Overview

This workshop focuses on what affect regulation is, how it affects our clients and their relationships.
It teaches quick and practical interventions designed to facilitate the development of self-regulation.

Wise Words from Viktor Frankl

Between stimulus and response there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

What is the Experience of Affect Dysregulation?

- Internal experience of being overwhelmed with emotion and feeling out of control
- Includes emotional, cognitive, somatic and/or behavioral manifestations of affect dysregulation
  
  (Daitch, 2007)

Affect Dysregulation

Affect dysregulation is at the core of almost all psychological disorders

Emotions

- Emotions, in and of themselves, are neither good nor bad
- Even intense emotions have a time and place in which their expression is adaptive (e.g., grief)
### The Problems Occur When:

- The intensity of the response does not “match” the life event
- When one lacks the ability to dampen the emotional intensity
- Response leads to the loss of jobs, friendships and romantic relationships

### The Fall-out

- Muscle tension
- Adrenaline and cortisol release
- Psychological bracing
- Stress leads to strain on both body and mind leads to the cognitive fallout

### Additive Effect of Stress Contributes to Affect Dysregulation

“I’ve tried yoga, but I find stress less boring.”

### Getting Your Head Around the Brain

We are hardwired to react to many external stimuli with behavioral responses based on fear or anger

### SNS & PNS: The Gas and Brakes

- SNS: Responsible for the fight, flight, freeze response
- PNS: Important for clients to learn to engage
  - decrease chronic levels of hyper-arousal
  - lessen physical symptoms

### Anxiety
Too Scared for Therapy

Anxiety: Pervasive Characteristics

- Overestimates risks
- Underestimates available resources
  (Yapko, 2014)
- Repeats rigid behavior patterns
- Avoids scenarios which might trigger anxiety

The STOP Solution

- Scan
- Time-out
- Overcome the Surge of Emotion
- Put the Tools into Practice

STOP: SCAN

- Scan for thoughts, sensations, and emotions that are precursors to emotional flooding
- Reframe these cues as opportunities to practice self-regulation

STOP: Time Out

- Take a Time-out when one is emotionally flooded in order to calm and center self
- Build a regimented habit of diffusing tension

Selecting a Space for Time Out

- Private, quiet place where you will not be disturbed
- If you are in a public place, you can always go to the rest room to have some time alone
STOP

- Do you have the patience to wait ’til your mind settles and the water is clear?
- Can you remain unmoving ’til the right action arises by itself?

Tao te Ching

STOP: Overcoming the Initial Surge of Flooding

Induction techniques used to focus attention and calm:
- eye roll
- tight fist
- breathing
- safe place

Sequence of Interventions

Must master the first three self-soothing skills STO... before learning the final part of the STOP Solution

STOP: Putting the Tools into Practice

- Mindfulness With Detached Observation and Acceptance
- Okay Signal (anchor)
- Dialing Down Reactivity
- Juxtaposition of Two Feelings (Demo)
- Autogenics
- Positive Future Focusing

Mindfulness & ACT

Interventions:
- Mindfulness and Detached Observation
- Fostering Acceptance and Self-Compassion

Directions for Mindfulness

- Name the thoughts, feelings or sensations, e.g., “there’s the frustration”
- Take an attitude of curiosity about your experience, e.g., “as I observe how frustrated I am, I notice my jaw clenching”
- Remind yourself that thoughts, feelings or sensations come and go
Fostering Acceptance

Look at the image of the suffering self with compassion

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OK Signal (Anchor)

- Establish an "anchor" with an OK signal
- Signal that everything is fine or “OK” in the moment

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Autogenics

A form of self-hypnosis:
Allows the conscious mind to connect to the unconscious control of the ANS

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Dialing Down Reactivity

Think of a stressor... notice what number the needle on the dial is registering... use the power of your imagination to dial the number down...

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Positive Future Focusing

Fast-forwarding in your mind’s eye to a time in the future when the emotional flooding has dissipated

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Video Demonstration of the STOP Solution

Case Presentation
- History of childhood neglect
- Diagnosis: panic disorder; GAD
- Overcompensates with son
- Intolerance of uncertainty
**Video**

**Applications to Relationships**

- If you interact with people, challenges are a given
- But emotional flooding is not

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**Ingredients for Success**

1. Stay calm
2. Be kind
3. Give attention
4. Laugh

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**If It Were Only This Simple**

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**Emotional Triggers in Relationships**

**Feeling:**
- betrayed
- controlled
- criticized
- judged/shamed
- abandoned
- betrayed
- lack of empathy
- misunderstood

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**Other Dynamics**

- Illusion of fairness: leads to emotionally laden power struggles (often one person shoulders more responsibility)
- Personality characteristics: over or under-entitlement, narcissism or co-dependence
- Unrealistic expectations!
The BIG Impediment:

Poor affect regulation

Carolyn’ Uses The Stop Solution

- Body state: hungry and tired
- Trigger: expectation / disappointment
- Body response: agitation, increased cortisol, hypoglycemia
- Mind’s response: critical cognitions
- Impulse: to criticize/ attack unsuspecting husband
- Intervention: Stop solution: self-soothing and perspective

Unchecked Emotional Flooding

When partners are unable to regulate affect, inability to resolve conflict with positive affect occurs

Attunement

- Attunement is fundamental in our experience of well-being in a relationship
- “At the heart of empathic relationships is the experience of sending a clear image of our mind into the mind of another.” (Siegel, D., 2007)
- “The partners experience emotional resonance, they are humming the same tune” (Daitch & Lorberbaum, 2014)
Historical Basis of Conflict

• Adult relationships retrigger unresolved wounding from childhood
• Results in unconsciously projecting onto others the characteristics of our earlier caretakers
• Leads to emotional flooding and over-reactions and conflict

Bad Habits of Unsuccessful Couples

• Harsh start-ups to conversations
• Vicious counter-attacks
• Retelling past war crimes

Goals for Couples

• Impulse control
• Self-soothing
• Positive affect
• Emotional connection

Relationship Conflicts: Case

Treatment Goals:
• Break cycle of defensiveness, contempt, and withdrawal
• Increase tolerance of perceived criticism
• Develop ability to soften reactions by accessing positive memories

STOP: Putting the Tools into Practice for Relationships

• Juxtaposition of Two Thoughts/Feelings
• Wise/Compassionate Parts of Self (ego states)

Limitations of Insight and Good Will

To help relationships improve it is vital to offer couples concrete, reliable strategies for self-soothing, switching emotional gears, and rehearsing new behaviors.
Challenge You Have to Remember

Practice Makes Permanent

- Practice at end of each session.
- Successfully override ingrained behaviors.
- Visualize engaging newly learned behaviors.

Applications to Parent/Child Relationships

Letting go of the desire to fix or control children or parents

- Case example: Parent/Adult Child
- Case example: “It takes a year for your ideas to become mine.”

Self-Statements

Impulse Control

- I choose to stay calm
- I breathe through my anger (irritation, impulse, etc.)
- I release judgment of myself/my partner
- I cultivate compassion

Books

- AFFECT REGULATION TOOLBOX
- Anxiety Disorders
- ANXIETY in LOVE
- the road to calm workbook

Books
Take Away Points

- Everyone experiences an ever-changing, constant flow of emotions
- The goal is to modulate the intensity of your emotion, not eradicate it
- Your ability to experience emotion enriches and enhances your experience of life. However, when you experience emotional flooding and have no tools to ease it, you experience great suffering

Q & A

Resources


Resources


Resources

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Juxtaposition of Two Thoughts and Feelings

Carolyn Daitch, Ph.D.

From Road to Calm Workbook, Daitch, C. and Lorberbaum, L.

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1. Acknowledge that it is possible for two contradictory thoughts or feelings to coexist.
2. Imagine that you are placing this thought/emotion in the palm of one hand, and make a fist to encapsulate this emotion and hold it there.
3. Now recognize that there’s always another opposing thought/feeling that is available to you as well.
4. Direct your attention to one of these other, more positive thoughts or feelings.
5. Imagine that you are placing this thought or feeling in the palm of your other, free hand, making a fist to encapsulate it as well.

1. When a distressing thought, emotion, or sensation is powerful, it’s easy to be consumed by it. With Tool #10, Juxtaposition of Two Thoughts or Feelings, you can recognize that there’s always an, opposite thought or feeling available to you as well. And both of these thoughts or feelings can coexist… in fact… you may be pleasantly surprised to discover that calling on both can lessen the intensity of your distress… So let’s begin to do this now… by identifying one strong, distressing thought or feeling that is occurring in the moment. Perhaps a worry, sadness, a frustration….. Now

Extend both of your arms in front of you, bended slightly at the elbows with your palms
turned upward, gently cupping the air. Focus your attention on one of your hands... and as you do, place all of the uncomfortable emotions (such as anger, sadness, or fear), or any distressing thoughts in one hand... wrap your fingers around them, and hold them. Now focus on your other hand and place a positive feeling or thought there, maybe even the opposite of your distressful feelings or thoughts... tolerance, ease, acceptance, confidence...something endearing about someone you care for. And wrap the fingers of that hand around the positive thoughts or feelings. ... so that in one hand you hold the positive... and in the other, you hold the distress.

And now, with your arms still extended...cup both hands together.... And once your palms make contact... begin rubbing your right hand and your left hand together...blending those two opposing feelings.... accepting that they can co-exist... and you can feel courageous. ... even when you are frightened... you can feel forgiving... even when you’re angry...

And with that understanding... let your hands come down gently toward your chest... gently resting them on the center of your chest... above your heart... and let the softening that comes from combining the two contradictory thoughts or feeling seep into your heart... into that safe... secure place... you carry inside of you... at the very core of who you are... That’s right... feel it... soak in... thoroughly and completely...
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