

Contextually-Focused Dialectical Behavior Therapy:  
DBT in the Light of the Psychological Flexibility Model

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2 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Purpose
  - Outline a model of emotion dysregulation applicable to both clinical and non-clinical populations.
  - Present a version of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) considered through a contextual behavioral lens.

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3 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Dialectical Behavior Therapy
  - DBT and ACT have expanded the stances, style and targets of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT).
  - Linehan and Hayes have contributed to revolutionary changes in the encounter called psychotherapy well beyond the cognitive behavior tradition.

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### Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Dialectical Behavior Therapy
  - Four Components
    - Individual Therapy/Case Management
    - Telephone Consultation
    - Skills Group
      - Mindfulness
      - Interpersonal Effectiveness
      - Emotion Regulation
      - Distress Tolerance
    - Consultation Group

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### Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Dialectical Behavior Therapy
  - Acceptance in the context of change and change in the context of acceptance

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### Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Dialectical Behavior Therapy
  - Key is the commitment to a life worth living
    - Commitment is the fulcrum upon which all interactions between client and therapist(s) rest.
    - Ask participants to make commitments, because they are NOT skilled at doing so.
    - Practice at behaving based on commitments rather than thoughts, emotions, memories or urges.

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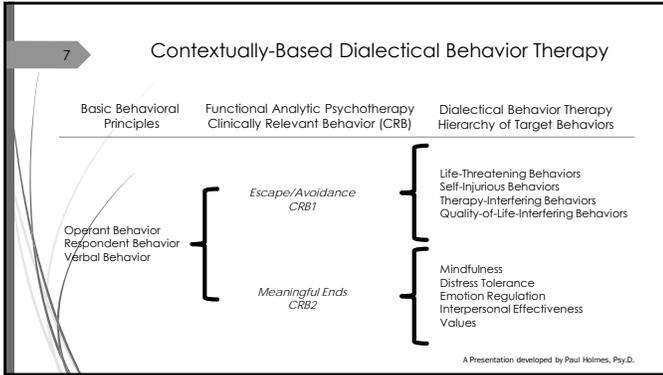
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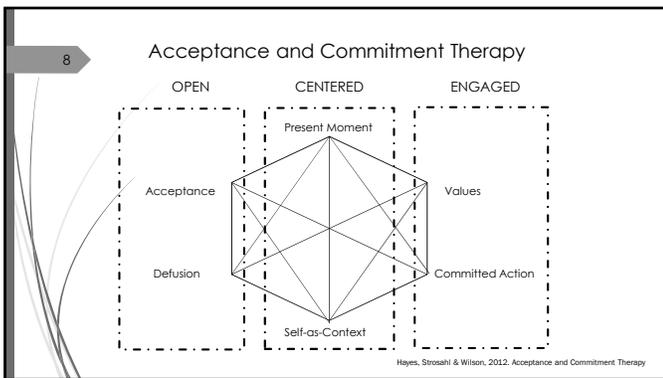
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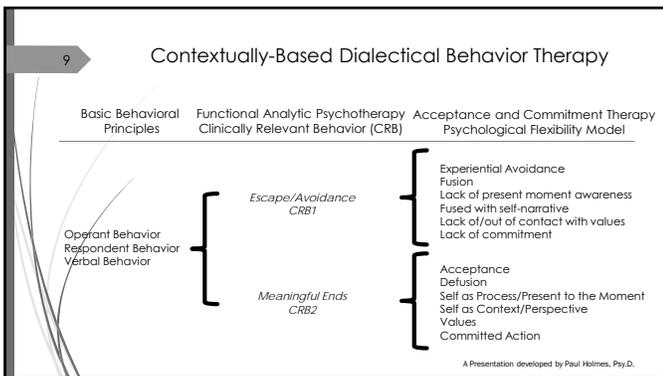
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10 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- What they have in common
  - Assist participants to discriminate between their private experience and the behaviors that accompany them.
  - Focus on 2<sup>nd</sup> order change
  - Future oriented.
- How they differ
  - ACT focuses on language processes.
  - DBT focuses on factors contributing to emotional dysregulation.

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11 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- DBT can learn from ACT, the influence of language processes in emotion dysregulation.
  - Word, sentences and phrases function for humans like the bell did for Pavlov's dogs.
- ACT can learn from DBT, the role emotion plays in both dysregulation and well-being.
  - Emotions, like opposing thumbs have adaptive functions.

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12 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Recontextualizing DBT a result of a number of questions faced in doing both DBT and ACT.
  - How do we address the implicit (and at times, explicit) message of change and control toward private experiences found in DBT?
  - How do we understand emotional dysregulation and behavioral dyscontrol/overcontrol across a broader spectrum of clinical populations?
  - What does a contextually-focused DBT look like?

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13 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

How do we address the implicit (and at times, explicit) message of change and control toward private experiences found in DBT?

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14 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- DBT has one foot in the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave and other in the 3<sup>rd</sup>
  - Include both cognitive modification strategies and Mindfulness Practice

<p><u>Cognitive Modification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assumption about content of mind                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content is the problem.</li> <li>Counter or challenge it.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><u>Mindfulness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assumption about content of mind                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content is NOT the problem.</li> <li>Openness and acceptance.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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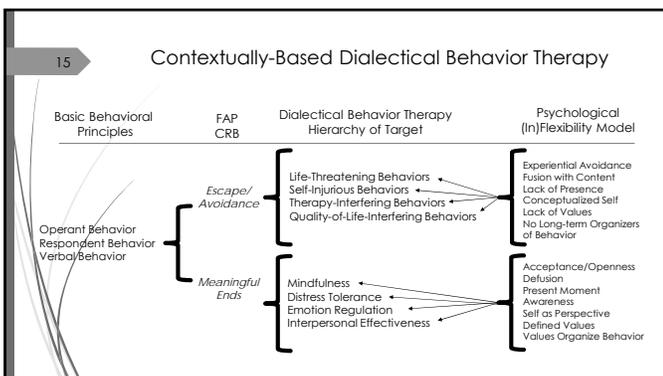
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16 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

How do we understand emotional dysregulation and behavioral dyscontrol/overcontrol across a broader spectrum of populations?

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17 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Form versus Function of Behavior

Protocols for:  
Narcotics Dependence  
Alcohol Dependence  
Anorexia Nervosa  
Binging and Purging  
Self-Harm/Suicide  
OCD  
Phobias  
Social Anxiety

Topography of Behavior

Function of Behavior

Protocol:  
Openness and willingness to private experience  
Commitment to expand repertoire of behaviors

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18 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- C-DBT focuses on the functional interaction between language processes and the neurobiology of emotion.
- The goal of treatment is to reduce the degree to which this interplay interferes with behavior organized by commitments and values.

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19 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Humans are memetic beings (Rene Girard)
  - Imitation is reinforced during child's learning history.
  - Child limited neurologically, anatomically and behaviorally in comparison to adult models,
  - Inevitable disparity between the skillfulness of the child in comparison to the model.
  - Child develops a sense of inadequacy—inferiority.
  - This is not a problem.

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20 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Validating verses Invalidating Environments (Marsha Linehan)
  - Validating environments teach children how to experience aversive private experiences.
  - Invalidating environments respond to the child's aversive private experiences in ways that:
    - Exacerbate the aversiveness.
    - Lead to efforts to avoid and escape.
  - Children who have not been taught how to have aversive emotional states spend much of their adult life "trying" to get rid of aversive private experiences.

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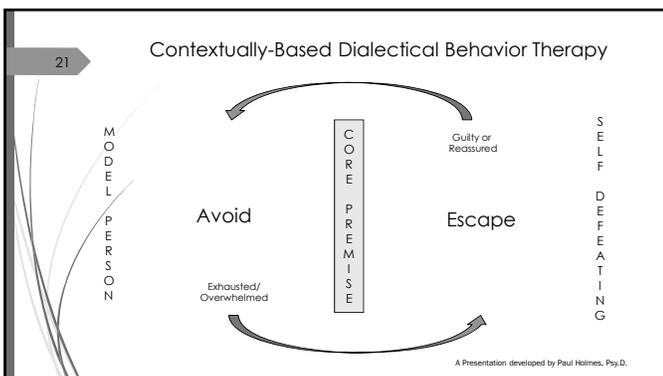
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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Candace Pert
  - Discovered the opiate-receptor in the brain. This receptor is located throughout the body.
  - States that at the level of neuropeptides, the chemical processes associated with emotion function much like heroin.
  - Emotion is where the mind and the body intersect.
  - Suggests that people become "addicted" to emotion.
    - Stimulation of primary reinforcing centers in the brain.
  - The one you like the least but have the most frequently.

Pert, C. 1999. Molecules of Emotion.

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23 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Relational Frame Theory- transformation of stimulus functions
- Mainstream psychology:
  - Neurology is considered a necessary foundation for the conceptual abilities humans develop that enables them to create narratives.
- C-DBT suggests a bidirectionality between languaging and neurology.
- A person's narrative is the brains way of feeding its own addiction.
- **Chronic distress involves a constellation of behaviors under appetitive and aversive stimulus control.**

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24 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

- Chronic Distress
  - Person's become fused with their narrative due to the reinforcing effects of sense-making. This is under appetitive stimulus control.
  - The stimulus functions of the words, sentences and phrases of the narrative elicit increased levels of aversive physiological arousal.
  - Overlearned automatic coping strategies are initiated in order to de-escalate levels of physiological arousal. This is under aversive stimulus control.
    - Working harder, staying longer, being more loving
    - Cutting, burning, drinking, drugging, bingeing, purging
    - All de-escalation strategies.

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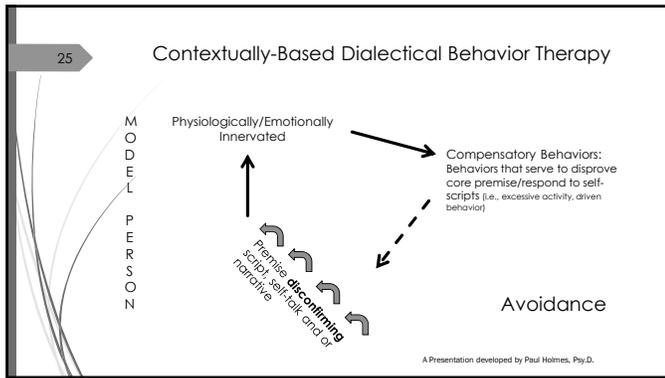
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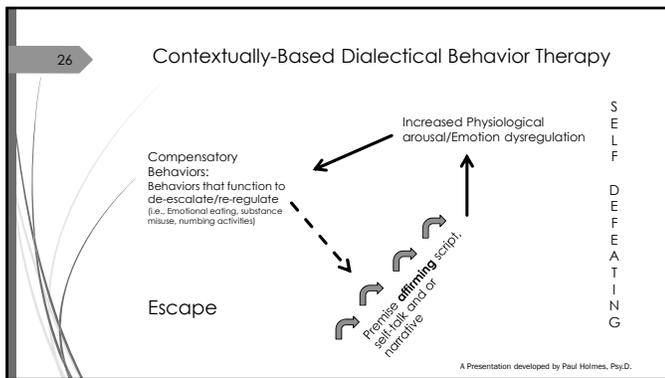
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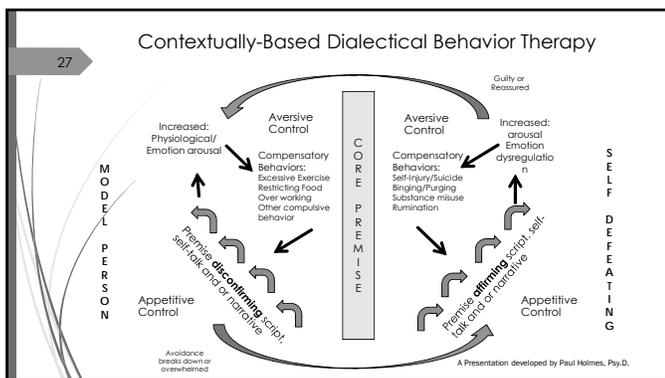
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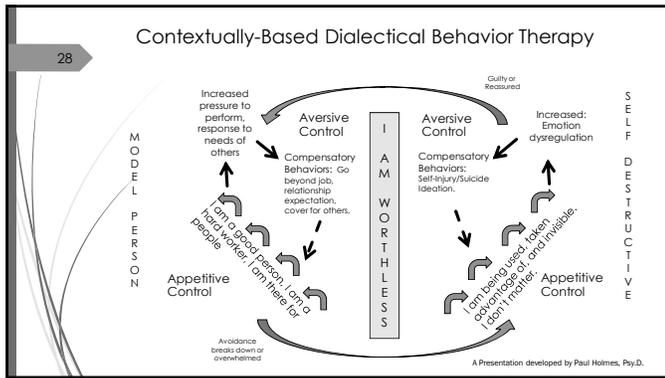
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29 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

What does a contextually-focused DBT look like?

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- 30 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy
- The Four DBT Skills Areas
    - Mindfulness
    - Distress Management
    - Emotion Management
    - Values/Developing Agency
- ACCEPTANCE
- CHANGE
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31 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Mindfulness

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32 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Mindfulness

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33 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Mindfulness

- A basic set of skills needed to read a book, have a conversation, drive a car or engage in a spiritual practice.
- **The practice of bringing our capacity to attend under stimulus control of the present moment.**
- Work from the premise there is no such thing as a distraction, simply different aspects of the present moment.
- Assist participants in making a distinction between thoughts and thinking.

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34 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Mindfulness

- Acceptance as a non-response.
  - Acceptance is the only workable approach to thoughts and emotions.
  - Responding to thoughts or emotions "positively" or "negatively" is still responding.
  - Non-responsiveness is the middle path between avoiding or ignoring, and ruminating or obsessing.
  - We experience thoughts, and they do not exist. There is nothing to respond to.
  - Thoughts are like rainbows, not like tables. There is nothing to fix.

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35 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Mindfulness

- Minding the GAP
  - The GAP is where you experience:
    - Freedom from historically established ways of responding.
    - Freedom to choose self-restraint in the service of commitments/values.

Thought + Emotion → Behavior

The GAP  
You get to choose

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36 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Distress Management

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37 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Distress Management

- Distress Management skills are the application of mindfulness principles to distressing moments.
  - The anchor for attention is the activity.
  - Shaping from self-defeating toward constructive behavior.
  - In doing so, exposing oneself to cues that makes one vulnerable to a second set of thoughts, emotions, memories or bodily sensations.

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38 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Distress Management

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39 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Distress Management

- Distressing moments are watershed moments.
  - Choice Points
    - Am I going to passively go with historically established ways of responding.
  - OR
  - Will I actively choose what I will make this moment about knowing I am having these thoughts, memories and bodily sensations.
- This is about moving in the direction of a desired future.

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40 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Emotion Management

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41 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Emotion Management

Emotion Defined

- Emotion is what emerges at the intersection of your mind and body.
- Every emotion has a specific function.

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42 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

**Emotion**

**Affect**

Sadness, Anger, Fear, Joy, Surprise, Disgust

1. Observable
2. Sensitive to environmental stimuli
3. Change rapidly
4. Duration short-up to 120 seconds
5. Predisposes person to action

**Mood**

Mania, Hypomania, Euphoria, Euthymia, Dyphoria, depression

1. Not observable, have to ask
2. Less sensitive to environmental stimuli
3. Change slowly
4. Duration of hours to days
5. Predisposes person to specific ways of thinking

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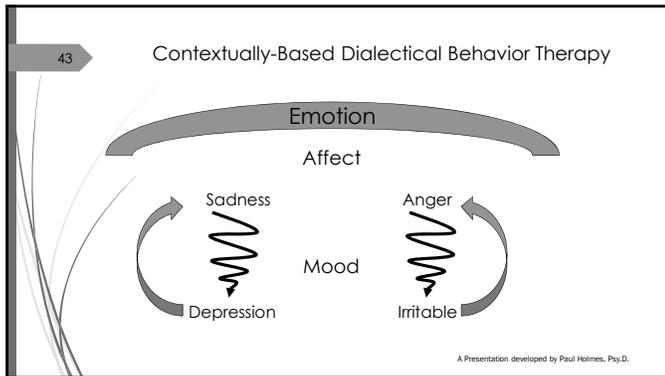
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44 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Emotion Management

- Emotion management is learning openness to private experience while organizing my behaviors via pre-established commitments.
- Never experience the same emotion twice.
- Every emotion is a pointer to what is important.
- Dysregulation is the result of reacting to the emotion rather than focusing on what it is point one toward.
- Depression is what emerges when consistently moving away from what is important.
  - Anxiety—Depression

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45 Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Emotion Management

- Worksheet outlining the Prompting event, Urge action, Lesson and suggested Action.
- Example: Sadness
  - Prompting Event: Loss
  - Urge Action: Reduce Activity, become reflective
  - Lesson: You have lost a major source of reinforcement.
  - Action: Repair or replace

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Expanding Repertoires

Range of possible emotions

A particular behavior  
(i.e., being kind)

Range of possible behaviors

A particular emotion  
(i.e., feeling anger)

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Values/Developing a Sense of Agency

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Clarifying Values

- Values Work
  - Participant's entered treatment feeling there is no path to a meaningful life.
  - As the various historically-established barriers to living desist, participants confront the next existential problem; there is no pre-set path.
  - Values work is about participants developing their own path to a meaningful life.

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Clarifying Values

- Values Work
  - The goal is to assist participants in shifting what organizes their behavior **from** their past and their problems **to** their future and their values.

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Clarifying Values

- Values Work
  - Two Questions
    - What kind of person do I want to be?
      - Left side values exercise (Harris, R. 2008. Happiness Trap).
    - What do I want to make my life about?
      - Values Questionnaire.
      - Dialectical Dialogue

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Developing Agency

- We will rise to the level of expectation our mind creates for us.
  - Our thoughts do not exist in the traditional sense of the word.
    - We make our thoughts a reality by organizing our behavior in reaction to them.
    - This a double edged sword.
- One makes oneself into the person one aspires to be by taking oneself to be that person (Brandom, 2000).

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Individual Therapy

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Individual Therapy

- Balancing Validation and Behavior Change
  - Behavioral Chaining
    - Primary Function
      - Exposure and Response Prevention: Via language exposure to emotions, thoughts, urges and bodily sensations associated with target behavior(s).
        - Services to expand person's behavior repertoire.
        - Validation, openness, defusion, and willingness.
    - Secondary Function
      - Identification of alternative behavioral responses.

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Individual Therapy

- Dialectical Dialogue.
  - What distinguishes humans from other species is our ability to make commitments, take responsibility and hold each other accountable.
  - Practice at using commitment rather than thoughts, emotions and memories as the organizing principle of behavior.
  - Values Diary Card
    - Shift from diary card focusing on behaviors that have interfered to behaviors in the service of values-based behaviors.

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Individual Therapy

Dialectical Dialogue.

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graph TD
    Commitment --> Obligated[Obligated to other commitments]
    Commitment --> RulesOut[Rules out other commitments]
  
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Pursuing a meaningful life obligates one to commitments one may not be initially aware of and rules out commitments to some other valued things in life.

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Individual Therapy

- Dialectical Dialogue.
  - Learning to manage private experience creates the psychological space to identify commitments and values.
  - Using commitments and values to organize ones behavior will evoke private experiences that will set the occasion for historically-established ways of responding to re-appear.

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Contextually-Based Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Summary

- Developed a transdiagnostic model for emotional dysregulation.
- Removed Cognitive Modification Strategies.
- Skills oriented toward:
  - Openness to private experience.
  - Expanding repertoires of behavior in the face of aversiveness.
  - Using values and commitments to organize behavior.
- Shifting perspective from one focused on one's past and problems to one looking to one's future and values.

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