

DBT Workbook (Diana) and DBT Workbook (Matthew McKay)

Matthew McKay: [00:00:00] the average emotion lasts seven minutes. And what keeps us stuck at the top of the wave are those three things, repetitive, negative thinking, and, acting on our emotions and try to avoid as suppress our emotions. And that's how we get stuck with chronic emotional disorders. You're listening to Dr. Matthew McKay on psychologists off the clock.

Diana Hill: [00:00:21] We are three clinical psychologist committed to cutting edge integrated and evidence-based strategies for living well.

Yael Schonbrun: [00:00:36] On this podcast, we bring you ideas from psychology that can help you flourish in your work parenting relationships and health.

Diana Hill: [00:00:43] I am Dr. Diana Hill practicing in Seaside Santa Barbara, California.

Debbie Sorensen: [00:00:47] I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen practicing in Mile High, Denver, Colorado.

Yael Schonbrun: [00:00:51] And from coast to coast. I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun a boston-based clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Brown University.

Debbie Sorensen: [00:00:57] We hope this podcast offers you ideas for how to live a full and meaningful life.

Diana Hill: [00:01:02] Thank you for listening Hi everybody. We have some great events coming up in the new year. We want to tell you about, I'm going to be in Santa Barbara at yoga soup presenting a workshop on committed action. So if you have a change you want to make in the new year and you want to do it in a way that is sustainable and values based, meet me at yoga soup on January 5th.

From 2:30 to 5 you can find out more information at yogasoup.com

Debbie Sorensen: [00:01:39] If you enjoyed episode 102 Dr. Steven Hayes, who is the co founder of ACT and wrote A Liberated Mind, we are having an online question and answer session about A Liberated Mind. It's a great chance to talk to Steve Hayes directly, ask him questions, and listen to him talk about the book. That's happening on Tuesday, January 7th at 9:00 AM mountain time. So do the math on the time zones if you need to, and you can go to www.impactpsychcolorado.com for details about how to join us live. And if you are a mental health professional and identify as a woman, please come to Boulder, Colorado on March 7th I'm doing a professional development workshop with Dr Meg McKelvie. You know, as women and mental health professionals, we have a lot to balance and we can't get really depleted sometimes. And this workshop is about tuning into our professional values, recharging our batteries, and coming together to support one another in our professional and personal growth. And we really welcome

everyone from students and graduate school to seasoned mental health professionals to join us. It's going to be a wonderful event. And so also for that,

just go to impactpsychcolorado.com for more information.

Diana Hill: [00:03:00] we have links to all of these events on our website, offtheclockpsych.com check it out.

We have Dr. Matthew McKay on the show for a second time Debbie and we had him on a while back. Talking about his book, the new happiness, but today he's talking about another strategy that he uses in therapy called DBT, dialectical behavioral therapy, and a workbook that he's revised and it's coming out the DBT skills workbook.

So this episode I think is going to be especially helpful for therapists or for people that have experienced a DBT or interested in trying out dialectical behavioral therapy for themselves and looking for maybe a therapist that works with that.

Debbie Sorensen: [00:03:40] Yeah, that's great. I think that the full on DBT approach is really wonderful for people with, you know, kind of more severe issues, and I trained in that back in. When I was training, and I think you did too, Diana, and, but if you're not in a program like that, the skills are wonderful. I mean, the interpersonal skills, the distress tolerance, the mindfulness skills, there's a lot of really good stuff in DBT that you can use with all kinds of different clients.

I even use some of them with my kids sometimes just teaching them about their emotions and being interpersonally effective. So I'm really excited to use this new book that's just kind of revised and updated.

Diana Hill: [00:04:18] Yes. And just to give a nod to Marsha Linehan, who was the developer of dialectical behavior therapy, and it was really a ground breaking therapy when we were in graduate school. It was just sort of coming out and gaining a lot of momentum. And what was different about Marsha Linehan's work was that she took. Everything that we knew from behavioral psychology and added in these components from Zen Buddhism and more Eastern based principles and created this new program that was really at the time, I think. Surprised people. They were excited about it. And it's has a tremendous amount of skills to help you regulate your behavior, regulate your emotions, regulate your interpersonal relationships, and all based in a really good science. So I think that this, this workbook is fantastic and it's fun to see it used in such a practical. Applied in such a practical way by Dr. McKay. He also, we also talk about in the episode these skill cards that he go along with the workbook, and in the episode I draw a skills card at random from each of the different groupings of DBT, and it's kind of fun to see which skills cards I pull out. And those are another little handy tool to

Debbie Sorensen: [00:05:36] That sounds great.

Diana Hill: [00:05:37] So take a listen to Dr. McKay all about the DBT skills workbook.

Dr Matthew McKay is a professor at the Wright Institute in Berkeley, California, and he's authored and coauthored numerous books, including the dialectical behavior skills workbook, but also the relaxation and stress reduction workbook, self-esteem, thoughts, and feelings. When anger hurts and act on life, not on anger. And McKay received his PhD in clinical psychology from the California school of professional psychology and specializes in cognitive behavioral

treatment of anxiety and depression.

Welcome, Dr. Matthew McKay.

Matthew McKay: [00:06:13] Glad to be with you.

Diana Hill: [00:06:15] today we get to talk all about DBT. DBT has really evolved over time, and your workbook is a demonstration of that evolution. DBT was originally designed for people with a mood dysregulation. Specifically used a lot with borderline personality disorder and now it's demonstrated effective with a number of different populations.

At the foundation of the skills is that their skills and emotion regulation, what, what does it take to regulate our

Matthew McKay: [00:06:45] Well, want to make a point that it's not just emotion regulation is behavioral regulation as well. Class for DBT were folks who were struggling with borderline personality disorder, and they were not just emotionally just not regular, but behaviorally, and did a lot of impulsive behaviors to cope with overwhelming emotions. some interesting research came out and showed that when you treat the emotion dysregulation to behavioral dysregulation goes away. and so, Helping people, get, down regulation skills, Mmm, is really important. Not only to help them feel better emotionally, but to lead less impulsive, dangerous lives.

so a mood. Regulation problems are different from people who have specific emotional disorders.

you know, you can have an anxiety disorder, you can have depressive disorder, you can, you can have, you can struggle with shame. you could have difficulties with anger, but people with emotion dysregulation are dysregulated across the board. All of their emotions are. Elevated. so when they get activated.

in a situation that generates anger, they are enraged. So, and when they are sad, they are overwhelmingly depressed and sometimes to the point of suicidal ideation. When they are anxious, they are so scared and overwhelmed that they often get immobilized. So folks with emotion dysregulation are struggling across the board with overwhelming emotions.

The knob is turned way up on their emotional life all the way to high.

Diana Hill: [00:08:23] that gets reflected as you just described and how they behave. So whether that's how they behave interpersonally. Or how they behave towards themselves, maybe harming themselves on things like binge eating could be a result of the emotion just dysregulation getting so high, and that's how you're trying to control that, that feeling, or for someone else, it may be outbursts of anger and for someone else it might be

Matthew McKay: [00:08:47] Exactly.

So self-injury, sudden, sudden anger, and certain, certainly even substance use is, is, is a part of that behavioral dysregulation.

Diana Hill: [00:08:58] Why is it that some people are better at regulating their emotions

Matthew McKay: [00:09:04] Well, that's a great and somewhat difficult to answer question. I think, you know, Lenahan is postulated that.

Emotion dysregulation is partly hardwired, and partly a product of, environments that are, invalidating. and another part of what creates emotion dysregulation, of course, is trauma and early childhood trauma or early adverse experiences in

childhood. Seem to impact, the development of neural pathways between the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system.

so we don't get very emotionally ready. We don't have, if you don't have much a connection between your prefrontal cortex, where you do your reasoning and thinking and deciding and your limbic system, sort of the primitive emotional centers of the brain, then you often just react emotionally because you really don't have, on board, executive function, you're not, you're not really able to think about and analyze a situation. So it was a problem. And so kids who have early trauma don't develop as many of these neural pathways and are almost by definition, a less loosely regulated because there's less of a communication between those parts of their brain.

Diana Hill: [00:10:19] when I first started learning DBT in graduate school, it was one of those experiences of why didn't they teach us this all along? Like why isn't this part of our curriculum? Because the way that DBT is broken down is into four core. Skills. And some of them are more acceptance based skills, and some of them are more change based strategies, but they're, they're concrete strategies that we all could use.

And then in particular, if you have issues with emotion dysregulation there, they're very helpful. So I'd love to go through each of these categories with you and then talk about how you teach them in the workbook, what you see in your clinical practice, and then maybe even draw. Some of the cards that you have in this, the skills deck that came, that came out, and we can talk a little bit about that, but let's just start with the four categories of DBT skills.

Matthew McKay: [00:11:12] So, the four a key strategies or skills that Lenahan has outlined are first distress tolerance. So you start with that. mindfulness is the second major skill, the ability to pay attention to the present moment.

The third skill is, emotion regulation and, the ability to watch one's emotions and, and to turn the knob down on emotional reactions. and interpersonal effectiveness is the fourth, learning how to relate to others in ways that are effective and get our needs met as opposed to, angry, rejecting. Hostile interactions.

Diana Hill: [00:11:56] One of the things that act practitioners may may bristle at, and the distress tolerance skills is the use of a distraction. And that's actually a skill that you're teaching encouraging. But in DBT, it's effective distraction. Can you speak to that?

Matthew McKay: [00:12:15] Well, first of all, distraction really does work. they've done some component and analysis and found. the distraction is actually one of the most effective of the distress tolerance techniques. and, even though acceptance, commitment therapy doesn't like distraction because it.

It's a deliberate attempt to downregulate or, or, or, suppressing emotion. it does work really well there are all kinds of ways that, we can distract from intense emotions.

but I think one of the best ways is to just plan something nice. To plan, to do something that you're going to enjoy and focus on that plan and distract yourself with a future event that you are anticipating with pleasure. But there are lots of other distraction techniques. and, I think it's crucial for people who are struggling

with emotion dysregulation to learn some of them because they really work.

Diana Hill: [00:13:14] experienced a lot of panic attacks and the ambulance showed up. And they gave her some advice so that she then gave me the, now I'm using with my, with my clients. They told her during her panic attack, one of the best things to do is to read a sentence out loud, and they gave her a piece of paper and how to read out loud

and she said it was incredibly helpful. So that's a perfect example of you're in a panic attack. maybe distracting yourself could be helpful in this moment. Another option would be, , feeling the sensation and opening and diffusing and all of that, but it's all

Matthew McKay: [00:13:48] Exactly.

It's about what works. And one of the reasons that works, by the way, is that when we're, when we're panicking, we're really operating mostly from the right side of the brain. and, and forcing oneself to read words, we have to move over to the left side of the brain. and so, it really, it really does distract because we're literally using a different part of our brain.

Diana Hill: [00:14:12] the ambulance. You know, paramedics, they see a lot of, they see a lot of panic attacks. They got some good advice.

Matthew McKay: [00:14:19] know what they're

Diana Hill: [00:14:19] Yeah. Another distress tolerance example from one of my clients was one that she struggled with binge eating and she described a time when. She had brought home all this binge food and her car, and she got out of the car and she was about to go on this binge and she took all the food. She put it behind her car and then drove backwards across it and then drove backwards and forwards and backwards and forwards.

And it was just example of, you know. It sometimes can seem Senate kind of crazy to do this, but it's actually going to benefit you in the long run, and it's how to survive a crisis without making it worse, which is really what distress

Matthew McKay: [00:15:00] Exactly. And, and having in each client has to figure out what uniquely works for them.

And, some distress tolerance techniques are, extremely effective, for individual a, and, and it was, you'll be, it's, it's completely worthless. And so we, and we have to experiment with every one of them to see, you know, a, what is uniquely useful.

Diana Hill: [00:15:20] So I have your, your DBT skills card deck here.

And what this is, is it's a number of the DBT skills distilled down into individual cards. And they're in different sections. So you have cards for distress, tolerance skills, you have cards with emotion regulation skills.

So I'm going to pull one of the distress tolerance skills cards here. And this is the one that I pulled is number five, and it says, relax and soothe.

Using touch. Make a list of the tactile sensations that are most pleasing for you every day. Do something that feels good on your skin, such as taking a warm shower, applying a soothing skin lotion, or petting a soft animal. Start today. So what distress tolerance skill does that lie

Matthew McKay: [00:16:07] Well, that's under a self soothing.

we know that, if you. Pay attention to something that feels good. and, and it feels good to one of your senses. it tends to distract from painful emotions. so we have

five self-soothing strategies. one that relates to, things that you taste that tastes good, smell good.

the touch that we just talked about, kinesthetic, auditory and visual. So there are, self soothing strategies and for all five senses. And we encourage people to actually choose in advance, Mmm. Two or three strip of the self soothing strategies, in each of these sensory domains.

And it works really great. It's, it works as a distraction, but it also works to add pleasure to your life, you know, to, to make your life, at a moment when you're feeling distressed suddenly about something that feels good. and, and to bring these positive sensory experiences in, at the very moment that you are struggling with emotions.

Diana Hill: [00:17:07] And I think therapists can model this in their offices. So for example, in my office, I keep essential oils that just right by the client's chair that they can use if they want to try some of those on. I always have fresh flowers in the office. I always have a, a blanket and, has a nice texture to it.

And. Just tending to those things for our clients, and then we can also direct direct clients to use some of that even during our sessions can be helpful as practicing the self-soothing skill right there.

Matthew McKay: [00:17:39] great to model it, and I think it's also important to consider that some of these self-soothing.

activities, , can have symbolic value as well. like, I have a client who's had a very strong, good relationship to her mother. and her mother were, a perfume that was smelled like violets. And so she keeps a little vial of violet perfume , with her at all times.

And when she smells that , she feels her mother's presence and her mother's support. So not only smells good, but it has a special meaning and symbolic representation for her. I, I carry a a little, it's a little disk that was given to me by someone I loved very much. And when I, when I touched that disc, I often feel a little bit more, courage or, I feel more comfortable somehow, are optimistic.

help helping folks develop. A number of these self-soothing strategies, and ideally a couple of them having some of this symbolic value, can be usually important strategy for emotion regulation.

Diana Hill: [00:18:47] It makes me think about just some of the things that if you had a healthy relationship with a parent, they may have done for you.

You know, like I send off my kids when they had the sleepover with a little necklace of mine or a little symbol for them to hold onto, but sometimes we haven't been taught that and we need to learn. Learn how to do that. Symbolic meaning is important. It also links to the second skill set that you're talking about, which is mindfulness, and you spend a lot of time in DBT.

It's sort of woven, I think, throughout all of the different skills. Is this really core skill of mindfulness? Can you speak a bit to that and how it's used in DBT?

Matthew McKay: [00:19:24] Yeah. A DBT really uses mindfulness as a coping strategy, which is very different from acceptance and commitment therapy, which, uses mindfulness as a really, to, to turn toward face and expose oneself to whatever, whatever's happening whatever one is experiencing.

But in. And DBT mindfulness. It's major function is to get people out of ruminative processes. That repetitive negative thinking is so much a part of emotion

dysregulation. Mindfulness seems to work really well to help people, get out of their, these repetitive negative thoughts. So if we get focused on the present moment, we're not thinking about all our mistakes in the past. we're not thinking of dangerous and horrible things that are going to happen to us in the future. and, and attending to our sensory experience in the now . Is very regulating. It's emotionally regulating because, usually we can take refuge in the present moment. The present moment is just things that are happening around us that may feel actually rather pleasant. and so attending to what, what I see, what I hear, we use a lot of five senses exercise and spending a minute and a half or so, really focusing on the present moment of each, each of these sensations. And that works wonders for people because it gets them right into the present moment. And I guess them out of whatever their negative thoughts have been that have been triggering painful effect.

Diana Hill: [00:20:56] Probably the most frequently used mindfulness skill that I use now from DBT is wise mind. And if you're my client, you know that word because it's balancing the wisdom from emotion, mind and the wisdom from rational mind and then finding a greater wisdom at dialectic of the two. Can you speak about wise mind, how you teach it and how you use it?

Matthew McKay: [00:21:19] So, I agree. Why is mine is a tremendously valuable, Strategy. How I teach it is I have a, I, I, first of all, it's important to differentiate between emotion, mind, and wise mind and, irrational mind and help clients recognize what are each of these minds and how do they look and how do they feel?

and, and there are limitations. Emotions, send us messages that are action urges, that push us to do certain things, some of which may not be very good for us. and sometimes, rational mind, it comes up with all kinds of, thoughts that actually don't lead to any, appropriate or skillful action. and we just get stuck and, paralyzed. So why is mine? I teach it. I don't know. We may teach it differently, but I teach it by having them client focused on the center of the breadth that that spot right at the center of your breath, which is your diaphragm, and bring all of the attention to that place in the body. And, and observe the breath and when thoughts arise, let us let them go and just observe the breath for awhile until you get really, really centered before they enter into the wise mind process. Though, I usually have them start with a question, you know, what should I do about such and such? if they're struggling with making a decision or are, are developing, a wiser, effective course of action. So I'll have them ask that question first before entering the wise mind meditation. And wait. A N and I'll tell him sometimes the answer isn't going to come very, very wise. Mind meditation, it may come later in the day. It may come spontaneously, but just ask the question, do the meditation and allow yourself, your wise mind to do its work. Eventually will produce some kind of response or answer.

Diana Hill: [00:23:15] say. Yeah. I

Matthew McKay: [00:23:17] teach it?

Diana Hill: [00:23:17] I teach it a little differently for. You know, for every client, and sometimes I just teach it as an inner knowing that maybe is getting clouded

or pushed around by emotional mind or reasonable mind because we can feel those two arguing out.

thinking about an example for me this week of I'm debating whether or not to go on a field trip with my kids on Wednesday or to work. And get some work done during that, , three hour period of time. And I had my rational mind telling you to work and had my emotional mind feeling guilty for not going on the field trip. And they just bounced each other back and forth. And I couldn't decide until early this morning when I was out running. And I just had this knowing. And what I love about Marsha Lenahan is that. She really teaches that, that we all have a wise mind and it's there and in how to climb down that sort of inner staircase into that place.

Underneath that is calm and centered and knowing and maybe honors all of it. Honors the emotion might honors the reasonable or rational mind, whatever you want to call it. And I think that meditation or visual visualization is one way of getting there. but there's, there's other ways of maybe even being just in partnership with, with a friend that we can notice our wise mind show up, or we can see our wise mind and, and other people like a tuning fork, you know, things that we tune into.

But it's a beautiful skill. And I think in particular, my work with eating disorders, it's a skill that. It's really at the foundation of a lot of decision making that is helpful decision-making.

So I have your, your deck here. I'm gonna pull. A mindfulness card from the deck and, huh, this is a real case.

So this one's a related mine, but different than wise mind. It's beginner's mind. And so this card says it's card number 22 use beginner's mind. You can talk about what that is, but it says today, engage with every situation and relationship as if you were seeing it for the first time without making judgments and without being critical instead be mindful of your actions and observations. Do your best to notice something new that you might have missed in the past. Try it today. So beginner's mind, what's, what

Matthew McKay: [00:25:33] Well, it's such an important, Mmm, strategy and technique because, so much of what drives emotion dysregulation are our judgements.

we make, we make judgments about other people and negative judgments and get very angry. we make negative judgments about ourselves and get very depressed and the shame, ah, so judgments really are the source of so much psychological pain. Make a guess that 75% of the actual psychological pain people suffer is, is judgment related.

and, and folks who were emotionally dysregulated, seem to have a specially. Vicious, part of their, their mental process that, that engages in very, very black and white judgments. Things are very good, or they're very bad. People are very good, or they're very bad. They themselves are very good or very bad.

And these, these dichotomist judgments. end up, inflaming enormous, problems with rage and self-loathing. So beginner's mind is taking an experience. As if you've never seen it before, but, but the process is paying attention to what is this experiences? What am I seeing, what I'm hearing?

What am I feeling? What is this thing that I'm, I'm experiencing right now? and

then when their judgment shows up, say there's a judgment and let me get back to paying attention to what I am, experiencing right now.

and looking for something interesting and new about it. Try to try to observe it carefully so that, so that you see something that perhaps you haven't seen or hear something you haven't heard So beginner's mind is, is a very crucial strategy and technique to learn, to start to learn, to actually recognize the difference between judgment.

it's a, it's a form of meditation. usually we tend, when we meditate, we focus on something like the breath. and then when you have thoughts, you notice them and bring your attention back to the breath. Well, in this case, w, you focus on experiencing this thing in front of you that you are, you are now observing. And when you have judgment thoughts, you'd note them and bring your attention back to experiencing it again. So it's a lovely meditation and very powerful strategy.

Diana Hill: [00:27:48] It's a great one to use with body image. So many times we do our morning, look in the mirror and we just go straight to judgment about. What we see in that mirror with our face or a body. And if you take a beginner's mind as if you've never seen this face before, and you look at the shape of your eyes or the texture of your lips, it can be a very different experience because judgments are shorthand way of experiencing the present moment, but being in beginner's mind, that all falls away.

You just see what is. And you can, then you can practice that ticket one step forward and take that same beginner's mind to looking at your child's face and look at the shape of their eyes and the texture or their lips, and then you start to appreciate that, wow, it's not gonna always be this way.

You know? , I love beginner's mine. It's a very useful tool. And it traces really back to Buddhism, which a lot of, Marsha Linehan's and DBT skills do. They integrate behavioral psychology, but also Zen Buddhism and some content can happen with prayer. And, she was really groundbreaking in terms of that, grateful to her

Matthew McKay: [00:28:51] Yeah, she was, she didn't hurt so much of what she developed a DVT that was from her trip to India and all of her experiences there. Yeah. And just the one point about, Judgements is the problem. One of the, I think, problems with judgments is they take us out of the present. and when we entered the present moment, we can finally take refuge from judgments in the present moments. Judgments don't exist. Those are mental processes, that, that are, that are actually leaving the present and to, and taking us into, conceptual thought.

so anyway, I, I just, it's a, it's a beautiful technique, people strategy, and I think it's a great contribution that she brought it into. you know, Western psychology.

Diana Hill: [00:29:37] So practice it with your face in the morning

another set of skills are the emotion regulation skills.

How do we regulate our emotions effectively when they're strong in the

Matthew McKay: [00:29:52] Well, Marsha Linehan, of course, and DBT, has a whole suite of. Of strategies, but really, emotion regulation starts with, facing the emotion, actually learning about and experiencing it because, you know, the, the

three, things that cause emotion dysregulation are repetitive, negative thinking. Number one. We've talked a little bit about that. emotion driven behavior, actually makes our emotions more intense when we engage in mercy driven behavior. And when we try to suppress our emotions and push them out of awareness, that makes the worst. So, one of the things that we teach a lot is that emotions are a wave.

the average emotion lasts seven minutes. and, and. And what keeps us stuck at the top of the wave are those three things, repetitive, negative thinking, and, acting on our emotions and try to avoid as suppress our emotions. And that's how we get stuck with chronic emotional disorders.

we, we do one of those three things. And so emotion regulation starts with turning toward the emotion and, and learning about it and observing it. emotional exposure is, is a crucial heart of emotion regulation. and frankly, I think DBT could use a lot more emotion exposure.

I think it's so important that, it's fundamental foundational, for emotion regulations turning toward the emotion. But it's also important after you've turned toward the emotion, if it's still overwhelming and you've observed it, for awhile, that you can do some things to, cope and, and, and manage and down-regulate the immersion.

and of course, the emotion regulation part of DVT has a lot of those skills, including things like acting the opposite and so forth. There are a lot of specific techniques to help. Turn the knob down on intense emotions, but it starts with facing them.

Diana Hill: [00:31:53] know if it was Tara Brock or where it sources back to, but then the name it to tame it.

Philosophy around emotion regulation that just placing a name on it helps regulate it and making, room for it, making friends with it, opening up that closet door and seeing what's in there. I also think that vulnerability to emotion is one of the things that we pass over quickly and we don't think about as therapists there's a lot of things that make us more vulnerable to experiencing an extreme emotion and they're just sort of basic self care strategies. I was working with a client recently who was just talking about how much more ancient as she was unusual and how life was just feeling overwhelming.

And of course I'm thinking only way to get contact with your psychiatrist and do a medication change. But then I started asking more questions and I learned that she had just changed her work schedule to doing the 2:00 AM shift. And it's like, of course you're feeling more anxious because you're not your, your sleep schedule is completely off.

can you talk a little bit about reducing emotional vulnerability

Matthew McKay: [00:32:59] Yeah, so important. and so, and a lot of things, that we do with our bodies are happening in our bodies are, are implicated in emotion dysregulation. So dealing with those vulnerabilities, if you're in chronic pain.

It's really important to find some, ways of, of dealing with that pain more effectively. people with chronic sleep disorders. it's been, estimated that that's probably the greatest single contributor to emotion dysregulation is, when people are getting insufficient sleep or, or have a sleep disorder of some kind.

So addressing sleep disorders, addressing, the kinds of food we, and that there

are certain kinds of foods that actually create more dysregulation. We, if we load up with sugar. We're going to have a more dysregulation. and and so paying attention to diet, paying attention to exercise, people who don't exercise are much more prone to dysregulation.

So there are a lot of things we can do to deal with these, vulnerabilities that are rooted in our bodies. And, I think that's an important part of DBT is helping clients identify and recognize, what those vulnerabilities are for them and changing those behaviors. just to go back for a second, to , exposure.

one of the things that we've advocated for a lot, in, in emotion exposure is being able to verbalize the emotion while you're watching it. So it's not just, it's not just naming it and saying, Oh, well I'm feeling anxious, but, but actually describing the emotion. describing, finding as many words as possible for the emotion.

Physicalizing how big is it? What color is it? and then also looking at other aspects of what's the physical sensation that goes with this emotion? What are the thoughts that go with this much? What are the action orders? And really paying attention and verbalizing all of these components of emotion so that people get used to recognizing.

what makes up an emotional experience, what is it composed of? and, as they learn to describe it, it becomes less frightening and less overwhelming. So the ability to describe emotions regulates, and it improves the distress tolerance tremendously.

Diana Hill: [00:35:18] It's sorta like the experience of how you feel right before you're about to write a big paper and then how you feel when you've outlined it and broken it down and taken a look at all the different. Components of it. All of a sudden it doesn't feel quite so scary and overwhelming and it's the unknown. That's, I think, scary about emotions. And when we don't have awareness of what this whole in our landscape is, it, can feel. Overwhelming. Yeah. So, so that's very much part of the exposure. And you talk more about emotion exposure in your Emotion, Efficacy work.

And, and we had Aprilia West, last on the show talking specifically about how to do that. And she gave some great, I think she worked with me around one of the things that I was feeling overwhelmed about. So go back and listen to that episode. I will put it in the show notes. If people want to learn more about that. I think it's a really helpful, strategy. Okay, let's pull an emotion regulation skill from your deck. Oh, this is very related to what you said. It's number 28 and it's say how you feel to help you recognize and cope with how you feel. It's often helpful to say it out loud. This might sound silly, but stating how you feel like I'm scared. Highlights how you feel and can help you choose the best coping strategy. Like use mindful breathing. Try it today. Yeah. Say how you feel. Okay.

Matthew McKay: [00:36:37] Yeah. And that, and that really I think is an important step because, you know, folks who are struggling with emotion dysregulation, often emotionally phobic.

They're really afraid of, of paying attention to their machines. They're afraid of, of looking at them at all. And, and when an emotion begins to surface for them, their first reaction is to try to, you know, get rid of it. but of course there's, as I was saying, trying to suppress or get rid of the motion usually makes it worse.

It intensifies the emotion it actually has the opposite effect of what the person

wants when they're trying to push it away. So naming the emotion, just allowing yourself to say, Oh, I'm feeling scared, or I'm feeling kind of sad. leads to, first of all, a recognition of, Oh, this is what I'm, this is what's happening to me. But also it may lead to, as the card says, choosing better skills. W so I'm feeling this way. What, what shall I do? What can I do? there's, there's my, I can, I can engage in emotion driven behavior and make it worse. but maybe I can use some of my DBT skills and actually, do deal with this feeling more effectively.

Diana Hill: [00:37:47] And if you're a parent or you work with kids, I think that spending some time doing that with our kids, whether it's , they hit their knee on the corner of a table and you just say, where does it hurt? Show me and tell me what happened and what does it feel like? Is it, is it like a.

Like a spiky feeling or like a dull ache, like describe it to me that we're, teaching our kids how to do that with our physical pain, but also to do that with some of the emotional pain, staying in that space long enough before you start going to the problem solving of what are we going

Matthew McKay: [00:38:20] Yeah.

And you're making such a great point because, because when you look at a child who's just gotten overwhelmed by falling down and scraping their knee, and they're flooding, they're flooding with with distress and, and as soon as you get them to start describing what's going on. You, you noticed everything shifts and that flooding stops, and now the child is finding words for their experience. , and the experience ceases to be something that's is overwhelming and, totally threatening. It's now just something that we can talk about. Okay.

Diana Hill: [00:38:53] always have to run straight for the ice pack or the bandaid. Let them talk about it first. But we'll still get you the ice pack.

And that's sort of DBT in a nutshell. Right. That acceptance, but also change.

So. Interpersonal effectiveness skills, man, we could all use some of these. and when I think about these skills, I think about Marsha Linehan, juggling these three components of balancing the objective of what we want to get in our relationship, balancing the relationship, how we want other people to feel about us.

And then also balancing our own self respect. And there's different points in times when those, maybe one may be stronger than the other. sometimes we may then have the interpersonal skills on hand, but we don't use them. So what gets in the way of, being interpersonally effective?

Matthew McKay: [00:39:43] Well, if you have the skills and you don't use them, what's getting in the way is a lack of mindfulness. You're, you're, you're not aware of a mode of the moment of choice. We talked a lot about the moment of choice. A moment of choice is when you've got. Trigger, you know, something has happened that has triggered a strong emotional reaction.

You feel threatened in some way. and if you're not mindful and aware of that experience that, Oh, I just just happened to me. I just got triggered. I am feeling hurt, or I am feeling scared, or I'm feeling ashamed if I don't, if I don't notice that, and I, and I don't. Have awareness that that moment of being triggered emotionally is also a moment of choice.

That I have a choice. I can, I can do emotion driven behaviors. I, I can follow the action urge that the emotion is pushing me toward, or I can do something that's

effective. I can do something that I've decided in advance, would be, a better way to handle this, this particular situation.

So, Mmm. Set one is we have to be aware of when we're triggered. For any behavior change. so, but number two, we have to have a plan. What, what am I going to do instead? I've got my old action urge, my old emotion driven behavior on die. That's a well worn path. the neural pathways that leap leap from getting triggered to, to that action is they're very well established.

But I have to also then get clear what is my alternative. And so it's very important to work with people, to develop. in this case is assertiveness scripts, how can I express. My feelings and needs in a way that's effective and planning that in advance. And so helping clients identify likely situations that are going to be coming up in the near future where they're going to get triggered.

And, and, and working with them to mindfully, learn to observe that moment when they're triggered, to notice when, when they've gone into that triggered painful state. And then, Oh, and I have a plan that goes with them. I don't want to say something about that too, because one of the things that we've done that's very different in this book than we'd done before, is, is we're using a cognitive rehearsal, to help with this.

So what will, in a cognitive rehearsal, which you know, is an old, techniques, it goes back in the early seventies, but, April West and I kind of, so together with, exposure, , to make the rehearsals more effective. and that's what we're doing now with all the, all the DBT skills.

So the first thing is, okay, let's, let's visualize that triggering experience and then let's actually feel upset. Let's let, let's visualize it long enough that we can get up to a five or six suds and really feel a level of distress. But now I'm going to, I'm going to notice the distress.

I'm going to recognize that this is a moment of choice. Here it comes. here's that urge to do that old, old motion driven behavior. I can feel it. And now we have the, the client visualize. A new value space or, effective behavior, that a new response. And it might be, you know, expressing their needs in an assertive way, setting a limit.

Asking for something, or, or even just acknowledging that they have had, they've been hurt that they've had , this experience, this emotional reaction, but the new behavior then is visualized. Right next to the experience of the, of the, of the triggering event and, and the emotion that went with.

So by using exposure and, and, and having clients learn new responses and practice, visualize new responses, in the face of the pain, and, and during the pain, it makes it more likely they'll be able to use it, out in the world when they're triggered.

Diana Hill: [00:43:26] does. Like athletes have been using this for a while, whether they'll imagine themselves, you know, at the game that pressure's on. It's the end. You got two minutes left to make the shot and then imagine yourself centering, taking a breath and shooting the ball. Right. And, and. There's good research on doing that type of visualization. The part that you're really adding in is being in the emotional state. That context dependent and learning that you're practicing the skill with, and that's very helpful.

Rather than just talking about the scale, you're actually practicing it in a

visualization way.

Matthew McKay: [00:44:00] Yeah, exactly. So you can practice new behaviors, and you can also practice your coping skills. You know, let's visualize the activating experience, and let's notice that you're getting upset. Then what we're going to do is observe the emotion for a little bit and then we'll cope it down. The coping behaviors are so much better and more easily learned when they're learned in an activated state.

Diana Hill: [00:44:24] mentioned an assertiveness script, and I really appreciate how on this workbook you took, the certain, a script that the dear man that I learned when I was in doing DBT, which was, I always have to go back and look at the acronym and then remember which letter.

So there's a ton of acronyms and traditional DBT, dear man, being one of them, where you're doing an assertiveness exercise with somebody and you're saying, okay. First D stands for describe, and then dear man stands for express and a stand, you know, but, but you're certainly, script is way simplified, paired down, and, just four steps.

can you, spell it out for us?

Matthew McKay: [00:45:01] Absolutely. we call it, I think, I feel, I want, and then, and then there's a contingency piece, but I think is just what is, what are the facts of the situation? What, what is it that's happened here? and I have to describe the facts non-judgmentally.

It would not w without pejorative language, just, just the facts. What

Diana Hill: [00:45:21] you're asserting yourself to somebody else, something that you

Matthew McKay: [00:45:25] the situation to them without judgment, without a Spurgeon's. It's just, this is what has happened.

Diana Hill: [00:45:31] start with

Matthew McKay: [00:45:32] that's the, I think part. Yeah. I feel part is just I statements what, what is my emotional reaction?

And not, not that you, you made me feel this way or, I feel that you're a bad person, which is not, not an emotional cause. It's not an I statement, but just I feel sad or I feel hurt or I feel scared or whatever. My emotional reaction is to this situation as, as simply sharing that. and then the I want part is identifying.

What specifically I would like the other person to do or change and it has to be a behavior. It can't be, I can't ask them to change their feelings or change their attitudes. all I can do is ask them to change their actual actions and behaviors. and I usually, it's helpful to ask for one thing as opposed to multiple things.

So ask for a single behavioral change, in the, in the, I want part. Now we have to acknowledge though that, people don't always do what we want, even if we ask them very nicely or assertively. and so the fourth component is the self care solution. Which is how I will take care of myself if, if you and I can't work together to make some kind of change and address my need here.

a self care solution is not a punishing, is not designed to punish the other person or, or harm them. But it's about how I need to take care of myself if I can't get your help in this situation. and, and that's, in some ways that's a very important part of the script because, , if the person is unmotivated to help you or respond to your needs, you have to provide a contingency to get, to get them interested

sometimes. So it's self care solution is, is important. And we have people work in advance to figure out the, I th I think, I feel I want part of this, and what would we, a inappropriate self care solution.

and, and so they have that pretty clear and often we'll rehearse it. In session, so that when an identifiable and likely trigger event happens, they can use the skill. It's up there and it's available to them.

Diana Hill: [00:47:39] Right? It's a great skill for asking for what you want or what you don't want from somebody.

So for example, it gives us the second time that you've been on our show. If after the first time I wanted you to come back on, what would the, I think be, I think we had a good conversation, or we, how do you make that not a judgment.

Matthew McKay: [00:47:55] Well, I think, yeah, you have to be careful about the judgment part, but, it could be, this conversation I think was very useful to our audience and, I, I really enjoyed it and Mmm.

Diana Hill: [00:48:07] And then I

Matthew McKay: [00:48:08] what I would

Diana Hill: [00:48:08] excited about, yeah. About the possibility of S come on.

Matthew McKay: [00:48:11] other topic and,

Diana Hill: [00:48:12] Yeah.

I want you to come back and if you decide not to come back, I may have one of your

Matthew McKay: [00:48:16] Yeah. We can just burn my book or something,

Diana Hill: [00:48:21] That would not, would not be regulated. Right. So it's, it's a great tool. having these short hand in your pocket, rehearse it, plan it out, then we'll be a lot more effective when you're actually going in and, and it's, the stakes are a little bit higher.

Yeah. Great. Great. So let's pull in our last skill set here. Interpersonal effectiveness, skill, and Oh, this is a nice one. Practice making simple requests. Find safe opportunities to practice making simple requests. For example, ask a stranger for the time or directions in a store. Ask an employee to help you find something with friends.

Ask for a small favor. The more you practice, the easier we'll get.

Matthew McKay: [00:48:59] Yeah. And it, you know, it's true that, A lot of folks who struggle with their emotions. have a hard time asking for things. It's scary. And, and a and R office, because they grew up in, in, in invalidating environments where their needs and their feelings weren't important or were disparaged in some way.

and so asking for things as dangerous and, and, and sometimes they have to learn with baby steps, you know, asking for some directions and, asking somebody to get through the time. Or whatever it is. Very simple. Or air your supermarket, you know, where, where's the product section here?

And just, just asking simple questions, is a good foundational and beginning a strategy to, to learn more about assertiveness. There's another assertive tool that we, use a lot. And it's a, it's about limit setting. and it's very simple. It's, it's much simpler than. And Marsha Marcia's approach, but basically it's two steps.

You start by saying you validate the other person's experience, whatever it is they're doing, Oh, I want you to do, you, you, you totally validate and appreciate

why they would want that. and so you always start with the validation part, and then you set the limit and say, but actually, I don't want to do this. and you say, I don't want to do this cause it doesn't feel good to me that you don't, and it's really important when you set a limit, not, not to have a rationale for why, you know, it's like, I don't want to do this because, you know, some, some rational reason because then that then that's going to lead to debate and the other person's going to attack it.

And you know, you shouldn't think that way. But in fact, if we just keep it very simple, validate the other person. And say that I don't want do this because it doesn't feel good to me. Mmm. it really cuts off a lot of arguments, but also it helps the other person feel okay about their own needs.

Diana Hill: [00:50:52] a lot of the strategies and skills that we've talked about today, you'll see sort of this underlying theme of practice and DBT is all about practice, practice, practice, practice, practice. The workbook that you offer has a lot of practices in it. some skills, cards to continue your practice at home. And it's something that people can use either on their own, or if they're in a DBT group or a therapist wants to use it with a client, it can be used in that way. So it's really bridging this traditional DBT approach of it's in a, in a group for, you know, two hours at a time into the. To the real world and, and simplifies things and make some really accessible.

Matthew McKay: [00:51:29] it's kinda cool for, for what you're saying about practicing as now we have clients, you know, just, you know, we get a card out. That's something that they really do need to practice and we want them to carry it with them.

all that week. And just, and just read it every day, reminding himself, Oh, I'm working on this. And they keep the card with them because that's, that's the reminder that this is the thing we're practicing.

So, it's kind of cool for, for the point of homework and practice.

Diana Hill: [00:51:57] think people get bogged down. They just get bogged down by how much, there's so much. It's too much. And therapists get bogged down by it. So actually what I appreciate about the card deck is I had this one card that lists 52 skills on it.

And so even as a therapist, I could use this, just this one little card that listed 52 skills to think about what I'm going to do in my session today as opposed to having to go through a big manual. for me, that's what's helpful. About it, and then, yeah, you could just pull skills at random.

Honestly, if you just pulled any skill out of the deck, it's probably gonna be helpful. So,

but yeah, I liked this. I liked the card deck. I think it's, I think it's good, but yeah, you need the background a little bit to apply it well, so thank you for doing this work and for updating it, with some of your wisdom and strategies that have, that have worked for you. Really appreciate you and bringing this to us.

Matthew McKay: [00:52:49] Thank you.

Diana Hill: [00:52:50] Yes. So we'll link to all of that on our, on our website. And if you want to look up some of these cards, there's 52 skills on them and they could

be another kind of nice little tool to have as well. And it's a pleasure and delight to have you back on the show and we hope that you'll come back again talking about another book cause you've got a lot of them.

Matthew McKay: [00:53:08] I really enjoyed being with you and having our conversation.

Diana Hill: [00:53:11] Thank you for listening to psychologists

Yael Schonbrun: [00:53:20] off the clock. You can find us on iTunes Facebook and Twitter.

Debbie Sorensen: [00:53:25] This podcast is for informational and entertainment purposes only and is not meant to be a substitute for mental health treatment. If you are having a mental health emergency, please dial nine-one-one. If you're looking for mental health treatment, please visit the resources on our web page.

Diana Hill: [00:53:40] Website is www.flexsim.com. That's www.norfolk.gov Psych.com.

Take care of Dr. McKay.