



Linden Oaks

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

A part of Edward-Elmhurst Healthcare



The Hidden Consequences of Being Over Accommodating

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Objectives

- Define emotion regulation
- Discuss how avoidance leads to a decrease in emotion regulation and distress tolerance
- Connection between avoidance and accommodations
- Review emotion regulation and distress tolerance skills

Emotional Dysregulation

- When an individual is emotionally dysregulated, they are frequently emotionally intense and labile.
- They can become intensely angry, frustrated, depressed, anxious, etc. very quickly, they hold on to that high level of emotion for a long time, and it can take a very long time to come down from the emotional experience, if they ever fully recover.

Avoidance Results in Dysregulation

- As an individual opts to avoid discomfort, they systematically reduce their tolerance level for discomfort, thereby making the world more and more uncomfortable, until things that were once slightly stressful are now perceived as overwhelming and completely unapproachable.
- As their tolerance level decreases, their urge to avoid intensifies, resulting in a negative self-sustaining pattern that ultimately reduces functioning over time and results in emotional dysregulation.

Are Accommodations Avoidance?

- Accommodations are a form of avoidance, particularly if they are quickly and proactively offered.
- When we accommodate too quickly or over-accommodate, it deprives the student of the opportunity to learn how to manage difficult situations, consequently making it less likely that they will be able to manage those situations by themselves in the future.
- When working with schools, often times my recommendations are to remove most accommodations.

Increasing Tolerance Levels

- Exposure is the number one, most effective and quickest way to increase someone's tolerance level.
- Therefore, expectations should be set above the student's comfort level, while still allowing them the opportunity to be successful.
- Natural consequences for not meeting expectations should be incurred.
- If the student is shielded from appropriate consequences, their motivation for functioning often decreases.

When are Accommodations Necessary

- The least amount of accommodations should be offered to allow the student to be successful.
- If the student's tolerance level is so low that they are unwilling to approach school, the most conservative accommodations should be allotted to encourage the student to enter the building and/or classrooms.
- Accommodations should be gradually reduced over time, until they are removed all together if possible.

Restoring Emotional Regulation

- **Observe and Describe Emotions:** understand and name your emotions
- **Accumulate Positive Experiences:** participate in pleasurable activities in order to increase the ability to access positive emotions
- **Build Mastery:** engage in at least one activity per day to increase a sense of accomplishment
- **Cope Ahead of Time with Emotional Situations:** describe the situation that may prompt problem behavior, decide coping skills to be used, imagine the situation, including coping effectively, practice calming skills after imagining scenario
- **Taking Care of your Body:** with PLEASE (Treat physical illnesses, Balance eating, Avoid mood altering substances, Sleep, Exercise)
- **Increasing Mindfulness to Current Emotion:** observe your emotion: notice its presence, step back, get unstuck
- **Taking Opposite Action:** change the emotion by acting opposite to its action urge, for example: sadness – get active

Benefits of Emotional Regulation

- As an individual becomes emotionally regulated, they escalate emotionally at a slower rate and overall experience less intense vacillations in emotions.
- However, life offers surprises and the student may be faced with an event that results in a high level of emotional arousal.
- If and when this does occur, the student would implement crisis survival distress tolerance skills in order to cope with and recover from the experience.

Benefits of Increasing Tolerance to Distress

- Be able to manage stressful situations
- Recover quickly from high anxiety / panic attacks
- Reduce suffering
- Live a full and meaningful life
- Tolerate unwanted thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, urges, impulses, etc.

Distress Tolerance Skills

- **Acceptance Strategies** are skills to reduce suffering by letting go of struggles and engaging in life:
 - ✓ Willingness
 - ✓ Turning the Mind Towards Acceptance
 - ✓ Radical Acceptance
- **Crisis Survival Skills** focus on tolerating painful events, urges, impulses, unwanted thoughts, feelings when individuals cannot control the situation
 - ✓ STOP
 - ✓ TIPP
 - ✓ Distracting (ACCEPTS)
 - ✓ Improve the Moment (IMPROVE)
 - ✓ Self-Soothing
 - ✓ Thinking of Pros and Cons

Acceptance Strategies

- **Willingness:** moving body towards values while carrying any discomforts (unwanted thoughts, feelings and physical sensations) lightly
- **Turning the Mind:** the mind and body are more willing to move towards values however the mind continues to struggle
- **Radical Acceptance:** letting go of things you cannot control, as well as pain creates suffering only when you refuse to accept the pain
 - ✓ Pain x lack of acceptance = degree of suffering

STOP

- **Stop**
- **Take a step back:** practice breathing exercises
- **Observe:** thoughts, feelings, urges, situations, other people
- **Proceed mindfully:** move towards values and let wise mind make decisions

TIPP to Change Your Body Chemistry

- **Tip the Temperature of your face with cold water**
 - ✓ “Dive response” to slow heart rate and reduce blood flow to nonessential organs so it flows to brain and heart
- **Intense exercise**
- **Paced breathing**
- **Paired with muscle relaxation**

Distracting (ACCEPTS)

- **Activities:** exercise, hobbies, games, sports, walk dog, jumping jacks, ride bike, active video games, dance, jump rope, yoga, high knees
- **Contributing:** volunteer, make a gift, surprise someone, chores, cook/bake, help team mate, coach, babysit, call friend/talk about them
- **Comparison:** moving towards values vs avoidance, day 1 of treatment vs current progress, unhealthy urges vs healthy behaviors
- **Emotions:** joke book, comedies, music, quotes, bubble bath, body scan
- **Pushing Away:** mentally stepping back from situation by using imagination, such as pain in box, emotion draining from body, defusion
- **Thoughts:** reading, homework, puzzles, paint, ABC game, word searches, Sudoku, cross words, count backwards by 13, 20 questions, I spy
- **Sensations:** hold ice in hand (touch), spicy food (taste), loud music (sound), spices (smell), optical illusions (sight)

IMPROVE the Moment

- **Imagery:** imagine relaxing scene, imagine coping, fantasy, nature, memories, vacation, dance routines, moving towards values, sport plays
- **Meaning Making:** identify values underneath the distress, explore reasons to be willing to experience discomfort
- **Prayer/Meditation:** connect with higher power, increase in trust, support, hope, contact with present, calm physical sensations, grounding
- **Relaxation:** body scan, yoga, breathing exercises, walking, 4 square breathing, singing, dancing, get fresh air, play with hair/jewelry/clothes
- **One Thing in the Moment:** bring self back to present moment by doing one thing at a time, 100% focus, use 5 senses to get grounded
- **Vacation:** (1) 15-20 minute break, (2) practice skill (3) return to experience
- **Encouragement:** self-cheerlead, quotes, poems, DBT phrases, song lyrics, encouraging words from family and friends

Self-Soothe

- **Vision:** flowers, candle/watch flame, food, art, pictures of family/friends/pets, star gaze, walk/drive mindfully, you tube videos, books, dance performances, television, movies, celebrities, nature
- **Hearing:** listen to soothing music, sounds of nature (waves, birds, rainfall, leaves rustling), sing your favorite song, play musical instrument, friends/family voices, audio books
- **Smell:** favorite perfume or cologne, lotion, spray fragrance in the air, scented candles, potpourri, bake cookies/bread/cupcakes, cook favorite meal, mindfully walk in nature, wax melts
- **Taste:** favorite meal, soothing drinks (herbal tea, hot cocoa, chocolate milk), treat yourself to a dessert, mints, gum, water, hard candy, chocolate.
*remember to eat and/or drink mindfully
- **Touch:** bubble bath, pet dog/cat, fresh clothes from dryer, get a massage, soak your feet, put lotion on, cold compress on forehead/back of neck, soft material, brush hair/run fingers through hair, hug family member/friend, fidget toy/stress ball/bendy stick, small stuffed animal

Crisis Kit/Self-Soothe Kit/Skills Kit

- Crosswords/word searches/Sudoku/logic puzzles
- Pictures of family/friends/pets
- Favorite smelling lotion/perfume/cologne
- Chap stick/lip gloss
- Gum/mints/candy
- Fidget toy (stone/squishy toy/cloth/coins)
- Ear buds/playlist of high energy songs/soothing songs
- Deck of playing cards
- Silly putty/Play-doh
- Pen/paper/journal
- Coloring pages/markers/crayons
- Cinnamon stick/tea bags/wax melts
- Book/magazine/jokes/ poetry
- Shell for ocean sound plus fidget
- Inspirational quotes/lyrics/poems
- Travel sound machine
- Water bottle

Index Card of Skills

- 4 square breathing, follow your breath, value breathing, count your breaths
- Leaves on a stream, clouds in the sky, bubbles, watch thoughts
- ABC game
- 20 questions, I Spy, tic tac toe
- DBT phrases: ride the wave, get out of your future, move towards values
- Count backwards by 7's from 1,000
- Exercise: jumping jacks, high knees, push-ups
- Imagine calming scenes, nature, moving towards values
- You Tube videos of animals or babies, watch clips of movies or television shows
- 5/4/3/2/1 with five senses
- Cook, bake, eat mindfully

Book Recommendations for Schools

- The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety by John Forsyth, Ph.D. and Georg Eifert, Ph.D.
- The Expanded Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Training Manual by Lane Pederson, Psy.D.
- DBT Skills in Schools by James Mazza, Elizabeth Dexter, Alec Miller, Jill Rathus and Heather Murphy

Book Recommendations For Parents

- Parenting Your Anxious Child with Mindfulness and Acceptance by Christopher McCurry, Ph.D.
- Parenting a Child Who Has Intense Emotions by Pat Harvey and Jeanine Penzo

Contact Information

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