

All You Ever Wanted to Know About (& maybe more)

## Skill Rehearsal in Individual Sessions in Dialectical Behavior Therapy

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### Skills Training Overview

- **Skill acquisition:** Most often in skill training group
  - Rationale: connect skills to client goals
  - Instructions (what to do, when to do it, and how to do it)
  - Demonstration & modeling: Experiential learning
  - Initial practice or rehearsal, "arbitrary" homework practice
- **Skill strengthening:** Most often in session, on chain (or TIB)
  - Behavioral rehearsal (in vivo, imaginal, role play, etc.)
  - Reinforcement of new skills
  - Add soothing, validation, to potentiate nascent skill impact\*
  - Coaching and corrective feedback
- **Skill generalization:** Both in session and in real life
  - Generalization planning + in-session rehearsal with validation, soothing\*
  - Connect in-session behavior to out-of-session behavior
  - Between session consultation
  - In vivo behavioral rehearsal assignments in real situations
  - Changing the environment so it/they reinforce progress

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### Emotion Dysregulation Disorders

Maladaptive behaviors *function* primarily to regulate emotions (or, are the natural consequences of chronically dysregulated emotion, thinking, or actions)

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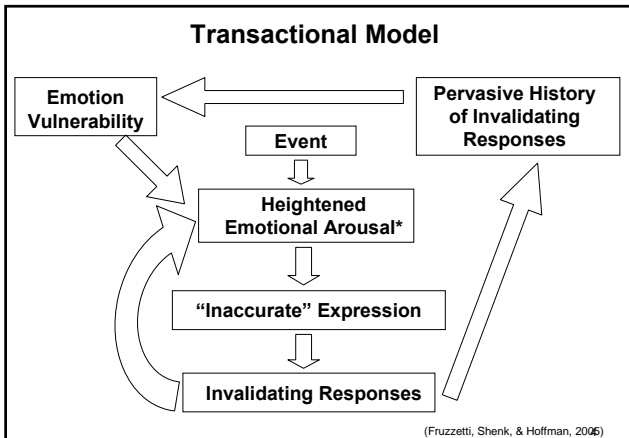
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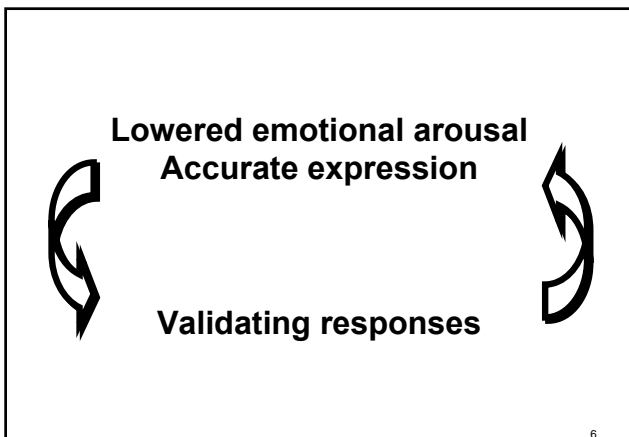
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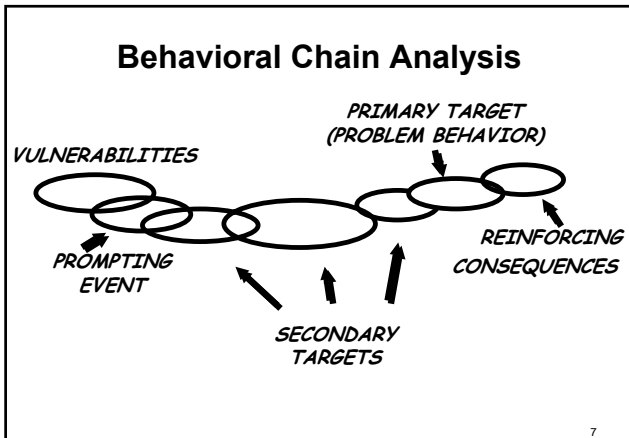
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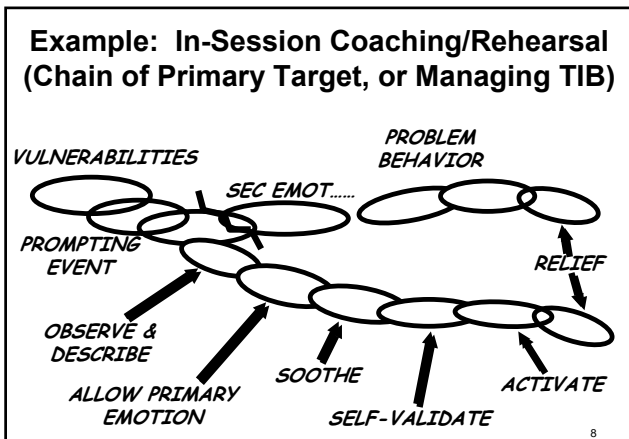
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### What's Really Going On Here?

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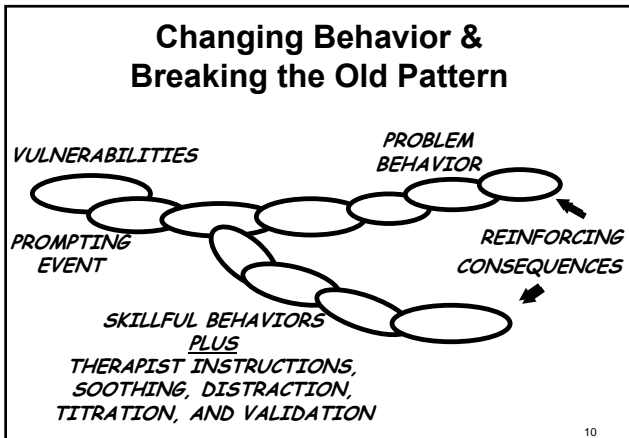
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**Potentiate: to make effective or active or more effective or more active; also: to augment the activity of synergistically**

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**Let's Take a Precise Look at This Behaviorally**

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### INCREASING TARGET BEHAVIORS

- **Reinforcers:** consequences that strengthen behavior, resulting, on average, in an increase in the behavior they follow
  - **Positive Reinforcement:** providing a positive consequence, or applying a positive stimulus after a given behavior
    - In-session, this is likely to be arbitrary and temporary
  - **Negative Reinforcement:** removing, stopping, or decreasing a negative or aversive stimulus after a given behavior
    - This is where all the change (↑ skills) must start...

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### Behavioral Concepts

- Discriminative stimulus
- Conditioned (and unconditioned) stimulus
- Conditioned (and unconditioned) response
- S<sup>A</sup>
- Establishing operation
- Matching law
- Arousal gradient
- Two-factor theory

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### Stimulus

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ↑ negative arousal</li> <li>• Urge to escape</li> <li>• C changes subject</li> <li>• Tantrum behavior</li> <li>• Tantrum works, stimulus is removed</li> <li>• Escape succeeds</li> <li>• Relief: ↓ arousal</li> <li>• (no habituation)</li> <li>• (likely ↑ reaction is learned)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ↑ negative arousal</li> <li>• T: Notice, label (V2, also distraction...)</li> <li>• Paired with attention, soothing...if timed right, attention, soothing, are reinforcing distraction, disengagement from tantrum... → ↓ arousal</li> <li>• Stimulus still present,<sub>15</sub></li> </ul> |
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### Stimulus/Prompting Event

- ↑ arousal (sadness)
- Self-invalidation
- Shame + sadness
- Judgments
- Anger
- Judgments
- Shame
- Self-harm
- Relief
- ↑ arousal (sadness)
- Mindfulness: notice, label (distraction, V2)
- Conditioning: soothing associated with skills
- Validation → ↓ arousal
- Conditioning: validation paired with skills
- Engaging in skills is reinforced & potentiated by validation

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### Potentiation of Skills

- UCS: Soothing → UCR: ↓ arousal
- CS: Thinking about or trying to use skills → CR: ↓ arousal
- UCS: Validation → UCR: ↓ arousal
- CS: Using skills → CR: ↓ arousal
- Skills → ↓ arousal (a little) + ↓ arousal (CR) = substantially more ↓ arousal

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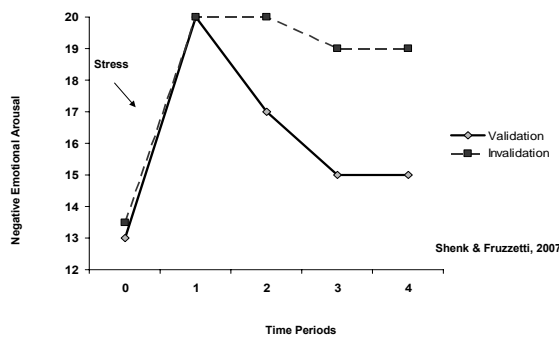
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### Validating vs. Invalidating Responses



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**DECREASING TARGET BEHAVIOR**

- Punishment: consequences that result, on average, in a reduction in the behavior they follow (+ or - punishment) – used rarely in DBT
- Extinction: reductions in a given behavior that has been reinforced before by *no longer* allowing or providing reinforcement – relevant occasionally
- Reduce antecedent stimuli (S<sup>D</sup>, CS) for dysfunctional behavior (or Δ establishing operation...mindfulness)
- Recondition behavior-behavior relationships
- Increase antecedent stimuli for alternatives (skills)
- Increase antecedent stimuli for non-dysfunctional behavior (S<sup>A</sup>)
- Reinforce skillful behavior (↑ skill → more ↓ arousal)

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**Roles of Therapist Validation**

- As an eliciting stimulus for improvement (S<sup>D</sup>)
- To balance change strategies (dialectically) –reduce arousal to make change possible, keep cognition & PS high, allow learning
- Reinforce progress (shaping, skillfulness)
- Potentiate skill use
- Strengthen self-validation

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**Remember: Every operant learning episode includes the opportunity to potentiate more learning via imbedded classical conditioning (and other learning), at least temporarily. Alternatively, this process can interfere with any possible operant learning if at cross-purposes.**

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