Lesson 1-4

THE “HOW” SKILLS

of MINDFULNESS

Part 2 – Nonjudgmentally, Effectively

© Dan and Tasha Tonning 2018 ® Peer Guided DBT Lessons
“HOW” SKILLS

As it was explained in our last lesson, the Mindfulness “WHAT” Skills are the explanation of what we do to be mindful.

**OBSERVE:**
It is necessary that we learn how to observe *without judgment or attachment*.

**DESCRIBE:**
Describe both your internal and external experience *just as it is*.

**PARTICIPATE:**
Fully participate in the present moment. Let go of self-consciousness and hesitation.

The Mindfulness “HOW” skills explain how we do the “WHAT” skills. We do the “WHAT” skills:

**NONJUDGMENTALLY:**
It is necessary that we learn how to observe without judgment or attachment.

**ONE-MINDFULLY:**
Describe both your internal and external experience just as it is.

**EFFECTIVELY:**
Fully participate in the present moment. Let go of self-consciousness and hesitation.

This means that each of the “WHAT” skills are done a specific way:

**OBSERVE:**
Nonjudgmentally, One-mindfully, Effectively

**DESCRIBE:**
Nonjudgmentally, One-mindfully, Effectively

**PARTICIPATE:**
Nonjudgmentally, One-mindfully, Effectively
PERCEIVED VALUES

Judgment is our perceived values learned from past experiences.

If a person had been burned by fire as a child, they would likely perceive fire as bad. That instant judgement can serve as an urgent message to avoid touching it again and risking that pain again. This is a natural interpretation to something that has caused unpleasant sensations, built into the brain as a protection enabling a person to take rapid action in order to avoid injury.

If we leave the brain to act on its own, without purposefully directing it, the mind will automatically judge things as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good or Bad</th>
<th>Right or Wrong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair or Unfair</td>
<td>Important or Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent or Non-Urgent</td>
<td>And On and On</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These judgements occur so fast that our experiences are automatically colored by our interpretations the moment we experience them. Try to imagine your judgements as viewing your experience through heavy framed glasses with thick, cloudy, scratched, colored lenses. The lenses of judgement would result in a distorted slanted view of yourself, others, and events. Visualize yourself removing the lenses of judgement, blinking to clear your vision, then stepping back to really look at the world around you, and observe how your point of view changes.

Mindfulness is being aware of the minds tendency to automatically judge - but being willing to take on fresh perspectives. It is about changing your relationship with judgements as they occur. It means looking past those automatic classifications, reminding yourself that judgements are simply temporary thoughts. The mindful non-judgmental stance is being aware that you don’t need to follow them or be swept away by judgements just because they enter your mind.

Attempting to let go of judgmentalness does not mean that we are agreeing to “approve” of things that violate our true values. Non-judgmental does not equate to approval. Being non-judgmental simply means that we are letting ourselves move into a place of emotional stillness brought about by acceptance of what is.

When you adopt the mindfulness attitude of non-judgement, the need to do something about the present moment ceases. You do not need to reach for more than what is in the present moment. You do not need to resist what exists in the present moment. You also do not need to ignore the experience of the present moment.

When you release yourself from the need to react to your experience and just simple be, you will find that you are able to open yourself more completely. When you remove judgements from Mindfulness, there is no longer anything you need to do, there is nowhere you need to go. Allowing yourself to just be, you can recognize that the reality of the present moment is complete just as it is. You will find that you can learn to rest in being mindfully present.

When you stop trying to react to your experience, you can open up to it completely, resting in mindful presence.

© Dan and Tasha Tonnaing 2018 Peer Guided DBT Lessons
NON-JUDGMENTALLY

Since mindfulness is about connecting to what is going on around us in the present moment, it could be said that it is about connecting with reality. Judgements are not the facts of reality, and in fact only exist in our minds. Whenever we add in our interpretations to what is happening, we move away from the goal of being in the moment, as it actually is.

It is important that we pay attention to our thoughts as they enter our minds. We need to be aware when a judging quality of mind appears. Jon Kabat Zinn, PhD. the founding Executive Director of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School says regarding being judgmental - “All that is required is to be aware of it happening”.

If you find your mind becoming judgmental, you do not need to try to stop it from doing that, nor do you need to pursue the judgmental thoughts or act on them. It is impossible to stop judgmental thoughts from ever arising, it is human nature for the mind to make judgements. You do not need to judge the judging. Doing this only makes matters harder on yourself, rather- try to respond to yourself with understanding and compassion. Remind yourself that mindfulness practice involves putting judgement on pause and just observing whatever occurs.

Simply recognize the judging quality of the mind when it appears. Realizing it is happening, you can take a step back and become an impartial witness. Remind yourself to just observe it. By impartial observation we will become more aware of our prejudices and fears, granting us liberation from their control.

The personal interpretation (judgments people make) of a situation is usually what triggers a person to become emotionally dysregulated rather than the actual situation itself. Any of our negative judgments tend to escalate our emotional pain. When you find that you are feeling emotionally upset, try to pay attention to any judgements you are making. The non-judgmental element of mindfulness can help us to regulate our emotions by helping us to return to the facts of the situation. If you describe what is actually occurring without judgement, you are able to observe and participate in the current emotion without the unnecessary suffering that would be expected when you are more engrossed in judgement than the actual situation.

A study published in the journal “Emotion, Vol. 18 (2), March 2018” stated that; through decades of research on emotion regulation, the foremost answer to success is acceptance. Acknowledging and accepting when uncomfortable emotions are present can actually help to deflate them. Have you ever tried to simply not think of something unpleasant or to not feel an uncomfortable emotion? It simply is not possible. The harder you try, the more it anchors in your mind.

Try describing only the facts of the situation, along with the emotion you are feeling. Observe if you pause the judgement, if the strength of your emotion eases a bit or - if it disappears altogether. Describing “only the fact” increases our willingness to tolerate difficult situations. Every uncomfortable moment we are able to tolerate shows us that we are able to handle them.
BENEFITS OF PRACTICING THE NON-JUDGMENTAL STANCE

1) The Non-Judgement Stance of Mindfulness helps us nurture a more peaceful state of mind:
Because our judgements are no more than a temporary thought crossing our minds, if we let go of the judgements and go back to the facts, we will find that the judgement of “bad” is causing more stress and discomfort than the actual situation. Freeing ourselves from the interpretation “bad” helps us let go of the unnecessary suffering caused by this value rating or judgement.

2) The Non-Judgement Stance of Mindfulness helps to open our eyes to the beauty in life that we most likely have been missing:
Judging something instantly as “good or bad” would mean that we need look no further because we have already given it a classified value. The next logical assessment then would be to judge things as “neutral” to avoid the extremes of “good and bad”. The problem with judging anything as “neutral” is that this assessment also says to the mind that this is not of enough value to be worthy of our attention.

When we remove all judgements - including “neutral”, we open our eyes and mind to truly explore the raw reality of what is. This gives us the opportunity to see the beauty and wonder that life offers. Any object or activity can enrich your life if we only take the time to openly observe it. People tend to miss the wonder of what surrounds them, because they erroneously judge it not worth their time.

3) The Non-Judgement Stance of Mindfulness helps us get off the ongoing treadmill of perpetual dissatisfaction:
A major cause for disappointment and dissatisfaction in most people’s lives is their endless quest for more or better than what they currently have. This comes in many forms; we want more money, more prestige, higher accomplishment, more power, higher titles, etc. The judgement we make that says that what we have now just isn’t enough feeds the motivation to ceaselessly pursue more. While setting goals for ourselves to continue improving ourselves as a person is important, we should not get so caught up in pursuing goals that we miss out on all the amazing things that are in our here and now. If we let go of our judgement that what we have now is not good enough (and accept what is), we can open ourselves fully to living a life worth living right now.

4) The Non-Judgement Stance of Mindfulness helps us to see reality more clearly, thus respond more effectively:
For as long as we continue to view our experiences through the distorting lenses of judgement, we will only be able to react to our judgements and our own personal interpretations of the situation. If we let go of our judgements - we are able to see things as they actually are. Responding effectively to reality is a much more practical interaction to any situation than the ineffective reaction to our own interpretations of the same situation. Practicing the Non-Judgement Stance of Mindfulness makes it possible to make a direct connection with the experience as it occurs.

© Dan and Tasha Tonning 2018 ® Peer Guided DBT Lessons
EFFECTIVELY

To practice mindfulness *effectively* means that we are actively applying the mindfulness concepts. It requires the continued learning and practicing of those skills. Effectiveness in mindfulness become apparent as we notice the strengthening of our mindfulness muscles as we progress.

To practice mindfulness effectively means becoming aware of the space between our emotions, thoughts and actions. Effectiveness in mindfulness become apparent as we become less impulsive due to realizing that we can feel and think without needing to react to it.

To practice mindfulness effectively means we are actively reducing our judgements of ourselves, others, situations, thoughts, and emotions. Effectiveness in mindfulness becomes apparent as we let go of judgements that have been holding us back from living life to the fullest. and we see an increased sense of compassion within ourselves.

To practice mindfulness effectively means we go back to *deliberate focus of our minds* when we notice that they have begun to wander. Effectiveness in mindfulness becomes apparent as we realize that we are becoming resilient to mind wandering, and we notice that we are spending less time ruminating and worrying.

LIVING EFFECTIVELY

Being *effective* is a mindfulness skill, in itself. Effectiveness requires a mindful method of functioning. It means being willing to accept the present moment just as it is, in order to maneuver through the current situation in a manner that effectively works to help us achieve our objectives. Effectiveness captures the dialects of DBT by acceptance of the present moment, **AND** - responding to it with flexibility to reach our goals. It means choosing actions that are not only appropriate, but at the same time will move us closer to our objective. Being effective is doing the very best you can in the current moment, not sitting on our hands just wishing that the reality of our situation was different.

In order to discover what works, we must first be clear on what we want from our specific current situation. What is our goal? Then we must do what is necessary to achieve it, rather than reacting to our conflicting emotional urges. What works is not always comfortable at the time - in fact it could even be painful in that moment, but it is the choice that will get you closer to your goals.

Living effectively means that we let go of our judgements about what is “right”, what “should be”, what is “fair, or what you “deserve” and become willing to do what is going to help us achieve our objective. This is not the same thing as sacrificing your values in order to try to do what works, because in the long run, *that does not work*. Letting go of your judgement is being willing to do what works - provided it does not go against your values - rather than fighting against it for the sake of proving you are “right”.

The calm, peaceful effects of practicing mindfulness will continue to increase over time. You will see more lasting positive effects in your life the more you practice the “HOW” and “WHAT” skills of mindfulness. Start living each moment to the fullest.

© Dan and Tasha Tonning 2018 ® Peer Guided DBT Lessons
NON-JUDGMENTALLY WORKSHEET

1) Name three things you were taught or learned through experience to quick judge in order to avoid danger? Judgements that were formulated to keep you safe? (EXAMPLE: Bees are bad)

   1. ____________________________
   2. ____________________________
   3. ____________________________

2) Is holding firm to these judgements causing you to miss out on something that might come into view if you put those judgements on pause and observed more closely with an open mind? _____

3) Name something that one of these judgements might cause you to miss out on?

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

4) What is the difference in being Judgmental and holding to your Values? _________

   __________________________________________________________

5) Should you hold to your Values, even if doing so seems to be a form of Judgement? Why or Why Not? ________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

6) What are some Judgements that you catch yourself making fairly often? _________

   __________________________________________________________

7) What could your common Judgements be holding you back from doing? _________

   __________________________________________________________

8) When practicing the Non-Judgmental Stance, I became aware of the pleasure in:

   __________________________________________________________
EFFECTIVELY WORKSHEET

1) In your own words, how would you define or explain what it means to practice Mindful Effectiveness?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

2) Why is it important first to be willing to accept the present moment just as it is to be effective?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

3) Why is setting a goal for each situation necessary to be effective?

_______________________________________________________________________________________

4) Why is acting effectively at times uncomfortable in that moment?

_______________________________________________________________________________________

5) Can fighting for your rights be ineffective? Why or Why Not?

_______________________________________________________________________________________

6) It becomes apparent that we are effectively practicing mindfulness, and are actively applying the mindfulness concepts while we continue learning and practicing those skills, when we:

_______________________________________________________________________________________

7) It becomes apparent that we are effectively practicing mindfulness, and are becoming aware of the space between our emotions, thoughts and actions, when we:

_______________________________________________________________________________________

8) It becomes apparent that we are effectively practicing mindfulness, and are reducing our judgements of ourselves, others, situations, thoughts, and emotions, when we:

_______________________________________________________________________________________

9) It becomes apparent that we are effectively practicing mindfulness, and are able to go back to deliberate focus of our minds when we notice that they have begun to wander, when we:

_______________________________________________________________________________________
BIBLIOGRAPHY

1-4 Mindfulness How Skills


