

Arts-Based Approaches to Advancing Youth Mental Health & Wellbeing

Part 1: Arts-Based Approaches Informed by Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

#ArtsBasedMentalHealth
#YouthMentalHealth
#YouthWellbeing
#YouthREX



YOUTHREX
Research &
Evaluation eXchange



Welcome



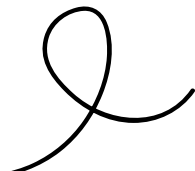

RECOGNIZING THE LAND & THE PEOPLE

Source: native-land.ca



RECOGNIZING THE LAND & THE PEOPLE

YouthREX's provincial office is located at York University. Both YouthREX and York University recognize that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. We acknowledge our presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.



ABOUT YOUTHREX

OUR VISION

An Ontario where shared knowledge is transformed into positive impact for all youth.

OUR MISSION

To make research evidence and evaluation accessible and relevant to Ontario's youth sector through knowledge exchange, capacity building, and evaluation leadership.

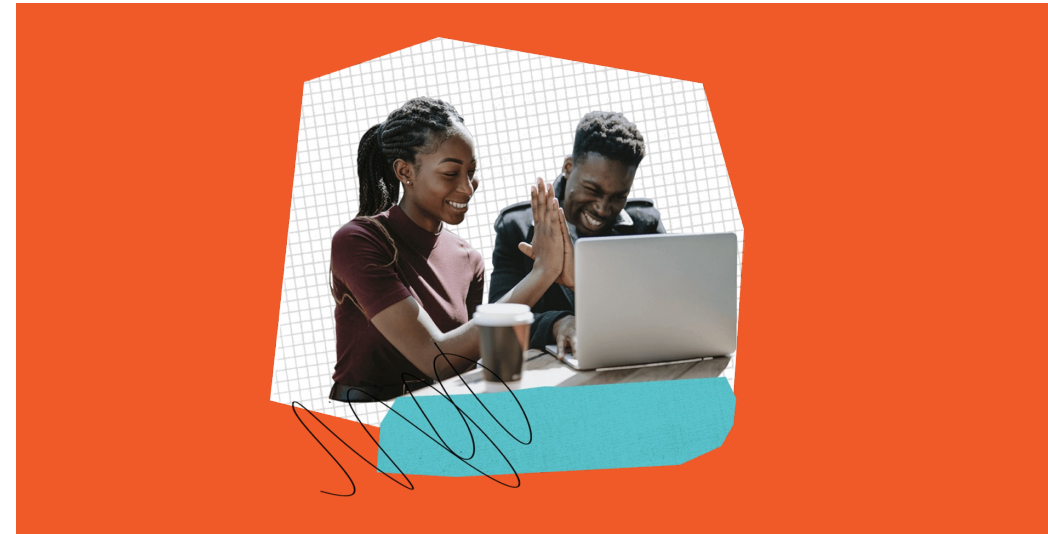


PROGRAM OBJECTIVES



Knowledge Exchange

We create and curate evidence-based resources to support youth work practice, and to amplify the voices and experiences of young people in Ontario.



Learn by YouthREX

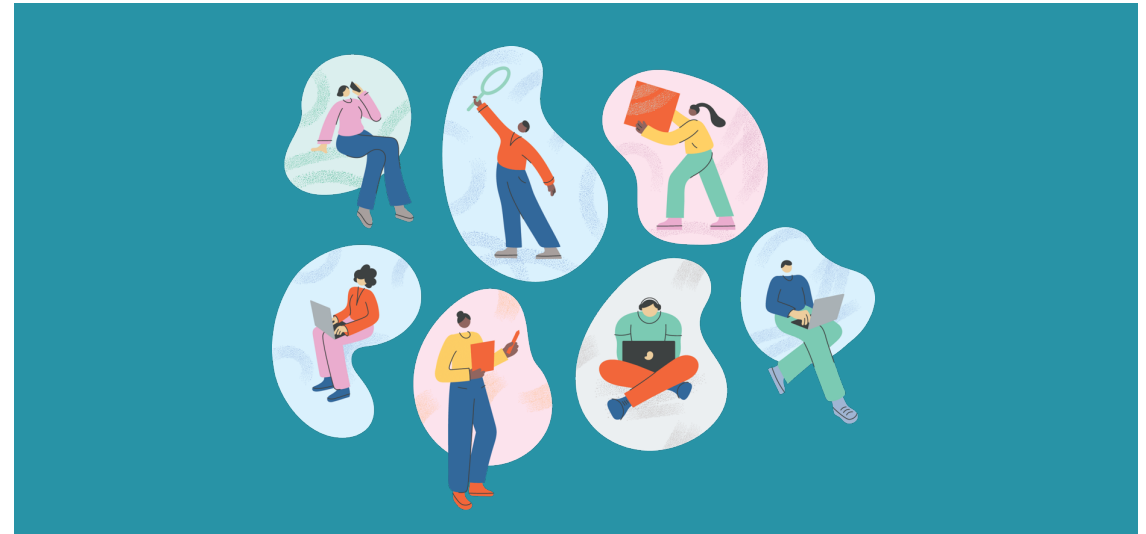
We offer professional development opportunities for youth workers to learn, connect, and share – both online and offline.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES



Youth Program Supports

We work with youth programs to support the design, development, and evaluation of their work with young people.



Community-Engaged Research

We conduct Community-Engaged Research about youth and youth workers in Ontario. Our first project – the Ontario Youth Sector Compass – was completed in November 2021.



This webinar looks at four core facets of DBT-informed creative arts interventions, including:

- *Metaphor use*
- *Mindfulness skills*
- *Distress tolerance techniques*
- *Dialectics in Action*

The webinar provides an overview of these DBT-informed art activities and explores ways you can use some of this model's tools to support the mental health of young people you work with.



Overview

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DBT Basics

Understanding Emotion Regulation & Supersensors

DBT & Art Therapy

Mindfulness

Mindfulness core skills

Mindfulness skills through art

Distress Tolerance

Engaging youth with distress tolerance

Distress tolerance skills

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Metaphor use in DBT

Examples

Dialectics in Action

Embracing dialectics in everyday art activities

Questions & Answers

Wrap-Up



YOUTHREX
Research &
Evaluation eXchange

Dr. Carmen Lalonde

Psy.D., C.Psych



Carmen Lalonde earned her doctorate in Child Clinical and School Psychology, specializing in neuropsychological assessment, from Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology at Yeshiva University in New York. She is registered as a psychologist in New York and Ontario. She completed her pre-doctoral internship at Mount Sinai St. Luke's Hospital in New York, where she received extensive training in Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, co-occurring substance use and psychiatric disorders, and complex trauma treating adolescents and children, adults, and families.

Carmen is currently a trainer of clinicians, supervisor and the program leader for Psychological Assessment at Broadview Psychology, and has extensive experience in providing comprehensive psychological and neuropsychological assessments for individuals of all ages experiencing complex difficulties in the areas of learning, attention, behaviour, social-emotional functioning, autism, and trauma.

A proponent of third-wave therapies, Carmen works primarily within a DBT framework and believes strongly in using a relational and behavioural approach that is client-focused and embedded in culturally affirming care to deliver evidence-based interventions. Carmen is intensively trained in implementing DBT-C, DBT-A, Standard DBT for Adults, DBT for couples and families, and DBT-PE and DBT for eating disorders.

Carmen is compassionate and warm and believes strongly in working collaboratively with clients to increase their resilience and skills to build meaningful lives. Carmen is also deeply committed to advocacy and providing affirming care to the LGBTQ community.

Adanna Anucha

MSW, RSW



Adanna is a Registered Social Worker with a Master of Social Work from the University of Toronto. During her graduate work she focused on adolescents and adults with complex mental health needs and substance-related difficulties. She completed her practicum at Toronto Western Hospital, where she was involved in various initiatives to support the wellbeing of expectant and new mothers experiencing post-partum depression.

Adanna has worked in a variety of settings, including the post-secondary sector and community mental health, and is now a clinician at Broadview Psychology, where she provides individual, group, and parent therapeutic services to adolescents, adults, and families.

Adanna's therapeutic practice is grounded in a trauma-informed and strength-based approach with an emphasis on the mind, body, environment connection. Her approach to therapy pays particular consideration to how early life experiences, incidents of trauma, and life stressors (including systemic inequities) impact an individual's mood, interpersonal relationships, and general daily functioning.

Adanna is trained in delivering standard DBT, DBT-PE, EFT & Narrative Therapy.

About Broadview Psychology

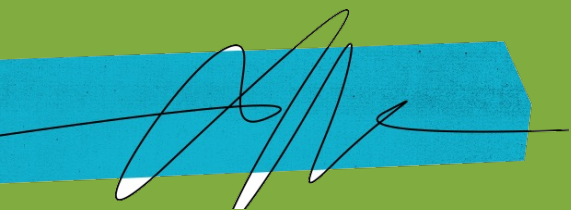
- **Services**
 - Dialectical Behavioural Therapy
 - Individual & Group Therapy
 - Family & Couple Therapy
- **Commitment to:**
 - Community
 - Diversity & Equity
 - Collaboration



Arts-Based Approaches to Advancing Youth Mental Health & Wellbeing



DBT Basics



DBT Research Support – Adolescents

Studies have been conducted with outpatient, residential, and incarcerated adolescents who exhibit:

- Self harm
- Suicidal ideation / behaviour
- BPD
- Disordered eating
- Aggressive behaviour
- Depression
- PTSD
- Oppositionality





DBT Research Support - Adolescents

Studies have found the following:

- **Reductions** in self harm, self-harm urges, suicide attempts, suicidal ideation, medication use, BPD symptoms, depressive symptoms, manic symptoms, emotional dysregulation, aggression, rule breaking, internalizing behaviour, binge/purge episodes, ED cognitive symptoms
- **Increases** in positive behaviours, psychosocial functioning, parent self efficacy, coping
- **Impacts on the brain:**
 - Reduction in amygdala hyperactivity
 - Increased frontal cortical connections
 - Decreased impulsivity dorsolateral prefrontal cortex
- *Adopt = Adapt*

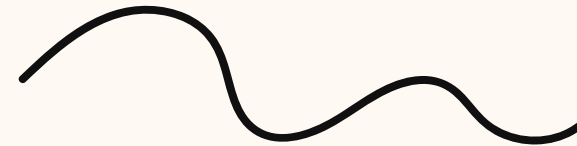
DBT – Suitability to Cultural Adaptation

DBT has core components that make the intervention highly suitable for cultural adaptation while still maintaining fidelity to the treatment:

- Dialectical principles draw from Eastern philosophy.
- Built-in pre-treatment phase where the assessment of the client's cultural context, values & beliefs are explored.
- Strong emphasis on the influence of invalidating environments and social and historical invalidation contributes to emotion dysregulation.
- Integrates components from Zen Buddhism and similar contemplative practices consistent with collectivist cultures.

What is DBT, really?

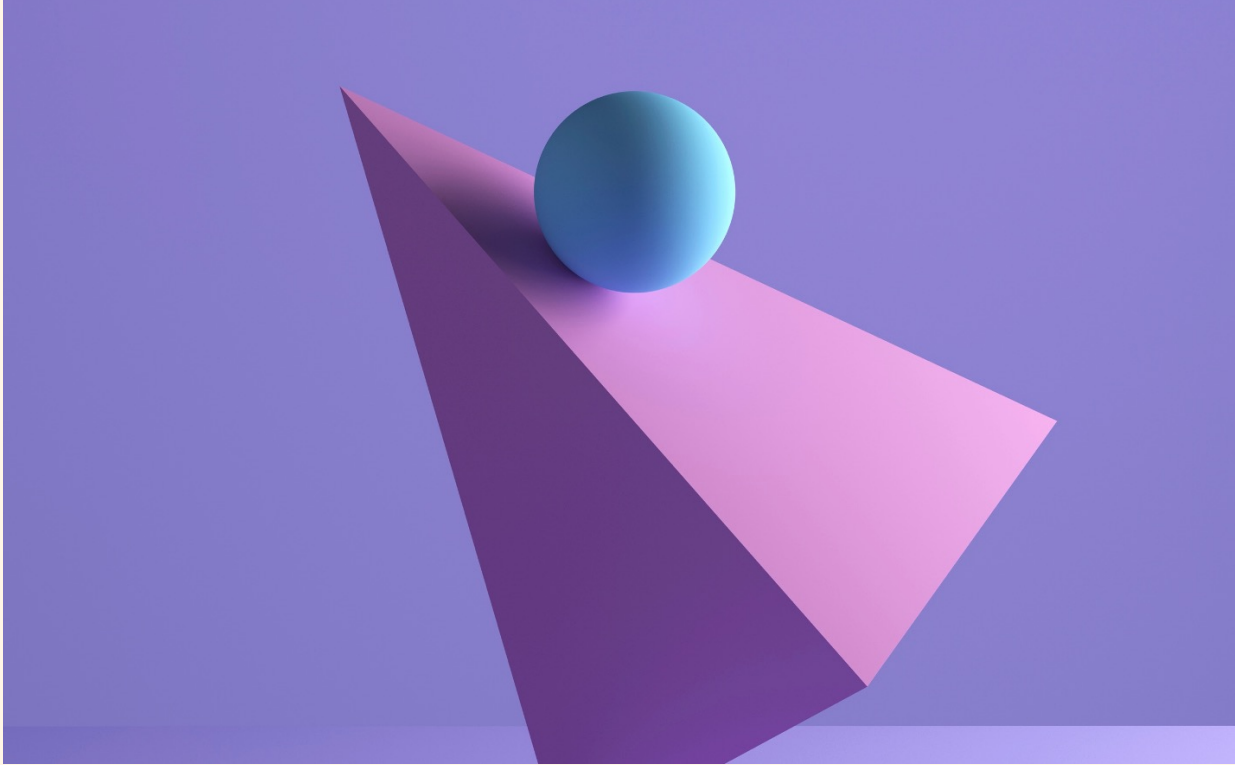
- Transdiagnostic principle-based treatment for clients who have difficulty regulating emotions and exhibit problems in multiple areas.
- Goal is to create a life worth living.
- A treatment which combines:
 - Behaviour Therapy
 - Exposure Therapy
 - Mindfulness/Acceptance Based Interventions
 - Dialectical Philosophy and Strategies
 - Skills Training and Coaching
 - Cognitive Therapy



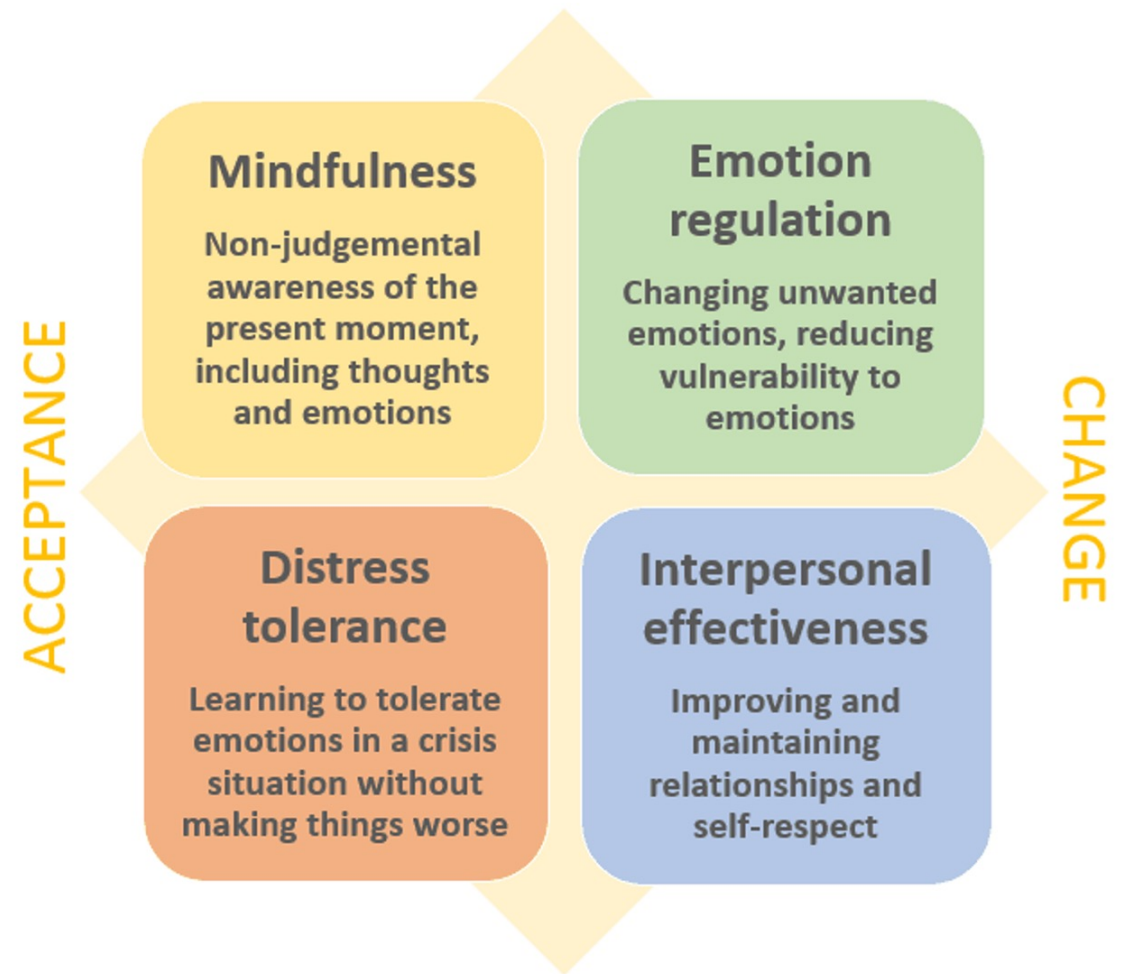
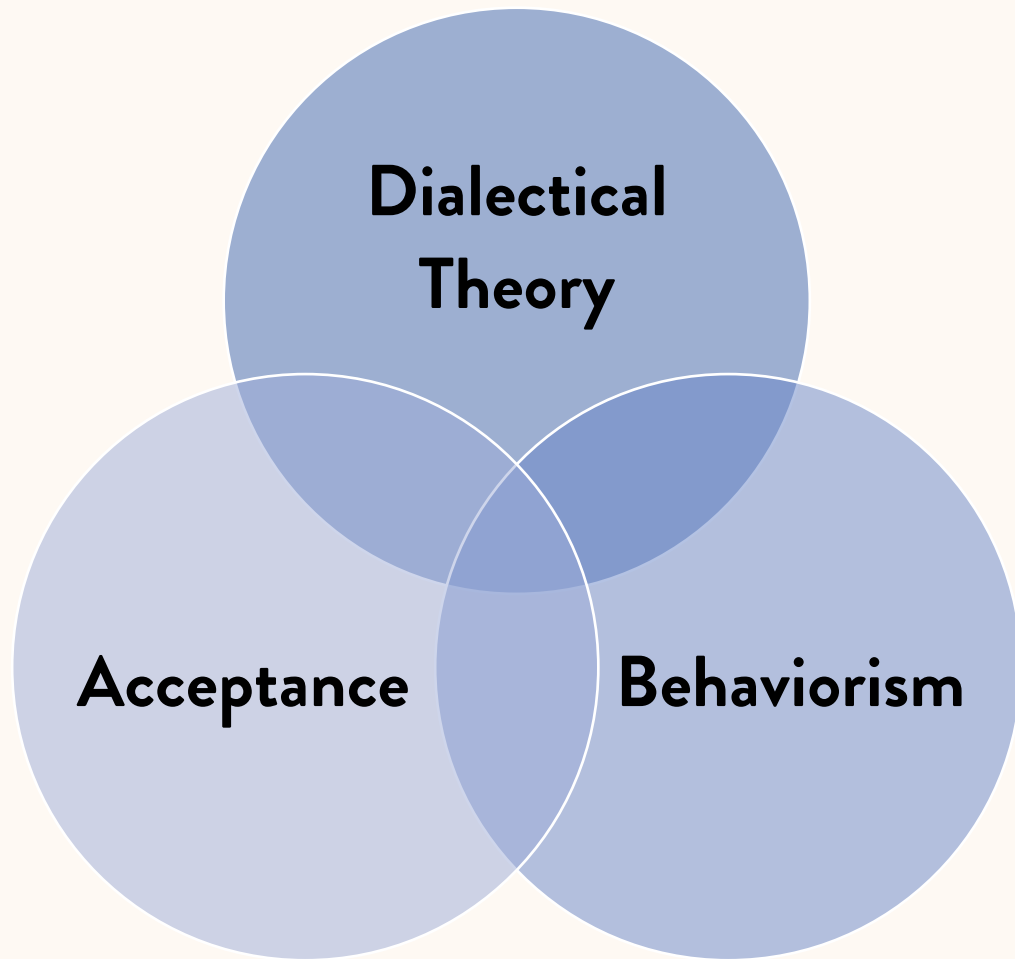
DBT assumptions about clients



1. Clients are doing the best they can.
2. Clients want to improve.
3. Clients need to do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change.
4. Clients may not have caused all of their own problems, but they have to solve them anyway.
5. The lives of our clients can be unbearable.
6. Clients must learn new behaviors in all relevant contexts.
7. Clients cannot fail in therapy.
8. All behaviors (actions, thoughts, emotions) are caused.
9. Figuring out and changing the causes of behavior work better than judging and blaming.



Chronic Emotion
Dysregulation
=
Needs a Treatment
that is Dialectical



DBT is Multi-Modal and Transdiagnostic

DBT Includes

- Mindfulness Skills
- Emotion Regulation Skills
- Distress Tolerance Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Dialectical and Middle Path Skills

Emotion Regulation



The ability to regulate, effectively, one's emotional experience



Encompasses understanding, experiencing, expressing, and modulating emotions



Involves various areas of the brain, and can be learned over time



Dyadic in the early years – closely linked to security of attachment relationship with primary caregivers



Can be easily disrupted via maladaptive learning/trauma



Learning can both impair and repair regulation capacity



Self regulation in human beings takes about 25 years to develop



Lots of opportunities for mistakes and corrections

Understanding Emotion Dysregulation

Under Regulation

- Emotions accompanied by impulsive behaviour
- Minimal to no control over emotions
- Intense reactions to many stimuli

Over Regulation

- Controlled, deliberate behaviour only
- Lack of emotional responding when appropriate
- Suppressing / hiding emotions

The Problem for Adolescents

Adolescence is naturally a time when the brain undergoes construction – the higher order part of the brain is intended to be developing more rapidly

Teens are relying more heavily on the self and peers for regulation

If they have not learned to effectively manage emotions, everything is intensified during this developmental period

There is still not full executive control, making treatment significantly harder

Why is emotion regulation so important in DBT?

DBT was developed to treat complex multi-problem clients

Multi-problem clients often have a core deficit in emotion regulation

DBT treats emotion dysregulation – rather than specific disorders

Understanding Our Clients



Youth with emotion dysregulation are supersensors and suffer from **double gravity** and high sensitivity, reactivity, and slow return to baseline.

Double gravity = Youth with high emotional sensitivity have to withstand the double impact of 1) *the stressor AND* 2) the *impact of extreme emotional reaction associated with the stressor*.

Therefore, the problem behaviors related to emotion dysregulation either *function to regulate emotions OR are the consequence of emotion dysregulation*.

WE MUST teach our clients ways of building strength (skills) to manage the double gravity.

Supersensors/ Sensitive People

Challenges

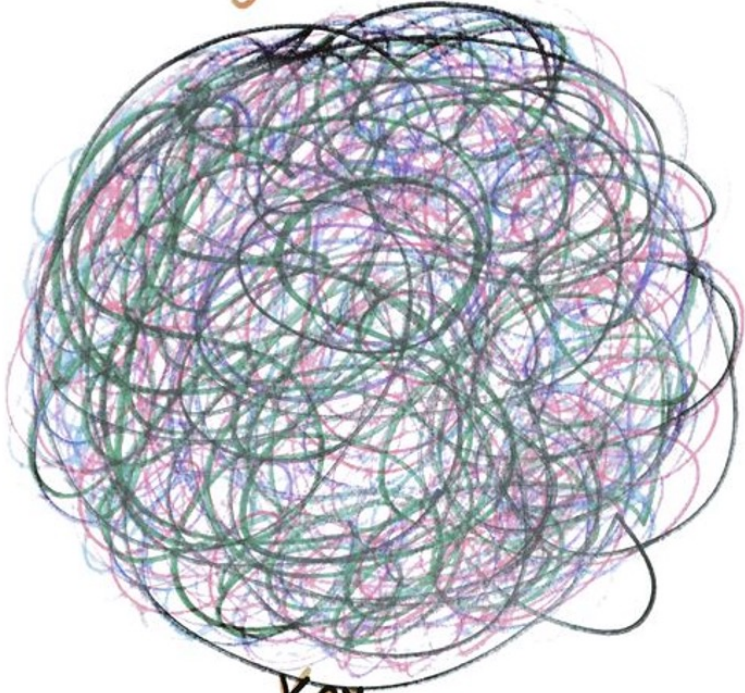
- Sensitive to environment
- High reactivity
- Slow return to baseline
- Bored easily
- Sensory sensitivities
- *What else?*

Advantages

- Attuned to the environment and people
- Creative
- Curious
- High level of empathy
- See patterns
- *What else?*

**Therefore, art can be an incredible
way to reach youth, help youth,
and give youth tools.**

My Tangled Ball of Grief



<u>Key</u>	
■ Sadness	■ Worry
■ Anger	■ Emptiness
■ Shock	■ Jealous
■ Guilt	■ Loneliness

Art Therapy

“...art therapy involves the use of visual artistic media within a clinical environment. Art therapists are professionals trained in both mental health and creative interventions who know ‘a great deal about the wide range of ways in which art can aid in understanding, as well as helping people to grow and change’” (Clark, 2017, p. 54).

Mindfulness





Mindfulness: What is it?

“Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us” ([mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org)).



Mindfulness

The basic tenet of Cognitive Therapy.

Differentiate thoughts, images, and emotions from facts.

While mindfulness is considered an acceptance-based skill, it is often a required step in effective behaviours focused on change.

Mindfulness skills are “core” to:

- Emotion Regulation
- Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Distress Tolerance

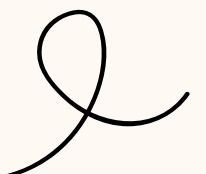
It is the AWARENESS piece in Behaviour Change.

Why is Mindfulness a Core Skill?



Mindfulness

- Slows reactivity
- Reduces risk of anxiety /depression
- Shortens duration of intense emotions
- Reduces stress and perception of being overwhelmed
- Decreases anxiety
- Decreases avoidance
- Decreased risk of depression relapse or reoccurrence
- Increased healing of psoriasis
- Improved functioning of the immune system in patients with HIV
- *Facilitates decentering – changing the relationships to thoughts*



**Mindfulness is a way
of living awake, with
eyes wide open.**



Mindfulness in DBT-A



**Three States
of Mind**



WHAT Skills



HOW Skills



Reasonable Mind/Logic Mind

- Cool
- Rational
- Task Focused
- When in reasonable mind, you are ruled by facts, logic, reason, and pragmatics.
- Values and feelings are not important.



**Reasonable
Mind**

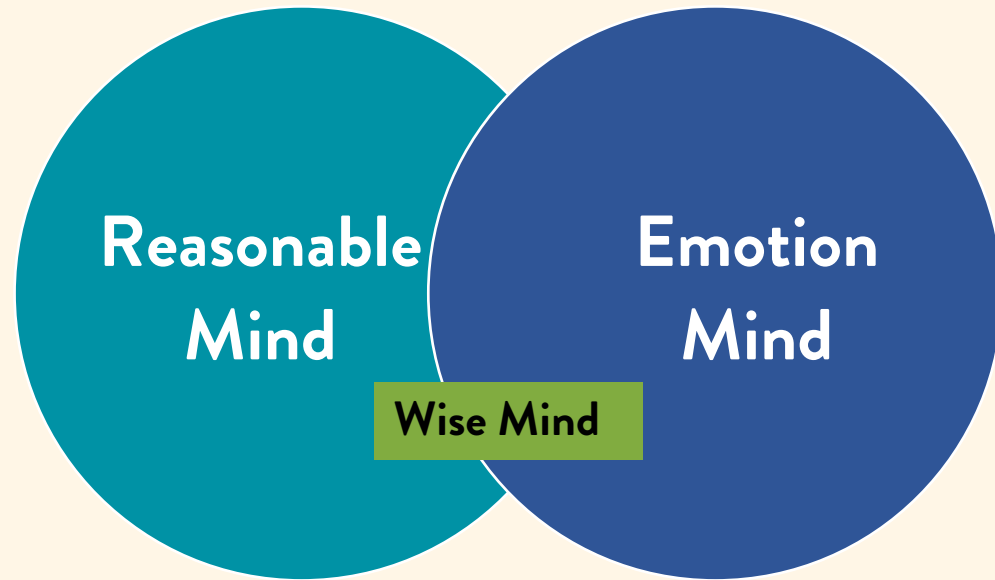
Emotion Mind

- Hot
- Mood Dependent
- Emotion-Focused
- When in emotion mind, you are ruled by your moods, feelings, and urges to do or say things.
- Facts and logic are not important.



**Emotion
Mind**

Wise Mind



Wise mind is:

The wisdom in each person.

Seeing the value of both reason and emotion.

Bringing left and right mind together.

The middle path.

We get to wise mind through mindfulness!

DBT is unique in that it presents mindfulness as a set of
“psychological and behavioral translations”
of those formal spiritual practices.



WHAT Skills

1. Observe

Through the five senses

2. Describe

*Only what you can
observe with your senses*

3. Participate

Fully and completely

HOW Skills

(how you practice, observe, describe, and participate!)

1. One-Mindful

One thing at a time

2. Non-Judgmental

*Notice evaluative judgments
and work to describe
using facts*

3. Do What

Works/Effectiveness

*In the moment, chose being
effective over being right*



Mindfulness Skills through Art





Visual Representation of the States of Mind

Goal: Help clients connect with what their **emotion mind**, **reasonable mind**, and **wise mind** look like.

- Through mixed media, have clients create what their three states of mind look like. Discuss and process and have them save in a place that they can access when needed (i.e., journal or phone).
- Have them create visual representations of their inner world (emotions, thoughts, urges) when they are in each state of mind. Discuss and process and have them save in a place that they can access when needed (i.e., journal or phone).
- Have the youth connect with and create compassion for the three states of mind and allow the visual representation to create deeper meaning and understanding for them.

Art as Observation Skills

Present a picture.

Ask the client to **observe** the picture for a few minutes.

Ask:

- What is coming up for you?
- What emotions do you observe?
- What thoughts do you observe?
- What sensations do you notice?

Allows for the observation of in-the-moment mindfulness.

Allows for increased “here and now experiencing”.

Allows for increased awareness of internal processes.

Exercise of mindfulness.



Art as Participate Skills

Again, anything can be done mindfully!

The **participate skills** are about dissolving the boundary between the person and the activity.

Art is about becoming one and expressing oneself through colour, the medium, and the movement of the art.

- Clay
- Dance
- Painting with hands
- Multimedia
- Nature with art

All of these art activities can facilitate the ability to fully participate; they also allow the sensation of being in the “flow” of being grounded and fully & deeply engaged.





Mindful Walking to Observe Street Art

- Mindfulness can be practiced while walking.
- Observe the street art.
- Observe nature as art.
- Observe to capture images to re-create at a later time!



Documenting Mindfulness Practice Visually



Visual Journals can help the client begin to track:

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Urges
- Actions

The **Diary Card** is a technique used with DBT to track thoughts, urges, emotions, and actions.

Designed to increase mindful awareness.

Considered a “reactive” technique; by engaging in tracking behaviours we want to change, we begin to change the behaviours.

The Diary Card can be visual – clinicians can outline how the client can track their thoughts, urges, actions, and emotions visually to bring and process in session.

ART as Mindfulness

Anything can be done mindfully!

- Art allows clients to:
 - **Observe** sensations at the moment.
 - **Observe** and **describe** the client's internal and external sensations and process.
 - **Observe** and **describe** the emotions that art evokes.
 - Practice the engagement of the **participate skill** and allow the boundary between the activity and the client.
- Practice **non-judgmental** observations of their own creations.
- Practice the **one-mindful** engagement: it helps to focus the mind on one thing at a time.
- If art helps the client, then they are practicing the **effective mindfulness** skill.
- Allows the client to practice noticing **emotion mind**, **rational mind**, and **wise mind**.

Help notice and point out how the client is engaging in the WHAT and the HOW skills.

Art inherently pulls for **wise mind**.

Art and feedback as a way of understanding emotions and thoughts, and increasing mindfulness of past events as a way of learning and creating acceptance and change.

DBT Skill

- Naming emotions, describing the urges, the thoughts, the actions, and the situation.
- This teaches:
 - Naming emotion skills – increases regulation.
 - Slowing down to be mindful of the situation – teaches checking the facts and challenging cognitive distortions.
 - Allows access to the **wise mind** to increase dialectical thinking.
 - Creates learning from past experiences.
 - Facilitates acceptance of past choices and events.

Translation to Art Therapy

- Have the client create a visual representation of the situation, the urges, the emotions, the thoughts, the actions, and the outcomes; allow the client to create with the medium that feels most representative of their emotions.
- Once the visual creation has been created, debrief and talk through the experience of creating the visual art, noticing what comes up in the moment (**mindfulness**).
- Talk about the content and what the client has created, and how it connects to the lived experiences.
- Process and then work to create a solution through verbal or artistic means.



A Note on Mindfulness

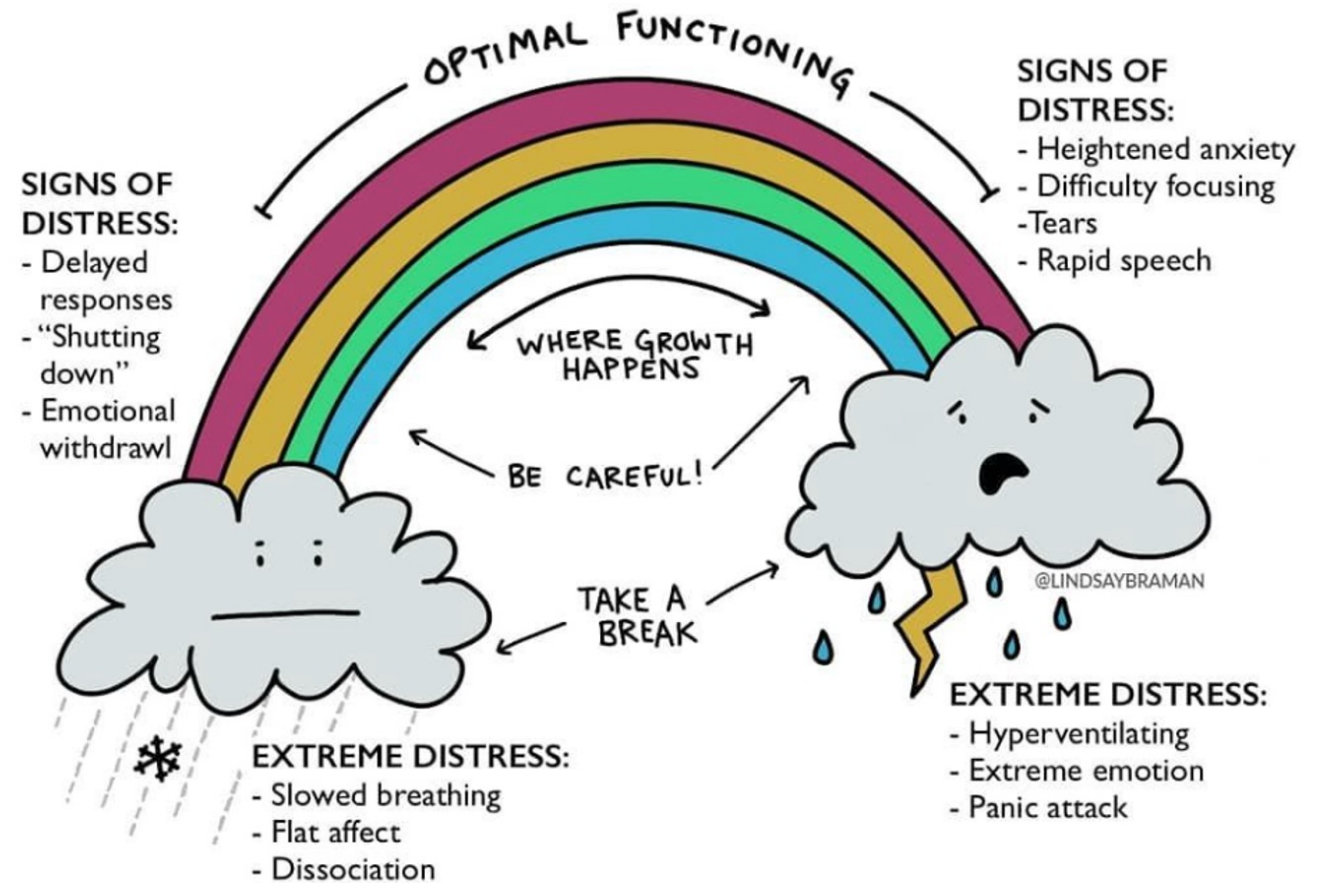
As we go through the other skills, you will notice that mindfulness is in **EVERYTHING.**

The beauty of art and skills, and change and growth, is that **the more we are aware** – participating fully and deeply, without judgment, and being effective and skillful – **the more connected to ourselves and the world we become.**

This creates space, a mindful space, to make choices rather than react to the world around us.

Distress Tolerance

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE (IN RAINBOW FORM!)



Distress Tolerance Skills

- Distress tolerance skills are used to help us cope and survive during a crisis, without making things worse.
- Distress tolerance skills help us tolerate short-term or long-term pain (physical or emotional).



Distress Tolerance: Crisis Survival Skills

CRISIS SURVIVAL SKILLS are needed:

When the client is in a situation that is:

- Highly stressful
- Short-term
- Creating intense pressure to resolve the crisis now

AND

- Acting on emotions and urges will make things worse
- Client cannot make things better right away
- Client must temporarily tolerate painful events and emotions

CRISIS SURVIVAL SKILLS are *not* for:

- Everyday use
- Solving all of life's problems
- Making life worth living

Heart of Distress Tolerance

Engaging in activities that help to distract or reduce distress so that we don't make the situation worse AND accepting that we are upset and distressed and maybe can't change everything about the current situation.
This is the heart and soul of distress tolerance.

This means that any form of art that helps to distract, reduce distress or support acceptance of the current situation can be considered an effective distress tolerance skill.



Engaging Adolescents with Distress Tolerance

- Connect the distress tolerance skills to their long-term life-worth-living goals.
- Practice in group and in individual sessions how the distress tolerance feels and remind adolescents of **the purpose of distress tolerance** – not to feel better, but **to survive the current crisis without making things worse**.
- When learning distress tolerance, **create crisis plans that are accessible** to adolescents, such as images on their phones, apps, special playlists, and reminders on their electronic devices.
- **Be playful and savvy** with the use of distress tolerance and remind adolescents that not all of these skills will work for them – that is why there are over 100 skills for them to choose the ones that work best! Once they select skills that they like, **practice, rehearse, practice, rehearse**, so that they **overlearn**.

WISE MIND A.C.C.E.P.T.S.

- **A** – Activities: any type of art can be a different activity.
- **C** – Comparisons: creating artistic reminders of how I am now – how I was before.
- **C** – Contributions: creating art for others as a form of contribution.
- **E** – Emotions: creating visual representations that elicit different emotions – creating music that elicits different emotions, and dancing to music.
- **P** – Pushing Away: creating a visual representation of them pushing distressing thoughts, target behaviours, and situations away from them that they can look at when distressed.
- **T** – Thoughts: drawing and colouring their thoughts changes the relationship to the thoughts.
- **S** – Sensations: clay, mixed media, art with hands and fingers, fully immersive art can be very grounding and regulating.



Self-Soothe

*when we need to soothe
our systems during
distressing events*



- Art as a way to soothe emotions and our bodies during distressing times.
- “Self-soothing is being comforting, nurturing, peacemaking, gentle, and mindfully kind to oneself.”
- **Self-soothe** is a distress tolerance skill that reduces vulnerability to **emotion mind**, soothes deprivation that can contribute to the emotion mind, and helps us tolerate pain when we are in distressing situations without making the situation worse.
- **Self-soothing is done through soothing the five senses**
 - Art is visual
 - Art is tactile
 - Art can have scents and soothing smells
 - Art as a form of music can be soothing to youth
- All of these methods can be used to help reduce distress!

Radical Acceptance

Radical Acceptance is one of the reality acceptance-based distress tolerance skills.

Five options for solving a problem:

- *Solve the problem.*
- *Change how you feel about the problem.*
- *Accept the problem.*
- *Stay miserable.*
- *Make things worse.*

Ways to Practice Radical Acceptance:

- Willingness
- Turning the mind
- Half smile
- Open posture/willing hands
- Mindful breathing
- Mindfulness of current thoughts

Willfulness

Refusing to tolerate a situation.

- giving in to hopelessness/giving up
- trying to change a situation that cannot be changed
- refusing to change something that must be changed
- “the terrible twos” (“no...no ...no...”)
- getting stuck in blame, shame, regret, or the past
- firmly insisting, “I can’t”
- focusing on all the reasons why something won’t work
- the opposite of “doing what works”



Willingness is...

- Allowing the world to be what it is.
- Being open to the situation.
- Participating fully in the present moment.
- Doing just what is needed – no more, no less.
- Being effective.
- Listening to your **wise mind** and deciding what to do.

Turning the Mind

- Noticing how you are not accepting what is before you in the current moment.
- Internally turn your mind and physically turn your head.
- You only have to accept this current moment.

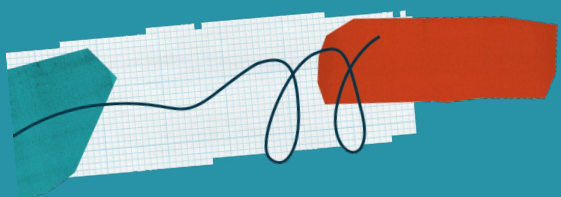


Reality Acceptance Practice through Art



- Goal: Continually practice accepting what life has given us – over and over again – turning the mind, becoming willing, engaging with open postures and half smiling, and radically accepting how things are in the present moment.
- First, teach your clients or group what **reality acceptance skills** are.
- Then provide your client or group with a task of creating a house or a picture and provide them with different media and objects to complete the task and make it difficult (each client gets different items).
- Guide the client in accepting the items they have, learning to become willing with the current situation; help them describe the emotions and thoughts that arise in them during the activity; and have them continually practice participating fully in the acceptance of the task without judgment.

Dialectics in Action






*Learning to identify extreme thinking,
reactions, behaviour, and interactions.*

*Learning to see other perspectives.
Learning to come to a middle path.*

*Learning to accept and live with the
apparent contradictions.*

Walking the Middle Path



Learning to identify extreme thinking, reactions, behaviour, interactions.

Learning to see other perspectives.

Learning to come to a middle path.

Learning to accept and live with the apparent contradictions.

Reasons for Being Dialectical

Improved relationships within the family.

Better ability to take each other's perspective.

Increased ability to validate.

Less tendency to become polarized or locked in a power struggle.

Greater ability to work collaboratively with your client.

Less likely to be reactive in extreme ways.

Less likely to move from one parenting extreme to the other.

Increased flexibility, adaptability, and resilience.

Being Unbalanced



Signs:

- Extreme or judgmental thinking
- Extreme language (never, all)
- Dismissing other perspectives or needs
- Using either/or thinking; using the word “but”
- Being willful or feeling stuck
- Being polarized with someone
- Engaging in a power struggle
- Being unable to validate
- Neglecting self care
- Feeling burnt out and/or resentful



Tips for Becoming More Dialectical

Be mindful of becoming unbalanced and stuck.

Use the word “and”.

Avoid the words “but,” “always,” “never” ...

Avoid extreme and judgmental language.

Watch out for extreme responses.

Be open to other perspectives/needs/ideas.

Listen and validate.

Practice willingness to be flexible and more balanced.

Pause before responding or making decisions.

Blank Sheets AND Artistic Creations

A blank sheet of paper can create a dialectical connection between nothingness AND everything.

Dialectics in Action through Art – learning to incorporate the **AND** into our life

- I am dissatisfied with what I have created **AND** I can accept what I have created and try again.
- I am building my skills through my art **AND** I am still learning and will make mistakes along the way.
- I have created a piece of art that I love **AND** others may not share this view.
- I have created a piece of art that represents me at this moment **AND** may not represent me in another moment.
- I love art today **AND** I may dislike it tomorrow; this is ok, as I am constantly changing.
- **The art I created before is different than the art I create now – I can see myself change and grow over time.**

Ways of Embracing Dialectics in Everyday Art Activities



Embracing change

- Have clients challenge themselves to try new media of art to engage in media or creations that challenge them and are different.

Change is transactional

- Have clients notice how colours mix and change as they use them to help them understand and see how change is transactional and relational.

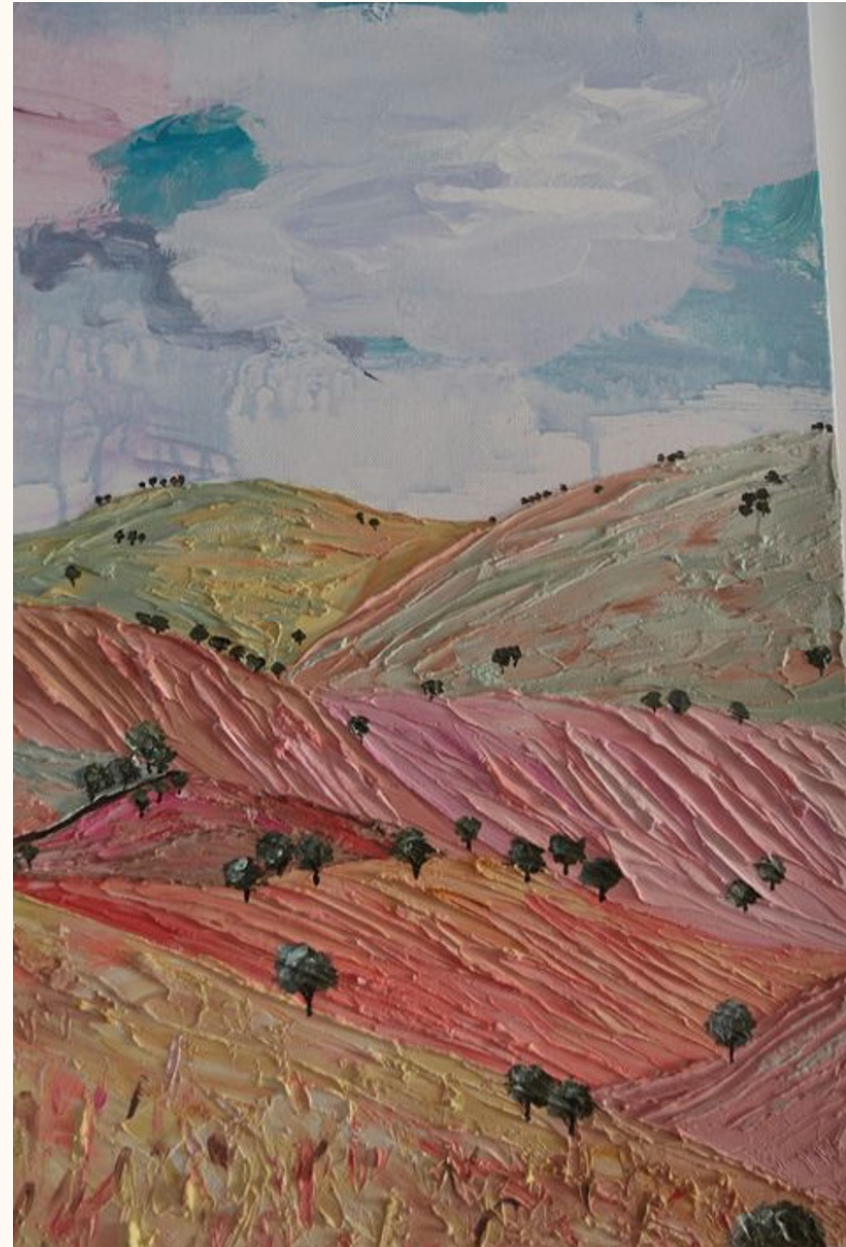
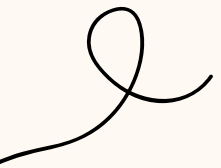
We are all connected

- Have clients in a group create an artistic piece of work together and, over time, notice how we all breathe the same air as we create together, that we all connect and create differently and similarly, and that how we create together changes how we create together.

Change is constant

- Have clients notice that each time they approach a new artistic task, a new representation, they create something different, that each time they engage with their artistic abilities they are building mastery (DBT skill) and that this change can be seen over time.

Metaphors





Metaphors & Metaphorical Story-telling

- Metaphors and story-telling can be an expressive, creative, and powerful form of communication.
- They are engaging and interactive; elicit search for meaning processes in the listener.
- In many cultures, metaphorical story-telling is used to communicate values, morals, standards, etc.

The Wolf You Feed

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said, “My son, the battle is between two ‘wolves’ inside us all. **One is evil.** It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. **The other is good.** It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.” The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: “Which wolf wins?” The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”

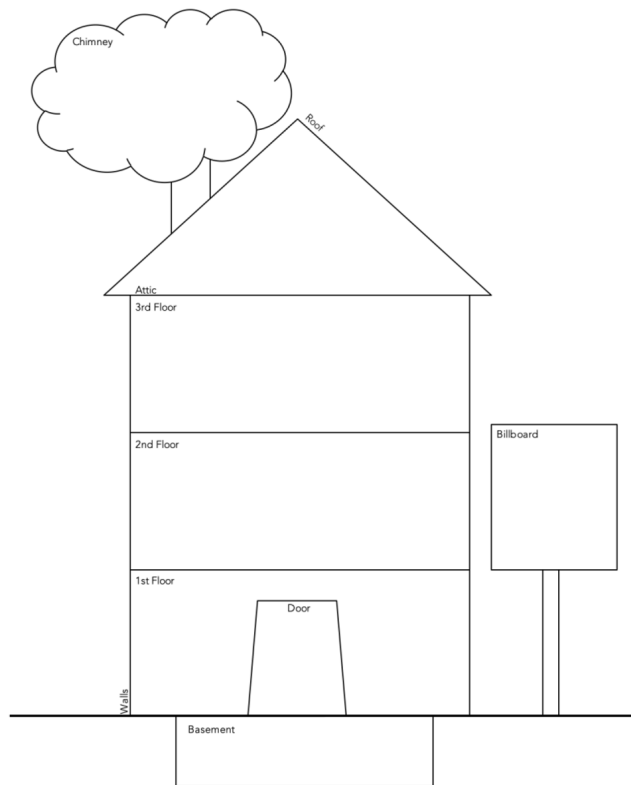
Metaphor Use in DBT

- In DBT, metaphors are used to teach dialectical thinking and help ideas be more memorable. Metaphors facilitate a dialectical worldview by comparing something the client understands with something that they do not.
- Helps clients gain a deeper understanding of their emotions, illustrates problematic behaviours and thought patterns, and makes room for new behaviours.
- Used as indirect suggestions to help effectively communicate a therapeutic message that can provide a pathway to facilitate a client resolving their problems.
- Allows for abstract concepts to be made more concrete by providing a rich verbal context that evokes thoughts, feelings, and behaviours similar to situations an individual is facing.
- A way to bypass resistance by creating emotional distance when talking about highly sensitive matters.

Metaphor Use in DBT – Examples

- “You not trying because you’re afraid of rejection is like turning off a movie because you’re afraid of how it’s gonna end. Yeah, you won’t have to deal with the fear, but you’re now gonna be left agonizing about what happened in the end.”
- “Repressing anger is like stuffing trash in a garbage can. Eventually, it’s going to spill over if you don’t take the trash out.”
- “Cravings are like waves; ride them out until the wave recedes.”
- “It’s like playing a game, and you’ve been dealt really sh*** cards. You still gotta play the game.”
- “It’s like going to the gym; you might not see instant results, but over time you begin to reap the benefits.”

Mindfulness Metaphor



A house is like your mind.

- The ground floor is where you perceive with your senses – where you are most grounded.
- The second floor is where you categorize: that is a chair, that is a cat (how we know what something is).
- The third floor is where we begin to categorize if something is “wanted,” “unwanted,” “safe,” “unsafe,” “good,” or “bad”. This is the evaluation floor.
- The fourth floor, the attic, is where we attribute meaning, assumptions, and worries, and think about things over and over; this is where judgments live and where assumptions and worries grow in the heat of the attic.

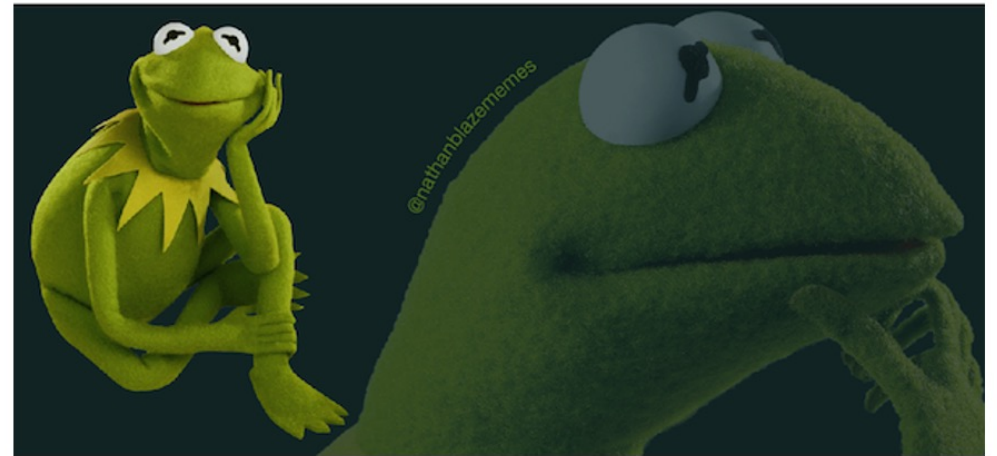
The goal of mindfulness is to **learn what floor we are on and how to become “grounded”** and walk the stairs back down to the ground floor.

Having youth create a visual representation of this can help them ground themselves, learn to identify judgments, and learn to decenter and change their relationship to their thoughts, and it helps them visualize the movement of mindfulness.

Using Metaphors & Story-telling with Youth

- Employ metaphors & metaphorical stories that evoke powerful visual imagery.
- Use metaphors and stories that the youth might find relatable; explore using cultural parables and stories.
- Metaphors do not always have to be verbal or orally delivered; internet “memes” (and other visuals) can serve as great metaphors!
- Encourage youth to think of their own metaphors that illustrate their emotional state.

I don't procrastinate. I wait until the last minute to do things, because I will be older, and therefore wiser



Imagery as a way of creating radical acceptance.

Metaphors and imagery are powerful ways of helping us radically accept what we can't change and must accept to reduce suffering.

- Baseball batter in a cage
- Dandelions
- Quicksand

Have the client or your group

- Create an artistic representation of what “radically accepting” looks like to them.
- Create a visual representation of what willfulness looks like to them.
- Create a visual presentation of what being willing looks like to them.

Allows you to ground and balance your client when they are dysregulated.

Allows your clients to support and create a shared understanding of what radical acceptance looks like.

Metaphors & Emotion Regulation Skills

Skill: “Check the facts”

Metaphor: House of Mirrors Metaphor

The reflection we see in a Fun House of mirrors can change depending on what mirror we’re looking at – our emotions too can affect what we see and think, and how we react.

Skill: PLEASE Skill & Building Mastery

Metaphor: Filling Your Bucket

What fills your bucket and what puts holes in your bucket?



Emotion Regulation through Art

- **Emotion regulation** is to become aware of, understand, listen to, and accept the information our emotions give us, to then act according to our values and our goals, and to build a life worth living that has happiness and joy, mastery and growth, and the ability to feel emotions without acting unless we choose to. To feel our emotions without shame and to develop a way of accepting and living, and loving our emotions.
- Art allows **mastery** to build in our youth; the act of engaging with a task over and over and then, with time, beginning to see the development of skill and mastery is essential to confidence, self-esteem, and regulating emotions.
- Mastery building is an emotion regulation DBT skill in that it helps youth and individuals see the benefit of engaging with a task every day – a task that is challenging enough to feel satisfied and confident each time we engage with it but not so hard that we give up, and not so easy that we don't feel pride every time we engage with the task.
- Mastery building is also connected to valuing work, in that we develop mastery in areas of our life that align with our values and when we work on tasks that align with our values, we are in our WISE MIND.

Regulating and Understanding Emotion through Art

- A core skill in DBT and developing awareness of our internal states is being able to **name emotions**, their urges, their physiological make-up, their actions, and their outcomes.
- A core skill in DBT is understanding when an emotion is justified and when an emotion does not fit the facts.
- Many clients and youth do not have emotion language and have spent years working to avoid feeling; becoming friends again with their emotions, learning to name them, and accepting them is vital to regulating emotions and mental health wellness.

Art is an excellent way to help begin to develop emotion knowledge and awareness.

- Creating visual representations of emotions can help begin to solidify what they look and feel like for youth.
- Creating an emotion circle to see which emotions were “allowed in their home” and which emotions were “not allowed” can help them begin to understand why they may struggle with certain emotions (emotions that were/are accepted are inside the circle, and emotions that were/are not supported or accepted are outside the circle).
- Creating visual journals of their emotions can help youth begin to track their emotions, urges, and actions, which is a DBT target.



DBT and Art Therapy

“Art activities facilitate mindfulness, the foundational DBT skill, by engaging clients in a novel, process-oriented experience that possibly ‘slows down learning while activating... positive emotions’” (Clark, 2017, p. 12).

Art is suited to non-traditional learners, and many of the clients we work with are neurodivergent and experience the world in diverse ways.

Art facilitates the use of metaphors, which is a key component teaching tool in creating acceptance and change in DBT.

Art therapy highlights the nonjudgmental nature of DBT by refraining from assigning aesthetic value to any artwork; the focus is on the creative process rather than the resulting product.

Art allows clients and clinicians to enter the paradox, which is a dialectical strategy.

Art allows clinicians to connect didactic strategies to reality and lived experiences.



To Summarize

- DBT has been adapted to be used across the lifespan, is transdiagnostic, has been adapted to be used with multiple populations, and aligns well with cultural humility and diverse and marginalized populations.
- The more experiential learning can be, the more it can be generalized and have meaning with youth.
- Art is an exceptional way to teach DBT skills.
- Knowing the heart and soul of each skill allows the skills to be utilized in creative and artistic ways, allowing the clinician to reach youth from all walks and backgrounds.
- DBT is about creating a life worth living, being mindful, and developing mastery through learning and metaphor use.
- The more real therapy can be with youth, the greater chance we have of reaching them and helping them; art and DBT are two ways of connecting that allow for **real, genuine, authentic, and culturally-humble connections**.

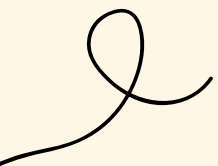


Questions

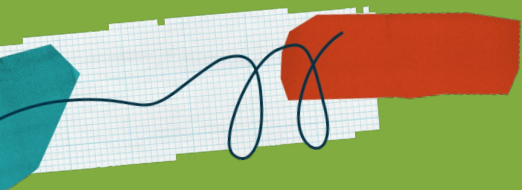
Please contact Dr. Carmen Lalonde or Adanna Anucha if you have questions or would like resources.

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Q&A



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