

# Dialectical Behavior Therapy: A Tool for Crisis Management in Juvenile Detention

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# Disclosure and Disclaimer Statement

We do not have any relevant financial relationships  
with any commercial interests

# Agenda & Objectives

## Overview of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

- Historical and empirical basis
- Brief Description of Dialectics
- Brief Description of Biosocial Theory and Development of Pervasive Emotion Dysregulation
- Brief Description of Validation

## How DBT addresses crisis proactively/systemically

- Modes & functions of DBT
  - Skills Training Modules
- Avenue to behavior change

## How DBT addresses crisis behaviors

- Definition of Crisis
- Problems vs. Solutions
- Examples of Skills that can be used to tolerate a crisis situation
- Skills coaching process
- Brief discussion of Egregious Behavior Protocol for repair when harm is caused

# What is DBT?

- Dialectical Behavior Therapy
- A multi-modal mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral treatment
- Initially developed for suicidal behavior, current empirical basis for clients with multidialectic, complex behaviors and presentations
- A highly adaptable principle-driven treatment

# WHY DBT?

- Empirically validated approach demonstrated to effectively treat (reduce/eliminate) suicidal behavior and non-suicidal self injury (over 50 randomized control trials)
- Detention/incarceration is a risk factor for suicidal behavior and there is a systemic push for effective suicide prevention (and treatment)
- A top treatment for emotion-dysregulation
- Youth benefit from building more effective coping strategies to better manage stress and address problems in living
- Interactions between staff and youth are vital and DBT can help Improve interaction style and relationships
- DBT can reduce provider/line staff burnout
- Helping youth realize and move toward true and important goals (LWL)

\*\*growing empirical research base for addressing other mental health and behavioral problems including (but not limited to) mood disorders, substance abuse, eating disorders, and oppositional defiant disorder.

Diawhaaaaaaat?

# DIALECTICAL behavior therapy

- Finding the “truth” in the opposing position
  - People are doing the best they can *and* they can do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change.
  - This staff is really strict *and* she cares about me
  - I didn’t mean to do it *and* I caused harm
- The goal is not to win the argument, but to find a common understanding (middle ground).
- Counters the tendency for extreme positions
- Does not require you to “give up” your perspective, it’s just allowing space and understanding for another one.
- The core dialectic is between acceptance and change

# How to be Dialectical

Move from  
either/or to  
both/and

Avoid  
extremes, be  
descriptive

Remember  
that things  
are always  
changing

Accept that  
different  
opinions can  
be valid

Find the kernel  
of truth/wisdom  
in the other  
perspective

Check your  
assumptions

Ask yourself,  
“what is  
missing?”

Do you want to  
be *right* or do  
you want to be  
*effective*?

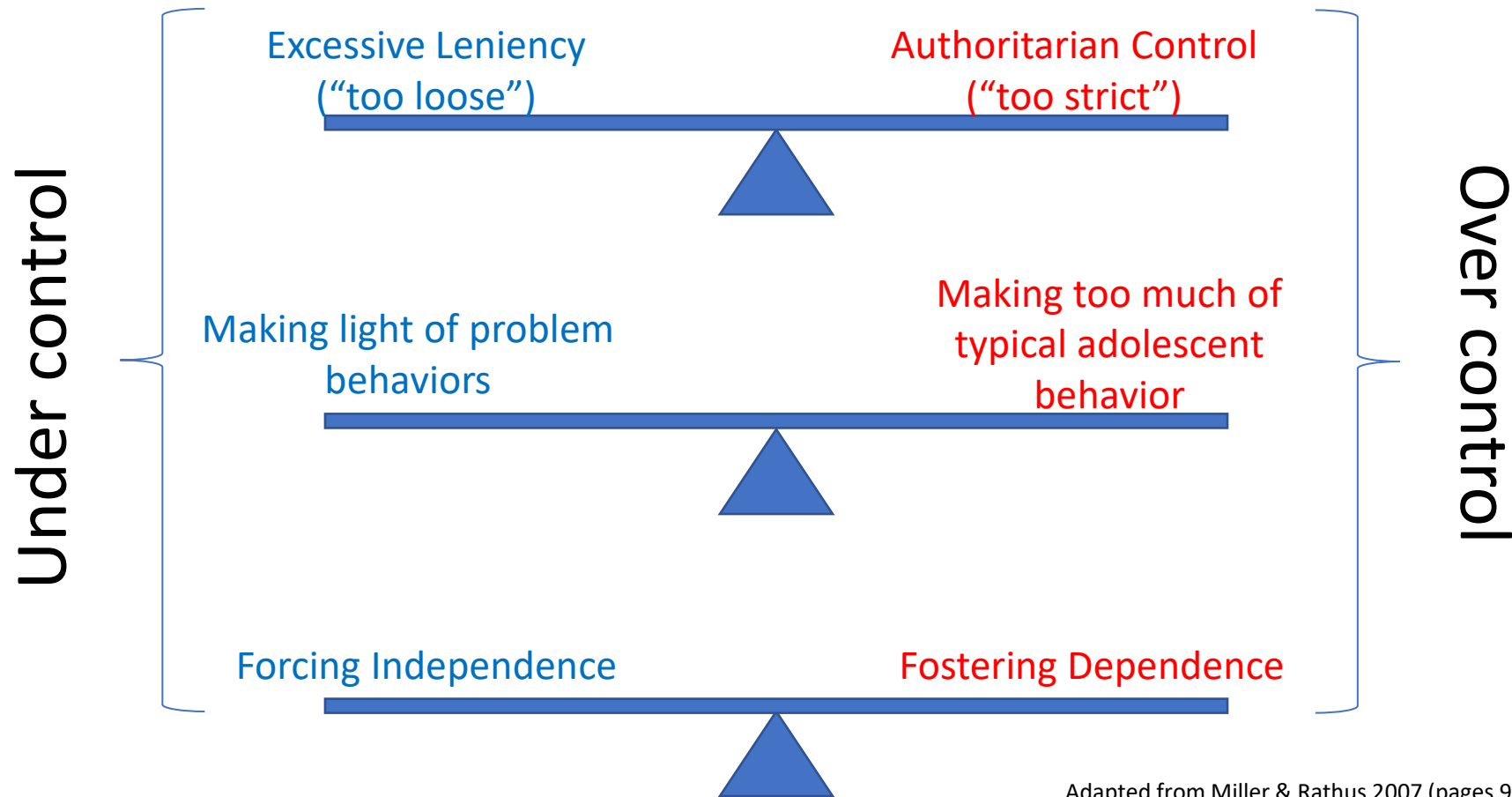
Remember  
that all things  
are caused  
and have  
function

Be open  
minded- no one  
has the absolute  
truth

There is  
always more  
than one way  
to do things

Use “I  
statements”  
and talk about  
your reaction

# Dialectical Dilemmas of Adolescents & Caregivers



Adapted from Miller & Rathus 2007 (pages 98,313)



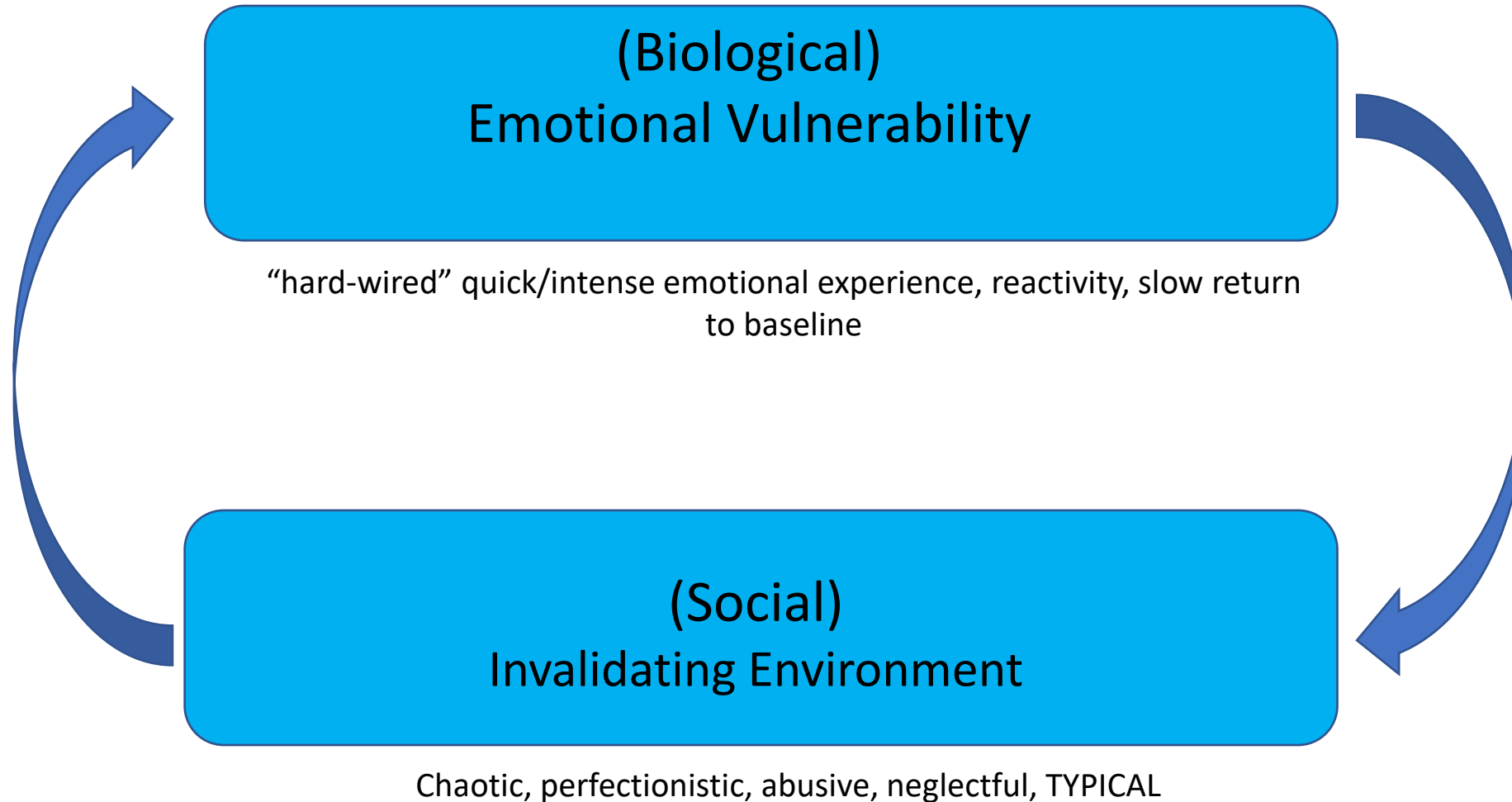


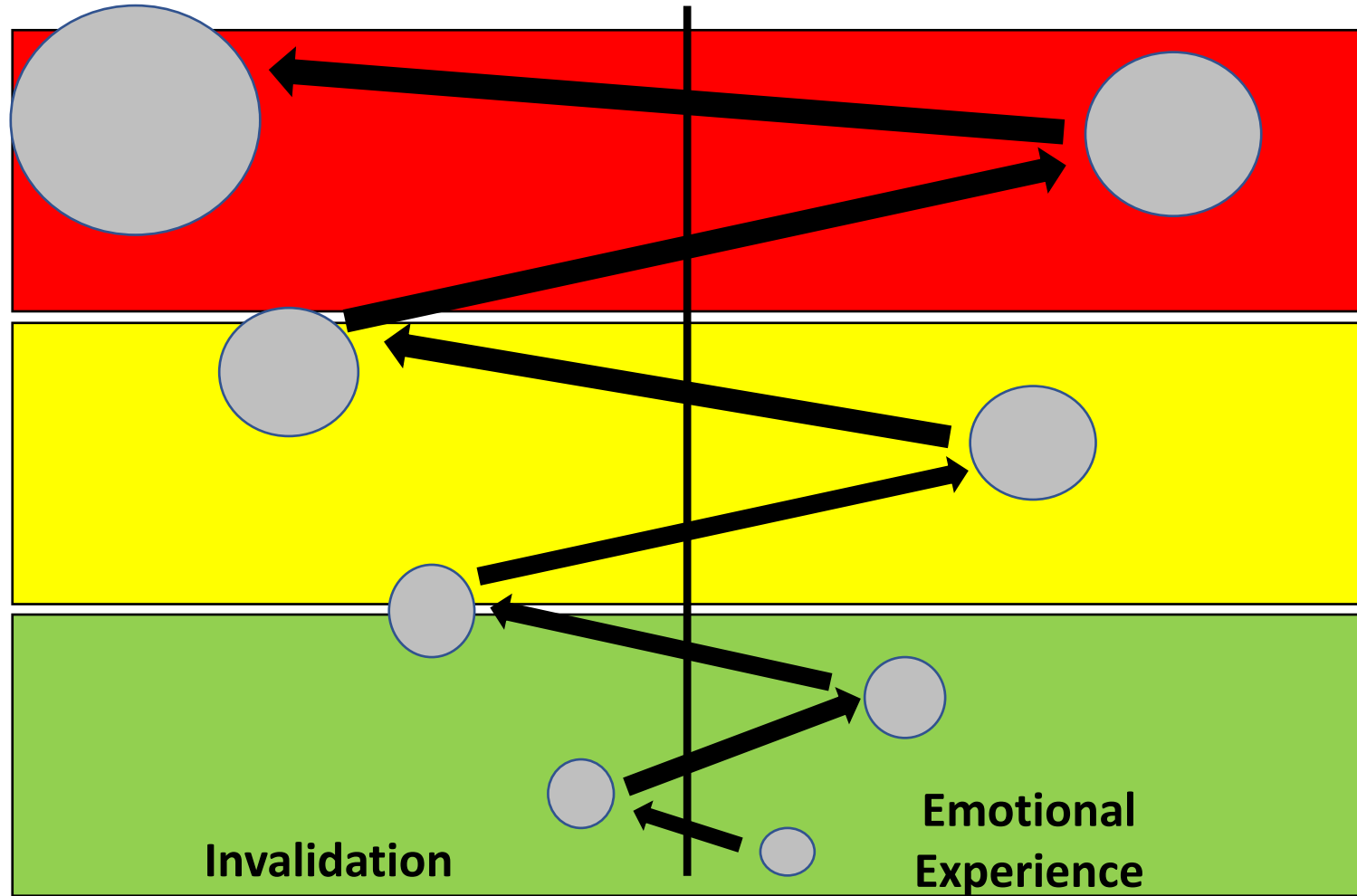
# DBT is uniquely good at improving pervasive emotional dysregulation

- Experiencing emotion causes substantial escalation or shutting down
- Unable to decrease physiological arousal independently
- Difficulty focusing attention
- Difficulty inhibiting mood-dependent actions (impulsive behavior)
- Unable to engage in behaviors that are consistent with true (wise-mind) goals
- Emotions are in charge
- Automatically following where emotions tell us to go



# BIOSOCIAL THEORY: How do pervasive emotional problems develop?





# Solving Pervasive Emotion Dysregulation

## Biological: Emotional Vulnerability

### Behavioral Skill:

- a) Mindfulness
- b) Distress Tolerance
- c) Emotion Regulation
- d) Interpersonal Effectiveness
- e) self-management
- f) SELF validation

Accurate Communication of Distress & Effectively asking for Help

Sensitivity over time  
Reactivity over time  
Slow Return to Baseline over time

## Social: Invalidating System

### Behavioral Skill:

- a) Effective Validation
- b) Mindfulness
- c) Distress Tolerance
- d) Emotion Regulation
- e) Interpersonal Effectiveness
- f) Self-Management
- g) Effective Contingencies

Indiscriminate, pervasive, and harmful invalidation

We get better outcomes if we  
teach/foster a validating environment  
(one of our best crisis strategies is a proactive one)



Validation is what  
keeps a relationship  
healthy and is the best  
fire extinguisher for  
conflict!

**CONFLICT**



# Validation Pro-tips

- Validation doesn't mean agreeing or approving
- Validation is about finding (and communicating) what is reasonable or understandable about what is happening
- Validation is more about CAUSES and EMOTIONS than it is about actions and outcomes
- Validation has to be genuine.
- You don't have to validate something that is invalid (ineffective) that wouldn't be helpful.



# Good News! There are LOTS of ways to Validate:


LEVEL OF VALIDATION	DEFINITION
Level 1	Listening and observing Attending and remembering over time
Level 2	Accurate reflection Conveying non-judgmental understanding
Level 3	Articulating the non-verbalized Accurate “mind reading”
Level 4	Client’s personal history It makes sense given your prior experiences
Level 5	Universal behaviors It makes sense for all of us
Level 6	Radical genuineness Responding as a real person

# Let's practice: Find the Validity...on BOTH sides

- You worked all day and come home and your partner is sitting on the couch. The house is filthy. You ask your partner to help you clean up and they say they're too exhausted. You feel very unappreciated.
- You helped someone yesterday because they promised that they would help you with something today but then they cancelled at the last minute saying they're really ill.
- A youth on the unit was ready to make a phone call home when there was an emergency on another unit that caused everyone in the facility to have to lock in. They missed their call and when the emergency was over, they started breaking the phones in the dayroom and staff returned them to their room and put them on a phone restriction for the rest of the week.



My Suggestion:  
Caregiver training at a minimum...



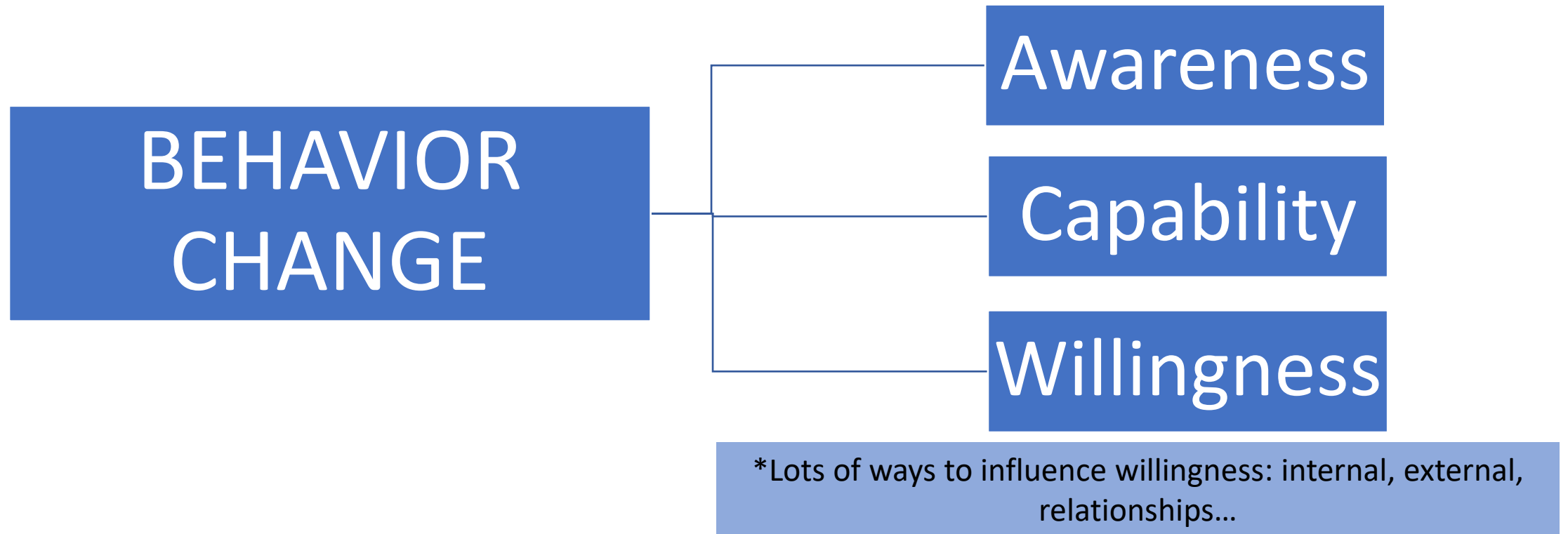
Orientation  
to the model  
and principles

Validation  
strategies

Behavioral  
principles

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# Recipe for Effective Behavior Change...



# Evidence-based, Comprehensive DBT includes:

## Skills training (group)

- Target: Enhancing capabilities

## Individual therapy

- Target: Enhancing Motivation

LOTS OF WAYS  
TO SERVE THIS  
FUNCTION

## Skills coaching

- Target: Ensuring Generalization to Real Environment and Daily Life

## Consultation meetings

- Target: Enhancing Provider Motivation and Skill

## Ancillary treatments

- Target: Structuring the Environment  
(this is what we were just talking about with caregivers)

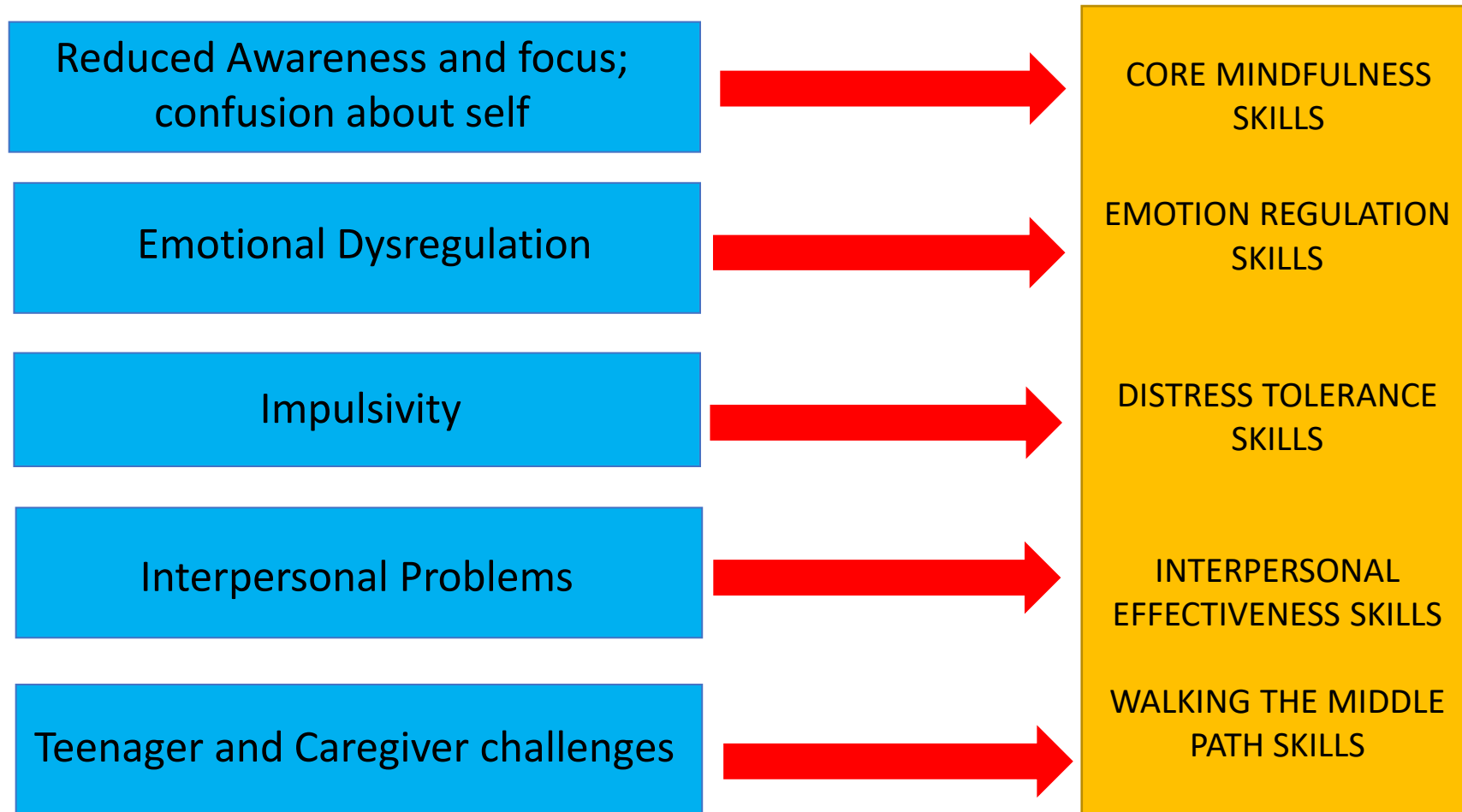
In facilities, this is often a culture change



# Skills Training

- Typically group format\*
- 120-150 minutes per week
  - One long group
  - Two shorter groups
- Addressing skills deficits through skill building
  - Mindfulness
  - Distress Tolerance
  - Emotion Regulation
  - Interpersonal Effectiveness
  - Middle Path (dialectics, validation, behavioral learning)
- Skill acquisition and skill strengthening
- Assign practice between sessions
- Connect to life, goals, values- why do *these* kids need *these* skills?
- Make it *relevant*

# DBT addresses ALL areas of dysregulation with enhanced skills



# What is a **CRISIS?**

A very stressful, temporary situation

That causes pressure to do something about it *immediately*

## When do you need **Crisis Survival Strategies?**

- You're experiencing extreme pain or stress that cannot be resolved right away
- You have an urge to do what your emotions tell you, but that would make things worse
- Emotions are becoming overwhelming and it might be hard to make the best choices
- You have things you have to do even though you're struggling





# Crisis Survival Strategies

## ARE

- Skills to make painful situations more *tolerable*
- Skills to help you *tolerate* difficult things without making them worse
  - Like treading water
  - like a tourniquet
- Can prevent impulsive actions

## Are NOT

- Intended to make you “feel better” or “feel good”
- Problem-solving skills (and will not solve the core problem you’re having)



# Crisis Survival Skills:

(we'll come back to a few of these later)

- STOP
- TIP
- Distract with Wise Mind ACCEPTS
- Self-Soothe with 5 senses and movement
- IMPROVE the Moment
- Pros and Cons



But when I'm  
dysregulated I can't  
think...

This is when environmental assistance (coaching) can be  
especially helpful

# Function of Skills Coaching



GENERALIZING AND APPLYING SKILLS  
WHEN THEY NEED THEM



ASKING FOR HELP EFFECTIVELY AND  
REINFORCING THAT



ADDRESSING CRISIS BEHAVIORS  
BEFORE THEY HAPPEN  
(BUILDING AWARENESS AND MASTERY)



Before you coach...

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**YOU HAVE TO BE  
REGULATED FIRST!**

(what skills might YOU need?)



What Helps You?

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# Solutions vs. problems

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Problem behaviors (especially behaviors seen as problems for the system) are typically *SOLUTIONS* to the real problem in the moment

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Skills coaching focuses first on identifying/Assessing the PROBLEM (the real problem)

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THEN shifts to identifying alternative, functional, and effective solutions

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Solutions have to be seen as solutions for the person who needs them, not just the coach

# Crisis Survival Strategies: A few examples

- Down-regulate your physiology to calm down quickly with TIPP
  - Tip the temperature of your face with the mammalian dive response
  - Use Intense Exercise to downregulate
  - Paced Breathing to slow your heart rate
  - Paired (progressive) muscle relaxation



# Crisis Survival Strategies: A few examples

- Distract to get through it with ACCEPTS
  - Activities that get you thinking about and doing OTHER things
  - Contribute to others
  - Compare yourself/your situation (to others, to yourself at a worse moment)
  - Do things that give you a different Emotion (e.g. music that's mood inconsistent)
  - Pushing away
  - Think about something different
  - Elicit other intense physiological Sensations (taste, smell, sound...)

# Crisis Survival Strategies: A few examples

- Self-Soothe with movement and your senses
  - Build a self-soothe tool kit to help you!
- Think ahead about your actions with pros and cons and try to connect to wise mind

# Coaching Process

- **Self regulate**
    - USE YOUR OWN SKILLS
  - **Assess the problem briefly**
    - Not the proposed solution (e.g. suicide, self harm, etc.) the PROBLEM
    - Summarize the problem aloud
  - **Validate**
    - Instill hope/cheerlead
  - **Evaluate/Establish Safety**
    - Plan, Intent, Access to Means
    - Get commitment, commitment, commitment (use commitment strategies as needed)- Pivot here if not obtained
    - Means safety, reduce risk in the environment
  - **Skills!**
    - Acceptance & Tolerance Skills
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- Rehearse
  - Adjust
  - Commitment
  - Expect resurgence of crisis
  - Reinforce

# Also...Recovering after crisis behavior.

- Egregious Behavior Protocol
  - Establish Safety
  - Removal from Programming
  - Commitment to safe and skillful behavior
  - Assess Behavior (behavior chain analysis)
  - Identify skills for use in future situations
  - Demonstrate skill use
  - Identify harm caused and work on repair
  - Return to programming
- An opportunity for building awareness, new learning, skill strengthening, and repair
  - Establishing safety
  - creating time and space for focus on new learning and repair
  - Thorough assessment of behavior
  - Identification and practice of skillful behavior (build or strengthen capability)
  - Reparative action

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