manual is accompanied by a student workbook ‘Regulator,’ and website, which is an ongoing self-help resource that provides refresher material for both clients and clinicians.

www.dbtregulator.com.au

Triple Care Farm would like to acknowledge that this work has largely been adapted from that of Marsha Linehan. Please see the recommended reading list for more information about her work, as well as that of other practitioners and authors who have influenced this manual.

Triple Care Farm would like to acknowledge its staff who contributed to this manual; Lara Williamson, Sarah Green, Peta Stone, Lauren Mullaney, Lisa Spackman, Nichole Sullivan, Sara Oldfield, Leanne Harrison, Jayne Power and Gabriella Holmes.

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Triple Care Farm would finally like to thank the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education for funding and supporting this initiative.
1. Background

Young People with Complex Needs

Young people accessing treatment for substance use have faced multiple challenges in their lives and thus they present with multiple needs simultaneously. At Triple Care Farm, the complexity of challenges faced by each young person is marked.

An average of demographic data from 2007 to 2014 demonstrates that approximately nine out of ten young people presenting for treatment at TCF are unemployed; 75% have a history of family breakdown and almost eight out of ten self-report a diagnosed mental health issue. Seventy-per cent of young people attending have a criminal history, while 45% have had experiences of homelessness. Slightly less than two-thirds have engaged in suicide behaviours; and a further 45% identify with self-harming behaviours. The experience of trauma is pervasive, with 39% of young people reporting physical abuse and 23% reporting sexual abuse. In the six months prior to admission, 44% have been incarcerated and 57% have been hospitalised for an acute substance and/or mental health related crisis.

The issues facing young people accessing Triple Care Farm are consistent with the literature; people with complex mental health and substance use experiences tend to concurrently experience other psychosocial barriers. Treatment programs for young people with complex needs must therefore be integrated, and they should aim to simultaneously assess and target multiple areas of need (NSW Clinical Guidelines: For the Care of Persons with Comorbid Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders in Acute Care Settings, 2009). Having one cohesive and integrated group program is identified as best practice to address comorbidity and complex needs (Grenyer, Bargenquast and Helyer, 2013).

Why DBT?

DBT is a structured, skills based treatment, based on a biosocial theory that proposes that the complex client group: (a) lacks important interpersonal, self-regulation (including emotion regulation), and distress tolerance skills, and that (b) their environment often impedes the use of any behavioural skills that they may have, reinforcing the level of dysfunction and dysfunctional behaviour. DBT combines cognitive therapy with the eastern practice of mindfulness, and draws upon an overarching dialectical world view. The dialectical approach emphasizes the need to synthesise polar thinking, to overcome dichotomous, rigid patterns of thinking that lead to extreme and entrenched patterns of behaviour.

DBT originally began as a strategy for intervention for self-harm in American women (Linehan, 1993), yet has been found to have a much broader clinical utility. As such its application has been generalised for substance misuse (Dimeff & Linehan, 2008); for young
people (Rathus & Miller, 2002); for ADHD (Hirvikoski, et al. 2011); for Bi Polar Disorder (Van Dijk, Jeffrey, & Katz, 2012); in forensic settings (Thompson & Cooke, 2011), and in the Australian clinical setting (Pasieczny & Connor, 2011). DBT is therefore widely accepted as having elements that suit co-occurring disorders.

This evidence has informed Triple Care Farm’s vision to provide structured, skills based groups, skills coaching and individual counselling, which is tied to one central philosophical and therapeutic approach: Dialectical Behaviour Therapy. The approach has been modified in line with evidence based best practice for young people (Rathus & Miller, 2002); for the residential treatment setting (Thompson & Cooke, 2011); for a shorter time frame (Fleischhaker et al., 2011), and for the primary target of substance use disorder (Mc Main, Dimeff & Linehan, 2007).

The modular practice elements approach

Whilst DBT is the over-arching framework used by Triple Care Farm, the program also draws upon the Modular Practice Elements Approach to treatment. Based on the idea that therapeutic interventions are comprised of numerous discrete and separable elements (Chorpita, B., Becker, K.D. & Daleiden, E.L., 2007; Garland et al., 2008; Mitchell, P.F., 2011), this approach respects and builds on the strengths of current practice rather than attempting to replace it.

This approach is based on functional units or ‘Modules’ that are essentially self-contained, yet can connect with other units. Modules are not dependent on each other, but connection with other modules can improve results.

Triple Care Farm’s group program thus draws from a variety of intervention models in purposeful ways according to a clear set of intentions and principles; in this case:

- Ensuring capacity to meet a diversity of needs
- In order to meet a specified set of therapeutic intentions
- Evidence of effectiveness with respect to specified needs and therapeutic intentions
- Consistency with practice values and principles

The modified DBT framework presented in this manual therefore also incorporates elements from the following evidenced based approaches:

- Psycho-education
- Motivational Interviewing for Substance Use and Criminality
- Relapse Prevention
- Strengths Based Work
- Solution Focused Therapy
- Drug Education
• Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
• Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
• Mindfulness and Meditation
• Narrative Therapy
• Art Therapy

These approaches have been modified based on relevant peer-reviewed literature and the clinical wisdom of therapists working at Triple Care Farm, to meet the particular needs of young people within a residential setting. The framework also aims to support Triple Care Farm’s service goals of reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs, reducing the impact of mental health issues, reducing criminality and to improve the wellbeing of young people.

Interventions are expected to have positive outcomes for individuals, for the young peoples’ families and for the wider community. Our practice framework is designed to emphasise the social and emotional well-being of young people with complex needs, fusing evidence from the recovery and resilience literature together with developmental neuroscience.

**Key Principles**

Key Principles for working with young people with complex problems, within the framework include:

• Demonstrate empathy
• Listen to the person’s current experience
• Validate the person’s current emotional state
• Take the person’s experience seriously, including verbal and non-verbal communication
• Maintain a non-judgemental stance
• Stay calm
• Remain respectful
• Remain caring
• Engage in open communication
• Be human and be prepared to acknowledge both the serious and the funny sides of life where appropriate
• Foster trust to allow strong emotions to be freely expressed
• Be clear, consistent, and reliable
• Remember aspects of challenging behaviour have survival value given past experiences
• Convey encouragement and hope about their capacity for change while validating their current emotional experience
2. Overview of the Group Program

Participation
All young people at Triple Care Farm must participate in the group therapy program. Group sizes are recommended to be a maximum of 10, and optimally 8 participants.

Format
The group cycle
At Triple Care Farm the group is an ‘open’ group, as the program has a rolling intake, with new young people entering the program and joining the groups each week.

In order to ensure that group cohesion is maintained throughout this process, new young people are formally oriented to DBT through the pre-treatment session which occurs prior to joining the larger group. This introduction exists to familiarise participants with the structure, expectations, overarching goals and principles of the approach. This session may also be used to increase a young person’s motivation, and to administer any pre-treatment measures.

Following the pre-treatment group, young people begin participation in the whole group learning experience. At Triple Care Farm, young people are placed in one of two groups (Group A or Group B) at the discretion of the counselling team. For the remaining duration of their placement at Triple Care Farm, all young people attend skills training with their assigned group twice a week.

Young people may be moved from one group to another to assist in the balancing of group dynamics. However where possible, the interpersonal difficulties, which inevitably arise should be used as rich contextual examples for practicing the skills learned in the group.

See over page for rolling timetable.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>MON</th>
<th>TUES</th>
<th>WED</th>
<th>THURS</th>
<th>FRI</th>
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<td>Group B Mindfulness 1</td>
<td>Group A Mindfulness 2</td>
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<td>Group B DT2</td>
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<td>Group A DT8</td>
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<td>Group A IE1</td>
<td>Group B IE1</td>
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<td>Group A IE3</td>
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<td>Group A ER5</td>
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<tr>
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**Individual group structure**

A clear group structure provides predictability and security for group members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Orientation and introductions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here and now, interpersonal focus</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice review</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Break</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Timing**

Groups are 2 hours in duration in line with Linehan’s (1993b) recommended format. At Triple Care Farm, groups are timetabled each day from 9am to 11am.

At Triple Care Farm, additional coaching and homework review opportunities exist outside of formal session time. Practice efforts are frequently discussed and reviewed with young people, and are celebrated where appropriate. Minor changes are encouraged and championed, with therapists and staff constantly searching for ‘glimmers of hope’ in changes in behaviour. These practices link to behaviourist shaping methods, encouraging any progress toward a desirable behaviour, and should be practiced across all shifts by all staff at all times.

For non-residential programs, or programs that do not function in such a structured way, extending the time allocated to practice review may need to be considered.

**Orientation and Introductions**

Each group session is commenced with an introduction to new group members or new facilitators. Members are asked to settle into the space, quickly preparing any drinks or snacks before content is discussed. Brief attention is also given to group rules, and therapy-interfering behaviours such as problems with group dynamics and/or facilitator-group member dynamics (Linehan, 1993a). If such issues are not resolved in a timely manner, it is the task of the secondary facilitator to discreetly address individuals. If necessary, individual group members may be required to leave the group space, and obtain support from a non-facilitating Triple Care Farm staff member. This enables the facilitators to continue the session within the allotted time.
An ice-breaker activity may also be undertaken at the discretion of the primary facilitator. See appendix for examples of mindfulness and ice breaker activities which may be utilised.

**Here and Now Interpersonal Focus**

This section of the group work provides an opportunity for group skills trainers to role model alternative, safe and secure attachment models. Group facilitators can demonstrate how relationships can be healthy and how we can ‘work through’ interpersonal conflict. Young people will test the security of these new role model relationships by ‘boundary testing’ or by provoking, which are invitations to staff to demonstrate healthier ways of responding, and should therefore be considered in a social learning context.

This interpersonal focus extends to creating ‘here and now’ moments, providing group members with an opportunity to discuss interpersonal issues, which may have arisen in the residential environment or within the group process.

This section allows additional practice review through these ‘here and now’ examples.

**How to facilitate this section:**

*Check in with group members around how they are feeling in this moment, i.e., energy levels, noticeable dynamics between group members, significant events that have occurred since the previous group session, etc.*

*Suggest appropriate and recently learnt DBT skills for managing any unhelpful dynamics or distressing experiences, e.g., if the group identifies low energy, prompt conversation around the Opposite Action skill and how it could be implemented in the moment.*

**Breaks**

It is at the discretion of the primary facilitator, based on group cohesion and motivation to proceed, whether or not a break or breaks are given during sessions. Agreed break times must be no longer than 10 minutes so as to not cut into group time, and to maintain the attention, focus and concentration of the group. Group members may bring drinks and snacks into the room as this often reduces the need for breaks.

If the group does not wish to break, additional time can be allocated to mindfulness practice, or content delivery can be continued.

**Practice Review**

Following start-up and the group focus on interpersonal dynamics, approximately 20 minutes is allocated to group members sharing their efforts to practice the specific behavioural skills. Skills practice is reviewed first and foremost for the content of the preceding group (i.e., Mindfulness 2 has a focus on Mindfulness 1 content). Any remaining time is used for the review of additional DBT skill practice.
Young people are invited to share practice experiences one at a time. Every young person is asked to share their experience, including those who appear averse to the task (Linehan, 1993a). The role of facilitators is to encourage group members to analyse their own behaviour, validate difficulties and reduce any expectation for perfection in practicing skills. Facilitators should also promote the development of more effective coping strategies (Linehan, 1993). Facilitators must balance validating strategies with problem solving strategies, and irreverent communication with reciprocal communication, in order to aid the therapeutic sharing process (Linehan, 1993a). This process should help to foster emotional, social, and cultural safety. Facilitators are also expected to stimulate the process by applying ‘radical genuineness’ in disclosing any relevant personal experiences (Linehan, 1993a).

The same amount of time is to be provided to successful skills practice scenarios as to those that pose greater challenges (Linehan, 1993a). Praise and support, including prompting peer-peer support, is to be provided for members disclosing positive experience with skills practice (Linehan, 1993a).

When members report that skills are not helpful, it is the facilitator’s role to model how to analyse situations and behaviours, applying problem solving strategies to the example provided (Linehan, 1993a). Over time, group members may also help in analysing and solving problems that are presented by an individual to the group (Linehan, 1993a).

Where a group member reports that they have not practiced a skill, the facilitator may continue questioning the individual in order to reveal any attempt at practice, no matter how small:

"On a scale of 1 to 10; 1 being that you didn’t even think about skills practice and 10 being you practiced as much as you could AND the skills worked for you; where do you think you fit?"

Alternatively, where a group member firmly reports no practice, the primary facilitator may offer the individual an opportunity to work through a current problem with the group (Linehan, 1993a), as way of utilising the target skill (e.g., role play to practice an interpersonal effectiveness module).

The ‘Event Chain Analysis’ may be used as a method of working through such issues as not completing homework, eliciting any efforts to use skills and identifying areas for skill use and development (Linehan, 1993a). If however, the problem appears to be motivation, at the discretion of the primary facilitator, this may be analysed either within the group, or individually following the session.

A DBT Diary Card (see Appendix 2) may also be used to encourage reflection on skills practice. Read more about DBT Diary Cards in Linehan (1993b).

**Presenting new skills**

Approximately 60 minutes is allocated to the presentation of new skills. Please view each session outline individually.

A summary should highlight the salient points of the new skill and offer another opportunity for reinforcement through repetition.
Mindfulness as a closing activity

Where possible, if time remains, facilitators may lead an additional mindfulness exercise. The purpose of each exercise is to help group members ‘wind down’ (Linehan, 1993a) and to encourage the practice of core mindfulness skills training.

Facilitators

At Triple Care Farm facilitation of groups is rotated due to workplace demands. Due to the rotating nature of group facilitation, communication between facilitators is critical. It is the role of the primary facilitator to hand over any important information to the primary facilitator of the next session, so that the narrative of the group can continue.

Facilitator training

DBT is not an ‘expert’ to ‘client’ model of treatment, rather it can be effectively be practised by a wide range of therapists from different professional backgrounds and varying experience (Brassington & Krawitz, 2006). Moreover it is the ability of Skills Trainers to show radical genuineness, empathic validation and irreverent communication that is most desirable and efficacious.

DBT individual therapists have additional, discipline specific training and clinical supervision.

Though not all practicing DBT facilitators, approximately 75% of Triple Care Farm staff have completed an “Introduction to DBT Skills Coaching Training," and have a basic understanding of how to support young people in practising DBT skills. DBT training is offered to new staff on a regular basis, as the need arises.

Primary group skills training facilitators must have completed the training and have acted in a secondary facilitator for an entire cycle of DBT skills (Mindfulness, Distress Tolerance, Interpersonal Effectiveness, and Emotion Regulation).

Primary and Secondary Facilitation

Two facilitators are essential for the conduct of group skills training in DBT (Linehan, 1993a). Triple Care Farm endeavours to have two leaders for each DBT group and agrees that there MUST be two facilitators for groups of 6 or more young people. The primary reason for this is therapist burnout, which can happen very quickly for a therapist facilitating groups alone.

Group members, particularly in the early stages of treatment have issues of:

- Passivity;
- Hopelessness;
- Emotional Vulnerability, and
- Invalidation.

These issues are impossible for a lone worker to manage. They will eventually impact on the therapist.
Such issues may result in:

- Emotional withdrawal from the group
- Group conflict

Therapists will often need to ‘push’ group members along and challenge them to change, in order for group skills training to continue as a process.

**The Primary Group Facilitator**

The Primary Group Facilitator may also be the individual therapist for group members, thus creating an imbalance in the therapeutic relationship. The Secondary Facilitator’s role also acts as counterweight to this imbalance.

TCF uses the metaphor of the train to describe the Primary Group Facilitator. Keeping the group on the tracks; never going off the set tracks; getting from point to point without stopping and the train stops for nothing. The Primary Group Facilitator’s role is to deliver the content within the set time to the majority.

Generally, if there is a ‘bad guy’ it is the primary group leader; by way of enforcing group rules, group norms, ensuring homework is completed.

Primary facilitator tasks include:

- Creating a space which is conducive to group skills training being mindful of physical, emotional, social and cultural safety;
- Preparing materials for group;
- Timing of commencement breaks and close;
- Focusing on the group as a whole and delivering content consistent with the manual, to the majority of group members;
- Delivering content in concrete, easy to follow chunks, and giving handouts;
- Giving examples of skills to be learned;
- Establishing/reviewing group rules and limits;
- Setting of specific homework tasks;
- Homework review;
- Reinforcing Skilled Behaviour;
- Giving behaviourally specific feedback;
- Coaching;
- Role Play;
- Pointing to models in the environment for group members to observe;
- Disclosing one’s own use of skills in everyday life;
- Storytelling, illustrating skills;
• Setting up an imaginal / covert practice milieu;
• Observing in vivo skills use, in and between sessions;
• Thinking out loud and role modelling self-talk to model adaptive thinking/coping ahead skills, and
• Setting up homework reminders to increase target behaviours inside and outside of group times.

The Secondary Group Facilitator

The Secondary Group Facilitator does what is necessary to keep the ‘train’ on the tracks. The secondary facilitator’s role is to keep the journey as smooth as possible, putting out ‘spot fires’; managing problematic behaviours, if necessary briefly removing members of the group, assisting with literacy and numeracy of members; offering additional interpretations of examples from experience, and countering the approach of the Primary Group Facilitator. The Secondary Group Facilitator often emerges as the ‘good guy’ providing individual attention, addressing individual needs, and seeing the point of view of the members of the group who may be ‘down and out’ or on the verge of getting left behind by the train.

Secondary facilitator tasks include:
• Creating a space that is conducive to group skills training being mindful of physical, emotional, social and cultural safety;
• Reading through materials, being familiar with the group content beforehand;
• Giving examples of skills to be learned in addition to those of the Primary Group Facilitator;
• Observing and describing behaviours demonstrating adherence/non adherence to group rules and limits;
• Managing an individual’s emotional withdrawal from the group;
• Managing group conflict and mediating tension between group members or group members and the primary facilitator;
• Ensuring group members are participating to the best of their ability;
• Setting up homework reminders to increase target behaviours inside and outside of group times;
• Eliciting completion of homework by offering individual support inside and outside of group times;
• Reinforcing skilled behaviour and giving behaviourally specific feedback;
• Coaching;
• Participating in role play and pointing to everyday life examples that group members can observe;
• Disclosing one’s own use of skills in everyday life;
• Storytelling, illustrating skills;
• Setting up an imaginal / covert practice milieu;
• Observing in vivo skills use, in and between sessions;
• Thinking out loud and role modelling self-talk to model adaptive thinking/coping ahead skills;
• Packing up after group; cleaning the room; replacing chairs, tables, materials; advising AOD counsellor when resources need topping up;
• Documenting activities and outcomes of groups as per agency policy and procedure, and
• Communicating, when necessary to appropriate staff, the outcomes of group attendance for individual group members.

Observers
There may be times when observers are invited to attend DBT groups. Observers are most likely social work or psychology placement students completing hours at Triple Care Farm, or new staff who have little to no experience with therapeutic groups.

Observer tasks include:
• Taking responsibility for their own learning;
• Completing pre-requisite readings from the DBT text book and articles provided by their supervisor;
• Ensuring they have informed consent to participate from participants as well as facilitators;
• Observing group processes;
• Answering direct questions posed by facilitators or participants with radical genuineness, and,
• Respecting the group rules.

Group Dynamics
People with complex needs tend to struggle to respond consistently and effectively to others, and as such experience difficulties maintaining relationships. Poor interpersonal skills are likely to impact the day to day running of a group program. Group facilitators may need to pay special attention to the interpersonal dynamics which occur within the group, and be prepared to deal with relational issues as they arise (e.g., conflict, playing one staff member off another to get one’s needs met, etc.). Many relational issues for individuals arise from difficulties experienced in the attachment period. These attachment styles will also tend to play out within the residential setting. This data can be used to assist in teaching skills through in vivo, experiential learning and by utilising the very relevant and context rich environment of the group.
3. Session Outlines

Session outlines are included for:

- 1 Pre-treatment group
- 2 Mindfulness groups
- 9 Distress Tolerance groups
- 4 Interpersonal Effectiveness groups
- 6 Emotion Regulation groups

There is room for flexible teaching, with 1 group of the 24 week cycle left blank for repetition or alternate learning.
Pre-treatment
This group is designed to orientate new participants to the group program.

Introduction to Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (15 minutes)
Introduce Dialectical Behaviour Therapy as the basis for the group therapy program. Elicit discussion around what the four core modules mean, and what skills young people may learn in each module.

“Dialectical Behaviour Therapy is an ‘evidence based’ approach to help you cope with all sorts of problems in life. This means that the skills we are going to be talking about have been proven to have worked for thousands of people with all sorts of substance misuse and mental health concerns. In DBT group we will be looking at four modules; core mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness and emotional regulation.

Core mindfulness is about learning to be fully present in the here and now. We will learn about this topic over 3 groups and then we will continue to practice as a group at the end of each session, and sometimes at the start, from here on out.

Distress tolerance is about learning to get through tough times without making the situation any worse. Have you ever been so angry, so sad or so excited that you’ve acted without thinking and made things worse? Over 9 groups, we will look at learning skills that will help us to manage our stress when things get tough, so that later on, when we’re calm, we can make our big decisions.

Interpersonal effectiveness is all about improving the way we communicate with others. Learning new ways to communicate will take us about 4 groups.

Finally, we will learn about emotion regulation skills. Here we will talk about how to identify our emotions as well as how to manage emotions that are unhelpful or unjustified. This will take up the final 5 weeks of our group work.”

Allow time for questions and discussion. It will be important to discuss how DBT will relate to substance use goals.

It may be useful to discuss group members’ past experiences of group therapy at this point.

Introduction to the Group Format (30 minutes)
Explain that group therapy sessions will be structured.

Highlight the format on the board. Set aside 20 minutes to discuss and model the interpersonal section now (see section 2 of this manual for information about how to do this).

Next, explain the importance of reviewing practice.
“Some of the skills we will talk about will work for you better than others. Maybe some won’t be the right fit. That’s okay.

What we do expect is that you at least give everything a go. This doesn’t just mean listening during group time. You will all need to try the skills for yourself in your own time. This might mean using a skill when something upsets you in group, using a skill when talking with your family on the phone, or using a skill on weekend leave. Whenever or whatever the situation is, you need to be practicing your DBT skills. Your mind is like a muscle in your body; if you don’t use it, it will become weak and it will make it all the more difficult to use when you really need it. The more you practice, the stronger your mind is, and the more likely it is that you will come to practice DBT responses with little effort.

This also means that because many of the skills we cover will be new, the first few practices will be tough. Most of the staff at TCF know about DBT and can help you; remember to talk with us if you need help with your practice.

You can also talk to each other during group time. In fact all DBT groups from here on in will have about half an hour set aside just to discuss your practice efforts. This means that all facilitators will expect you to have something to contribute at the start of each group. If you don’t have something prepared, your facilitator will still expect you to contribute by discussing barriers to practice, or why you didn’t give the skill a go.”

Introduce the Diary Card and take the time to demonstrate how it is used.

“Alongside this practice you will be given a diary card at the beginning of each week. This diary card has a list of all the specific DBT skills you will learn and provides space to record when you practice specific skills. This will help you in the discussion of your practice and also can be taken to counselling to get extra help with refining particular skills”.

**Group Rules** (10 minutes)

Brain storm rules for the group therapy program and write them on the white board. Some examples include:

- Respect each other and the space
- Confidentiality
Minimal swearing

**Introduction to Mindfulness** (60 minutes)

Ask group members “So what do you think we mean by Mindfulness?”

“When we are talking about Mindfulness we are talking about being 100% focused on what is happening in that moment and focusing on that experience with openness, interest and receptiveness. Mindfulness is about paying attention to a situation, on purpose, and without judgement.

We use Mindfulness to help us stay “in the moment” rather than being there physically; but mentally or emotionally being in the past or future.

For example, have any of you ever had an experience where you’ve literally been present, but mentally or emotionally been elsewhere? Like when you’ve had a conversation with someone, but you’re not actually paying attention to or listening to what they’ve said. You walk away without remembering what the conversation was about.

Mindfulness also helps us to move from emotional mind or factual mind into wise mind; as by being fully present in the here-and-now, we are able to more accurately understand what is happening around us and within us.

There are lots of ways in which Mindfulness can assist us…”

Generate discussion and cover the following points about how mindfulness can be helpful:

- To be fully present in the here and now;
- To experience unpleasant thoughts and feelings safely;
- To become less disturbed by and less reactive to unpleasant experiences;
- To become aware of what you are avoiding;
- To increase self-awareness;
- To learn the distinction between yourself and your thoughts;
- To have more direct contact with the world, rather than living through your thoughts;
- To learn that thoughts and feelings are impermanent; they change and come and go;
- To have more balance and less emotional volatility;
- To experience more calm and peacefulness, and
- To develop self-acceptance and self-compassion.
Explain that to practice mindfulness, we need to know about ‘What’ and ‘How’ skills.

“The first step is to observe or check out what is going on. This step is all about using your five senses to experience what is happening around you. Observing isn’t just about what is happening around you though. This step is also about watching your thoughts and feelings come and go. It’s important while doing this to try NOT to fight or push your thoughts or feelings away. Observing is about just letting them occur. To assist with this, it can sometimes be helpful to imagine your thoughts or feelings as a constantly moving object; like a stream, clouds or a conveyor-belt. Or to think of your mind as a Teflon pan, whatever goes into the pan just slides around, it doesn’t stick.

The second step is to describe what it is you’re observing. So this step involves putting words to your experience and observations. The important thing in this step is to make sure you are actually describing and NOT labelling the situation. For example, saying to yourself, “My stomach is churning” instead of “I’m anxious” or “My shoulders are tensed” instead of “I’m angry”.

The final step of what to do is to participate or get into it. Participating involves you focusing on your experience, without getting caught up in ‘busy mind’ and without becoming self-conscious of your feelings. This step requires you to actively participate in the current moment; without getting caught up in what happened before or worrying about what happens next.”

To demonstrate the above concepts, and the consequences of being unmindful, play the monkey business illusion.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY

• Optional practical activity (allow 5 minutes)

Ask group members to play noughts and crosses, and to focus on using the above skills.

“So now that we’ve discussed what to do to practice mindfulness, the next step is to look at how to do it. Like the ‘what’ skills, how to do it is also broken down into three steps.

The first step is to beware of judgements. It can be very easy to get caught up in judgements about what’s fair, what should be, or what could have been. However in order to effectively practice mindfulness, we need to try and be a neutral observer in the situation. This means that we need to observe what is actually happening, and let go of any judgements we may have...
In this first step, it is okay to acknowledge feelings, so long as you are not judging them, or name-calling. For example, acknowledging feelings of embarrassment but not labelling yourself as ‘stupid’ or acknowledging feelings of sadness, without labelling yourself as ‘weak’.

The second step is to stay focused on the experience. To do this, only do one thing at a time. Try and let go of any other distractions that might be dividing your attention. If you do notice your mind wandering, consciously bring it back to the present.

The third step is to do what works. By fully paying attention to what is going on around you (by using your observe, describe and participate skills), you will gain a clearer picture of your goals for the situation and what you’ll need to do to achieve those goals. This step is all about making sure that you’re doing those things that work effectively to achieve your goals; and letting go of the things that hold you back or let you down. Emotions like hurt or anger can often be things that when mindfully observed, hold us back from doing what works.

Doing what works is also about making sure you don’t ‘cut off your nose to spite your face’.

• **Optional practical activity (allow 15 minutes)**

Give each group member a piece of paper and pencil and ask group members to sit in pairs, with their backs against one another. Have one group member draw a simple picture or symbol on their piece of paper, without showing anyone. Then ask this group member to use their mindfulness skills of ‘describe’ and ‘participate’ to direct the group member behind them to draw the same picture on their paper (ask them to really break down descriptions and remove labels. For example, instead of saying, “Draw a circle.”, say, “Draw two arcs about 5cm in length that mirror each other and join them to enclose a space in the middle”). Encourage the drawing group member to observe and participate. Both group members should use the ‘how’ skills of being aware of judgements, focusing on one thing in the moment, and being effective.

Ask group members to swap and experience both listening and talking.

Allow time for discussion.

• **Optional practical activity (allow 15 minutes)**

Lead group members in a progressive muscle relaxation script.

**Practice for next session**

Ask group members to practice mindfulness during the time between groups.
Mindfulness 1: The 3 Mind States

Orientation and introductions 5 minutes

Here and now, interpersonal focus 20 minutes

Mindfulness activity 5 minutes

Practice review: Mindfulness 20 minutes

Short break 5 minutes

Skills training: The 3 Mind States 60 minutes

Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time 10 minutes

Practice Review

Review diary card

Key questions for generating discussion

“Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
“What is mindfulness?”
“How can it help us with substance use goals?”
“Do you remember the what and how skills for being mindful?”

Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around mindfulness and its benefits.
- Ensure an accurate understanding of the ‘what’ skills: observe, describe and participate.
- Ensure an accurate understanding of the ‘how’ skills: non-judgementally, effectively and one-mindfully.
Introduction to New Skill

The 3 mind states (50 minutes)

Explain to group members that in this group we will be learning about the 3 mind states. Direct group members to the image of the 3 mind states in their workbook.

“The next thing we are going to learn in DBT is the three mind states model. This is something that helps us to understand what state of mind we are in, or what viewpoint is influencing our attitude in a situation. Have you ever heard someone say, “Hey if you were thinking straight, you wouldn’t be making that decision!” This model is going to help us label ‘straight thinking’ as well as less helpful states of mind.

Being in factual mind is what we call it when we are thinking logically, considering all the facts of a situation. An example of being in factual mind might be of a person deciding that they want to marry someone based on a checklist of facts... they have money, tick; they have a house, tick; our families get along, tick.... But, without actually considering how they feel about the person.

Being in emotional mind on the other hand is what we call it when we are influenced by how we’re feeling. An example of being in emotion mind might be if a person felt really upset because their partner forgot their anniversary and decided in the heat of the moment to split up with them without considering such facts as previous instances of support; remembering the anniversary the previous year; the fact that their partner had had a very busy day that day, and the impact of splitting assets.

Being in wise mind, or observer mind, is what we call it when we are listening to both our factual and emotional mind. Wise mind is where we aim to be when we make decisions. We know that both our factual and emotional minds have their place and sometimes we will find ourselves experiencing these mind states... that’s ok because it’s pretty unrealistic to expect to be in wise mind all the time so we simply aim to bring ourselves back to the middle as soon as we can.”

Optional practical activity (allow 30 minutes)

Have group members watch an episode of the Big Bang Theory or similar.

“Okay, now that we understand the mind states, we’re going to begin to practice noticing them. I’m going to start a video; some of you may have seen it before but I’m going to let the whole episode play. Your task is to notice the characters in the video and whether their actions seem to be those of someone in factual, emotional or wise mind. You might need to take notes; we will discuss what you have noticed at the end.”
Discussion questions include:

- What did you notice about the characters and their mind states?
- What are the benefits of each mind state?
- Did we see any of the characters experience more than one mind state?

Also ask yourself such general questions as:

- What character reminds you of you?
- What mind state do you think you are in when you use substances?

**How to get into wise mind** (10 minutes)

Briefly review and discuss the ‘Tips for getting into Wise Mind’ from the workbook.

**Practice for Next Session**

Ask group members to practice noticing what mind state they are in. At times when they notice they are in emotional or factual mind, ask group members to try to move themselves into wise mind.
Mindfulness 2: Mindfulness in Practice

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Practice Review

Review diary card

Key questions for generating discussion

“Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
“What is wise mind? What is emotion mind? What is factual mind?”
“Can you think of any examples in the last week, when you identified with one of the three mind states?”
“What makes you think you were in that mind state?”
“If you noticed you were in emotion or factual mind, how did you move yourself back to wise mind?”

Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around wise mind, emotional mind and factual mind, including what they ‘look’ like, who represented them in the Big Bang Theory episode, and times when they are helpful/unhelpful.
- Support group members to identify examples of when they themselves were in different mind states.
- Help group members understand and distinguish between the different mind states.
- Revise ‘ways of getting into wise mind’.
Introduction to New Skill

This group session is flexible.

The aim of the group is for young people to develop a deeper understanding of mindfulness practice.

The following teaching strategies are recommended for this group:

- Visit to the Nan Tien Temple in Wollongong and participation in Tai Chi, Calligraphy classes, etc.
- Visit to a scenic area, e.g., the beach, a bushland area, etc., and practicing a mindful walk in nature.
- Visit and participation in a yoga class, tai chi, meditation, martial arts class, etc.
**Distress Tolerance 1: Introduction to Distress Tolerance Concepts**

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**Practice Review**

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

> “Who can remember what we did in the last group?”
> “What have you learnt about mindfulness and how are you applying it in your life now?”

**Key learning points**

- Review mindfulness and its importance.
Introduction to New Skill

**Introduction to the distress tolerance modules** (10 minutes)

Explain to group members that they will be focusing on the core module of Distress Tolerance for the next nine groups. Explain that these distress tolerance skills will build upon the knowledge and strategies that were developed during the mindfulness groups.

After setting expectations, generate discussion about what distress tolerance might mean and write group definitions on the board.

Examples for distress: pain, suffering, ache, discomfort, anxiety, woe, misery, trouble, unhappiness, despair, trouble, sorrow, worry, angst. Examples for tolerance: acceptance, endurance, patience, resilience, ‘put up with it’.

“*If we are using the definitions that we’ve just come up with to explain what Distress Tolerance is, what we learn is that distress tolerance is all about being able to put up with and accept painful and uncomfortable situations.*

Distress tolerance is NOT about trying to solve the problem and it’s also NOT about liking or agreeing with the pain or the situation you’re in. It is simply about getting through the painful situation and not making it worse…”

**Distress and pain** (10 minutes)

Generate a discussion about the inevitability of pain in life. Ask group members, “Do you think it is possible for a person to go through their life without ever experiencing pain?”

After facilitating initial discussion around pain and gaining group consensus that pain is an unavoidable and inevitable part of life, guide the conversation to the importance of being able to effectively cope with pain.

“We are all in agreement that at some point in our lives we will have to cope with distress and pain. In some instances it may be physical pain, like breaking a bone, or stubbing a toe. In other cases it may be emotional pain, like sadness or anger. We can’t always predict when we are going to stub our toe or when we’re going to feel angry and because of this unpredictability, we usually fall back to the coping strategies we’ve used in the past to deal with pain; and of course hope that they work.

Often, if the pain we are experiencing is particularly intense, occurs frequently or comes on quickly, we become overwhelmed by the distress and attempt to deal with the pain in ineffective or unhealthy ways. This could be to try and make it go away as quickly as possible. The problem with this is that many of the strategies we use when we’re feeling overwhelmed can actually make the problem worse in the long-term and take us further away from where we actually want to be…”
Examples may include: AOD use; isolating self from other people to avoid the situation; ruminating on past problems, pain and mistakes; becoming aggressive towards others; self-harming behaviours; engaging in dangerous or risky behaviours; avoiding pleasant activities as a form of self-punishment; resigning oneself to living with ongoing pain.

Ask group members what mind state they are in when they make the decision to cope in this way. Highlight the connection with emotion mind thinking. Ask group members if they think they make good decisions when they are in emotion mind and highly distressed?

Summarise how distress tolerance skills are designed to address this:

“This is why Distress Tolerance strategies are so helpful. They allow us to sit with and accept an uncomfortable or stressful situation, without creating a bigger problem; until we are in the right mind-state to be able to effectively deal with the cause of our distress...”

**Distress tolerance strategies** (20 minutes)

Direct group members to their workbook and read through ‘when to use distress tolerance skills’ Ask group members to identify when they have been in these types of situations.

“You should use your core mindfulness skills to help you decide whether or not it will be helpful to use distress tolerance strategies in the situation you are in. Ask yourself, “What mind-state am I in right now?” Observe your thoughts and notice any urges. If your thoughts or urges are tempting you to escape from the situation, it is probably a good time to be using distress tolerance skills.

Remember that your goal is to get through the moment without making it worse. It doesn’t matter if you don’t feel any better, or if the problem is still there. If you have survived the moment and you’re not in a more damaging situation, then you’ve achieved your goal...”

The idea of sitting with discomfort and NOT trying to ‘fix’ the problem can be a challenging concept for group members to accept. Address any questions or concerns group members may have before moving into specifically discussing the different types of Distress Tolerance strategies.

This can be a good opportunity for the primary facilitator to use the DBT concept of radical genuineness, to recognise that just accepting and sitting with pain can be difficult and requires practice.

Next, move into introducing the types of strategies that will be presented over the next 9 groups. As you are speaking, the secondary facilitator should move to draw two columns on the board and title them ‘crisis survival’ and ‘acceptance’.
“What we’ve discovered from our discussion so far, is that while pain is an unavoidable part of life, the way we respond to painful and stressful situations can play a big role in whether or not that pain results in short-term discomfort or long-term suffering.

The distress tolerance strategies we will be learning about in the coming groups are aimed at placing you in the best situation possible to use effective coping strategies, and therefore being able to limit pain to short-term discomfort.

The distress tolerance strategies can broadly be divided into two groups:
1. Skills for tolerating and surviving crises.
2. Skills for accepting life as it is in the moment.
Both of these skill sets are important for being able to manage pain and distress in a variety of different circumstances.

These skills really draw on the mindfulness concept of being effective and doing what works, and this requires us to make the conscious choice to be effective in the current crisis situation.

What I mean by this is: it sometimes can be very tempting (especially when we’re in emotional mind) to make the decision to prove to others just how bad and awful our situation is, rather than deciding to get through the discomfort. While this can provide short-term gains (for example by someone temporarily giving in to our wants), it usually fails to stop long-term suffering.”

Stop here to allow group members time to discuss examples. Encourage responses from the group, however as this can be a new, and challenging concept to grasp, it is always helpful for the primary facilitator to have a pre-prepared example of ‘proving how bad a situation is.’

Move to describing crisis survival skills. Write the skills into the column on the board and encourage group members to flick through their workbook and notice each skill as it’s written.

“If we look closely at the crisis survival skills, the way they work is that they temporarily short-circuit the emotional distress we experience in crisis situations. So essentially, they stop the growing momentum of the distress we are experiencing. While a use of the Crisis Survival skills may sometimes provide us with a feeling of relief, this is not their aim or purpose. The four Crisis Survival skills are (1) Distraction, (2) Self-Soothing, (3) Improving the Moment, (4) Pros and Cons...”

Do the same for acceptance skills.
“The second set of distress tolerance skills falls under the category of acceptance skills. This set of skills is designed to help us to accept reality exactly the way that it is in the moment; regardless of whether that reality is uncomfortable.

Often, when we are distressed or in pain, our initial reaction can be to get upset or angry; with ourselves, with others, or with the situation. We can begin to attach blame, try and find reasons, or get caught up in wishful thinking about the situation being different to what it is. Unfortunately, no matter who is blamed, or how many alternate scenarios you imagine, the past cannot be changed: the pain continues to exist and you suffer. In fact, in many cases, continuing to get caught up in past pain actually perpetuates its existence, and increases your chances of missing important details about a scenario. This can prevent you from taking the steps you need to change the situation.

So if you picture pain and distress as a bit like wearing your sunglasses inside: you’re not going to see everything as it really is, and you’re going to miss some important details...... then, by applying the acceptance skills it’s like removing your sunglasses. This allows you to see everything exactly as it is, and this genuine perception of your situation can allow you to more clearly see how to move past the pain and distress you have experienced.

The three Acceptance skills are (1) Radical acceptance, (2) Turning the mind, and (3) Willingness versus wilfulness. The important thing to remember in each of the acceptance skills is, that an acceptance of reality as it is does not automatically equal your approval. You can accept reality without necessarily liking reality...”

**Avoiding reality** (10 minutes)

Briefly explain to group members that we are going to look at the signs and consequences of avoiding feelings and emotions. Ask, “What does ‘avoidance’ mean? What would you be doing if you were avoiding something?”

Examples: use of AOD; withdrawing from people or situations that may trigger uncomfortable feelings; staying in bed; sleeping a lot; overuse of distraction (e.g., keeping really busy all of the time), etc.

Ask, “Why might we choose to avoid our feelings?” Connect avoidance with the fact that our feelings are sometimes uncomfortable or painful and it is hard to sit with distressing emotions, etc.

Finally ask, “Do these avoidance behaviours make the initial problem or feeling go away in the long-term?” Gather a consensus that sometimes the consequences of our avoidance behaviours can actually increase our distress or the problem.
Engage group members in a discussion around avoidance versus distress tolerance. Explain to group members that the longer they avoid their distress, the more intense the distress will become. Contrast this to the short-term use of distress tolerance strategies, which allow us to ‘cap’ the level of distress we are experiencing, for only the amount of time required to move into Wise Mind and effectively deal with the situation.

“As we’ve discussed, while avoiding our feelings in the short-term can provide us with some temporary relief, the consequences of long-term avoidance can far outweigh any short-term benefit we may gain. It can also take us further away from our goals and where we want to be. If all of our attention and effort is focused on avoiding uncomfortable feelings, it doesn’t leave much time or energy for focusing on the long-term goals that are important to us…”

Ask the group “What could some of the consequences of avoiding our feelings be?” Elicit responses from group members and refer to the below listed consequences. Gauge each group member’s opinions and experiences:

- It doesn’t work. Feelings that are not dealt with leak out in unexpected ways; can build up and ‘explode’ or lead to ‘breakdown’. All of these consequences lead to the sense that our feelings are ‘out of control’.
- Ignoring feelings means we do not address the messages that they function to give us and so the messages just continue to get louder.
- The behaviours we engage in to avoid feelings can interfere with our functioning; our ability to achieve our goals, and the life we would like. They are life restricting.
- Avoiding feelings means we never learn the skills we need to manage them effectively. This reduces our ability and confidence to tolerate distress.
- Avoiding feelings means that they end up controlling our behaviour and our lives, rather than us being in control.

**Practice for next session**

Remind group members to fill in their Diary Cards and to pay particular attention to the ‘Emotions’ section. Tell group members that until the next group you would like them to pay particular attention to recording the presence of ‘distressing emotions’ and then to use the ‘What’ and ‘How’ skills to identify if Distress Tolerance strategies would be helpful.

Ask group members to identify and record when they have avoided, or had urges to avoid feelings.
Distress Tolerance 2: Distracting with ACCEPTS

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Practice Review

Review diary card

Key questions for generating discussion

“Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
“Can anyone remember the two main types of distress tolerance strategies?”
“What is the problem with avoiding emotions?”

Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around the concept of distress tolerance and when it is useful.
- Review crisis survival skills and acceptance skills. Prompt group members to identify the main aim of both sets of distress tolerance strategies:
  - Crisis survival skills: to get through the distressing situation without making it worse or increasing personal distress.
  - Acceptance skills: to accept reality exactly as it is in the moment.
- Discuss pitfalls of avoidance including ideas that: feelings will eventually ‘leak out’ anyway; we don’t address the messages of those feelings; that the behaviours we engage in to avoid feelings limit our functioning; that avoidance stops us from learning skills to manage distress, and that those feelings end up controlling our behaviours.
- Encourage sharing of specific examples from the past week.
Introduction to New Skill

Introduction to distraction (15 minutes)

In the Practice Review section of the group, group members should already have re-familiarised themselves with the concept of crisis survival skills. Explain that for the remainder of the group they will be focussing on learning and practicing the Distract skill.

If group members have not already done so in the review section, prompt discussion around examples of when pain is intense, but when it is also an inappropriate time to work on changing the source of the pain, or changing the painful emotion.

“As we discussed in our last DBT group, there are times when we may find ourselves in painful situations or we are experiencing painful emotions and it is not an appropriate time to process that pain, or work to solve the cause. In these situations, distracting ourselves from the pain can be a useful short-term strategy.

Essentially, distracting works by either reducing our contact with the event or thing that triggered our emotional distress; or by helping us to change the unhelpful part of our response to that emotion.

There are a number of reasons why we should use distracting as a skill when we are distressed. Firstly, when we experience distress, we tend to narrow our focus to only thinking about and concentrating on what it was that caused us distress. This in turn, increases the levels of the distressing emotion we are experiencing, which then leads us to focus even more on our distress, which further increases that emotion, and so on and so forth…”

Engage group members in a brief discussion of a situation where they identify distress leading to a greater focus on distress. Ask the group, “Can everyone relate to this?” Or, “A time where you’re feeling upset or angry (or any other distressing emotion) and all you can focus on is what caused you to be upset or angry?”

“If focusing on our distress has the consequence of increasing our distress, then what distracting allows us to do is re-focus our attention onto something else. This short-circuits the cycle of distressing emotions and helps us to reduce the escalation of our distress. Another reason why distraction can be helpful is that it can help us to change part of our emotional response. Especially in situations where we are distressed, our emotional response (i.e. the way we express our emotions) can be unhelpful. Distraction can help us alter or delay the way we respond…”
This can be a good opportunity for the facilitator to provide some brief psycho-education around emotions ‘feeding’ themselves. The facilitator could also draw the Cognitive Model on the board and explain the relationship between emotions and behaviours and how distracting can interrupt that relationship.

Move to clarify these last points with group members to ensure that they understand when distracting is helpful and when it is unhelpful. Reinforce that distracting is a short-term strategy for managing distress. Once these concepts have been appropriately understood, move into teaching the ACCEPTS skill.

“Distracting skills are most helpful when the problem or situation can’t be resolved straight away, or when it’s not appropriate to process the emotion you are experiencing in that moment.

Remember that distracting is best used in small doses and only as a short-term strategy. Distracting does not replace the need to process the emotion or address the problem when it is an appropriate time to do so...

If distracting is used too much or for too long it can stop being an effective strategy for managing distress, and become avoidance. As we’ve already discussed, avoidance is an unhelpful coping strategy and can actually make our pain and the situation worse. Distracting turns into avoidance when:
- it no longer is helping you to move forwards towards your goals
- it ends up restricting your opportunities for new ideas…”

**ACCEPTS (45 minutes)**

Direct group members to their workbooks. Explain to group members that in DBT there are seven Distracting skills that can be used in the short-term, to tolerate distress. Introduce ACCEPTS as an acronym that helps us remember the seven different Distracting skills.

Highlight to group members that a number of the strategies that will be discussed are skills that they are probably already utilising. Explain that by naming them and consciously choosing to use them, their ability to effectively tolerate distress increases.

Facilitator to write the word “ACCEPTS” vertically down the entire length of the board, before working through each of the skills individually, taking time to discuss, elicit examples, and clarify questions.
Highlight to group members that in order for Activities to work effectively, they must use the mindfulness ‘What’ skill of Participating Fully. Remind group members that this means that whatever activity they are engaging in, they must do so with their complete attention and focus.

Ask, “What are some activities you could engage in, that would help to distract you?” Elicit a number of different responses from group members and write them on the board in the space next to the ‘A’. It can be helpful to encourage group members to come up with as many examples as possible for as many different scenarios as possible, as it may not always be viable to utilise their first choice activity in some scenarios.

“The first ‘C’ in ACCEPTS represents ‘contributing.’ Contributing is a really helpful skill as it allows us to refocus our attention from our own painful situation to what we can do for others. For some people, the act of doing something for someone else can increase their own sense of self-worth and self-respect and can really improve how they are feeling in the moment.

The key to ‘contributing’ is reminding yourself that your contribution doesn’t have to be a grand gesture or something really big and involved. Smiling at someone or even just saying ‘thank you’ can be really simple ways of implementing the ‘contributing’ skill...”

Ask the group, “What are some other examples of contributing that you could implement?” For example, having a conversation with someone; cooking someone dinner; making someone a cup of tea or coffee; helping out with chores, etc. Write examples on the board.
“The second ‘C’ stands for ‘comparisons’, which also aims to refocus our attention away from ourselves and onto another. The ‘comparisons’ skill can work in a number of different ways. In its original form, ‘comparisons’ is all about comparing yourself and your current situation to the situation of those who are NOT coping as well as you; or just generally comparing yourself to those who are less fortunate than you are. What this can do is reframe your own situation in a more positive light…

Another way of using ‘comparisons’ is to compare yourself, as you are right now, to how you were in a situation where you were not coping as effectively. For many of you, this can be a particularly powerful form of comparison, especially if you consider how you would have responded to a crisis prior to accessing AOD treatment, and how you would respond now. This can be extremely powerful, and a strong motivator to continue to tolerate the distress; rather than responding in a harmful way, by using drugs or alcohol.

Comparison can also be a useful skill to motivate and refocus you on your goals, and what it is that you want out of your life. In this way, it can be helpful to think of a role model or someone you admire, and compare how they would respond in the situation you are in…”

Allow time for discussion. Some group members may feel that the ‘comparisons’ skill is taking benefit from someone else’s misfortune. Reinforce that the ‘comparisons’ skill is about getting them through a crisis without making them worse off. Also note that considering someone else’s misfortune does not change it in anyway. Encourage group members to think of scenarios that might help them gain perspective and write on the board.

Optional activity (allow 10 minutes)

- Hand out a blank piece of paper and ask group members to think of a role model; it can be someone known to them or someone famous. Direct group members to think of a situation where they themselves were distressed. Ask that they draw, write, or otherwise depict, how their role model might have acted in this situation. Assure group members that they do not have to share their responses with anyone else.
Clarify the concept of emotions generating urges to behave in particular ways, and from this, discuss what the ‘opposite’ behaviour could look like.

Examples of ways in which one can generate opposite emotions are:

When feeling sad, try listening to happy music or going to the gym; when feeling angry, try slowing the pace at which you are completing things, or watch a comedy movie; when feeling scared, try creating an environment in which you feel effective and safe.

Add group members’ suggestions for opposite emotion activities to the whiteboard, next to the ‘E’.

Optional activity (allow 5 minutes)

• Hand all group members a blank piece of paper. Ask group members to do a quick ‘body scan’ and identify the strongest emotion that they are experiencing, and to give it a score out of 10 (1 being not at all intense and 10 being very intense). Have approximately 30 second snippets from a selection of different tempo songs (e.g. upbeat pop song; slow ‘break-up’ song; quick-paced rock song, etc.) and have group members re-examine and rank the intensity of their initial identified emotion after each song has finished playing. At the end of the exercise have group members discuss what they noticed and experienced.

“The ‘P’ in ACCEPTS represents the distracting skill of ‘pushing away’ when you are distressed. There are two parts to this skill. It can represent physically pushing away from a situation by leaving. For example, if you’re about to engage in an argument with someone, or if you are in a risky situation where you are being triggered to use your substance of concern, the ‘pushing away’ skill could be used to physically remove yourself from the situation before you act in a way that may make the situation worse...”
Ask group members to identify situations where it may be helpful to ‘push away’ by leaving the situation.

Highlight to group members that the ‘pushing away’ skill should not be the first distress tolerance technique that they try, and that overuse of the ‘pushing away’ skill can quickly become avoidance and stop them from developing other skills for managing distress. Emphasise that ‘pushing away’ works best when it is used infrequently. Write ‘physically or mentally’ on the board next to the P.

Optional activity (allow 10 minutes)

- Explain to group members that they are going to participate in a ‘Safe Place’ guided imagery exercise. Explain the usefulness in creating a mental safe place to retreat to when they are not feeling distressed, so that when they are distressed they can more easily draw on this skill. Read through the ‘Safe Place’ script provided in Appendix 1. Following the exercise, debrief the activity with group members. Encourage group members, if they feel comfortable, to share details about their safe place.

“The T in ACCEPTS represents ‘Thoughts,’ and this skill works by once-again filling and distracting our short-term memory. By filling our mind with alternative thoughts to the ones generating our distress, this skill helps to stop the unhelpful thoughts from reactivating the negative emotion…”

Emphasise to group members that ‘thoughts’ can be absolutely anything that keeps their mind occupied and replaces the thoughts that are triggering their distress.

Ask, “What are some examples of ‘thoughts’ that you could use to distract yourself?” Common examples include: reciting song lyrics; picturing you’re somewhere else; naming everything you can see that is a particular colour; creating a mental shopping list; naming all of the movies you can starring a particular actor, etc. Write them on the board.

Optional activity (allow 5 minutes)

Explain to group members that they are about to play a game called ‘Categories’. Refer to Appendix 1 for activity instructions. Play as many rounds of Categories as time permits, before moving onto ‘sensations’.

“The other way in which ‘pushing away’ can be useful, is by allowing us to mentally push away from, or block out the distressing situation. This can be achieved by retreating into your mind, or imagining yourself elsewhere. Mentally pushing away is an important skill to learn, as we are not always in a situation where we are able to physically remove ourselves. For example, if your distress was being caused by being on an aeroplane and having a fear of flying, you wouldn’t be able to physically remove yourself from the situation causing you distress…”
Clarify with group members that ‘intense sensations’ refers to things that have a strong impact on one or more of the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch.

Ask, “What are some things that you would be able to do, to activate a strong impact on your senses?” A hot or cold shower; massage; an intense workout; eating; holding ice-cubes; pinching self (ensuring that this is not causing more than momentary discomfort); drinking a hot but not burning cup of tea or coffee, etc. Write examples on the board next to the S.

Optional activity (5 minutes)

- Ask if any group members are willing to place their hand in a bucket of icy water. Ask the volunteer to submerge their hand and at the same time talk to the group about their favourite animal for 1 minute (if they can). After this time has elapsed, ask the volunteer if they were able to maintain their concentration, or if the strong sensation was successful in distracting them. Explain that this could also work when the current moment was a distressing one.

Practice for next session

Instruct group members to practice the ACCEPTS skill before the next group. Encourage group members to challenge themselves by utilising as many of the ACCEPTS skills as possible; and not just fall back on the ones they are most comfortable with.
## Distress Tolerance 3: Self Soothe

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<td>Skills training: <strong>Self soothe</strong></td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
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### Practice Review

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

- “Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
- “What does ACCEPTS stand for?”
- “Which skills from ACCEPTS did you use since our last group?”
- “How was using distraction helpful in the short-term and long-term?”
- “What can happen when we over-use distraction? How do we know we have over-used it?”

### Key learning points

- Recap all 7 of the ACCEPTS distraction skills.
- Support group members to identify examples of when they used each of the distraction skills, and their subsequent impact on emotions, thoughts and behaviours.
- Support group members to identify any over-use of distraction skills.
Introduction of new skill

Introduction to self-soothing (15 minutes)

Explain to group members that for the entirety of this group, they will be learning and practicing the self-soothing crisis survival skill.

Start by setting the group up with the parenting analogy. Ask the group, “When a baby starts to cry, what do we think is happening for them?” Group members may offer suggestions such as the baby being hungry, or tired or uncomfortable. Validate responses and draw group members to the consensus that when a baby cries, the baby is expressing that they are, in some way, distressed.

Ask, “And what does a parent or carer do when a baby starts to cry and express that they are distressed?” The parent or carer may feed the baby, nurse the baby, pick up the baby, or act in any other way aimed at lessening the baby’s distress. If necessary, expand on and spend more time discussing this analogy. For example, a child with a scraped knee may be given a Band-Aid and a hug from a parent; a toddler throwing a tantrum and being comforted by a parent, etc.

- Optional activity (allow 5 minutes)

Pass around a teddy bear or toy baby, telling group members that it signifies a distressed baby. Ask group members to demonstrate how they would try to calm it.

“What we are saying is that when we are young, even though we still have the capacity to become distressed, the responsibility of managing our distress falls to others.

As we get older, unfortunately it becomes less socially acceptable to throw tantrums or cry uncontrollably, every time we are distressed. It also becomes less likely as we get older that someone else is going to take on the task of making us feel better after our tantrum. However, the need to be comforted and soothed does not disappear just because we grow older. This is where the skill of self-soothing can assist us....”

Briefly begin to unpack the concept of ‘self-soothing’ by asking group members to explain what they understand by the term ‘soothe’. Responses will likely focus on understanding ‘soothing’ as being something that calms, comforts, relaxes, settles, and makes them feel better. Ask group members, “What have you noticed other people do, to comfort and soothe themselves?” Group members should easily be able to identify different things that others do to soothe themselves, such as yoga, eating chocolate, going for a run, etc.

If group members have difficulty identifying activities people engage in to self-soothe, draw their attention to the example of a ‘typical’ rom-com. Ask group members what the female characters usually do after a break-up with a boyfriend. Group members will quickly identify eating ice-cream, in pyjamas while watching movies as the typical scenario. Explain that
these behaviours are a form of self-soothing. Ask, “What are some things that you do to self-soothe?” Encourage responses from group members of activities that they engage in to self-soothe. Remind group members that in order to be an effective distress tolerance self-soothing strategy, the activity must not be harmful to themselves or others.

“How to use self-soothe (15 minutes)

Explain that ‘self-soothing’ is all about reducing our body’s heightened response to stress and that it works by targeting our distress on a sensory or physical level. Simply put, ‘self-soothing’ works by engaging the 5 senses.

Explain to group members that while the essence of the ‘self-soothing’ skill is quite simple and easy to implement, there can be several factors that mean we do not use the ‘self-soothing’ skill as effectively as we should.

“For a number of us, this skill is not used often enough. When we are distressed and should be taking time out to strengthen and recharge, we don’t.

This decision can be motivated by a number of different judgements we may have about the situation we are in. For some of us, these judgements are around shame or guilt. We may feel that we are responsible for the situation we are in, and therefore believe that we deserve to feel pain. The thought that we don’t deserve to feel better, means that we make the decision to not self-soothe. But regardless of whether or not we are responsible for our distress, we are responsible for managing the situation; and the best way to ensure that we effectively manage and deal with the situation is to ensure that we are in the right mind state to do so. To get into that right space, we need to be able to use ‘self-soothing’....”
Ask, “Does anyone have an example of a time when feelings of shame or guilt meant that you deliberately didn’t try to self-soothe, or make yourself feel better?” Encourage group members’ responses; however the primary facilitator should also have a pre-prepared example in case group members do not feel comfortable sharing their own experiences.

“Another judgement or belief that can get in the way of using ‘self-soothing’ is the belief that it is better to push through and get done whatever needs to be done, before taking time out to recuperate. This particular thought pattern can be very influenced by factual mind and doesn’t really take into account the impact that the stress and pain we are experiencing will have on our ability to effectively complete the task.…

The final judgement that can mean we deliberately don’t use ‘self-soothing’ is based on the belief that others should be doing the soothing for us. This reason to not soothe yourself can be based on such a belief, particularly if you believe that someone else is responsible for your current distress. In other situations this belief can be based on not feeling you have the ability to self-soothe, or the feeling that you shouldn’t have to self-soothe. But as is the case with the first judgement we looked at: it makes no difference whether or not you caused your current distress, you still have to take on the responsibility of resolving it.”

Again, allow time for discussion and examples from group members.

To conclude discussion around situations where ‘self-soothing’ is used too little, highlight to group members that the best way of overcoming this difficulty is to practice ‘self-soothing’ in situations where they are not distressed. Explain to group members that while this may initially bring up feelings of guilt, anger or resentment, with continued practice the skill will become easier, and therefore will be more likely to be effective in situations of actual distress.

For group members who identify that they over-use the ‘self-soothing’ skill: encourage the use of the Mindfulness ‘What’ and ‘How’ skills to determine whether the situation they are in is actually a crisis situation, and only then to use ‘self-soothing’ skills. After implementing the skill for a short period of time, ‘What’ and ‘How’ skills should be re-applied and strategies developed to solve the problem.

“At the other end of the spectrum, ‘self-soothing’ is used too much. As with all Distress Tolerance skills, ‘self-soothing’ is designed to be used as a short-term strategy only.

When self-soothing is over-used, it stops being helpful and becomes an avoidance strategy that takes us further away from our goals and stops us from effectively dealing with problems. If you find that you are using ‘self-soothing’ skills too much, it is important to make sure that you limit their use to crisis situations only.”
Self soothe inventory (15 minutes)

Direct group members to their workbook. Explain that as a group, a list of potential ‘self-soothing’ strategies will be developed and categorised according to which sense they are activating. Reconfirm that some strategies will fit into multiple sensory categories.

Encourage group members to come up with as many strategies as possible for each sense. Highlight the fact that as distressing situations can arise unexpectedly and in a number of different contexts, it is important to have a number of different ‘self-soothing’ skills that can be used in a variety of different settings.

While group members write the suggestions into their workbook, the facilitator should write the strategies on the whiteboard, using each of the five senses as a heading.

- **Optional activity (allow 30 minutes)**

Using the recipe provided in Appendix 1, ensure that enough ingredients are available for each group member to make a single portion of pizza dough.

Explain to group members that they will be making pizza dough as a ‘self-soothing’ strategy. Encourage group members to focus on the senses being engaged and activated as they make the dough. Highlight that this strategy can also be used as a form of ‘distracting’ as it falls under many of the ACCEPTS skills also.

- **Optional activity 2 (allow 30 minutes)**

Allow group members to create their own physical or virtual ‘self soothe box.’

To create a physical self soothe box, provide each group member with a gift box, and ask them to choose from the facilitator’s pre-purchased resources, the things that they could use to self soothe when distressed. Encourage group members to add personal items such as photos or CDs, to their box when they go home and to then keep it underneath their bed, or somewhere safe and easily accessible, for times of need. The facilitator will need to organise relevant self soothe resources prior to the group. Recommendations include: herbal teas; soaps; stress balls; colouring in books; journals; coloured pencils; bubble blowers; brain teaser books; perfume samples; essential oils; loofahs; wind chimes; slinkies; balls, etc.

To create a virtual self soothe box, using iPads or similar, show group members how to access the site Pintrest, sign up and create a secret Pinboard that others can’t see. Show the group how to collect pictures and videos that are interesting. Have young people do this for themselves. Encourage group members to access their Pinboard to self-soothe.
Practice for next session

Ask group members to utilise their self-soothe box before the next DBT group. Ask them to take note of the intensity of their distress before using the self-soothe skill and then how they feel afterwards.

Distress Tolerance 4: IMPROVE the moment

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Practice Review

Review diary card

Key questions for generating discussion

“How can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
“What are some potential problems with using the self-soothing skill?”
“How did everyone use the self-soothing skill in the time since our last group?”

Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around the ‘self-soothing’ skill (i.e., why it is useful, when it should be used, etc.).
- Ensure understanding of the impact of using ‘self-soothing’ too much or too little.
- Encourage and positively reinforce all examples of using the self-soothing skill. Coach and teach points where additional skills use could have been utilised. Have group
members reflect on how effectively or ineffectively they feel they were in using the ‘self-soothing’ skill (i.e., successes, challenges and difficulties, outcomes, etc.). Clarify and problem-solve any questions or difficulties that group members may have about the use of the skill.

**Introduction to New Skill**

**Introduction to IMPROVE (10 minutes)**

Explain to group members that for the entirety of this group, they will be learning and practicing the ‘IMPROVE’ crisis survival skill.

“**IMPROVE the moment is a distress tolerance skill that is aimed at replacing the current negative event with a more positive one. Some of the IMPROVE skills assist us to change our interpretation of ourselves or the situation; others help us change our body’s response to the event, and others are designed to help us to accept and let go of our suffering.**

As with the ACCEPTS skill, IMPROVE the moment uses the acronym ‘IMPROVE’ to make it easier for us to remember each of the skills.”

Ask the group, “Why would it be helpful to be able to replace negative experiences with more positive ones?” Coach group members to identify how positive events will help stop the re-triggering of distress caused by the negative event, and therefore assist in coping and developing effective solutions to the problem.

**IMPROVE (50 minutes)**

“The ‘I’ in IMPROVE stands for ‘Imagery’. ‘Imagery’ is a very adaptable skill that can be used to distract, soothe, build confidence and courage, and make future rewards seem more real. ‘Imagery’ can be used in two separate, but both equally useful ways.

By using imagery and your imagination, you can create a situation that is completely different from the one that you are in. In this sense, imagery allows you to leave the negative situation and go into a more positive one. If you are using imagery in this way, it is important that the imaginary place that you create is a safe and secure one. It is also important that you develop your imaginary safe place when you are not in crisis, so that when you are in crisis and need to use it, you already have a detailed and firmly established place to go to...”

- **Optional activity (allow 5 minutes)**
Place a range of photos depicting snippets of different scenes face up on the group table. Ask all group members to select one image that appeals to them. Inform group members that they will be given approximately three minutes to think about some background information for the image they have selected. Ask them to think about where it is, what they’re doing there, and what is happening in their image. Also ask group members to think about why they have selected this particular image and what is it that appealed to them? After the three minutes are up, ask group members to come together and have each explain to the group a bit about the imaginary safe place they have created. Tell group members that they can continue to add detail to their imaginary place, and call upon it whenever needed as a distress tolerance skill.

“We can also use the ‘imagery’ skill to help us cope more effectively in crisis situations. The way that we use ‘imagery’ for this purpose, is that we imagine and picture ourselves dealing well with whatever the situation is. Once again, it is important to picture as many details as possible in order for this skill to work as well as it can. So it is about picturing what you are doing to manage the situation, how you’re standing, what you’re saying, how you’re saying it, etc. While it can seem like a strange thing to do, practicing coping with a situation in your imagination does actually increase your chances of coping with it effectively in real life. This skill is so effective that even elite sports people use it to help them win events!”

Before introducing the ‘M’ skill, lead a discussion around its meaning by asking, “Who has heard of the saying, ‘When life gives you lemons, make lemonade’?” Ask group members what they understand this saying to mean. If necessary further prompt them by giving the following hints: lemons= sour; lemonade= sweet, or eventually clarify that the saying therefore means, make something sweet out of something sour or seeing the good in the bad.

“The ‘meaning’ skill is really aimed at getting us to re-interpret our situation to help us find purpose or meaning in our pain and suffering. This is based on the idea that if we are able to create some sort of reason or meaning for our suffering, it becomes easier to accept and get through.

Having said this, sometimes there are times in life when there are no apparent ‘reasons’ for our pain or suffering, and that’s okay too. We don’t always have to believe that bad things happen for a reason. For some people, spiritual beliefs can help them create a sense of meaning in these circumstances, but even if you don’t have strong spiritual beliefs, meaning and purpose can still be useful. In these situations meaning and purpose can be used as motivators for why we should cope through the pain, even if we are unable to make sense of the pain itself.

This meaning could have to do with our own personal motivators or goals; they could be lessons or pearls of wisdom from people we admire, or it could be a statement, quote or philosophy that really speaks to you...”
Examples of meaning in suffering can be very helpful to show the use of this skill. For example, the purpose of the pain the day after a gym workout is that our muscles are being strengthened, etc.

- **Optional activity (allow 5 minutes)**

Give each group member a blank wallet-sized piece of paper. Ask group members to think of something that has ‘meaning’ to them. It could be a quote, a picture, a word, or a symbol. Ask group members to write or draw that meaning on the wallet card. Explain that they can keep that card with them, as a ‘ready-made’ IMPROVE the moment skill, for when they may need to use it.

Some group members may find it difficult to think of something meaningful. It can therefore be helpful for the group facilitator to bring along a selection of quotes from prominent figures that group members may find meaningful and relatable to their situations.

If group members are comfortable doing so, ask them to share their ‘meaning card’ with the rest of the group.

Next orient group members to the ‘P’ for ‘Prayer’ skill as a key skill that draws on the DBT concept of ‘acceptance’.

“The ‘prayer’ skill is one of the skills that really encourages you to practice the use of acceptance. While for some people, a spiritual or religious belief can further aid the use of this skill, there is definitely no need for a person to have strong spiritual beliefs for this skill to be effective.

The essence of the ‘prayer’ skill is to have you be fully present in the moment and fully open to the moment, and to just accept it for what it is. The use of ‘prayer’ is about the concept of being able to turn control over to a higher power, the universe, or even just time, and asking for the strength to be able to just get through the moment.

‘Prayer’ is NOT about asking for the pain to be taken away, or asking ‘why me?’ It is simply about being okay with reality as it is...”

Turn discussion over to group members about how they feel the ‘prayer’ skill could be useful. Ask if any group members have ever attended AA, or if anyone else is familiar with the ‘Serenity Prayer’. Explain that the ‘Serenity Prayer’ captures the essence of this particular skill, in that there are certain things in life we don’t have control over, and that we need to be able to accept those things if we are to ever move past our suffering and distress.

**The Serenity Prayer**

*God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, The Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference.*
If group members are uncomfortable with religion, take more time to create a discussion around how spirituality outside of organised religion can be useful. In addition to the above, the facilitator could suggest group members could focus the prayer skill towards turning over power to nature or to their own wise mind.

In turning to the ‘R’ for ‘Relaxation’ skill, discuss with group members how the ‘relaxation’ skill works to improve the moment by reducing our physiological distress to the situation.

“When we are in a stressful situation, it is really common for us to try and control the situation, by controlling our body. We tense our muscles, we change our breathing, and our blood pressure and pulse rate also change.

The goal with this skill is to accept reality with our body, by consciously relaxing. The idea is that our body communicates with our mind, and so if we are able to accept reality with our body, it will assist with accepting reality in our mind...”

Generate discussion by asking, “What are some strategies you could use to relax your body?” Most group members would have recently completed the self-soothe group. They should therefore already be able to name a number of strategies to assist in reducing physiological arousal and relaxing the body. Examples could include: going for a hot bath/shower; having a warm drink; going to the gym, or having a massage, etc.

- **Optional activity (allow 10 minutes)**

Guide group members through a Progressive Muscle Relaxation exercise, using the PMR script in Appendix 1. Following the exercise, debrief with group members around their experience of the PMR exercise (e.g., which muscle groups they noticed the most change in, etc.).

Highlight to group members that the next skill, ‘One Thing in the Moment’ is the second mindfulness ‘How’ skill.

“While ‘O’ for ‘one thing in the moment’ can be a really difficult skill to master, it can be incredibly helpful in the middle of a crisis. This skill can give us the time we need to settle down, rather than making the situation worse.

The trick to this skill is to remember that regardless of the pain that you are in, you only ever have to survive the pain for just the present moment. A lot of the time we suffer a whole lot more than we need to, because we get caught up thinking about painful experiences in the past, or worrying about further pain we might have to endure in the future. This skill helps improve the moment by making us realise that all we have to do is focus on getting through the current moment...
Engage group members in discussion around the ‘One Thing in the Moment’ skill. Highlight the importance of using core mindfulness skills to effectively utilise this skill. Ask, “If we break the distressing situation down, in most cases are you physically able to get through the moment?” Most group members will agree that in the majority of circumstances it is possible to make it through the moment. Follow with, “What do you think is the benefit of breaking our pain down into moment by moment chunks?” It makes it more manageable and easier to deal with; it is less overwhelming.

Introduce the ‘V’ skill by asking, “Who here has recently been on, or is going on a holiday soon?” If there are no group members who fit this, widen the question to ask if anyone wants to go on a holiday. Then ask, “Why do you want to go on a holiday?” To relax, to get away from ‘everyday life’, to recharge, to rest, etc. Ask, “What do you have to do before you go on holiday?” Group members should start to talk about the different steps to planning and preparing for a holiday, before being able to go. It may even be helpful to play devil’s advocate and prompt responses around what would happen if a holiday is not properly planned.

“This skill is about taking a short holiday or ‘vacation’ from adulthood. Sometimes our pain and suffering can be so exhausting, that we need to take a bit of a break from dealing with it. A break could mean: getting back into bed and taking a nap for 20 minutes; not washing the dishes that day; taking time-out to read a trashy magazine or watching reality TV.

But, as our earlier discussion highlighted, this skill is all about making sure that the ‘vacation’ you take is planned and prepared in a way that is not going to be harmful to you, or that makes the situation worse. So if you have other responsibilities that need to be looked after, it would be about ensuring those responsibilities are put on hold, or are being taken care of by someone else, before you take your ‘vacation’.

The other important thing to remember with the ‘vacation’ skill, is that it must only be a brief; no longer than a day. If your ‘vacation’ goes on for too long, it becomes another form of avoidance.”
Allow time to reinforce through discussion. Ask, “What are some ways you could use the ‘vacation’ skill?” Write group members’ suggestions on the board.

Ask, “Has anyone ever over-used the ‘vacation’ skill before? What was the consequence of that?” If group members are unable to think of an example of over-using the ‘vacation’ skill, the group facilitator should provide a pre-prepared example.

Finally introduce the ‘E’ for ‘Encouragement’ skill.

“Often when we are in distress, our mind can turn to focus on what we can’t do, and all the potential things that could go wrong. The skill of ‘encouragement’ aims to improve the moment, by providing you with the support and encouragement you need to get through the crisis.

‘Encouragement’ is about cheerleading yourself. You can do this by talking to yourself in the way you talk to someone you care about, who is in a crisis. Chances are, if you were talking to someone you care about, you would be positively reinforcing what they can do to get through; rather than focusing on how terrible their situation is.

The other way ‘encouragement’ can work, is by talking to yourself as you would like someone else to talk to you. Think of times in the past when others have encouraged you, or said something to you that really helped. Repeat those thoughts to yourself as a way of tolerating distress and getting through the moment…”

• Optional activity (Allow 10 minutes)

Place ‘Strength Cards’ face up on the group table. Ask each group member to look through the strength cards, and select a strength card for the person sitting to the left of them (based on what they know of the person). Once everyone has selected a card, go around and ask each group member to explain why they have selected that strength for the person to their left.

After everyone has explained their choice, place all cards back into the middle of the table, and then have each group member select a strength card that represents them. Repeat the process for each group member asking them to explain which strength they have chosen for themselves, and why.

Debrief the activity. Often there is a theme around it being more difficult to say positive things about or to ourselves.

Practice for next session

Recap the ‘IMPROVE the moment’ skill and encourage group members to practice using a variety of the skills before the next DBT group.
Distress Tolerance 5: Pros and Cons

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<td>Practice review: IMPROVE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills training: Pros and Cons</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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Practice Review

Review diary card

Key questions for generating discussion

- “Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
- “What skills does the acronym IMPROVE represent?”
- “How did everyone use the IMPROVE skill in the time since our last group?”
- “How did it impact the moment?”

Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around the ‘IMPROVE the moment’ skill (i.e. why it is useful, when it should be used, etc.).
- Cover all skills, i.e., Imagery; meaning; prayer; relaxing; one thing in the moment; vacation; encouragement.
- Have group members reflect on how effectively or ineffectively they feel they were in using the ‘IMPROVE’ skill (i.e., successes, challenges and difficulties, outcomes, etc.).
- Discuss whether some skills were used more often than others and why.
- Reiterate connections to previous modules, (e.g., how self soothe and relaxation both address physiological arousal; one thing in the moment as a mindfulness ‘how’ skill etc.)
Introduction to New Skill

Introduction to **pros and cons** (15 minutes)

Explain to group members that for the entirety of this group, they will be learning and practicing the ‘pros & cons’ crisis survival skill.

Gauge initial understanding by asking the group, “Would somebody be able to explain what is meant by the term pros & cons?” Reinforce any answer that captures the essence of the skill, i.e., pros=positives/benefits and cons=negatives/costs. Summarise that the ‘pros & cons’ skill refers to weighing up the positives and negatives, or costs and benefits of a particular choice.

Encourage discussion around why looking at pros and cons could be useful in stressful or painful situations.

How to use **pros and cons** (50 minutes)

Explain to group members that to begin with, ‘pros & cons’ can take quite some time, and it is easier if they write it out. Emphasise that the more they practice the ‘pros & cons’ skill, the easier and faster it will become, and the more likely they will be able to complete the exercise mentally, rather than always having to write it down (add though that it is always helpful to have your ‘pros & cons’ list written down if possible).
“To begin a DBT ‘pros & cons’ list, we first need to determine what the crisis is.

Essentially, the crisis is whatever the situation is that is leading you to feel distress. For example, let’s say that you’re distressed and feeling really guilty after having an argument with a close friend. So in this situation, the crisis is the argument with your friend.

The next step in our ‘pros & cons’ list is to figure out what the urge is. That is, what it is we want to do about the crisis. So let’s refer back to our earlier example of the argument with our friend. We’re feeling really guilty about the things we said, so we decide that we’re going to use our substance of concern to make ourselves feel better. The decision to use would be the urge.

While a two-column ‘pros & cons’ list is a good place to start, a DBT ‘pros & cons’ list goes even further, to ensure that all short-term and longer-term consequences are considered. For this reason a DBT ‘pros & cons’ list has four columns: The pros of acting on the urge; the cons of acting on the urge; the pros of not acting on the urge; and the cons of not acting on the urge. Once again, if we go back to the example of the argument and our decision to use, we find that our four columns look at the pros and cons of using, as well as the pros and cons of not using.

While you may find that there is some cross-over in the four columns, ensuring that you’re looking across all four perspectives means that you are able to consider options and perspectives that might not otherwise have been clear.”

Ask group members, “How do you think you then decide which option is the best one to go with?” Highlight that the column with the greatest number of reasons is not necessarily the ‘best’ decision to go with. Explain to group members that different reasons will carry more weight than others, and that understanding their personal values, or what’s important to them, is a big part in making the ‘best’ decision. It isn’t the most reasons that determines the Wise Mind response, it is the value attached to the different reasons that determines the Wise Mind response.

If group members struggle with the concept of values, a short values cards exercise can be used here, for example, ask group members to pick a value card that speaks to them, and to describe a way that they try to incorporate that value into their day to day living.

See Appendix for Values Cards.
As it can be difficult to always complete a ‘Pros and Cons’ list at the time of a crisis, urge group members to utilise the DBT skill ‘Cope Ahead’ by completing their ‘Pros & Cons’ exercises prior to being in situations where they predict potential crises occurring.

- **Optional activity (allow 40 minutes)**
  Using the scenarios in Appendix 2, work as a group, or in pairs, to complete ‘pros & cons’ lists for each scenario. Discuss and debrief as a group which decision group members would opt for in each of the scenarios. These discussions can provide good opportunities for group members to start to think carefully about their values and goals (which are more closely looked at in the Interpersonal Effectiveness module).

- **Optional activity (allow 40 minutes)**
  Ask group members to complete pros and cons lists for crisis examples from their own life. Discuss and debrief as a group where appropriate. These discussions can provide good opportunities for group members to start to think carefully about their values and goals (which are more closely looked at in the Interpersonal Effectiveness module).

**Practice for next session**
Encourage group members to use the ‘cope ahead’ skill by completing a ‘pros & cons’ list before the next DBT group. Alternatively group members can opt to complete a ‘pros & cons’ list around a past situation that they have dealt with.
## Distress Tolerance 6: Urge Surfing

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<tr>
<td>Practice review: Pros and Cons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills training: Urge Surfing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
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### Practice Review

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

- “Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
- “How do you complete a ‘pros & cons’ list?”
- “How did everyone use the ‘pros & cons’ skill in the time since our last group?”

### Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around the ‘Pros & Cons’ skill (i.e., why it is useful, when it should be used, etc.).
- Review the steps involved in creating a pros and cons list: (1) identify the crisis; (2) identify the urge; (3) identify pros & cons for acting on the urge; (4) identify pros & cons for not acting on the urge, and (5) weigh up values to decide which decision is best.
- Link the use of pros and cons steps to core mindfulness skills.
Introduction to New Skill

Introduction to urge surfing (5 minutes)

Explain to group members that for the entirety of this group, they will be learning about urges and cravings, and practicing ‘Urge Surfing’ and other skills, for managing urges and cravings.

“Today we’re going to be focusing on a variety of practical skills to help us manage urges and cravings when they occur. However, before we start to learn these skills, it is important that we have a good understanding of urges and cravings, and how they affect and impact us.

It is also important that we understand the differences between urges and cravings, so that we can decide which skills will be most effective.”

Ask group members, “What do you think the difference is between an urge and a craving?” Facilitate a group discussion around their understanding of the differences between an urge and a craving. Emphasise to group members that it is okay if they don’t have a clear understanding of the differences, as it will be discussed in detail throughout the group.

Understanding cravings and urges (30 minutes)

Discuss urges and cravings and ensure the group understands both concepts. Use this opportunity to normalise experiencing cravings and urges as a part of the recovery process.

“Cravings are the desire for the effect of a substance or activity.

Cravings for drugs and alcohol can be both physical and psychological. Physical cravings occur when a person has built up a tolerance to a substance over time, and then have to go without.

Cravings are a natural and completely normal part of quitting or minimising substance use. Cravings tend to be more intense and more frequent in the early stages of quitting or cutting down; however for some, cravings or thoughts of substance use can continue to occur after long periods of abstinence.”

Explain that an urge is the impulse or intention to go and do something (e.g., the impulse to go and use). Engage group members in discussion around urges. Explain that urges are the ‘I have to do it now’ thoughts associated with their substance use.
“So while cravings can impact us physically, urges are more about the impact of our thoughts, in convincing us that we must do something immediately.”

- **Optional Activity (10 minutes)**
  Watch this short YouTube clip to illustrate the science of cravings:
  
  **Triggers and Cravings (Part 2): The Science of Addiction**
  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43SfGbtzyp0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43SfGbtzyp0)

  (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

  Discuss and clarify any questions.

- **Optional Activity (15 minutes)**
  Using the ‘myths and truths about urges’ resource in Appendix 2, handout statements to group members and ask them to place the statement(s) into either a ‘truth’ pile, or ‘myth’ pile. Allow time for group discussion, encouraging group members to explain why they are placing statements in each pile.

  Ensure discussions have reinforced these key learning points:
  
  - Urges or cravings DO NOT INEVITABLY lead to actions.
  - Urges or cravings and actions are NOT the same thing.
  - Urges are impermanent and do not have to be acted upon.
  - Struggling with cravings or urges ultimately feeds them.
  - Internal struggling or fighting feeds the urge, e.g., flipping between wanting to use and wanting to resist the urge or thinking thoughts like, “I wish this craving would go away, I can’t make it through this.”
  - Attempting to block urges or cravings makes them worse.
  - Attempting to block or avoid an urge or craving can work in the short term, but suppressing an urge or craving ultimately increases it.
  - Trying to block the urge or craving is like trying to block a waterfall – you eventually end up inundated.

**How to urge surf** (25 minutes)

Introduce the metaphor of the wave and use it to describe the skill of urge surfing. Discuss group members’ personal experiences of cravings and how they fit in with this metaphor. Take the time to allow each group member to reflect on how their cravings and urges have
manifested in the past, i.e., what triggers them? Are triggers always external or can they be internal? How long do they last? Encourage group members to record known triggers in their workbook.

Things that may trigger a craving include (consider here both internal and external triggers):

- Stress;
- Dealing with the drug issues in group or counselling;
- Talking about things that relate to your drug problem;
- Being exposed to the drug;
- Being in a situation where you would have used;
- Becoming overwhelmed by feelings and emotions;
- Death of a family member, friend, etc.;
- Relationship problems, and
- Feelings of loneliness, shame, guilt, anger, and abandonment.

"Urges are like waves; they come, grow, and eventually crash. Just like waves they can also come in sets; rolling in one after the other. As we have discussed, there is no effective way to block them, so instead we are going to use our core mindfulness skills to learn to surf them.

1. Remember that cravings and urges pass by themselves.
2. Imagine what you are feeling is like a wave at the beach; the waves arrive, crest and subside. They are small when they start, grow in size and then will break up and dissipate.
3. Watch your breathing – notice it, don’t alter it, just let your body breathe for itself.
4. Notice your thoughts about the cravings – don’t judge them, feed them or fight them. Just observe them.
5. Notice how the craving or urge as it affects your body.
6. Be curious about what occurs and changes over time – the key is replacing the fearful wish that the urge will go away, with interest in our experience. When we do this we notice that the urges change, crest and subside and it becomes more manageable.
7. When you find your mind turning to thoughts, acknowledge this process, and then bring your attention back to the physical sensation of the craving.

• Optional Activity (10 minutes)

Demonstrate the skill by having the group use the urge surfing skill with chocolate. See Appendix 1. Ensure group members link the skill to their mindfulness skills of observe, describe and participate.
Let group members know that as with any skill taught in group, it’s obviously going to be much harder to practice in a distressing situation, so practicing with easier scenarios is really important to build mastery.

**Practice for next session**

Encourage group members to apply the urge surfing technique to a range of urges related to a desire to use substances or when experiencing strong emotions. Ask group members to reflect on the process for discussion next group.
Distress Tolerance 7: Effects of substance use

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<td>Mindfulness activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice review: Urge Surfing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills training: Effects of Substance Use and the 3Ds</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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Practice Review

Review diary card

Key questions for generating discussion

“Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
“What is urge surfing?”
“How is urge surfing different to distracting from urges?”
“What did being mindful about your urges help you to notice?”

Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around the ‘urge surfing’ skill (i.e., why it is useful, when should it be used, etc.).
- Ensure the group understands urge surfing is not about distraction.
- Reiterate the connection to other modules (e.g., the use of core mindfulness skills).
Introduction to New Skill

Explain that this group will take a look at some of the effects of drugs and alcohol. In particular, the way they affect our perception and the decisions this may lead to. Some of the content and activities may be confronting, so remind the group to take time out if needed or to speak to one of the facilitators after the group.

“Today’s group will be broken into two main parts; talking about the effects of drugs and alcohol on the body and an activity to explore some of the perceptual changes that happen to the body when under the influence. The focus on drugs and alcohol may be difficult, and may even trigger strong urges. Please use this opportunity to practice some of the skills you have learnt already in group, take time out if you need it, and talk to us about what is happening for you.”

Effects of Drugs and Alcohol (30 minutes)

Discuss with the group what constitutes problematic drug use. Group members may describe the idea of a ‘functional drug user’. It may be important to explore what this is and if there is such a thing. Group members may also identify positives that are associated with drug use.

“While there is a reason people use, and perceived positives, there is no denying that there are problems associated with drug use. Part of today’s group is acknowledging this problematic side.

A substance use disorder is usually described as a problematic pattern of use resulting in impairment. This may include: using larger amounts than intended; unsuccessful attempts to cut down; spending large amounts of time dedicated to using; using despite the consequences; cravings, tolerance and withdrawal, etc.”

Work as a group to understand the effects to drugs and alcohol. Facilitator may like to consider what will be relevant for the group members at the time.

Up to date information and handouts can be found on the AUSTRALIAN Drug Foundation website.

Before each of the ‘substance effects’ information is revealed, ask group members what they think some of the side effects may be. As the group reads through the handouts, discuss the points as you go through and encourage group members to write information in their workbook. Consider both the short and long term effects of substance use.

- Alcohol
- Cannabis
- Methamphetamine
Nicotine

Ask group members why would these short term and long term effects be explored.

“The effects are important to consider as it helps us to make informed choices. The reality is, we just don’t say yes to the positive things that we perceive when we use, we actually say yes to all the consequences. The longer we use, the more likely it is to catch up with us! Alternatively, there are things we can gain when we say no.”

Show group members the You Tube clip:

The “Quitting Smoking Timeline emphasizes the positive effects of quitting smoking and how the body restores itself to health”.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLbQfMmrISE

Perception (30 minutes)

Explore the way perception and our beliefs may influence our choices to use substances.

“The way we see the world can be helpful and unhelpful. As human beings we have blind spots (like that of a reversing car) and we have to be careful not to allow these blind spots to influence what we decide to do. For instance, I may allow my emotional mind to influence my frame of mind and this may lead me to use. The trick is to look at the bigger picture.

I want to show you a You Tube clip. In this clip, they are showing a trick, and I want you to try and guess what it is. IF you guess what is going on, don’t yell it out so the others may keep watching - and we will discuss it afterwards.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3iPrBrGSJM

The facilitator should stop the video before the actual trick is revealed. See what group the participants have noticed. Then play it through and discuss each group member’s reaction. Explore what this tells us about human perception and decision making.

“Now, if we can do this with a simple card trick, how often do you think we go through our day to day lives without seeing what really goes on? In fact, if I throw drugs and alcohol into the mix, what can happen?”

Allow time to brain storm and discuss.
**Optional Activity (Allow 20 minutes)**

Walk group members through an obstacle course using the fatal vision goggles to show the effects of substance use of vision and co-ordination.

“Some of you had great difficulty completing the course, which showed directly how substance use affects your vision and co-ordination. As for those for whom it didn’t look so difficult for, I can tell a high level of concentration and attention was being used in order to get through the course. I’m guessing you generally would not have been concentrating that much when you were under the influence of substances. So imagine how this would affect your ability to drive a car, walk through a crowd or beside a busy road... And that’s just the physical aspects of the effect of substance use; it doesn’t even take into account how rational your thoughts are. Usually we would be combining these physical changes with emotion mind decisions...”

Allow time to debrief the exercise. Ask the group, “In what way does this demonstrate the limits to our perception and decision making when we are under the influence?”

**Practice for next session**

Ask group members to reflect on information presented within the group.
Distress Tolerance 8: Acceptance

Orientation and introductions 5 minutes

Here and now, interpersonal focus 20 minutes

Mindfulness activity 5 minutes

Practice review: Effects of Substance Use 20 minutes

Short break 5 minutes

Skills training: Acceptance 60 minutes

Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time 10 minutes

Practice Review

Review diary card

Key questions for generating discussion

“Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
“What are some of the effects we discussed (long term, short term, physical and psychological)?”

Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around the effects of substances, including short and long term effects and the psychological and physiological effects.
Introduction to New Skill

Radical Acceptance and Turning the Mind (30 minutes)

Explain to group members that the focus for today is on developing skills to accept distressing situations.

Explain to group members that the first skill we will be learning is the ‘Radical Acceptance’ skill. Engage group members in a discussion around the meaning of the words ‘acceptance’ and ‘radical’ and come to a consensus about what ‘Radical Acceptance’ might be about.

Highlight to group members that sometimes when distressing situations occur, we have no control over them, and we can’t change them. In these situations acceptance skills can lessen our discomfort and reduce our distress. This stops the pain (which is uncomfortable but manageable) from becoming suffering (which is both painful and unmanageable).

Suffering = Pain + Non-acceptance of reality

“As we’ve discussed in previous groups, pain is an inevitable part of living, and something we can’t completely avoid. In some painful situations, accepting that pain as a part of our reality is the only way for us to get through that pain.

If we refuse to accept reality as it is, our pain can turn into suffering, which is much more difficult to bear.

It’s important to note though, that acceptance doesn’t equal approval or being passive in situation; it simply means recognising the situation, so that we can let go of any suffering it has been causing us.”

Key points to discuss are that radical acceptance is:

• An active process of acknowledging what is.
• Letting go of fighting against reality.
• Accepting that the past can’t be changed.
• NOT giving up, agreeing with the situation, or asking “why me?” and saying “it’s not fair”.

It can be helpful to illustrate the radical acceptance skill with an example such as a card game. That is, it doesn’t matter what cards we wish we had, or what cards we’ve previously had; we can only play the hand we have been dealt. Engage group members in discussion about what the outcome of the game would be if they refused to accept the cards they had been dealt, etc.

Explain to the group that ‘Turning the Mind’ is a skill that assists in implementing the radical acceptance skill.
Optional practical activity (allow 5 minutes)

Half Smile

Explain to group members that this activity is about accepting reality with the body, and noticing its impact on the mind.

Ask group members to focus on a still object in the room. Have them consciously relax their neck, shoulders and face. Direct them to “half-smile”. Explain that a half-smile is not tense; it is simply a slight upturn of the lips, while the rest of the face remains relaxed. Ask group members to retain the half-smile for three breaths.

Debrief with group members about the effects of the half-smile exercise and discuss situations where half-smiling can be useful (e.g. first thing in the morning, when irritated, when thinking about past distress, etc.).

Willingness versus Wilfulness (15 minutes)

Explain to group members that for the remainder of the group, the focus will be on ‘Willingness’ as an acceptance skill. Discuss with group members their understanding of the terms ‘willing’ and ‘wilful’.

Willing = agreeable; helpful; prepared Wilful = stubborn; obstinate; headstrong

Link this discussion to the importance of willingness in acceptance and reducing distress, and the role of wilfulness in rejecting acceptance and leading to suffering.

“Willingness is an important skill in effective coping. Willingness is about listening to wise mind and doing exactly what is needed in each situation, with a focus on effectiveness.

Wilfulness on the other hand, is about doing the opposite of what is effective. Sometimes this means doing nothing and refusing to make the changes that are needed. At other times wilfulness is about trying to ‘fix’ every situation. Wilfulness is refusing to tolerate the moment.”
Explore with group members different reasons why someone may be ‘wilful’ in a situation, e.g., pride getting in the way of effectiveness, lack of confidence in skills, etc.

- **Optional practical activity (allow 10 minutes)**

To demonstrate wilfulness as a group, read through and discuss Dr Seuss’ *The Zax* (Story two in *The Sneetches and Other Stories*).

Questions for *The Zax* discussion:

- What were the consequences for the Zax being wilful in this situation?
- If the Zax were willing, what might they have done differently?
- What might the consequences have been of acting in this way?

Time permitting, work through as a group (or in pairs) past examples where group members were wilful. Look at alternative ways that group members could have responded, which would have been willing, and discuss the potential consequences of that willingness.

**Practice for next session**

Reiterate the importance of the acceptance skills. Ask group members to practice it themselves, and to also notice the difference it makes on their level of distress.
**Distress Tolerance 9: Save A Mate Training**

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**Practice Review**

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

- “Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
- “Why are acceptance strategies important?”
- “What is turning the mind?”
- “What does willingness and wilfulness mean?”

**Key learning points**

- Prompt discussion around the concepts of turning the mind, and willingness versus wilfulness.
- Turn discussion to focus on group members’ specific use of turning the mind and willingness and encourage examples.
Introduction to New Skill

Explain to the group that today’s session will be run by an external provider and will build on what we have started to learn about the effects of substances. This group will be about learning first aid skills for substance use emergencies and will go for a full day. Reassure group members that you will be available throughout the group and will be able to talk with them, should they find the content distressing.

The facilitator should pre-organise for Save A Mate training to be provided to the group, by the Red Cross.

### Interpersonal Effectiveness 1: Dialectics and the Middle Ground

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### Practice Review

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

- “Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
- “What were the skills you learnt during the training?”
- “How do they link to DBT?”

### Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around the skills learnt in Save A Mate, and link examples to DBT concepts as much as possible (e.g., using acceptance in regards to the realities of substance use, and that others around them may still use).
Introduction to New Skill

Introduction to interpersonal effectiveness (5 minutes)

Explain to group members that over the next 3 groups there will be a focus on interpersonal effectiveness skills and that these skills are about building and maintaining meaningful relationships and communication.

Introduction to dialectics (5 minutes)

Explain to group members that for the entirety of this group, they will be learning a new skill to assist them in being able to find the ‘middle ground’ in any given situation.

“In today’s group we’re going to develop a better understanding of dialectics: what they are and how they can help us become more effective in our interactions with others…”

Ask group members what they understand by the term ‘dialectics’. It is likely that group members will not be familiar with this term or understand how it connects with interpersonal effectiveness if this is the case, quickly move into explaining and defining dialectics.

**Dialectics**: is a concept with a long history that is based in philosophy and science. Dialectical thinking is a process whereby apparent contradictions are able to be synthesised to provide a broader understanding of the ‘truth’ in a situation.

Dialectics therefore considers that:

- Reality is comprised of two opposing forces or positions
- Each position has some truth or value

The goal is:

- To identify the truth or value in each position and bring them together (i.e., the middle ground)

Dialectics can be a difficult concept to grasp. Spend as much time as necessary for the group to develop a basic understanding.

It can be useful to explain dialectics as a scale or spectrum, or to use an analogy of ‘black or white thinking styles,’ where our aim is to find the shades of grey.

The value in finding the middle ground (15 minutes)

“Sometimes in our thinking we strongly identify with one end of dialectic, and are unable to look at or even consider the other end. When we rigidly identify with only one end of a dialectic our behaviour tends to be more extreme.”

Encourage discussion with group members around why behaviour tends to be more extreme if one of the dialectic is strongly identified with (i.e., when the view is narrow, it means we are less likely to see the limitations of our own perspective, or the advantages of another perspective).
An example to highlight ‘extreme’ behaviour as a result of being ‘stuck’ in a dialectic, is frequently seen in avid supporters of particular sporting teams.

““At other times, we can swing from strongly identifying with one end of a dialectic to moving all the way to the other end. When we do this our emotions and behaviour can become unstable and inconsistent. When our emotions are unstable or unpredictable it can make us feel ‘all over the place’ or out of control, and this can make it hard for us to develop a consistent sense of who we are and what we believe.

Swinging from one end of a dialectic to the other can also cause difficulties in our relationships with others. Why do you think this is the case? When we are unpredictable in our behaviours and emotions it can cause instability and stress in our relationships, as others are not sure what to expect from us.

When we consciously start to address dialectical thinking and begin to see the middle ground, there are numerous benefits for us, on both an individual level and in our relationships...”

Work through the following points as a group, taking the time to discuss the impacts and benefits of each. Ensure that discussion is framed around the goals and aims of interpersonal effectiveness.

When we address dialectical thinking we begin to see that:

- There is always more than one way to see a situation, and more than one way to solve a problem.
- There is truth in both extremes of a dialectic.
- It is important to not view the world in absolutes/extremes.

When we address dialectical thinking it can help us to:

- Stabilise our emotions and behaviour, which can help us develop a more consistent sense of ourselves.
- Become more consistent and predictable in our emotions and behaviour, which helps create more stable relationships.
- Become ‘unstuck’ and more flexible in our thinking.
To further coach group members to be able to recognise if they are ‘stuck’ in a dialectic, engage group members in a discussion around ‘all/nothing’ and ‘both/and’ thinking.

**How to find the middle ground** (30 minutes)

“Sometimes it can be difficult to know whether or not we are stuck in a dialectic. There are however a number of things we do to actively change how we are thinking about a situation, which help us to more effectively find the middle ground.”

Work through the following steps to finding the middle ground. Encourage group members to ask questions, clarify concepts, and provide their own examples of where they have used these skills.

- Avoid words like ‘always’ or ‘never’ and move towards ‘both/and’ thinking. Explain to group members that words like ‘always’ and ‘never’ can be good clues that we are stuck in a dialectic. Being descriptive about a situation can help with broadening our perspective on a situation and moving us to the middle ground.

- Look for the kernel of truth in each position. Consciously looking for the ‘truth’ in the opposite position to the one we are in can help us become ‘unstuck’ and more focused on the middle ground.

- Practice looking at other points of view and find both sides to the story. Practice in situations that are not stressful, so that use of this skill becomes automatic.

- Accept that different opinions can be legitimate (even if you don’t agree) and that no one has the ‘absolute truth.’ Try using statements like, “I can see your point of view.” or “I understand where you’re coming from…”

- Ask yourself, “Am I stuck in a dialectic?” and “What would the middle ground be?” Consciously evaluating where you are on the dialectic can assist in moving you towards the middle ground.

- **Optional practical activity (allow 15 minutes)**

Move into a practical activity to demonstrate finding the middle ground. Have all group members stand up and provide the ‘Common Dialectical Thoughts’ handout, Appendix 1. Explain to group members that we are going to visually represent where we feel we are on each of the dialectics listed; at one end of the room is one point of view, at the other is the opposite point of view. Inform group members that they may be asked to explain why they have placed themselves at a particular point on the dialectic.
After trialling one or two dialectics, engage group members in discussion about: how and where we are on a dialectic will change depending on which situation we are in. For example the thought, “I have to put my needs first.” versus, “I must put others’ needs first.” may be different depending on if we are at work, or if we are at home; if we are a parent, or if we are in treatment, etc.

Expand on this discussion by looking at the fact that being directly in the middle of a dialectic may not always be the appropriate place to be, but that being able to acknowledge the middle ground is always important.

**Practice for next session**

Encourage group members to use the ‘middle ground’ skill before the next DBT group.
**Interpersonal Effectiveness 2: DEAR MAN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Orientation and introductions</td>
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<td>Here and now, interpersonal focus</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice review: <em>Dialectics and the Middle Ground</em></td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training: <em>DEAR MAN</em></td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practice Review**

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

“Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
“What is a dialectic?”
“How is dialectical thinking unhelpful?”
“What is the middle ground and how do we find it?”

**Key learning points**

- Prompt discussion around the concept of dialectical thinking.
- Ensure group members understand that fusing with extreme thoughts can be unhelpful and provide examples.
- Reiterate steps for finding the middle ground.
Introduction to New Skill

Interpersonal goals (5 minutes)

Explain to group members that for the entirety of this group, they will be learning a new foundation skill that will assist them in mastering DEAR MAN; being more effective in asking for and receiving what they want in a situation or averting what they don’t want.

“**When we interact with people in day to day life, we usually have a specific purpose in doing so. Sometimes that purpose is to specifically meet an objective or goal; at other times our aim is to maintain or develop a relationship, and sometimes our interactions with others are governed by maintaining our self-respect, or acting in line with our values.**

The skills we will be learning today will help us to more effectively express what we want from a situation, which makes it more likely that we achieve the outcome we are looking for, thus achieving objective effectiveness.”

Allow time to discuss and clarify the above. For example:

- **Objective effectiveness** is when you want something from a situation and do or say something to achieve that thing, for example, getting a discount from a sales person;
- In other situations, saying ‘no’ can be an example of objective effectiveness in not buying that extended product warranty, or there is
- **Relationship effectiveness**, which is about wanting to maintain a relationship and an example of how to do this might be better communication with a loved one, and
- **Self-respect effectiveness**, which is about maintaining your own self-respect for example telling someone they have violated your boundaries.

Emphasise to group members that while effective use of this skill will increase the chances of succeeding in their request, it is not automatically guaranteed. Link this discussion to the concept of dialectical thinking, and the use of these skills as the ‘middle ground’ i.e., having no control vs. having complete control.

Ask, “If you use these skills, and you aren’t successful in having your request met, what difference will that make to your feelings about the situation; compared to if you didn’t effectively use skills and still didn’t get your needs met?” Assist group members to identify that it becomes easier to accept a situation, if you know you have acted as effectively as possible.

DEAR MAN (45 minutes)

Explain that we are going to work through the DEAR MAN acronym to make it easier to remember what to do in interpersonal situations.

Clarify that the D in DEARMAN stands for ‘Describing’ the situation. Explain to group members that it is sometimes necessary for us to briefly describe the situation we are
reacting to. Discuss the potential problems if we assume that the person we are making a request from knows what we are talking about. Emphasise to group members that with the Describe skill, it is important to stick to the facts and use non-judgemental statements.

Examples of Describing:

“This is the second appointment that you’ve cancelled.”

“I’ve bought the groceries for the past fortnight.”

“I’ve been clean for four weeks.”

- Optional practical activity (allow 5 minutes)

Ask group members to think of what they had for dinner last night, and have them non-judgementally describe it in detail. Correct any judgements.

Clarify that the ‘E’ stands for ‘Express’ feelings or opinions clearly.

“This skill is about explaining how you feel and what you believe about a situation. Often, we expect other people to know what we’re feeling or for them to be able to mind-read our beliefs about a situation. This can lead us to feel frustrated or invalidated.

However, if we clearly express our feelings and beliefs, it allows both parties to know exactly where they stand…”

Highlight to group members that the Express skill is NOT about placing blame on others; it is about clearly expressing your own feelings about a situation. Facilitate discussion around the impact of ‘I’ statements, as opposed to ‘you’ statements, and of using such statements as, “I feel…” or “I want/don’t want” instead of statements using, “I need” or “You should/shouldn’t”. Ask, “What do you think the difference is in using ‘I’ statements, rather than ‘you’ statements?” ‘I’ statements can be less adversarial and are less likely to attribute blame; therefore I statements tend to make the person you are talking with less likely to feel the need to defend themselves.

Before moving on, ensure you inform group members that the ‘Describe’ and ‘Express’ skills are not always needed in every situation (e.g., if the room is hot, you may not need to describe and express why you want to open a window), but that this is still an important thing to do while you are developing these skills.

Explain to group members that the ‘A’ stands for the ‘Assert’ skill. The Assert skill is about clearly and concisely asking for what you want in a situation, or clearly saying no to a request.

“People aren’t going to know what we want in a situation, unless we clearly tell them exactly what that is. This skill means that we get straight to the point, by not beating around the bush, or putting off saying no…”
Ask, “What do you think could happen if you continually put off saying no to a request?” The person may not realise that you want to say no, and will continue to ask or pressure for a yes or find other ‘solutions’ so that you can meet their need. This can then make it even harder to say no. Reinforce to group members that the Assert skill is about being clear, concise and assertive.

Present that the ‘R’ in DEARMAN is for ‘Reinforce’.

“The Reinforce skill is all about rewarding people when they positively respond to your request, or to you saying no. Specifically, this skill looks at reinforcing to the person, what the positive effects will be if they give you what you want. Sometimes this reward can be tangible, like being able to give them more time at a later date, and at other times the reward may simply be your understanding or appreciation…”

Discuss with group members the concept that if we keep saying no, or if other people don’t ‘gain’ something from complying with our request, they may be less motivated to respond positively to us. Link this discussion with the Reinforce skill, by noting that the skill pre-empts this happening, by looking at behaviours being motivated by consequences, rather than whether the decision is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’.

Next explain to group members that the DEAR is what we do in this skill, and that the MAN is how we do it.

“Staying Mindful means that when we are asking for something, or want to say no, we stick to our position, and don’t become distracted by anything else; regardless of what that is. The way we do this is simple: we keep saying no or we express our opinion over and over and over again. Just like a broken record. The other strategy we can use when staying mindful is to simply ignore all attempts to distract us. Whether the person verbally attacks us, threatens us, or tries to change the subject, we should just ignore it and keep making our point. It’s important however, to also be very mindful of tone and always try to stay mellow and non-confrontational.”

*Optional practical activity (allow 5 minutes)*

Have each group member have a turn at reiterating their position and not budging from it. Pre-prepare an example of a question, e.g., asking for money and having each group member say ‘no’.

“The other thing to keep in mind while implementing our DEAR skills is to Appear Confident. This means using a confident tone, being aware of how you’re standing and maintaining appropriate eye-contact. It means making sure that you’re not whispering, stammering, over-apologising or staring at the floor.”
Ask, “Why do you think it is important to appear confident?” It communicates to the other person and to yourself that you are effective, deserve respect, and know what you want.

Engage the group in discussion around judging how confident to appear. Discuss the potential pitfalls of appearing either arrogant or too apologetic.

“The final tool in our DEAR MAN belt is to Negotiate. This skill is all about being willing to give to get, and about being open to alternative solutions. This skill is NOT about giving in, or compromising your values, but is more about being open to the other person providing a different solution or still saying no, but providing them with another option.”

- Optional practical activity (allow 25 minutes)
  Ask group members to divide into pairs and role-play scenarios in which they could showcase DEAR MAN in front of the group. Encourage role-players and other group members to take ‘time outs’ and use group knowledge to work through difficulties with the DEAR MAN skill.

Other considerations for saying no or making a request (10 minutes)

Explain that there are a number of factors that we need to consider, when making a request or when saying ‘no’ to someone and that we should also keep these in mind when using our DEAR MAN skills.

Use open and closed questions to ensure the group understands each point and can give examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Making a request: Is the person able to give me what I want?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saying no: Do I have what the person wants?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>Making a request: Is this a good time? Is the person in a good mood?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Saying no: Is this a bad time to say no?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Making a request: Do I have all the facts I need? Am I clear about what I want?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saying no: Is the person’s request clear? Do I know what I’m agreeing to?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>Making a request: Is the person morally or legally required to fulfil my request?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Saying no: Am I morally or legally required to agree?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Making a request: Is what I want appropriate to the current relationship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Give and Take</strong></td>
<td><em>Saying no:</em> Is what the person is asking for appropriate to the relationship?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Making a request:</em> What have I done for them recently? Am I giving as much as I’m asking for?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Saying no:</em> Do I owe them a favour? Does this person do a lot for me?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Long vs. Short Term Goals</strong></th>
<th><em>Making a request:</em> Will not asking for this create some short-term peace, but cause more problems in future?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Saying no:</em> Is giving in to short-term peace more important than the long-term welfare of the relationship? Will I eventually regret or resent saying no?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Respect</strong></th>
<th><em>Making a request:</em> Will making this request compromise my self-respect? Will not asking do so anyway?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Saying no:</em> Will saying no make me feel bad about myself? Will not saying no make me feel bad about myself?</td>
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**Practice for next session**

Encourage group members to use the ‘DEAR MAN’ skill before the next DBT group, or to reflect on a situation from their past where they could have used this skill effectively.
### Interpersonal Effectiveness 3: GIVE

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation and introductions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice review: DEAR MAN</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training: GIVE</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Practice Review

#### Review diary card

**Key questions for generating discussion**

- “Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
- “What are objective, relationship and self-respect effectiveness?”
- “What does DEAR MAN stand for?”
- “What other things do we need to consider when saying no or making a request?”

### Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around the concept of dialectical thinking.
- Ensure group members understand that fussing with extreme thoughts can be unhelpful and that examples are provided.
- Reiterate steps for finding the middle ground.
Introduction to New Skill

Introduction to GIVE (35 minutes)

Explain to group members that the focus for today is maintaining healthy and positive relationships.

Highlight to group members that regardless of whether they are saying no, asking for something, or simply dealing with people in everyday life, all of these things become easier if we are able to maintain good relationships. Explain that the following skills will assist in creating positive interactions when dealing with people. Explain that the acronym that will be discussed is ‘GIVE’.

Explain that we are going to look at the ‘G’ and the ‘E’ together and that they stand for: use a Gentle and Easy Manner.

“As we’ve already discussed in the previous group, the manner in which we behave and talk plays an important part in whether or not an interaction with someone goes the way we want. So in order to maintain a good relationship with someone we need to be mindful of our manner. Notice your tone of voice and use non-threatening body language; smile and where appropriate, use humour.

Also be aware of the actual language you are using. Make sure you aren’t using judgements, be respectful and obviously avoid threatening or attacking the person you are interacting with.”

Allow time for discussion and give an example giving of a gentle and easy manner versus an attacking or threatening manner. Encourage examples using extreme body language, as well as verbal examples.

Explain to group members that the ‘I’ in GIVE is about being interested, which is about simply putting into practice basic skills that we already know: listening to the other person without interruption; maintaining eye-contact; being patient, and not making faces (e.g., eye-rolling).

Optional practical activity (allow 5 minutes)

Ask young people to break into pairs. Tell them that each person is going to have 1 minute to talk about their pet, or their favourite animal and that for the time allocated, their partner is going to have to show that they are actively listening.

After each group member has had a turn at talking and listening, allow a few minutes to debrief the experiences of each, as a group. Ask, “What impact do you think it would have if instead of listening, your partner continually interrupted you while they were talking, or you noticed they were looking into the distance, or rolling their eyes?”

Ask, “If a person feels as though you aren’t interested in what they are saying, are they more or less likely to want to maintain a good relationship with you and give you what you want?”
Finally explain that the ‘V’ stands for ‘Validate.’

“Validating is all about acknowledging the other person’s feelings, difficulties and wants about a situation, without being judgemental. This involves you trying to figure out what problems the person is having with a situation, and saying out-loud that you can identify them.

Validating is NOT about saying you necessarily agree with that person, it’s simply about saying you can see where they’re coming from.”

Provide group members with examples of validating statements, such as:
- “I hear what you’re saying…”
- “I can see that you feel…”
- “I know that you’re really busy…”
- “I can see this is important to you…”

- **Optional practical activity (allow 15 minutes)**

Randomly ask a volunteer group member to leave the room to prepare a 3 minute talk on their favourite sport. Split remaining group members into two groups: one group that is going to validate the volunteer (e.g., “You’re doing great, you seem to know a lot about this!” etc.), and the second group who are going to invalidate the volunteer (e.g., “You seem nervous, you shouldn’t be, this should be easy, we’re a small group! You should be talking more, it’s your topic!” etc.). Ask the volunteer to come back into the room and give their talk. Allow time to debrief and reflect on the experience of both the volunteer and each of the other group members.

**Putting it all together** (25 minutes)

Explain to the group that the GIVE skill and indeed all of the skills across the interpersonal effectiveness model are very important in developing skills for effective communication and meaningful relationships, as well as healthy functioning within families.

- **Optional practical activity (allow 25 minutes)**

Instruct the group to read over the interpersonal effectiveness section of their workbook, and to break into pairs to practice putting it all together. Group members can role play their own scenario, or pick from the handout in Appendix 2. Facilitators should coach pairs and provide positive feedback as they observe on target practice of skills.

**Practice for next session**

Reiterate the importance of the GIVE skill. Ask group members to practice it themselves and to also notice the difference it makes when people use it with them.
**Interpersonal Effectiveness 4: Drug Refusal Skills**

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<tr>
<td>Practice review: <strong>GIVE</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills training: <strong>Drug Refusal Skills</strong></td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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</table>

**Practice Review**

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

- “Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
- “What does GIVE stand for?”
- “How does it feel when others are invalidating our experience?”
- “What is it like when someone is being aggressive in their manner?”

**Key learning points**

- Prompt discussion around the use of GIVE.
- Ensure examples are provided for both practice of the skill, and prompt reflection how it feels when others use parts of this skill in their interaction with us.
- Connect across other interpersonal effectiveness modules.
- Clarify for group members that, if they are unable to use GIVE because of distress, they may need to use a distress tolerance strategy before attempting effective communication.
Introduction to New Skill

Explain to the group that today’s interpersonal effectiveness group will focus on substance misuse and will cover two main topics, which are eliminating cues for use, and drug refusal strategies for saying ‘no’ when faced with some of these cues.

Substance use cues and triggers (20 minutes)

Ask group members what they think ‘avoiding and eliminating cues to use’ may mean. Discuss some of the concerns they have in regards to eliminating cues to use. Validate any discussion and reinforce that this is a normal part of the recovery process.

Define the following terms (if group members have not already): urges; cravings, and triggers. Cravings are the desire for the effects of a substance. Urges are the impulse to go and obtain the substance/use. A trigger is the situation/object/person that may bring on these cravings (i.e., seeing an old using friend; having a fight with a partner; seeing the substance or paraphernalia in front of you).

Introduce the 7 trigger types and discuss these with the group (see http://www.matthewberry.com//Model%20Summary.pdf (Matthew Berry, 2013) for further reading).

“There are many reasons why an individual may use, and this will vary from person to person as we are all different. Today, I am going to show you some of the reasons why an individual may use. I am interested in hearing what you have to say about these or if you have experienced this in the past. Remember it may not have always been a conscious decision to use, but looking back, are you able to recognise any of these reasons?”

1. Pleasure (‘pleasure seeking’)

Desire to seek ‘positive’ emotions or enhance an already positive mood state (i.e., I am having a really good time and I want to feel even better or I am looking to feel really good and have fun).

2. Relief (‘relief seeking’)

Desire to cope with or eliminate a difficult emotion - self medicating model (i.e., I am feeling sad/angry and I need something to help me with that).

3. Association/Habit

This is reinforced behaviour that is coupled with a neutral stimulus- classical conditioning. For example, people, places, situation, weather, smell, sight, sound, times,
season, emotion, cultural use (i.e., “It’s time to knock off work and I always have a beer at this time; I have run into old using friends and this is what we always do; freshly cut flowers make me feel like using because it reminds me of the perfume my mum used to wear”). Some of these can be tricky, because we aren’t always aware of them. Some may be as simple as going to a drawer in the house, because that’s where we keep the items we need to use.

4. Discontentment

Feeling discontent with possibly who you are and what you are doing/lack of motivation to move forward - may include feeling bored, restless and down (i.e., not living in line with values or a lack of values may masquerade as depressive symptoms).

5. Confused

Biofeedback confusion can occur. The brain may interpret physical symptoms incorrectly (i.e., flu like symptoms may be interpreted as a withdrawal by the brain and you then feel like you need to use to be ok.). Consider HALTS (i.e., am I Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired, Stressed, or sleep deprived?).

6. Dependence

This is tolerance to the substance - experiencing cravings and possible withdrawal symptoms.

7. Substance induced- when in active use

Already using and this in turn acts within itself to continue substance use.

Ask group members their opinion on these 7 factors. Are there any that they particularly identify with or perhaps hadn’t considered before? Ask group members what this shows them about their own drug use and possible relapse prevention plans.

For example: John, I noticed that you said you hadn’t considered relief as a reason why you used in the past. Does this change the way you may manage your cravings in the future? (i.e., You can learn to implement alternate strategies to ‘cope’ and explore distress tolerance whilst you are in the programme to practice managing these difficulties without substances.)

Discuss with group members, that whilst it is ok not to always know the ‘why’ of why we use, if we can RECOGNISE some of our triggers we may be able to prepare. Being forewarned is being forearmed. Explore what it means to have a relapse prevention plan. A relapse prevention plan is a plan we may have in place to keep ourselves safe if
we find ourselves in a difficult situation. This may vary from person to person, but it is about finding what works for you specifically!

**Strategies for managing these cues** (15 minutes)

Brainstorm strategies that group members already use for managing the above triggers. Examples that may be discussed include: distress tolerance strategies including urge surfing and distraction using ACCEPTS; self-soothe, and pros and cons. Other important strategies to discuss may include:

- **Distract, delay, and decide:** find alternate activities and delay making your decision until the craving passes (sleep on it) and then decide. Recognize the consequences so that you can make an informed decision.
- **Create new associations:** if you consider a particular drawer in your house to be a trigger it may be important to replace it, or put new items in there so your brain begins to make new connections with the drawer.
- **Recognise and challenge our beliefs:** for instance if someone has the belief that, “One (drink/hit) just won’t hurt.” or “To be a man I have to drink in the pub with my mate.” how will this help them?
- **Recognising that a onetime use doesn’t need to lead to more:** if you do use, remember that the cycle doesn’t need to continue; if we learn by what didn’t work, we can use it to help in the future.
- **Confidence:** “Fake it ‘til you make it,” and remember that no one else knows how you feel. If you don’t feel confident to say no, that’s ok, just pretend you are. Ask yourself, “If I were feeling confident, what would I do?” The more we do this, the more confident we are likely to feel!

It is important to stress that experiencing triggers and cravings is a normal part of recovery and nothing to be ashamed of (regardless of how long clean). It’s not the absence of triggers we should be striving for but rather management strategies to make different choices.

**Effective communication and substance refusal** (25 minutes)

Discuss with group members the importance of effective communication.

“Communicating is a big part of who we are as human beings. We can communicate things without even realising we are doing so. Has anyone experienced this before? I know we have talked about this before but it’s important because part of managing high risk situations and developing drug refusal skills is ensuring that we are communicating in an effective way.”

Ask group members what they already know about verbal and nonverbal communication (tone, body language, eye contact, etc.). Ask for a volunteer. The facilitator should demonstrate an example of verbal vs. nonverbal communication. For example, ask a group member to role play encouraging the facilitator to drink alcohol. In the first scenario, the facilitator is to shuffle around, not making direct eye contact and making uncertain excuses.
Ask the group members what the facilitator is communicating (i.e., perhaps they are unsure, more likely to use, etc.). Replay the scene. The facilitator should now be direct and say ‘no’ while making appropriate body language gestures and adopting a confident stance. Ask group members to reflect on the two scenes.

Discuss the concept of assertiveness. Explain that being assertive is about getting your needs met in an effective way, without being disrespectful to another. Assertiveness is not aggression. Briefly explore other styles of relating including being passive, aggressive and passive-aggressive.

Explain that in addition to the skills discussed over the past few groups, we are going to add and discuss a few more that will be helpful for refusing substances.

Ask the group members what their thoughts on saying no are. The facilitator is to reinforce that saying no is ok and that this is an individual’s right. It doesn’t make you weak or mean or anything else.

If saying no doesn’t work:

- Suggest an alternative (i.e., “No thank you, but do you want to go grab a coffee?”)
- Change the subject (i.e., “No thanks, but how have you been, I haven’t seen you for ages?”)
- Avoid excuses.
- Challenge the person/ ask for a change (i.e., “If we are to be friends, I have to ask that you don’t pressure me to use.”)
- Act confident, even if you don’t feel confident.

Optional practical activity (allow 15 minutes)

Ask group members to role play using the above statements and other strategies in front of the group. The facilitator should provide example scenarios, specific to substance use. Some are listed below. Group members may also suggest their own, real life scenarios. Try using the same scenario more than once, asking the group member to envision a different friend or parent etc., to see how this impacts on how they would handle the situation. Encourage group members to ask for ‘time out’ if they are stuck, so that the group can give options for them to try.

1. You run into some old using friends that you haven’t seen in a while. You don’t want to use, but they keep on insisting you join in for ‘old time’s sake’.
2. Your partner wants to hang out with you, but he/ she has been using. You are worried that you may insult them if you ask them to leave.
3. Your boss tells you that the celebratory drinks are on him tonight as you have been working so hard.
4. A stranger approaches you and starts talking to you about using and goes on about where all the local places to score are.
Practice for next session

Ask group members to write down a list of responses that they feel would be most like the responses that they would use in real life. Encourage group members to role play these in real life scenarios as opportunities arise in the course of their week. Also encourage group members to try other strategies that they might not have used before. If there is no real opportunity to practice the responses between groups, suggest that group members repeat the responses over and over to themselves in front of a mirror in order to become comfortable with them.
Emotion Regulation 1: Primary and Secondary Emotions

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<tr>
<td>Here and now, interpersonal focus</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice review: Drug Refusal Skills</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training: Primary and Secondary Emotions</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Practice Review

Review diary card

Key questions for generating discussion

“Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
“What are some of the types of triggers we may face when it comes to substance use?”
“What are some of the ways we can build our confidence and ability to say no when faced with these triggers?”
“How does it feel to say no to substance use triggers?”

Key learning points

- Prompt discussion around substance use triggers and cues.
- Prompt discussion around substance use refusal.
- Ensure examples are provided from each group member. If they have no recent examples, ask group members to reflect on how they could have done things differently in the past.
- Connect across other interpersonal effectiveness modules.
Introduction of New Skill

Introduction to emotion regulation (5 minutes)

Explain to group members that over the next 4 groups there will be a focus on emotion regulation skills and that these skills are about learning to identify and manage emotions. Before starting the content delivery however, ask each group member to list all the types of emotions they have ever felt, and to put an asterisk next to the ones they have felt in the last week or so. Highlight that, given emotions are a big part of our lives we will need to focus on ways to effectively manage them.

“Emotion regulation is going to cover skills and strategies that will work for some of you, some of the time, in helping you build your capacity to manage your emotions. Specifically, we are going to work towards being able to identify and understand our emotions, reduce our vulnerability to emotion mind, and increase the likelihood of experiencing helpful and rewarding emotions which fit with our values. We are not going to learn how to block out emotions, but we are going to learn how to reduce our suffering, when the things we feel are painful.”

Purpose of emotions (10 minutes)

Facilitate group discussion around the purpose of emotion. Ensure that the three themes are discussed, and encourage group members to give specific examples.

“Ok so we’ve just covered the fact that we will not learn skills to block emotions. This must mean emotions are important and that they serve a purpose in our lives. How do emotions help us function?”

- Emotions validate our experience, e.g., feeling sad about a loss tells us that what we have lost was important;
- Emotions communicate themselves to others, e.g., body language changes can sometimes signify meaning faster than words, and
- Emotions motivate us to action, e.g., moving away from an unsafe area because of an anxious feeling.

If the group does not spontaneously move into discussing examples for specific emotional states, scaffold the process by having a volunteer write a list of common emotions on the whiteboard. Ask the group what the emotion is good for or how it helps us. If the group starts to discuss functions and experiences of secondary emotions, validate their contribution and use the examples given to help describe the model at a later time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Common examples discussed by the group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Communicates danger; fight or flight response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Communicates to others that we may need space; can communicate that someone else has disrespected our boundaries or that something is not in line with our beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>Communicates to us that we have acted against our values; can motivate apologies and behaviour change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Tells us that something was important; communicates to others that we may need support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Connection to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Something is important to us, we are living in line with our goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Knowing about the importance of emotions, even the painful ones, can sometimes help us in accepting their presence. Myths about emotions can perpetuate and add to our suffering. Before we move into learning the skills for emotion regulation, let’s take the time to discuss some of the other unhelpful beliefs about emotions that people often experience.”

**Myths about emotions** (10 minutes)

Explain to the group that first we will look at some of the common beliefs held about emotions.

- **Optional Activity (allow 10 minutes)**

Using the ‘myths about emotions’ resource in Appendix 2, hand out statements to group members and ask them to place the statement(s) into either a ‘truth’ pile, or ‘myth’ pile. Allow time for group discussion, encouraging group members to explain why they are placing statements in each pile. Key learning is to ensure that group members understand that all of the statements are actually commonly held myths.

**Identifying emotions** (allow 15 minutes)

Inform group members that next we will be looking at how to identify emotions.

- **Optional Activity (allow 15 minutes)**

Ask group members to break into pairs or small groups, and provide each group or pair with an ‘Emotions’ handout(s) from Appendix 2. Ask group members to brain storm and fill in the blank areas. After 3 minutes, ask group members to rotate the sheets, and have a go at
adding to another group’s handout. Following several rotations and once everyone has had the chance to add to each handout, discuss as a group.

**Primary and secondary emotions (30 minutes)**

Direct group members to their work book and explain that for the rest of today’s group, we will be looking at the model for primary and secondary emotions.

“We’ve just seen that there is a lot of knowledge in the group; when it comes to our emotions, we are all experts! What we have here is a model that formally describes some of the things we have just looked at. I want to discuss it now, and go through some examples of how it works.”

Using the model in the workbook, and the example provided, the facilitator should take time to talk the group through how the model works. Ask questions along the way to ensure that the group is identifying with each component, as well as how the model flows. Be sure to clarify primary and secondary emotions: primary emotions are our initial feelings about an event and secondary emotions are actually our feelings about those feelings.

- **Optional activity (allow 15 minutes)**

Randomly hand each young person a prompting event card, and a self-talk card (see Appendix 2). Ask each group member to describe the emotion they think they would experience if they were faced with this combination. Ask them to describe the emotion; how is it connected to the event and to their self-talk? How do they know what emotion it is? How do they experience it in their body?

Then ask each student to swap the self-talk card, to see if it changes the emotion.

- **Optional Activity (15 minutes)**

Ask group members to fill in the blank Model of Emotions handout using a recent example from their own lives (a copy of this handout is available in Appendix 2 should group members not wish to write directly in their workbook). Group members may have time to fill out more than one. Allow time to debrief.

**Practice for next session**

Ask group members to be mindful of their emotions over the next week. If group members experience a distressing emotion, or strong secondary emotion, they should use the model to help build understanding of the experience. Encourage group members to apply the model to emotions they experience during the week. Where the emotions experienced are unhelpful, ask group members to try and change something in the model to achieve a different outcome. Hint to them that this second part will be addressed in upcoming groups, and that they will have a head start by trying their own strategies first.
**Emotion Regulation 2: Connection between Body and Mind**

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<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice review: Primary and Secondary Emotions</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training: Connection between Body and Mind</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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</table>

**Practice Review**

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

- “Who can remember what we were discussing in our last group?”
- “What were some of the myths about emotions we discussed?”
- “What does anger/fear/shame/joy/sadness/love feel like? What are some of the things you notice about the emotion before, during, and after?”
- “What are primary and secondary emotions?”
- “What are other important aspects of the model of emotions?”

**Key learning points**

- Discuss myths about emotions.
- Discuss ways to identify emotions, thoughts and physiological sensations associated with the emotion.
- Discuss urges associated with emotions and connect to distress tolerance modules such as urge surfing.
- Ensure all group members have a clear understanding of the model of emotions.
- Turn discussion to focus on group members’ specific use of the model for primary and secondary emotions over past week.
Introduction to New Skill

This group session is flexible.

The aim of the group is for young people to develop an understanding of the fact that their physical wellbeing does impact strongly on their mental wellbeing.

The following teaching strategies are recommended for this group:

- Arrange a guest speaker from a fitness or sporting background (e.g., a local football player) to talk with group members about how fitness impacts their lives, and for them to run a group exercise if appropriate;
- Watch “Retrain My Brain”, Series 2, Episode 1, ABC (or use a similar video) and discuss or
- Visit and participate in a yoga class, tai chi, meditation or martial arts class, etc.
### Emotion Regulation 3: PLEASE

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<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice review: <strong>Connection Between Body and Mind</strong></td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills training: <strong>PLEASE</strong></td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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### Practice Review

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

- “Has anyone had time to reflect on the learning experience from last week?”
- “How did this group remind you of other groups?”

### Key learning points

- Discuss the learning experience from previous group.
- Ensure group members relate the learning experience to other modules.
- Discuss how good physical fitness can augment the use of all DBT skills.
Introduction to New Skill

Introduction to PLEASE (60 minutes)

Explain to the group that today we will be focusing on the PLEASE skill.

“In the last group we focused on the connection between body and mind. Today we are going to discuss an acronym that can remind us of the physical things we can change, that will impact on and reduce our vulnerability to emotion mind.

This is a bit of a funny acronym, but hopefully because it is unique it will be easier to remember!”

If it has not been discussed during the practice review section, lead a discussion around how physical wellbeing impacts mental wellbeing.

Move into reading through the PLEASE acronym, allowing time for discussion points for each strategy.

“The P and the L, together stand for treat ‘Physical i-L-ness.’ It is important for you to address any physical illness symptoms, and to consult with a doctor when things don’t feel right. It is also important to take medications as prescribed, and to talk with your doctor if you want to cease medications.

Some young people have strong views about medication, especially psychotropic medications. Take time to discuss and normalise concerns. For groups that continue to struggle with the concept of medication, inviting a GP or nurse to answer questions may be of benefit.

“The ‘E’ stands for ‘Eat’ healthily. What we eat directly impacts our mood and functioning. Have you ever noticed some foods make you feel great, whilst others make you feel tired and run down? This strategy is about eating more of what makes you feel good, both mentally and physically. It’s also about being mindful of what you are eating. Have you ever eaten a bag of chips in front of the TV, or whilst talking to someone and wondered, where did they go?! Mindful eating allows us to focus on not eating too much or too little.”

Allow time for group members to discuss healthy eating and to identify foods that make them feel good. Discuss how many meals group members eat each day, what types of food they eat, and the impact they notice.

• Optional Activity (allow 10 minutes)

Using the ‘Urge Surfing with Chocolate’ handout in Appendix 1 as a guide, ask group members to participate in a mindful eating activity.
Lead discussion around the effects of substances. Ask group members what the effects of such common substances as caffeine are? Ask group members what the impact of alcohol can be and discuss other illicit substances that are relevant to the group. Ask group members, “Who can remember the effects of the substance use group and Save A Mate training?” and ask them to teach the group about what they can remember.

Ask group members how they feel when they do not have enough sleep? Ask what mind state they are usually in when they are tired, and what sort of decisions they make at those times. Discuss that oversleeping can be a problem too. Discuss ways that they can enjoy a better sleep; ensure that the following points are covered as a minimum:

- No caffeine in the afternoon or evening;
- Develop a routine around normal bed times;
- Engage in moderate exercise but not right before bed;
- Keep a clean and relaxing sleeping space;
- Remember that bed is only for sleep and intimacy;
- Use Progressive Muscle Relaxation to help with sleep, and
- Get up if you can’t fall asleep and return to bed when tired; don’t lay in bed awake for more than 20 minutes.

Optional Activity (allow 10 minutes)

Ask group members to rate their mood out of 10 (1 being poor and 10 being great). Then ask group members to participate in a few minutes of exercise, e.g., star jumps, going for a run or walk, etc. Ask group members to rate their mood after exercise and discuss.

“The ‘A’ stands for ‘Avoid mood altering substances’. This strategy highlights that many substances can and do impact mood. You should reduce your vulnerability as much as possible by limiting your intake, or being abstinent from substances.”

“The ‘S’ stands for balanced ‘Sleep.’ This is about getting the amount of sleep you need to feel rested. There are guidelines for how much sleep a young adult needs, on average around 8 hours, but you may find that you need just that much, or a little over or a little under that amount.”

“The last ‘E’ stands for getting ‘Exercise.’ Exercise has a huge impact on the way we feel, and research has shown that for some people, it can work just as effectively as antidepressants in changing mood. As we have mentioned, it also helps with sleep. Ideally, you want to exercise for at least 20 minutes a day.”

- Optional Activity (allow 10 minutes)

Ask group members to rate their mood out of 10 (1 being poor and 10 being great). Then ask group members to participate in a few minutes of exercise, e.g., star jumps, going for a run or walk, etc. Ask group members to rate their mood after exercise and discuss.
Practice for next session

Ask group members to practice at least 2 of the PLEASE skills before next group.
### Emotion Regulation 4: Acting Opposite

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<tr>
<td>Practice review: PLEASE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training: Acting Opposite</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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### Practice Review

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

- “Can anyone remember what we covered in our last group?”
- “How can our physical health impact our emotional and mental wellbeing?”
- “What does the PLEASE acronym stand for?”

### Key learning points

- Discuss the PLEASE acronym and cover the importance of treating physical illness, eating healthily, avoiding mood altering substances, and getting the right amount of sleep and exercise.
- Discuss the impact that these lifestyle changes have had/could have on group members.
Introduction to New Skill

Introduction to acting opposite (30 minutes)

Inform group members that for today’s group we will be focusing on the acting opposite skill. You may need to remind group members of the thoughts, feelings and behaviour triangle, and explain that this skill will target behaviour, to modify thoughts and feelings.

“Today we are going to talk about the value in acting opposite. This skill is about doing the opposite action to the action urge you experience in response to a painful or unjustified emotion. For example, if I felt scared about giving a speech, and I had the urge to run, to use this skill I would simply look to do the opposite; stay and give the speech. Through committing to opposite action over and over again, we can impact our thoughts, feelings and behaviours and over time, reduce our experience of unwanted and unjustified emotions.”

Ask the group, “What could happen if we just gave into our action urges?” Reinforce that avoidance and/or buying into unjustified emotions can increase suffering. Ask the group, “What could happen if we always acted opposite?” Reinforce that always acting opposite would also be unhelpful, as our emotions have functions.

- Optional practical activity (allow 5 minutes)

Ask group members to ‘half-smile’ or to participate in a laughing group exercise. After a few minutes of smiling or laughing, discuss any changes that have occurred to their emotional state.

Discuss the rules for acting opposite:

- Use when the emotion is unjustified, i.e., it does not fit the facts of the situation, and
- Use when the emotion is not helpful, i.e., it is too intense, has lasted too long, or has made you ineffective.

Ask group members to provide examples of appropriate circumstances in which they could use the skill.

Discuss the action urges associated with common emotions, and ask the group what the opposite action would be.

As a minimum cover the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Action Urge</th>
<th>Opposite Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>Approach what you feel afraid of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Attack</td>
<td>Gently avoid, slow things down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>Withdraw</td>
<td>Apologise if you have done something wrong, hold your head up high if you haven’t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sadness | Hide, avoid, withdraw | Get active and participate socially
---|---|---
Love | Saying “I love you”. | Avoid the person, using distraction, ..........look at the cons
Guilt | Overpromise | ‘Face the music’, apologise if you have done something wrong, stand tall

**Acting Opposite in Action** (30 minutes)

- **Optional Activity (allow 30 minutes)**

Ask group members to split into pairs and explain that we are going to role-play some scenarios where acting opposite could be used. See Appendix 2 for Acting Opposite in Action handouts. Ask pairs to come to the front of the room and act out the script they are given, applying acting opposite skills to end the scene. If group members are stuck they can ask for time out and get support from the audience. If group members are nervous about acting in front of the group, encourage them to act opposite by throwing themselves into the scene! If time permits, ask group members to write scenarios for each other to act out.

Debrief after each role play.

- **Optional Activity (allow 30 minutes)**

Explain to group members that they will be participating in an art activity to learn more about opposite action. Provide each group member with a piece of paper and ask them to fold it in half. On one side of the paper, the group member should draw/paint/make a collage-type representation of an emotion. On the other side they should do the same to represent the opposite emotion, thought or action. Debrief and discuss how opposite action can help people confront situations, work through distress and engage in meaningful activities.

**Practice for next session**

Ask group members to try acting opposite before the next group. Link the practice of acting opposite to practicing core mindfulness skills, and remind group members that they may need to review their work around the model of emotion. Ask group members to reflect and record how their emotions changed after acting opposite.
**Emotion Regulation 5: Building a Life Worth Living**

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<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Practice review: <strong>Acting Opposite</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training: <strong>Building a Life Worth Living</strong></td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Practice Review**

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

“Can anyone remember what we covered in our last group?”
“What is acting opposite?”
“When should we use acting opposite?”

**Key learning points**

- Discuss acting opposite and encourage group members to apply this skill to specific examples from their life.
- Remind group members that they should only use acting opposite skills when the emotion is unjustified, or unhelpful.
- Briefly link this to the model of emotions as a way to describe action urges.
Introduction to New Skill

Explain to group members that in today’s group we will be covering 3 separate strategies for creating a life worth living.

Building Positive Emotional Experiences (15 minutes)

Introduce the concept of Building Positive Emotional Experiences.

“Accumulating positive emotional experiences can reduce our vulnerability to emotion mind. All people need to experience positive emotions to be happy, and we need this happiness to balance the painful emotions we experience in life. This is skill is basically about doing more of what we enjoy!

What we need to do is to think about short-term and long-term ways to create positive emotional experiences. The other thing we need to do, is to actually do these things! And to not just charge through them but to actually be mindful as we do experience that positive rush.”

Discuss any barriers to building positive emotional experiences. Some common discussion points include:

- Not deserving positive experiences;
- Not having enough time;
- Needing to prioritise other responsibilities, and
- Feeling that it’s too much effort.

Ask group members to turn to Building Positive Emotional Experiences in their workbook. Ask group members to start to think about the things they enjoy doing and in the blank space, create a menu of positive events. Ask group members to fill the page as much as possible with things they can do every day, as well as less frequent, longer term positive events. Spend enough time on this task to ensure that all group members have a number of events listed.

Building Mastery (20 minutes)

Explain to group members that next we are going to look at building mastery. Ask group members what they think this might mean?

“Building mastery is about two things: (1) doing more of what we are good at and (2) getting better at things we want to master. When we are confident and competent we feel good about life, and we are better at planning to cope ahead for things to be ok. This skill is basically about doing more of what we are good at!”
Ask group members to turn to Building Mastery in their workbook. Have group members list things under the sections ‘Things I’m good at now’ and ‘Things I want to develop mastery in’. Remind group members that these may be little things or they may be huge, long-term goals that they can break down into smaller goals.

Discuss with group members the importance of practice and starting small in developing mastery.

- **Optional practical activity (10 minutes)**

Provide group members with a one page print out of information that will be of interest to them, but will include some difficult concepts or words (e.g., sporting code rules, scientific information about an animal, etc.). Ask group members to read through the page and highlight *in colour* the sections that they readily understand. Then using iPads, or similar, give group members 3 minutes to look up sections that they did not understand. Ask group members to read through the page again and highlight everything they understood. Repeat this process again if time permits. Group members should be adding colour to the page each time they read it through. Explain that this visually represents the development of mastery.

**Valued Living (20 minutes)**

“Values are the things that really matter to us in life. They are our highest priorities. The valued living strategy is about linking our values to the decisions we make in life.”

The first part to living a valued life is actually to determine values. Open a discussion about how group members think values may be developed, and whether everyone has the same values, or if they are unique to each person. Ask, “Is it difficult to live in accordance with our values?”

“Sometimes living by our values can be like playing a game of footy? Has everyone seen a game of AFL? In AFL the players get full points for kicking the ball through the centre two goal posts. But they also get a point if they get close, and the ball goes inside the outer posts. Living by our values can be a bit like this; we don’t always get it 100% right and get all the benefits, but just trying to live by our values still gets us somewhere because it makes us feel good.”

- **Optional practical activity (allow 15 minutes)**

Ask group members to pick from the Values Cards in Appendix 2. Ask them to talk to the group about why this value is important to them and how they can make choices that reflect this value. Then ask group members to write or draw a representation of what is important to them on a blank Values Card (see Appendix 2 for templates). Provide art materials so group members can individualise this card. Inform group members that they can take this card with them and place it in their wallet, room, self-soothe box, etc., as a reminder of what is important to them. If facilitators have access to a laminator, cards should be laminated so they can be kept for a long time by group members.
Group members can also do the above activity in their workbook, under Valued Living, and record art work that represents many, or a few, values.

**Practice for next session (5 minutes)**

Ask group members to write down a goal they can work towards before the next group. This goal should be in line with an identified value, should build mastery and be pleasurable. Ask group members to develop the goal and share with the group prior to the session closing. It may be necessary to briefly cover the SMART framework for goal setting.

S = specific  
M = measurable  
A = achievable  
R = relevant  
T = time bound
**Emotion Regulation 6: Fantasy Island**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation and introductions</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here and now, interpersonal focus</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice review: <strong>Building a Life Worth Living</strong></td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short break</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training: <strong>Fantasy Island</strong></td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness activity and/or additional summary time</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practice Review**

**Review diary card**

**Key questions for generating discussion**

- “Can anyone remember what we covered in our last group?”
- “Why is building positive emotional experiences important?”
- “Why is building mastery important?”
- “What are values and why do they matter?”
- “How did you go with your goal from last group?”

**Key learning points**

- Discuss the importance of building a life worth living by building positive emotional experiences, building mastery and living in accordance with values.
- Ask group members to provide feedback about how they went with their goal from last group.
**Introduction to New Skill**

**Introduction to the Fantasy Island task (10 minutes)**

Explain to group members the interactive, visual and creative approach of the group format and content. Provide a brief summary of the art directive and theme ‘Fantasy Island’ and the significance of the exercise in achieving greater self-awareness: a key component in developing one’s self-esteem. It will also provide members with the opportunity to freely and creatively express (externalise), process and acknowledge aspects of ‘self’ through imagery. It becomes a visual tool, to demonstrate how people, places and things can contribute to their mood, motivation and feelings of self-worth. The process ultimately reflects one’s goals, beliefs, values, likes and/or dislikes.

Creating a Fantasy Island helps individuals to mentalise and recognise major areas of their life that provide satisfaction and/or need improvement.

Lead group members in a mindfulness activity.

Ask group members to, “Close your eyes…. take some deep breaths and feel yourself relax.” (Repeat this a few times).

“Now visualise and create in your mind, what you perceive to be the ideal island and how it takes shape. Consider the environment; the landscape and terrain...are there beaches, trees, grassed areas or dense woods?
Is there fresh water...a waterfall, a stream or a dam?”

“What is your choice of weather...is it hot and humid, cold or stormy?”

“What is the atmosphere on the island? ....take in the smells, the aroma of the flowers, the sights and the surrounding areas....”

“What can you see and what would you add to the island in order to live a more comfortable and happy life....consider housing, the types of buildings, roads, vehicles and any other facilities you may need or would like: for example, are there shops, a gym, a cinema, an outdoor pool.......?”

“Would you like be alone on your island, or would you allow animals and other people to live there or maybe visit...if so, who would they be and why?”

“Would you have rules and regulations in this place, like private areas that are off limits to others, and how would it be communicated...signs or maybe fences?”

“Just reflect on what you’re creating for yourself, what it represents and why it’s important to you. Importantly, notice what’s different or better on your ‘fantasy island’ to how you live at present...what is it that you’re trying to change?”
**Fantasy Island Art Directive** (30 minutes)

Hand out an A3 sheet of paper to each group member and distribute art/drawing materials amongst the group to share.

Direct the group to firstly create an outline of an island; this will provide the framework for their overall design and a foundation to build (or re-build) their dreams.

Alternatively, group members can use the smaller template in their workbook.

Emphasise to the group that there is no right or wrong in how they approach or interpret the art directive in creating their ‘fantasy’ island… it’s a personal exploration and exercise into greater self-awareness; concerning one’s perception, priorities and values. They are in control and responsible for the choices they make. However each group member is accountable to reflect upon the creative thought process and the decisions made...will it help them achieve their optimum life goals and their lifestyle of choice? For example, having no rules in relation to the island’s content, may lead to discussions around AOD use and associated practices that were once considered desirable.

> “Artwork serves as a safe vehicle to express unconscious as well as conscious issues and beliefs. Creative expression through art provides the individual with the freedom to represent his inner and outer world in any way he chooses. There are no judgements and group members are told that however they choose to draw is perfectly acceptable.”

Allow all group members to finish their drawings before inviting individuals to discuss their islands as a group. Note, whilst encouraging individual members to present their islands and disclose their thoughts and feelings around the exercise, some may find it confronting and too personal to share in detail.

Possible and probable issues that may be raised amongst group members as a result of the theme and at the discretion of the facilitator are:

- Personal reflection and self-awareness – Values and belief systems (religion and spirituality, politics, law enforcement, rules and regulations); Alcohol and other drugs practices; recalling individual experiences and accounts from the past and present day; memories (both positive and negative); Interpersonal relationships – perception of ‘self’ and ‘other’; family, friends and community; Positive change – dreams, ambitions, goal setting and/or wish list.

- Consider ending with a discussion on Values.

Encourage group members to consider what they think is important to live a well-adapted and healthy lifestyle…is it independence; loving someone; family and/or friends; being respectful or respected; being liked or appreciated; being physically fit; having a job; being financially stable? Ask group members:

- “How have you represented or symbolised your desires within your island setting?”
- “What have you consciously added or left out to reflect these principles and or choices?”
- “What do you need to be happy and content?”
- “What changes do you need to be made in your life to achieve these goals?”
- “What is preventing or stopping you from achieving these goals?” (Identify barriers.)

**Communal Island Art Directive (20 minutes)**

Roll out a large piece of butcher’s paper so all group members have ample space to access and contribute to the joint art work. Drawing materials to be dispersed and shared within the group.

Explain the aim and directive of the Communal Island Drawing to the group: the purpose of the exercise is to see how they will all work and function as a team in creating a communal island, whilst meeting the needs and desires of everyone. Group members will need to consider the earlier discussions regarding personal values and belief systems and how they can integrate these principles onto a shared island, and in doing so, keep the majority feeling happy, heard and respected.

It’s a hands-on exercise that allows members to practice their interpersonal effectiveness skills – appropriate sharing and boundary-setting to encourage communication; create unity and cohesion, and to develop tolerance and mindfulness of others. The process also assists in increasing one’s sense of self (and belonging) in relation to others, especially in the context of a community (and/or family).

Questions for the facilitator to consider and propose to the group:

- Did the group feel that they worked effectively in executing the design and content of the island?
- Did everyone feel that they were able to contribute equally...and did they feel heard and respected by others in the process?
- What significant issues hindered or created resistance in the group?
- What issues unified the group?
- What were the common goals and priorities in creating the ideal island?
- How were the goals achieved and would you consider them obtainable in the real world? If not, why?
4. Recommended Reading and References


Sites

http://behavioraltech.org/index.cfm
5. Appendix 1: Mindfulness Activities

Additional mindfulness audio tracks are also available on the website.

Quick list of individual activities that can be practiced mindfully

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indoor</th>
<th>Outdoor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deep breathing</td>
<td>Walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a rap</td>
<td>Gym</td>
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<tr>
<td>Play pool</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>A set of push ups</td>
<td>Riding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook a meal</td>
<td>Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>Cloud Gazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>Running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a cup of tea/coffee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House work</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Categories

On a piece of paper have the members draw six equidistant vertical lines going down a landscape orientated page to form seven columns. The first six columns are labelled as the following categories: Girl’s Name, Boy’s Name, Animal, Food, Country and Colour. The seventh column is the label score. One group member starts the game by saying ‘go’ to the person next to them. This person silently says the alphabet to themselves. When the first person says ‘stop’ the second person says the letter they were up to out loud. The entire group then writes something for each category starting with the letter that has been nominated. The first person to answer all six categories says ‘stop’. Everyone in the group has to stop. Answers are then shared. A score of 10 is given to each answer that only one group member has and a score of 5 is given for an answer if more than one person has it. For example: If the letter was P and two people had written Pig for an animal they would each score 5. If only one person had written Penguin they would score 10. The scores for each category are tallied and written in the score column (a maximum score of 60 can be reached for each round). Rounds are played until each person has had a go at saying ‘Go & Stop’ and saying the alphabet in order to select the letter for the round.
Safe Place Mindfulness

Allow your attention to focus only on your body. If you begin to notice your mind wandering, gently bring back your focus.

Take a deep breath through your stomach, hold for a few seconds, and exhale slowly. Again, as you breathe notice your stomach rising and your lungs filling with air. As you exhale, imagine the tension in your body being released and flowing out of your body. And again inhale.....and exhale. Feel your body already relaxing. Keep breathing slow, deep breaths and you continue.

Now begin to create a picture in your mind of a place where you feel safe and can completely relax.

Start with the physical layout and location of the place you are imagining..... Where is it? You might envision somewhere outdoors.... or indoors..... It may be a small place or large area..... Create an image of this place in your mind.

Now picture some more of the details about your peaceful place. What can you see? Focus now on the sights of your place - colours, shapes.... objects.... plants..... water,..... all of the beautiful things that make your place relaxing and enjoyable.

Who is in this place or are you alone? Are there animals with you?

Imagine even more detail about your surroundings. Focus now on what you can hear. Are there sounds of nature? Or music? People’s voices? Take the time to imagine all of the sounds of your peaceful place.

Now imagine any tastes and smells your place has to offer. Maybe you can smell familiar scents? Do you have your favourite foods and drinks available in your peaceful place?

Imagine the sensations of touch present in your peaceful place... including the temperature, any breeze that may be present, the surface you are on.... imagine the details of this calming place in your mind. Maybe you have a warm blanket, or a pet you can reach out and pat?

To add further detail to this relaxing scene, imagine yourself there. What would you be doing in this calming place? Perhaps you are just sitting, enjoying this place, relaxing. Maybe you imagine walking around.... or doing some other type of relaxing activity.

Picture yourself in this peaceful place. Imagine a feeling of calm..... of peace...... a place where you have no worries, cares, or concerns....

Enjoy your peaceful place for a few more minutes. Memorise everything around you....know that you can return to this place in your mind whenever you need a break. You can take a mental vacation to allow yourself to relax and regroup before returning to your regular roles.

When you are ready to return to your day, file away the imaginary place in your mind, waiting for you the next time you need it and now, slowly turn your attention back to the room.
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Allow your attention to focus only on your body. If you begin to notice your mind wandering, bring it back to the muscle you are working on.

Take a deep breath through your abdomen, hold for a few seconds, and exhale slowly. Again, as you breathe notice your stomach rising and your lungs filling with air. As you exhale, imagine the tension in your body being released and flowing out of your body. And again inhale.....and exhale. Feel your body already relaxing. As you go through each step, remember to keep breathing.

Now begin by tightening the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as you can. Hold for about five seconds. And abruptly release; feel that tension fall away. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now smile widely, feeling your mouth and cheeks tense. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, appreciating the new feeling of softness in your face. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Next, tighten your eye muscles by squinting your eyelids tightly shut. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Gently pull your head back as if to look at the ceiling. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, feeling the tension melting away. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now feel the weight of your relaxed head and neck sink. Breathe in...and out.....in and out..... let go of all the stress......in...and out.

Now, tightly, but without straining, clench your fists and hold this position until I say stop. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now, flex your biceps. Feel that build-up of tension. You may even visualise that muscle tightening. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, enjoying that feeling of limpness. Breathe in...and out.

Now tighten your triceps by extending your arms out and locking your elbows. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now lift your shoulders up as if they could touch your ears. Hold for about 5 seconds, and quickly release, feeling their heaviness. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Tense your upper back by pulling your shoulders back trying to make your shoulder blades touch. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Tighten your chest by taking a deep breath in, hold for about 5 seconds, and exhale, blowing out all the tension.

Now tighten the muscles in your stomach by sucking in. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Gently arch your lower back. Hold for about 5 seconds, relax. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Feel the limpness in your upper body letting go of the tension and stress, hold for about 5 seconds, and relax.

Tighten your buttocks. Hold for about 5 seconds.....release, imagine your hips falling loose. Pause for about 10 seconds.
Tighten your thighs by pressing your knees together, as if you were holding a penny between them. Hold for about 5 seconds...and release. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now flex your feet, pulling your toes towards you and feeling the tension in your calves. Hold for about 5 seconds, and relax, feel the weight of your legs sinking down. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Curl your toes under tensing your feet. Hold for about 5 seconds, release. Pause for about 10 seconds.

Now imagine a wave of relaxation slowly spreading through your body beginning at your head and going all the way down to your feet.

Feel the weight of your relaxed body.

Breathe in...and out....in...out....in...out.
Making Pizza dough

You will need

• 1 teaspoon dried yeast*
• ¼ teaspoon caster sugar
• ¾ cup lukewarm water
• 1½ cups plain flour
• ½ teaspoon fine salt

What you need to do

1. Combine the yeast, sugar and water in a bowl.
2. Set aside in a warm place for 10 minutes or until bubbles appear.
3. Place the flour and salt in a bowl and make a well in the centre.
4. Add the yeast mixture and stir until it comes together.
5. Place on a lightly floured surface and knead until the dough becomes elastic.
6. Cover with a clean tea towel and set aside in a warm place for 20–30 minutes or until the dough has doubled in size.*

* Out-of-date yeast may be inactive, so check the expiry date before using.

** The optimum temperature for the dough to rise is 27°C.


**Urge Surfing with Chocolate**

1. Imagine that your hand is a plate; it can only do what plates can do. (Co-facilitator hands out chocolates.)
2. Observe your chocolate. Notice any sensations or changes that happen in your body. Notice any thoughts that you have about the chocolate, let them come and go. Notice any urges you have about the chocolate.
3. Remember that urges pass by themselves.
4. Notice the sensations. What can you see, hear, smell, feel, what taste is in your mouth? Notice how your tongue feels, your stomach, your nose. Notice your urges to move the chocolate, swap hands, smell it, and taste it.
5. Imagine that the urges are like ocean waves that arrive, crest and subside. They are small when they start, will grow in size, and then will break up and dissipate.
6. Watch your breath, don’t alter it, and just let the breath breathe itself.
7. Notice your thoughts about the urges.
8. Don’t judge them, feed them or fight them, just observe them.
9. Be curious about what occurs and notice changes over time – Is it getting stronger, or smaller, is the urge in a particular part of your body what happens when you breathe through it?... When we do this we notice the urges change, crest and subside and they become more manageable.
10. When you find your mind turning to thoughts like, “I just want to eat it, I don’t want to do this, this is silly”, acknowledge the thoughts, then bring your attention back to the physical sensation of the urge.
11. Bring your plate up to your mouth, inhale deeply and smell the chocolate. How does the urge change? What sensations happen in your body?
12. Now imagine your tongue is the plate. IT CAN ONLY DO WHAT PLATES DO. Place the chocolate in your mouth. Notice the urges: to move the chocolate, to suck it, to bite it.
13. Bite the chocolate, BUT ONLY ONCE. Now notice what changes.
14. Now you can eat the chocolate.
Throwing and Catching Sounds
The group sits in a circle. One person begins by making a sound such as ‘buzz’ using a hand motion they then ‘throw’ the sound to another member of the group. That member ‘catches’ the sound with their hands and repeats it. They then make a new sound and throw it to another group member. You can keep this going and add some time pressure by making the rule that you can only hold onto a sound for 3 seconds, or you can add actions as well.

Origami
The group completes an origami task. Origami templates can be printed from Microsoft Word, or directions can be found on YouTube etc.

Paper Planes
Group members create a paper plane (templates also available from Microsoft Word). This exercise can also include having a several rounds of paper plane races, with a focus on participation and adopting a non-judgemental stance. Differences in designs can be discussed and how observations can help inform different approaches.

Board Games
Play a short board game.

Celebrity Heads
Celebrity heads involves two or three members of the group volunteering. The volunteers sit with their backs to the whiteboard. The names of well-known celebrities are written on the board above the volunteers. The volunteers then get to ask Yes or No questions in an attempt to guess the celebrity they are. If the volunteer gets a Yes answer to their question they get to ask another one. If they get a No answer the next volunteer then has their turn to ask.

First Letter last Letter
The group sits in a circle. One person begins by saying a word. The next person has to say a work that starts with the last letter of the previous word. (Sample sequence: ‘pineapple’ – ‘easy’ – ‘yellow’ – ‘wheel’, etc). A practice round is always helpful and once the group has a feel for it introduce a time limit for thinking up a word, perhaps 5 seconds. Exceeding the time limit knocks a group member out of the round. The round then continues until there is one person left. To increase the difficulty, rules such as not repeating the same word or categories like animals, colours or food can be added. Focus should be on adopting a non-judgemental stance.

What’s Different about Me?
Group members pair off and mindfully observe each other. They then turn their backs and change three things (e.g., glasses, watch, hair) and turn back around to face each other. Can they notice the changes?
**Snap, Crackle, Pop**

The group sits in a circle. Starting with one person saying ‘Snap’ the sequence of ‘Snap, Crackle and Pop’ is passed around the group via hand gestures that are assigned to each of the three words. For example:

Snap = Crossing your chest with your left or right arm and pointing to the person next to you;
Crackle = Raising your right or left arm above you head a point to the person next to you, and
Pop = Pointing to anyone in the circle.

The idea is to maintain a reasonably fast pace. Anyone who gets the word sequence wrong or ‘mis-gestures’ removes themselves from the circle and becomes a ‘distractor’ by distracting their peers (verbally, no physical contact). The round continues until there are only two people remaining.

**Music Observation**

Facilitators play a piece of music. Group members are asked to listen quietly, to observe and describe nonjudgmentally their thoughts, emotions, physiological changes, urges etc. The facilitator plays segments of a few very different pieces of music and has group members observe the changes of music and their corresponding internal reactions. If several pieces of music are going to be used it may be helpful to ask the group members to write down one or two words for each piece of music to refer back to during discussion afterwards.

**Mindful Listening**

Group members are asked to pair off. One is asked to talk about a topic that is important to them. The listener is instructed to act distracted and bored. Facilitators then lead a discussion about what is was like to talk to someone who was not being mindful and what the listeners may have missed out on. The pairs then practice again with the listeners being mindful.

**Grounding in the Moment**

Group members focus on using their 5 senses to ground themselves in the moment, thinking only of the present, and pushing their feet into the ground.

**5 breaths in 1 minute**

Group members focus on taking 5 breaths in 1 minute, being careful to keep a calm rhythm. Repeat for 5 minutes.

**Game of 5s**

Ask group members to name 5 things they can hear, see, taste, touch, or smell that start with a specific letter, or a specific colour, etc. The answers can be either called out or written down.
Mindful Talking

Group members break into pairs and take turns trying to talk for one minute, without saying ‘ummm’ or ‘errrm’ (or any similar phrase/word, e.g. saying ‘like’ or swearing, etc.). Partners should observe and stop the attempt if they hear these words.

Passing Whispers

The facilitator starts by whispering a phrase to the group member on their left. The group member repeats the phrase to the person on their left and so on and so forth until the final person in the circle says the phrase out loud. Any changes are discussed.

Optical Illusions

A series of optical illusions should be shown to group members (you can Google optical illusions or gestalt pictures if you do not have an optical illusions book). Group members should focus on being flexible with their thoughts. This mindfulness activity can link directly to the steps for finding the middle ground.

Word Games and Puzzles

Print crosswords, find-a-word, Sudoku, connect the dots, mazes, etc., for group members to mindfully complete.

Colouring In

Provide group members with coloured pencils and colouring in stencils for mindful colouring in.

Writing Things Down

Ask group members to write about a topic for 5 minutes. Topics could be favourite song lyrics, favourite food, favourite day, etc.

Duck, Duck Goose

A group member starts as the ‘goose’. They move around the circle of group members and facilitators tapping them on the head saying ‘duck’ until they change it to ‘goose’! The person who is tapped and told ‘goose’ must chase them around the circle, and the original ‘goose’ must try to rush back to take the empty seat.

Heads Down, Thumbs Up

Two or three group members are ‘in’. The other group members must sit with their eyes closed with the ‘thumbs up’ signal held in front of them. The group members who are ‘in’ need to select one group member and silently tap their thumb. Those who have been tapped then try to guess who did it.

Musical Chairs

The facilitator plays music whilst group members walk around a circle of chairs. There is always one less chair than group members, and when the music stops, the group members need to try to sit in a chair before it is taken. The group member with no chair at the end of each round is eliminated.
Validate Others
Group members write down a worry thought they are happy to share with the group. All group members place their worry thought in a hat, and then take turns drawing a worry out of the hat, and read it out aloud, practicing validating the other person’s worry.

Remembering Others
Ask group members to break into pairs and close their eyes. They then need to try to describe how the other person looks, e.g., hair and eye colour, clothes worn that day, etc., without using labels.

Long Word Short Word
Give group members a long word, e.g., ‘validation’ or ‘dialectical’, and ask group members to re-arrange letters to create as many shorter words as they can.

Letter to Self
Ask group members to write a letter to themself; to be read in 1 week, 1 month, etc. The letter should describe how they feel now, what is important to them, etc., should avoid labels and cheerlead.

Short Video Clip Pop Quiz
Show group members a short video clip and inform them that there will be a quiz at the end, e.g., “What colour shirt was the reporter wearing?” etc.

Short Story Pop Quiz
Read group members a short story or poem and inform them that there will be a quiz at the end, e.g., “What colour was the fish?”

Charades
Have group members act out famous people, songs, movies, books, TV shows, etc., without speaking. Other group members need to guess what they are acting out.

New Languages
Show a short instructive video clip instructing group members to learn key phrases from another language and then have them practice in pairs. Alternatively, use English to other language dictionaries and have group members try to work out pronunciation.

Play Dough or Clay Sculptures
Direct group members to create a sculpture of their current emotions and thoughts.

Mindfully Describing Nature
Have group members go outside and collect a piece of nature, e.g., a pebble, stick, etc. Ask them to then focus on mindfully describing characteristics of the object to themselves.
Making Goop
Group members can make ‘goop’ by mixing 1 cup of corn flour and 1/3 cup of water. Food colouring can also be added. Group members should then focus on the sensory experience of playing with it.

Mystery Box
Fill a box or bowl with rice and add in random items, e.g., key, yo yo, etc., and have group members put their hands into the rice and try to feel around and guess the object without pulling it out.

Mystery Sweets
Ask group members to close their eyes and give out different flavoured lollies. Group members need to guess the flavour.

Taboo
Group members must try to describe a word without using key words associated with the word.

Guess the Drawing
Group members must draw a representation of a word or saying, song title, person, book, movie, etc., on the board for others to guess.
6. Appendix 2: Additional Handouts and Resources

**Blank Diary Card**

Encourage group members to record skill use with a new Diary Card each week. See over page for blank Diary Card template. Print and hand out each week.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wise mind</td>
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<td>Observe</td>
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<td>Describe</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Participate</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Nonjudgmental stance</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>One-mindfully: in-the-moment</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Effectiveness: focus on what works</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>ACCEPTS</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>IMPROVE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pros and Cons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Urge Surfing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Acceptance: Turning the mind, being willing</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Walking the middle ground</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>GIVE</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Model of emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>PLEASE</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Acting Opposite</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Building positive emotional experiences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Building mastery</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Valued living</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urge to...</th>
<th>Emotions</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use drugs</td>
<td>Smoke</td>
<td>Pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>on other</td>
<td>swear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>s</td>
<td>Lash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>out/react</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Used</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>0-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>0-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>0-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
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<td>0-5</td>
<td>0-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>0-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>0-5</td>
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<td>0-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>0-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**USED SKILLS**

0 = Not thought about or used
1 = Thought about, not used, didn’t want to
2 = Thought about, not used, wanted to
3 = Tried but couldn’t use them
4 = Tried, could use them but they didn’t help
5 = Tried, could use them, helped

Notes about my week:

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Name:                                          Date:
‘Pros and Cons’ Scenarios

Louise has been feeling depressed lately and she has let some important things in her life slide. She has spent the last 4 days in bed, because she couldn’t face the world and this has meant she has missed work and has not shown up to a friend’s birthday party. Before she was feeling depressed, Louise agreed to attend a family lunch and now she feels she just can’t face it. She’s thinking of not turning up...

Charlie has been looking for a job for 2 months, and has finally picked up some work at a local café. Charlie has wanted to work in the hospitality industry for years, and his new boss says that if he does well, the café will support him with a chef apprenticeship. It’s the morning of his first shift and Charlie is so nervous, that he starts to think if I’m this bad now, I might as well not show up! I’ll just stuff it up anyway...

Sophie hasn’t used drugs in 6 months. She’s at her friend’s 21st birthday party and there are lots of people using. Sophie is thinking she could celebrate her sobriety just this once...

Justin has just had a fight with his dad on the phone. The two usually get along well but since Justin has moved out with his new girlfriend things have been tense. His dad has just said to him, “it’s a bad idea; she’s going to make you relapse!” Justin feels like he is going to explode from anger. What he would really like to do is drive over to his dad’s place and tell him what he really thinks of him, to his face...
### Myths and Truths about Urges
Print and cut into strips for young people to place in piles of ‘true’ and ‘false’ for discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Truth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urges are excruciating, unbearable and unmanageable.</td>
<td>Urges compel and make you use or drink.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urges will just keep getting worse until you give in and use or drink.</td>
<td>If I block my cravings and urges they will go away and I won’t have to look at them again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I block my cravings and urges they will go away and I won’t have to look at them again.</td>
<td>Giving into urges or cravings does no harm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving into urges or cravings does no harm.</td>
<td>I should be able to abstain from alcohol and drugs through willpower and desire alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I should be able to abstain from alcohol and drugs through willpower and desire alone.</td>
<td>If I no longer desire or have urges to use alcohol and drugs while I am in treatment, I will no longer desire or have urges to use these substances when I leave treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I no longer desire or have urges to use alcohol and drugs while I am in treatment, I will no longer desire or have urges to use these substances when I leave treatment.</td>
<td>There is nothing ‘wrong’ with me if I experience cravings/urges- even if I have been clean for a long time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is nothing ‘wrong’ with me if I experience cravings/urges- even if I have been clean for a long time.</td>
<td>Cravings can be physical as well as psychological.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cravings can be physical as well as psychological.</td>
<td>Cravings or urges to use are a natural part of quitting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cravings or urges to use are a natural part of quitting.</td>
<td>I have to find a way to deal with my cravings in a way that works for me. This may not be the same for everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have to find a way to deal with my cravings in a way that works for me. This may not be the same for everyone.</td>
<td>Urges or cravings DO NOT have to lead to actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urges or cravings DO NOT have to lead to actions.</td>
<td>Cravings can be triggered by: people, places, things, feelings, situations or anything else that has been associated with using in the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cravings can be triggered by: people, places, things, feelings, situations or anything else that has been associated with using in the past.</td>
<td>Cravings and urges will pass by themselves.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Values Cards
Print and cut out these cards for values based activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful Activity</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serenity</td>
<td>Decisiveness</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Truthfulness</td>
<td>Privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>Giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Variety</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Interpersonal Effectiveness Scenarios
Cut into strips and have group members role play scenarios, using their interpersonal effectiveness skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’ve just had an argument with my friend and I said some things that I wish hadn’t. I’ve started to think: “I have ruined everything” “It’s all my fault” and “She will never speak to me again.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was talking to a friend about their problems and I didn’t know what to say or how to help them. I start to think, “I’m such a bad friend” and “A good friend would know what to say.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve relapsed and mum and dad are really disappointed. Dad says to me, “I thought you were over this!” I start to think, “I’m a failure, I’ve let them down” and “He’s right, I should be better by now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m at home looking at my phone bill. There are a lot of calls made by my partner and I don’t recognize the number. I start to think, “My partner is cheating on me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m at a family gathering and my Aunt asks how work has been going but I am currently unemployed. I start to think, “She knows that I’m not working and is trying to make me feel bad. They think I’m a bludger.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mum asks me why I’ve been out late. She won’t say it but I think she is worried I’ve been out using when I haven’t. I start to think, “This isn’t fair” and “She should trust me!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m in individual therapy and the therapist yawns repeatedly in the session. I start to think “I’m boring her; she must not really be interested in what I have to say.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m at party and a friend offers me drugs. I start to think, “Why would they do this? They’re trying to set me up!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friend asks for money. I think “Oh no, I don’t have anything to give!” and I feel guilty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Myths about Emotions**

Print and cut into strips for young people to place in piles of ‘true’ and ‘false’ for discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a right way to feel in every situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letting others know that I am feeling bad is a weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative feelings are bad and destructive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being emotional means being out of control/irrational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions can just happen for no reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some emotions are really stupid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All painful emotions are the result of a bad attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If others don’t approve of my feelings, I obviously shouldn’t feel that way/my feelings must be invalid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people are the best judge of how I should feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people are the best judge of how I do feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painful emotions are not important and should be ignored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Dialectics

**COMMON DIALECTICAL THOUGHTS THAT AFFECT HOW YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT FROM RELATIONSHIPS**

**What is the middle ground?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have to put my needs first</th>
<th>I have to put others’ needs first</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am right, they are wrong</td>
<td>I am wrong, they are right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to be different</td>
<td>I want to fit in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love them, they are perfect</td>
<td>I hate them, they are useless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am ok just the way I am</td>
<td>Nothing is ok about me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I must be in control all the time</td>
<td>I don’t have control over anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel overwhelmed</td>
<td>I feel numb or empty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t survive without this person</td>
<td>I don’t need this person for anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I should be able to do what I want</td>
<td>Others should tell me what to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person is completely trustworthy</td>
<td>This person cannot be trusted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I deserve whatever I want/need</td>
<td>I don’t deserve anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs are ruining my life</td>
<td>It’s not that bad when I use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMON DIALECTIAL BEHAVIOURS THAT AFFECT HOW YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT FROM RELATIONSHIPS

Where do you sit on the line?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Only doing things I should do</th>
<th>Only doing things I want to do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being passive</td>
<td>Being aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being affectionate</td>
<td>Being distant and cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing everything</td>
<td>Sharing nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always seeking support</td>
<td>Never seeking support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting immediately</td>
<td>Not acting at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being too trusting</td>
<td>Not trusting anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinging onto someone</td>
<td>Withdrawing or pulling away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being demanding</td>
<td>Asking for nothing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emotions Handout

ANGER

Things that lead to anger...

Interpretations that lead to anger...

Feels like...

Expressed by...

After effects are...
FEAR

Things that lead to anger...

Interpretations that lead to anger...

Feels like...

Expressed by...

After effects are...
JOY

Things that lead to anger...

Interpretations that lead to anger...

Feels like...

Expressed by...

After effects are...
LOVE

Things that lead to anger...

Interpretations that lead to anger...

Feels like...

Expressed by...

After effects are...
SHAME

Things that lead to anger...

Interpretations that lead to anger...

Feels like...

Expressed by...

After effects are...
SADNESS

Things that lead to anger...

Interpretations that lead to anger...

Feels like...

Expressed by...

After effects are...
**Prompting Event and Self-Talk Cards**

Cut out cards and mix and match to generate discussion of the model of emotions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompting Event Cards</th>
<th>Self-Talk Cards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car accident</td>
<td>“This is a fresh start.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failing a test</td>
<td>“My life is over!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relapse with substances</td>
<td>“It’s ok, if this happens again, I’ll know how to cope.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break up with a partner</td>
<td>“I’m sure I won’t even remember this in 10 years’ time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just had a job interview</td>
<td>“Everything happens for a reason.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing a craving</td>
<td>“It could be worse.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument at home</td>
<td>“I can’t believe it!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost share house accommodation</td>
<td>“What a wakeup call.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>“It’s not fair, this only happens to me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News from a doctor</td>
<td>“I should know what to do.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Model of emotions

- Prompting Event:
- Interpretation or self-talk:
- The experience of the Emotion:
- Action Urges:
- Expressing and Acting upon the Emotion:
- The After-Effects of the Emotion:
- Interpretation or Self-talk:
- ...... continued.
**Acting Opposite Scenarios**

Cut into strips and hand out to pairs for re-enactment using opposite action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You have had a really exciting day but when you get home your partner doesn’t ask you about it. You really want to tell them about it, and the longer time goes on without them showing interest, you start to feel angry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You feel obsessed with your friend’s partner, always checking their Facebook and thinking about them while at work. You think you are in love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You feel obsessed with your friend’s partner, always checking their Facebook and thinking about them while at work. You think you are in love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You had to say ‘no’ to lending a friend money because you didn’t have it, and you were also concerned about them relapsing. You find yourself over-apologising and feeling guilty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can’t stop thinking about how you introduced your friend to substance use. Every time you do you start to feel guilty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You often think you know the answer to your TAFE teacher’s questions but you are afraid to put up your hand and say something in front of the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone else has the newest trends and you and your family can’t afford to keep up. You feel ashamed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are worried about your health but you haven’t been to a doctor in a long time, and you felt uncomfortable about your last visit. You feel nervous just thinking about making an appointment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ve had really bad news and you just want to stay home, drink and smoke cones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ve had an argument at work and feel angry about your boss’ reaction. You are tempted to go home and have a few drinks to unwind.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fantasy Island
Mission Australia helps people regain their independence - by standing together with Australians in need, until they can stand for themselves.

Contact us
For further information please contact
Triple Care Farm on:

02 4860 7400
missionaustralia.com.au
@MissionAust
facebook.com/MissionAust