

EFFECTIVELY

Focus on what works. Do what needs to be done in each situation. Become a skillful dancer on the dance floor, one with the music and your partner, neither willful nor sitting on your hands. Stay away from “fair” and “unfair,” “right” and “wrong,” “should” and “should not.”

Play by the rules. Don’t “cut off your nose to spite your face.”

Act as skillfully as you can, meeting the needs of the situation you are in. Not the situation you wish you were in; not the one that is just; not the one that is more comfortable; not the one that...

Keep an eye on your objectives in the situation and do what is necessary to achieve them. Let go of vengeance, useless anger, and righteousness. They hurt you and don’t work.

EFFECTIVELY USE SKILLS

Effectiveness is using skillful means. As you learn and refine skills, you become more effective, i.e., your behaviors lead to a maximum of positive outcomes and a minimum of negative outcomes. When in familiar situations, it is clear how to get the maximum benefits because you have practiced the necessary skills and know from experience what works. But when the situation is difficult, challenging, or stressful, you need wisdom and skills to guide you to the best possible outcome. How do you gain the necessary wisdom and skills?

Wise Mind, the basis of all skills, is a real part of you and available to you now. Your Wise Mind brought you to treatment and this study. Your hope to make a life worth living grows from your Wise Mind. As you learn and refine skills taking on life’s problems and work in therapy your Wise Mind becomes stronger. You must believe in your Wise Mind. If you believe you can deal with any problem in your life (you can), you know Wise Mind.

Effectiveness is a mindfulness skill, a mental tool for increasing awareness and acceptance. “Effectively” solving problems is a little different because mistakes are okay. WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES! Think of a mistake as a negative outcome, which you would like to minimize. When you “effectively” make mistakes, you are honest about them. A mistake is nothing to be ashamed of. Accept your mistakes, and you accept yourself radically. You are not perfect and do not know all the answers, consider making a mistake a learning experience. The goal, of course, is to make less of them. The problem many people have with accepting mistakes is that they stick to the rigid view that mistakes are not okay.

Focus on what works.

Skills work! The skills - mindfulness, emotional regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance skills maximize the positive outcomes. Too often, you react automatically without thinking. Practicing skills allows you to focus on your choices, see opportunities, and examine options. The awareness of choice is crucial to effectiveness. You can choose to work with reality as it is. Focus on trying to maximize the positive and minimize the negative. Realizing you have choices increases feelings of mastery, competence, and control.

Rather than emphasizing the end result, effectively focuses on the process. The goal of *effectively* is to bring forth a positive result by using skillful means. “What works,” in this sense, is an attitude of continually developing skills and deeply connecting to reality. Committing wholeheartedly to practicing skills the best you can is critical to the process.

Focus on engaging problems instead of avoiding them. Remember, mistakes are learning experiences. Start learning to be effective by taking on smaller problems in your life. Try seeing more ways to resolve a problem. With practice, you will have the courage to take on your most difficult problems.

Do what needs to be done in each situation.

Willingness is doing just what is needed in each situation while keeping the balance on the positive. Keep the balance by finding two important connections. First, look inward and connect with the strength and stability of your Wise Mind. Second, look outward to your connection to the universe, the earth, to the chair you are sitting on, and to the floor supporting you. The people around you offer another source for support, connection, and security. Complete acceptance of “what needs to be done” is the foundation of willingness.

Become a skillful dancer on the dance floor, one with the music and your partner, neither willful nor sitting on your hands.

Imagine you are a skillful dancer. The dance floor is your life with its opportunities and options. Your partner is reality. Your Wise Mind can hear the music. Listening with your Wise Mind, you can skillfully dance from one opportunity to the next, making choices and effectively dance with reality.

Stay away from “fair” and “unfair,” “right” and “wrong,” “should” and “should not.”

Regard your partner, reality, *non-judgmentally*. Enjoy the music. Dance fluidly and gracefully. Being judgmental of reality is like trying to dance without shifting your weight from side to side. The dancer needs to be flexible and intuitive and shift her weight from side to side. If you believe or feel strongly there is only one-way to do things, you are locked into polarized thinking, stuck on one side, and can't dance. A dialectical approach dances from one viewpoint to another and shifts from one option to another.

Seeing oneself and others realistically requires an inquisitive, non-judgmental, and open-minded approach. Asking many questions is a good place to start. Curiosity helps you out of the rut of polarized thinking. The formula for seeing things from new perspectives is to start with honestly accepting reality and willingly participating, subtract polarized thinking, and add skills.

Play by the rules.

Consider these “rules” or assumptions of DBT. First, you are doing the best you can. Second, you want to improve. Third, you need to do better, try harder and be more motivated to change. Fourth, you may not have caused all your problems, but you have to solve them anyway. Fifth, if you are suicidal, you must change your life, not end it. Sixth, you must learn new behaviors in all relevant contexts. Finally, you cannot fail in therapy.

Don't "cut off your nose to spite your face."

In other words, don't make the situation worse than it already is! Acts of anger or revenge will hurt you more than it hurts anyone else. Fighting back hurts you more than it will help the situation. Let it go. Minimize negative outcomes.

Act as skillfully as you can, meeting the needs of the situation you are in. Not the situation you wish you were in; not the one that is just; not the one that is more comfortable; not the one that...

Meeting the situation you are in may require you to dismiss your wishes, abandon your ideas of justice, and leave your comfort zone. Wishing is a way to avoid. Wishes are a clue that you are trying to solve your problems by magic not by using skills. Thoughts of injustice provoke anger and increase stress. If the situation is not just, remember, life is not fair. Comfort is temporary. You can be yourself and be uncomfortable. *Willingness* is meeting your situation, staying grounded on earth and connected to your Wise Mind. Trust that staying connected to reality while practicing skills is enough to meet the needs of the situation. Remember mistakes are okay, use your Wise Mind to learn from them, and keep moving.

Keep an eye on your objectives in the situation and do what is necessary to achieve them.

What sort of "eye" is this? This eye "observes." Looking this way disengages your impulses. Seeing your objective without acting on impulse is like feeling one way and acting another. Keeping your eye on the objective mindfully is like stepping back from the situation and taking in a bigger perspective. *Effectiveness* requires mental flexibility. If your objective is rigidly defined, you are locked into a fixed outcome. There is a big difference between an objective to have someone act a certain way and an objective to

communicate to another person, as best you can, what you would like them to do. Focusing on communicating orients you to using skills to control your behavior, not controlling the other person. *Effectiveness* changes the focus from outside (other's actions) to inside (awareness of the choices you are making). Look at what you can do to make the situation better. *Effectiveness* has more to do with how you think about your objective and how you act than what actually happens.

Let go of vengeance, useless anger, and righteousness. They hurt you and don't work.

Remember, don't make it worse than it already is. High levels of arousal turn off the part of the brain that allows you to be mindful. Feelings of anger and vengeance cause you to react, not choose.

Conclusion

Wisdom and skills help you manage life's difficult problems. Be honest about your mistakes, this will help you learn. Engage problems and look at your options and choices. Willingness is doing just what is needed balancing acceptance of you Wise Mind and the universe. Looking at options and choices develops mental flexibility. Think of the rules as the assumptions of DBT. Don't make the situation worse than it already is. Meet the situation you are in by focusing on what you can control.