

BUILDING a Life Worth Living with STRUCTURE

Portland DBT Institute
Adult Intensive Outpatient Program

Group Curriculum | 8-Week Plan

Week	Lesson Plan	
1	Orientation	Pages 3 – 7
2	Goal Setting & Planning	Pages 8 – 13
3	Reinforcing a Life-Worth Living	Pages 14 – 18
4	Values-Driven Structure	Pages 19 – 23
5	Building Community	Pages 24 – 28
6	Building Purpose	Pages 29 – 33
7	Addressing Barriers to Building Structure Part I	Pages 34 – 37
8	Addressing Barriers to Building Structure Part II	Pages 38 – 41

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 1: ORIENTATION

Goals of Building Structure

1. Identify structured activities that support your mental health recovery and align with your long-term goals.
2. Build an antidepressant lifestyle to reduce vulnerabilities.
3. Learn and practice strategies to help you meet your building structure goals and skillfully address challenges that get in the way.
4. Actively build your **LIFE WORTH LIVING** by participating in structured activities.

What types of structure are important for your LIFE WORTH LIVING?
(e.g., employment, meal routine, family, friendships, etc.)

What building structure goals do you have for the IOP?

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 1: ORIENTATION

Defining Recovery from Mental Health Problems

“A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.” – SAMHSA (2012).

SAMHSA delineated *four major domains of recovery:

1. HEALTH:

Managing symptoms effectively and making informed choices that support physical and mental well-being.

2. HOME:

Having a stable and safe place to live.

3. PURPOSE:

Engaging in meaningful daily activities and possessing the independence and/or resources to participate in society.

4. COMMUNITY:

Building and maintaining relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.

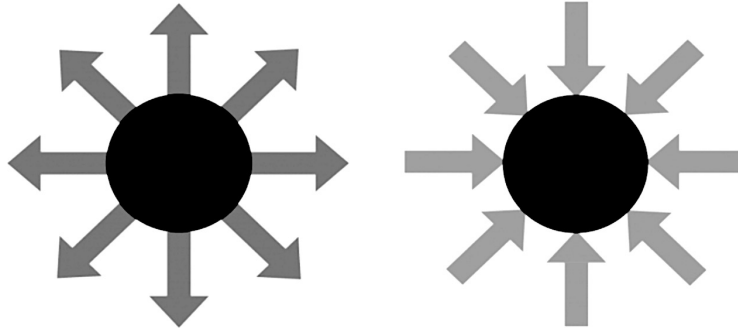
Do your building structure goals align with SAMHSA’s domains?

Are there additional domains that matter for your LIFE WORTH LIVING?
(e.g., having a spiritual practice, engaging in creative projects, etc.)

*SAMHSA’s Recovery Support Initiative (<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/recovery>)

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 1: ORIENTATION

INSIDE-OUT vs. OUTSIDE-IN Approaches to Treatment



Treating Mental Health Problems from the INSIDE-OUT:

- Place focus on treating mental health problems, so that other areas of life (e.g., work, relationships, etc.) will improve.
- *Example:* Attending a skills training group. Result: Learn skills to help achieve your goal of returning to school.

Treating Mental Health Problems from the OUTSIDE-IN:

- Engage in structured activities (not necessarily treatment-related) that will naturally improve mental health.
- *Example:* Volunteering in the community. Result: Distract effectively, build relationships, contribute to society, and improve mental health by developing a sense of mastery and purpose.

Building structure is an OUTSIDE-IN approach to treatment.

Which end of the dialectic do you tend towards? _____

What does a Wise Minded middle path look like for you?

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 1

Self-Assessment and Goal Setting (pg. 1 of 2)

Step 1: Write out your typical **current** weekly structure using the domains identified on page 4 (HEALTH, HOME, PURPOSE, COMMUNITY), as well as any others you identified as important for building a LIFE WORTH LIVING.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thurs.	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Before 8am							
8am to 12pm							
12pm to 4pm							
4pm to 8pm							
After 8pm							

WORKSHEET CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ~

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 1

Self-Assessment and Goal Setting (pg. 2 of 2)

Step 2: Using the graphic below, tally up your **estimated** number of hours spent in each domain **per week** and record your observations. As you do so, consider the question – “What’s missing?”

Step 3: Set Wise Minded goals. Would you ideally spend **more time** (↑), **less time** (↓), or the **same amount of time** (=) building structure in each domain?

Consider setting time-specific goals (e.g., from 4 hours to 8 hours) if effective.

	Current	Goal (↑, ↓, =)
HEALTH		
HOME		
PURPOSE		
COMMUNITY		

Observations:

**BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 2: GOAL SETTING & PLANNING**

Setting Goals for a LIFE WORTH LIVING

- Effective goal setting is a **skill** that we develop with practice.
- Building a LIFE WORTH LIVING is a **long-term goal** that can be broken down into specific **short-term** or **ongoing goals**.

Effective goal setting is scientifically shown to help us achieve our goals.

- Foundational research findings come from Locke and Latham’s Goal Setting Theory (1990).
- Research supports the idea that goal-setting skills are linked to overall well-being (MacLeod et al., 2007).





What does your current process for goal setting look like?

What behaviors are effective/ineffective for meeting your goals?

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE

UNIT 2: GOAL SETTING & PLANNING

SMART Goals

S	Specific	Come up with a behaviorally-specific plan to accomplish your goal.	
M	Measurable	Decide how you will know when your goal is actually met!	
A	Attainable	Set a realistic goal. Consider your current skillset. Is your goal reasonably challenging?	
R	Relevant	Are your goals <i>your</i> goals? Check that they are relevant to you. Consider your values and long-term objectives.	
T	Time-Oriented	Set a specific and realistic schedule and/or end date.	

Using the **SMART** framework for goal setting is often more effective than setting vague or non-specific goals. For *example...*

- Non-SMART Goal: “I want to work out regularly.”

- **SMART Goal:**

“Currently, I am not doing any intentional movement outside of walking my dog and I am feeling restless before bed.

I am going to commit to doing two low-impact bodyweight exercise routines from YouTube.

I have the most energy (and willingness) before eating dinner at 7:30pm. I will do my workouts on Mondays and Thursdays from 6:30 – 7:00pm so that I can shower before eating.

Once I’ve maintained my 2x/week schedule for 3 weeks straight, I’ll add in an additional workout on Saturdays.”

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE

UNIT 2: GOAL SETTING & PLANNING

When Goals Are Met

Reward yourself! **Reinforcement** is a powerful tool for increasing the likelihood of effective behaviors and meeting your goals.

- Brainstorm reinforcers – explore in Wise Mind what reinforcers will actually reinforce you!
- *Example:* Finish your job application, then hang out with a friend.

Mindfully **observe** the outcome of meeting your goal.

- Be mindful of **natural reinforcers** - e.g., checking off to-do boxes!
- Celebrate progress made and be wary of ineffective thoughts. All-or-nothing thinking is the antithesis to building mastery.

When Goals Are NOT Met

Be mindful of judgments! Take a step back (**STOP**) and assess in Wise Mind if your goal is still important to you.

- If not, check in with your long-term objectives and values, and consider setting a different goal.
- If you are undecided, try using a **Pros and Cons**.

If you decide that this goal is still important to you, identify the barrier (e.g., intense emotions, low motivation, don't know what skills to use).

- Accurately identifying the barrier will help you to apply strategies and DBT skills effectively.
- Practice flexibility! You may need to modify your goal and adjust your plan. This can be a frustrating but necessary component of setting effective goals and building a LIFE WORTH LIVING.
- Return to the SMART framework and brainstorm an actionable next step (and **check the facts** on all-or-nothing thinking!).

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE UNIT 2: GOAL SETTING & PLANNING

When All-Or-Nothing Thinking Gets in The Way

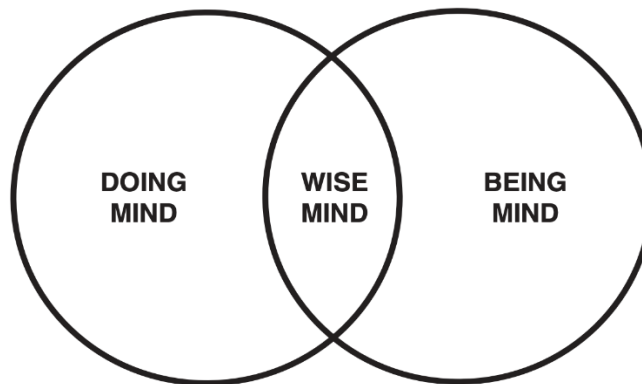
All-or-nothing, or *non-dialectical*, thinking can be a barrier to our long-term objectives, both when our goals are met AND when they aren't.

Observing when thoughts are non-dialectical can be a useful first step in overcoming that barrier and working effectively towards your goals.

- Be mindful of judgments and invalidating statements.
Example: "I'll **never** be able to get on a **good** sleep schedule, it **should** be easy for me!"

Keep in mind that goal setting is a **skill** that requires practice. Adjusting and fine-tuning your goals is an essential component of that practice.

Doing Mind, Being Mind, and Wise Mind



Doing Mind: ambitious, goal-oriented, problem-solving.

Being Mind: curious, present-oriented, no-problems-to-solve minded.

Wise Mind: an effective balance of both; the **middle path**.

- Letting go of perfectionism and the need for everything to go exactly as planned; throwing yourself in to your game plan AND engaging with life as it occurs, rolling with the punches.

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 2

Effective Goal Setting (pg. 1 of 2)

Step 1: Choose a long-term objective to work towards. Make sure that this is a goal that is **relevant** to *your* values and LIFE WORTH LIVING.

Step 2: Break your objective into a few actionable short-term goals.

1.

2.

3.

Step 3: Pick ONE **attainable** short-term goal to work towards right now.

Step 4: Plan behaviorally-**specific** action steps to meet your goal (as needed).

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

WORKSHEET CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ~

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 2

Effective Goal Setting (*pg. 2 of 2*)

Step 5: Decide how you will know when your goal is met. Make it **measurable!** Consider setting a deadline for accountability if effective.

My goal will be met when...

*I want to meet my goal by...*_____ **(time-oriented deadline).**

Step 6: Decide how you will keep track of your goal.
(e.g., weekly planner, sticky notes, alarms, Target Group worksheet, etc.).

Step 7: Plan ahead for barriers that will get in the way of accomplishing your goal, and brainstorm skills that you can use when those barriers appear.

Barrier	Skills to Use

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE

UNIT 3: REINFORCING A LIFE WORTH LIVING

Behaviorism

- Behaviorism is an approach to understanding how human behavior is **learned** and **maintained** over time.
- Behaviorism principles can be used to increase behaviors we want to engage in and decrease behaviors we don't want to engage in.

Behaviorism Principles

Behavior includes *actions*, as well as *thoughts, emotions, beliefs*, etc.

Reinforcer: Reinforcers are consequences that increase behavior by making it more likely to happen again.

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Increasing behavior by providing a “reward” or positive consequence.
Example: Paychecks provide monetary reinforcement for working.
- **Negative Reinforcement:** Increasing behavior by taking away an unpleasant or negative consequence.
Example: Drinking water to relieve thirst.
- **Natural Reinforcers:** Something that is inherently reinforcing and does not require learning.
Examples: Sleep, food, water, etc.

Punisher: Punishers are consequences that decrease behavior by making it less likely to happen again.

- BE MINDFUL OF USING PUNISHMENT – Punishment does not teach new behavior and can lead to ineffective avoidance.
- Broadly speaking, *research has shown that positive reinforcement is more effective at long-term learning.

*Scott, T. et al. (2017); Sharp, P. et al. (2022).

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE

UNIT 3: REINFORCING A LIFE WORTH LIVING

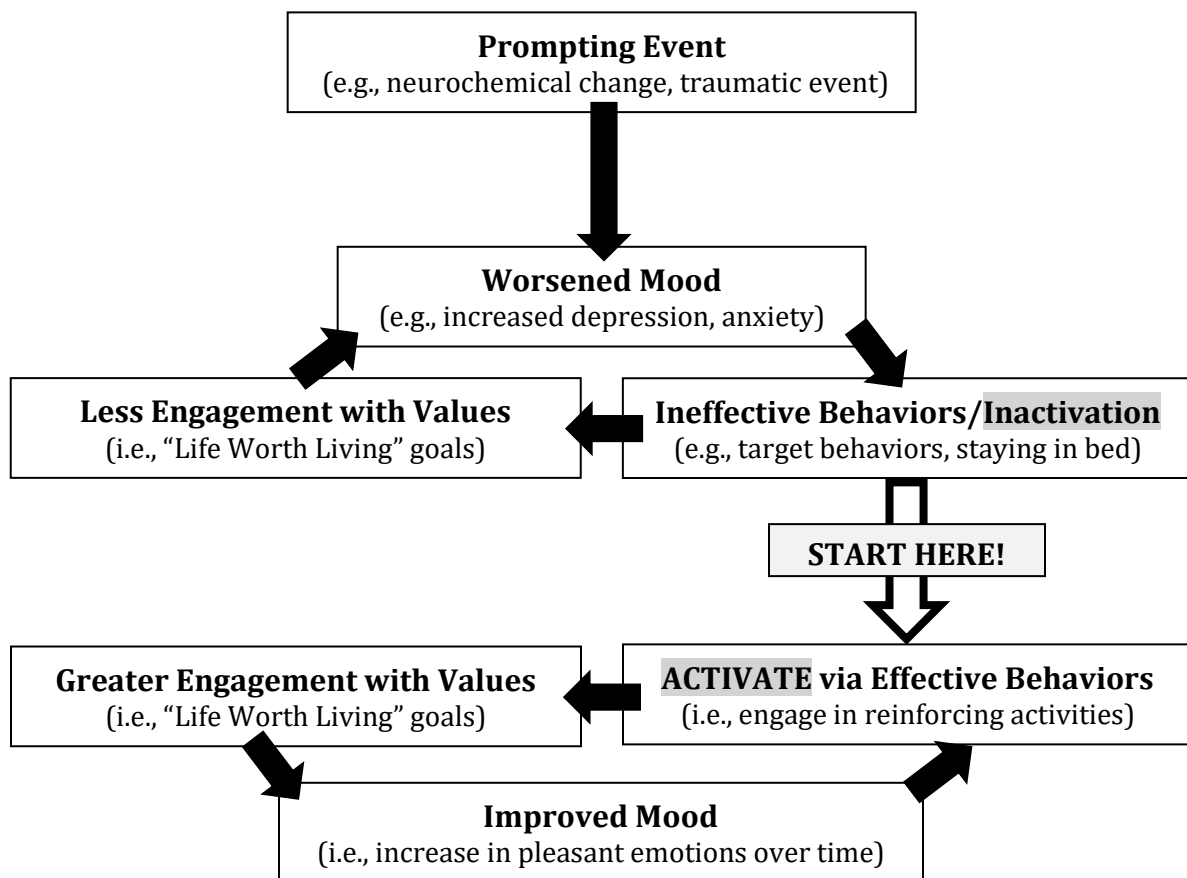
Shaping and Behavioral Activation

Shaping is the process of reinforcing behavior via incremental steps, in order to achieve a long-term behavioral goal.

Example: a baby learning to walk...

Caregiver reinforces baby for: rolling over → crawling → standing → taking first step → walking.

Behavioral Activation: Behavioral activation is a strategy for improving mental health by consistently engaging in behaviors that are positively reinforcing or rewarding.



BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 3: REINFORCING A LIFE WORTH LIVING

Emotions to Foster

Pleasure: Engaging in activities to foster satisfaction and joy.

- Ways to Describe Emotion: happiness – satisfaction, joy, relief, connection, contentment, excitement.
- Example Activities: reading, caring for pets, hanging out with friends, listening to music, eating foods you love, etc.

Mastery: Engaging in activities to develop your skills and sense of competence and improve the way you feel about yourself.

- Ways to Describe Emotion: happiness – accomplishment, confidence, competence, pride, triumph.
- Example Activities: working on a project, learning a new skill, paying your bills, practicing DBT skills, taking a class.

Remember! It is important to balance pleasure AND mastery activities. Be on the lookout for Emotion Mind masquerading as Wise Mind!

- BE MINDFUL OF USING PUNISHMENT – Punishment does not teach new behavior and can lead to ineffective avoidance.
- Broadly speaking, *research has shown that positive reinforcement is more effective at long-term learning.

Brainstorm pleasure and mastery activities:

What does a Wise Minded balance of activities look like for you?

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 3

Activating via Pleasure and Mastery (pg. 1 of 2)

Part 1: Investigate your *inactivation cycle*.

Step 1 – Worsened Mood: What emotions get in the way of building structure (e.g., sadness, fear, anger)?

Ways to Describe Emotions (Emotion Regulation Handout 6, pgs. 214 – 223) may be a useful resource for observing and describing emotions.

Step 2 – Ineffective Behaviors: What behaviors do you engage in because of your emotional urges (e.g., target behaviors, staying in bed, avoiding goals)?

Step 3 – Reinforcement: What is reinforcing about engaging in ineffective behaviors (e.g., safety, comfort, routine)?

Step 4 – Impact on Values: How does inactivation and engaging in ineffective behaviors impact your LIFE WORTH LIVING goals?

WORKSHEET CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ~

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 3

Activating via Pleasure and Mastery (*pg. 2 of 2*)

Part 2: Brainstorm ways to behaviorally *activate*.

Step 5: Using the table below, brainstorm **pleasure** and **mastery** activities that you are interested in trying. Aim to identify a Wise Minded balance between pleasure and mastery throughout the week.

If you are able to engage in the activity, rate its effectiveness (*1 – Least Effective; 5 – Most Effective*). Prompts for effectiveness may include: increase in positive emotions, progress in mastery, and accessibility of the activity.

Activity (+ Plan)	Pleasure	Mastery	Effectiveness
<i>Example:</i> Go to the movies with housemate on April 12 @ 7PM.	✓		3/5 – It was a fine distraction, but I don't really enjoy romcoms.
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE

UNIT 4: Values-Driven Structure

Values

- Values are guiding beliefs that shape the way we live our lives.
 - Values reflect how you *want* to behave towards yourself and others.
 - Values motivate us to take action.
 - Values can change over time.
 - Everyone's values are different. Your values are what matter to YOU.
-

Why Values Matter

- Values guide behavior and decision-making. They provide a roadmap for how we want to behave and help keep us on track.
- Living by one's values can provide a sense of fulfillment.
- Understanding your values can help you prioritize what's important.

Values vs. Goals

Whereas goals can be met or achieved with a desired result, values require ongoing action.

- *Example:* My **value** revolves around social justice advocacy.
My **goal** is to volunteer with an organization for 4 hours/week.

Values are a guiding direction with *no* destination or endpoint.

- **Goals** are the *trail signs* and *mile markers*.
- **Values** are the compasses, leading you in a certain direction.

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE

UNIT 4: Values-Driven Structure

Linking Goals to Values

The idea of living fully by your values might seem overwhelming or far off. Remember: **Values are the direction we head in**, not a destination or endpoint. Living fully by your values is an ongoing process.

One concrete way to live more fully by your values NOW is to set specific and actionable goals that are meaningful to YOU.

- *Example:* A person who values being part of a group might set the goal of increasing social connectedness by joining a club.

Create a Plan to Meet Your Goal

- Choose a value to work on now.
- Define what that value means to you.
Example: If you value living a life of pleasure and satisfaction, you might define your value as: eating foods you enjoy, caring for a pet, traveling to new places, etc.
- Set a related goal. Refer to the SMART acronym (Unit 2, pgs. 8 – 13).

Barriers To Linking Goals to Values

Guilt: Justified emotion when your behavior violates your own values or moral code AND it is aversive!

- Observe and describe guilt and its subsequent action urges.
- Check the facts. Act opposite to ineffective urges (e.g., avoidance).

Not knowing what your values are is also a huge barrier!

- Being aware of your current values is a practice to develop.

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE

UNIT 4: Values-Driven Structure

Commonly Held Values

Check off the values that matter to you.

- Attend to relationships.**
- Be part of a group.**
- Be creative.**
- Be powerful and influential.**
- Achieve things in life.**
- Live a life of pleasure and satisfaction.**
- Keep life full of exciting events, relationships, and things.**
- Behave respectfully.**
- Advocate for equity and social justice.**
- Be self-directed.**
- Be a spiritual person.**
- Be secure.**
- Recognize the universal good of all things.**
- Contribute to the larger community.**
- Work on self-development.**
- Have integrity.**
- Other:** _____

See *Values and Priorities List* (Emotion Regulation Handout 18, pgs. 253-255) for a comprehensive list of values.

ACT Values Questionnaire: <https://www.div12.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Valued-Living-Questionnaire.pdf>

Adapted from DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, Second Edition by Marsha M. Linehan. © 2015.

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 4

Linking Values to Goals (pg. 1 of 2)

Step 1: List your values (*make sure that they're yours, not someone else's!*) in the following domains. Define what each value means for you.

HEALTH: Managing symptoms effectively and making informed choices that support physical and mental well-being.

HOME: Having a stable and safe place to live.

PURPOSE: Engaging in meaningful daily activities and possessing the independence and/or resources to participate in society.

COMMUNITY: Building and maintaining relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.

Other: e.g., leisure, creativity, spirituality, etc.

WORKSHEET CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ~

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 4A

Linking Values to Goals (pg. 2 of 2)

Step 2: Consider the values you listed. What do you observe? Where are you living most fully by your values? Do you notice any areas for growth?

Step 3: Pick one value to focus on NOW and write it down below.

Step 4: Set a goal that aligns with the value you chose.

My goal will be met when...

Step 5: Write a list of specific action steps you will take to meet your goal.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Step 6: Commit to trying one action step this week and record observations.

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 5: Building Community

Why Community Matters

Extensive research shows that social relationships affect mental health.

Social support is defined as the emotionally sustaining qualities of relationships, including emotional and physical comfort from friends, family members, loved ones, and other people in your social network.

***Effective** relationships improve mental health by:

- Providing emotional support and physical comfort.
 - *Strengthening one's ability to cope with stressful events.*
 - *Reducing emotional distress.*
- Providing accountability to live within one's values.
 - *Reinforcing value-driven behavior.*
- Improving the way one feels about oneself.
 - *Enhancing self-esteem and celebrating goals met.*
 - *Helping to check judgments about unmet goals.*
- Providing a sense of meaning and purpose in life.
 - *Being a part of something bigger than oneself.*
- Improving overall physical health and well-being.
 - *Those with social support tend to live longer and have fewer health problems than those without social support.*

What qualities do you value in your relationships and communities?

*Mayo Clinic (2020); Umberson & Karas Montez (2010).

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 5: Building Community

Quality Matters

- Quality determines the overall impact of social relationships on mental and physical health.
- Stressful and destructive relationships have a **harmful** effect on mental and physical health, whereas supportive relationships have a **positive** effect.
- It is important to identify your needs, objectives, and **values** in your relationships so you can think about the types of relationships you want to cultivate.
- In addition to strengthening social relationships, creating a supportive social network may include advocating for yourself, asserting your needs, and ending destructive relationships with the help of your individual therapist.

How do you know if a relationship is supporting your mental health?

How do your needs and values differ between types of relationships?

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 5: Building Community

Finding New Relationships

- Finding new relationships takes effort and willingness to be strategic! With the support of your individual therapist and group leaders, now may be the ideal time to practice making connections.
- This may involve getting creative and using new skills.
Example: Acting opposite to fear and joining a virtual group.

Strategies to Consider

- Focus on people who are **near** you.
- Focus on **shared interests** and similarities.
Example: You overhear your co-worker talking about a TV series you love. You point out your shared interest and they invite you to watch the next episode at their house.
- **Research** new groups to join. It may be useful to start by choosing an activity you want to participate in.
Examples: Joining an intramural sports team, joining a role-playing game group, taking a group class, finding a spiritual community, etc.
- Identify an organization or cause to **volunteer** for. Volunteering can be a helpful way to meet people who share your values.
- Consult **Wise Mind** – what does finding new relationships in Wise Mind look like for you (versus Emotion Mind)?

What strategies have you used to find new relationships in the past?

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE

UNIT 5: Building Community

Structuring and Strengthening Community

- Express liking (selectively). Express *genuine* liking of the other person, letting them know you care.
 - Notice urges to *over-express* or *under-express* liking.
- Reach out, even if you haven't spoken in a while.
 - Be mindful of **judgments**. *Examples*: "They would have reached out already if they cared." "I should have reached out earlier, now it's been too long to say anything."
 - Consider various means of reconnection, e.g., texting, social media, phone calls, video chats, planning an activity, etc.
- Participate mindfully – throw yourself fully into the moment.
 - Use mindfulness skills to observe self-conscious thoughts and to act opposite to urges to avoid.
- Use appropriate communication skills.
 - *Examples (dependent on cultural factors)*: Use self-disclosure skillfully, ask and respond to questions, don't interrupt.
- Practice validation skills (reference *A "How To" Guide to Validation - Interpersonal Effective Handout 18*, pg. 156):
 - **Pay attention**. Listen attentively and one-mindedly.
 - **Reflect back**. Check that you understand the other person.
 - **"Read minds."** Be sensitive to what is *not* being said.
 - **Show understanding** based on their history or current state.
 - **Acknowledge the valid** given current reality and facts.
 - **Show equality**. Be genuinely you.
- Structure consistent connection with your community.
 - *Examples*: Schedule weekly phone calls, plan a monthly hike, attend a regular support group, schedule a 'target group' with someone who is also pursuing their life worth living.

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 5

Building a Life Worth Living Network

Consider groups you can join and become a part of.

Provide a 0 to 5 rating (0 = poor fit; 5 = perfect fit) on how good of a fit the group is to what you care about and feel excited by. Plan your next action step. Reassess the goodness of fit after engaging with the community.

Group	Fit Before	What's the Next Step?	Fit After
<i>Example: Sci-Fi book club.</i>	4	Attend my first open meeting on April 12 at 5PM.	5
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 6: Building Purpose

Defining Purpose in Building Structure

SAMHSA defines **PURPOSE** as one domain of mental health recovery, focusing on “Engaging in meaningful daily activities and possessing the independence and/or resources to participate in society.”

Working towards purpose means identifying structure that...

1. Aligns with your LIFE WORTH LIVING in a meaningful way.
2. Allows you to functionally validate the needs of your brain/body.

Examples of Purpose:

- Making changes in the world.
- Helping/supporting others (e.g., friends, family, community).
- Building/maintaining a family.
- Engaging with one’s culture and traditions.
- Engaging with one’s spirituality.
- Achieving/maintaining financial stability.
- Building mastery – i.e., in profession, art form, hobby.

Examples of Purpose-Driven Activities:

- Volunteer work.
- Activism
- Paid work.
- Parenting and caregiving.
- Attending spiritual or religious gatherings.
- Practicing a profession, art form, or hobby.

What type(s) of purpose resonates with you?

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 6: Building Purpose

Why Engage with Your Purpose?

Mental Health Benefits:

Purpose-driven activities can stabilize mood by providing:

- Opportunities to interact socially.
- Increased confidence and competence by building mastery.
- Increased structure and sense of stability.
- Opportunities to live by values, regulating guilt and self-esteem.

Engaging with purpose also offers opportunities to practice skills...

- At work, school, etc. you WILL encounter obstacles that will help you learn to regulate your emotions and generalize DBT skills.

Starting Now vs. Waiting Until Later

Benefits of engaging with purpose-driven activities NOW include:

- Support from your individual therapist and group leaders.
 - Fine-tune your skills practice with help from experts.
 - Get accountability to follow through with plans.
 - Receive help identifying resources and programs.
- Treating mental health from the **outside-in**.
 - Everyone will have a different balance of treating from the *outside-in* versus *inside-out*. Doing both is essential.
 - Purpose-driven structure helps treat from the *outside-in* while you are enrolled in the IOP.

How do you know you're ready to pursue one of your forms of purpose?

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 6: Building Purpose

Building Purpose Step-By-Step

1. Define your purpose-driven goal.

Example: Pursue a profession that allows me to be a leader and actively contribute to my community.

2. Create a list of necessary action steps to reach your goal.

Example:

- (a) Brainstorm possible professions that align with my purpose
- (b) Gain experience that will prepare me to pursue a chosen career,
- (c) Apply for any necessary education or training
- (d) Apply for positions!

3. Start with the first step and break it into smaller pieces.

Example: (a) Brainstorm possible professions...

- Complete a career values self-assessment (*see page 32*).
- Use a job matcher tool based on skills of interest. (*see page 32*).

4. Use the SMART acronym to plan and engage in the first step.

Example: This Saturday from 9 – 10AM, I will complete the career values self-assessment. I will positively reinforce myself with a cup of my favorite tea and by listening to my favorite album.

What purpose-driven goals would you be interested in setting?

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE

UNIT 6: Building Purpose

Additional Resources

- Try a **job matcher tool** based on tasks you like and don't like:
www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Careers/interest-assessment.aspx
- Complete a **career values self-assessment**:
www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Careers/work-values-matcher.aspx
- **Search for positions** to apply for or classes to enroll in, even if you are just practicing the application process:
<https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Jobs/find-jobs.aspx>
- **Prepare your resume** or academic CV (curriculum vitae):
www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Resumes/ResumeGuide/introduction.aspx
- **Draft a letter** expressing interest in the position. Many applications require a letter of interest expressing why you want the job:
www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Resumes/cover-letters.aspx
- **Submit an application** and interview if invited. Cope ahead for your interview. Consider role-playing with a trusted person.

Strategies for Accepting New Opportunities

- **Ask Wise Mind.** What does accepting an offer in Wise Mind (vs. Emotion or Rational Mind) look like for you?
- **Write out the Pros/Cons.** Consider and write out the pros and cons of accepting a new offer, promotion, or opportunity.
- **Identify short-term and long-term consequences.** Once you have listed the pros and cons, identify any short-term or long-term consequences of accepting the offer, promotion, or opportunity.
- **Cue into effectiveness.** Think of your LIFE WORTH LIVING goals. Will accepting the position or opportunity be effective?

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 6

Brainstorming Purpose-Driven Structure

Complete the **job matcher tool** and **career values self-assessment** highlighted in *Additional Resources* on page 32. Fill in the table below. Check Wise Mind after reporting your results – these assessments are not one-size-fits-all and Wise Mind will be needed to assess what is effective/ineffective for you.

	Strong Matches	Weak Matches	Wise Mind Observations
<i>Example: Interests</i>	Social, Artistic, Investigative	Enterprising, Realistic, Conventional	I am not outdoorsy or ambitious, but I am organized so I think I'd rank my conventional score higher.
<p>Interests</p> <p>Results can be found by clicking on <i>'What does my score mean?'</i> below the Interests bar chart.</p>			
<p>Careers</p> <p>Use this as a tool to brainstorm ideas and potential goals.</p>			
<p>Values</p> <p>'Most and 'least' are intended to be nonjudgmental. All listed values may be important or unimportant.</p>			

Goals: Brainstorm potential goals that align with your interests and values.

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 7: Addressing Barriers to Building Structure
– Part I –

Barriers to Building Structure

Barriers **will** arise as you practice building structure and creating a LIFE WORTH LIVING. Deciding how you will respond to barriers **ahead of time** is an effective strategy for reducing suffering and distress.

Knowing how you will respond to barriers can also help motivate you to try challenging tasks by giving you a sense of preparedness.

Types of barriers that get in the way of building structure:

- **Mood, emotions**, and low motivation.
- **Environmental factors** (e.g., time, money, life gets in the way).
- **Lack of skills** or knowledge needed to accomplish your goal.
- You get **disorganized, forget, or lose track** of your plans.
- You set goals that are **too difficult or too easy** for you.

What barriers have you encountered while working towards your Building Structure or Target Group goals? Record observations below.

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 7: Addressing Barriers to Building Structure
– Part I –

Toolkit for Addressing Barriers

When assembling your DBT toolkit, it can be helpful to consider whether **problem solving** (*changing the situation/problem*), **radical acceptance** (*allowing for reality in that moment*), or **opposite action** (*acting opposite to ineffective emotional urges*) will be most effective.

Effectively selecting the right tool (DBT skill) for the barrier(s) at hand increases the likelihood of accomplishing your goals and reducing suffering. AND barriers may take multiple tools and multiple tries.

Assembling Your Toolkit

- First, consider the facts of the situation. Nonjudgmentally observe and describe the barrier(s) that are getting in the way.
- Be mindful of all-or-nothing thinking, judgments, & catastrophizing!
- **Ask Wise Mind:**
Is the barrier in the environment? Y/N.
OR are my emotions/mood getting in the way? Y/N.
Can I realistically solve or change the problem in this moment? Y/N.
- **Problem Solving:** Use if the barrier is in the environment and you CAN realistically solve or change the problem in this moment.
- **Acceptance:** Use if the barrier is in the environment and you CANNOT realistically solve or change the problem in this moment.
- **Opposite Action:** Use if emotions/mood are getting in the way – check the facts + consider doing the opposite of the emotion’s urge.

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 7: Addressing Barriers to Building Structure
– Part I –

Problem Solving

1. **Describe the situation**, sticking to the facts. Name the barrier(s).
2. Remember your **Wise Mind goal** and write it down.
3. **Pick ONE barrier** (in the environment + solvable right now) to tackle first. Observe all-or-nothing thinking, lean into effectiveness.
4. **Brainstorm** a list of ALL possible solutions.
This is a *judgment-free* step – any and all solutions are up for grabs.
5. **Choose one solution** that fits best. Try comparing the pros and cons.
6. **Take action!** Try out the solution.
7. **Evaluate the results** of your problem solving attempt.
If it worked, awesome! If it didn't work, choose a new solution to try.
Problem solving is a curious-minded skill – all about trial and error.

Adapted from DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, Second Edition by Marsha M. Linehan. © 2015.

Radical Acceptance

- When the problem is outside of your control (just in this one present!) moment, practice **radical acceptance** and open yourself up to what you cannot change.
- First, observe the signs that you are rejecting reality.
Examples: Judgments, physiological changes (*heart rate increasing, flushed cheeks, numbness, eyes glazing over*), urges to avoid.
- Turn your mind *towards* acceptance. Practice saying 'yes'.
- **REMEMBER:** Acceptance is NOT approval, compassion, passivity.
Acceptance goes hand-in-hand with change (core DBT dialectic!).

Adapted from DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, Second Edition by Marsha M. Linehan. © 2015.

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 7

Identifying Barriers and Building Your Toolkit

Step 1. Pick one goal that you set in Target Group this week.

Step 2. Throughout the week, observe and label barriers that get in the way of taking action steps and accomplishing your goal.

- *Mood, emotions, low motivation.*
- *Environmental factors (e.g., time, money, life gets in the way).*
- *Lack of skills or knowledge needed to accomplish your goal.*
- *You get disorganized, forget, or lose track of your plans.*
- *You set goals that are too difficult or too easy for you.*

1.

2.

3.

4.

Step 3. Pick one barrier to tackle first. Ask Wise Mind (*circle YES or NO*) ...

Is the barrier in the environment? YES or NO

Are my emotions getting in the way? YES or NO

Can I solve or change the problem right now? YES or NO

Step 4. Identify skills that might be effective to address the barrier. If you practice skills, describe your practice and its effectiveness.

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 7: Addressing Barriers to Building Structure
– Part II –

When Mood or Emotions is the Barrier

- When mood or emotions are getting in the way of accomplishing your goal, consider practicing **Opposite Action**.
- In Building Structure, opposite action can be particularly helpful when the barrier to getting started is a lack of motivation, i.e., from depressed mood or a fear of ‘not feeling ready’.
- In some cases, you may never feel truly ready or fully motivated to accomplish a goal – even if that goal is very important to you!

*Be wary of the *motivation trap* – waiting for the spark of motivation to hit to launch you into action. Motivation can be a finnick, elusive thing. It might never show up. You might never act!
- Practicing opposite action, particularly when urges to avoid arise, can prompt you to take action NOW and retrain the brain over time.

This is an example of treating mental health from the **outside-in** vs. inside-out (i.e., waiting for mood to improve before taking action).

Think of a time when you were hesitant to attempt a goal, but tried anyway and succeeded? What was the result?

*Harris, R. (2022). *The Happiness Trap: A Guide to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*.

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 7: Addressing Barriers to Building Structure
– Part II –

Opposite Action

1. Observe when emotions are getting in the way of your goal.
2. Identify and label the exact emotion that is getting in the way.
Ways to Describe Emotions (Emotion Regulation Handout 6, pgs. 214 – 223) may be a useful resource for identifying emotions.
3. Check the facts. Does your emotion fit the facts of the situation AND/OR does the intensity of your emotion fit the facts?
4. Describe the action urge. What is your emotion telling you to do?
5. Ask Wise Mind: Is acting on my emotion effective for my goal?
If YES: Do it!
If NO: Practice doing the opposite of your emotion's urge.
6. Repeat acting opposite to your emotion's urge.

Example Scenario:

1. + 2. Fear/anxiety is getting in the way of socializing with a friend.
3. Spending time with your friend usually improves your mood and your anxiety decreases over time, and socializing will not put you are your friend in harm's way – the emotion does not fit the facts.
4. You observe the urge to cancel your plans last-minute.
5. You decide that acting on your fear's action urge will NOT be effective for your LIFE WORTH LIVING goals. You decide to act opposite by approaching the situation and meeting up with your friend even though you are still anxious.
6. Before you leave the house, you practice an ice dive to lower your physiological level of anxiety.

Adapted from DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, Second Edition by Marsha M. Linehan. © 2015.

BUILDING A LIFE WORTH LIVING WITH STRUCTURE
UNIT 7: Addressing Barriers to Building Structure
– Part II –

Coping Ahead for Barriers

The **Cope Ahead** skill is about assembling and preparing your toolkit ahead of time. Troubleshooting barriers in advance can increase the probability of meeting your goal by giving you an actionable skills plan.

1. Describe barriers that could get in the way of meeting your goals.

If there are multiple barriers, focus on just one to start with.

2. Brainstorm and write down a list of skills you would use to cope with the barrier or problem scenario. Be as specific as possible.

Example: “I’ll practice Wise Mind ACCEPTS when I get anxious.”

VERSUS “I think that fear will be really intense when I get closer to the movie theater where I’m meeting my friend. In the car, I’m going to practice paced breathing and distract with my favorite music playlist. At the theater, I’ll bring my stress ball from the car to distract with other sensations if my anxiety starts to increase.

3. Imagine the problem scenario in your mind and imagine yourself **coping effectively**, step-by-step, rehearsing exactly what you’d do.

NOTE: It is important to imagine coping EFFECTIVELY. Worrying about coping ineffectively will not increase your willingness.

4. Practice relaxation and self-soothing to re-regulate. Imagined rehearsal may elicit the same emotions at a similar intensity to the actual problem scenario. Relaxation after your practice will also be great practice for re-regulating after the problem scenario.

Ideas for relaxation include: paced breathing, paired muscle relaxation, self-soothing via the five senses, using PLEASE skills.

Adapted from DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, Second Edition by Marsha M. Linehan. © 2015.

BUILDING STRUCTURE WORKSHEET 8

Addressing Barriers to Building Structure

There are many ways to respond when barriers interfere with meeting your goals. Use this worksheet to help you brainstorm solutions.

Step 1. Identify a building structure activity or goal you would like to complete but haven't yet because you are running into barriers.

Step 2. Identify what's getting in the way of working towards your goal. It will be helpful to choose the barrier that is most impactful, so you can focus on addressing it first. Consider the types of barriers (*pg. 34*) and the questions to ask Wise Mind when assembling your toolkit (*pg. 35*).

Step 3. Identify and practice skills to address the barrier. Consider problem solving, acceptance, opposite action. You may also consider brainstorming a cope ahead plan to prepare for difficult or emotionally intense barriers. Record your observations below:
