

DBT Phone Coaching

Orientation Sheet

Reasons to use phone coaching:

- 1) **To generalize DBT skills:** We want to help you generalize the skills across different situations in your personal life, as it doesn't help to only use the skills in individual or group therapy sessions.
- 2) ***To prevent suicidal or self-harm actions when skills are not working:** The idea is to call *before* a full-blown crisis occurs and to learn to call earlier and earlier at the first signs of needing help.
- 3) **To repair the relationship with the therapist:** For example, you might want to check out something that was said in session or apologize. We want to address anything that gets in the way of our relationships that can't wait until the next session.
- 4) **To share celebratory news:** Sometimes you just want to share that you successfully used a skill and that it helped. We love to hear successes too!

***24 HOUR RULE:** You are responsible for calling your therapist **BEFORE** you engage in a target behavior. Calling after engaging in target behaviors is ineffective not appropriate. The reason behind this is that your therapist is most helpful to you before you engage in a problematic or self-harming action. Therefore, you are not permitted to call your therapist for 24 hours after engaging in a target behavior. If you call during that time, you will be instructed to contact other resources and the call will end.

Phone coaching is...

- brief (5-10 minutes) and focused on using DBT skills
- to help you use your skills in the midst of a crisis, so that you do not make the situation worse.
- most effective when you are willing to use your skills

Phone coaching is NOT...

- an extra therapy or venting session
- for analyzing or problem solving the crisis itself (the crisis can be analyzed and problem solved in the next session)
- effective when you are unwilling to use your skills

How to access phone coaching:

1. Answer the following questions **BEFORE** you call:
 - a. *What is the situation and/or specific problem I need skills for? (stick to the facts)*
 - b. *What is the primary emotion I am experiencing right now? (and how intense from 1-10)?*
 - c. *What skills have I already tried?*
 - d. *What is my most important goal right now? (e.g., Change the situation? Change your emotional response to the problem? Accept and tolerate the problem?)*
2. Call therapist (do not text) and leave a brief voicemail describing your answers to the above questions.
3. If your therapist does not call you back within an hour, call your group therapist.
4. If your group therapist does not call back within an hour, call your therapist's supervisor.
5. If your therapist's supervisor does not call back within an hour, call your local crisis line.

See General Handout 1A below

My therapist's name & number: Ashley Maliken - 503-290-3277

My group therapist's name & number: _____

My therapist's supervisor's name & number: Jennie Heinlein - 503-290-3271

For life-threatening emergencies, we always recommend you either call 911 right away or go to your nearest hospital emergency room.

Examples of effective phone coaching requests:

(addresses each question briefly/succinctly)

"Hi this is _____ and my phone number is _____.

I just got into a big argument with my mom.

I'm currently experiencing anger at a 10 out of 10.

I've already tried to use *paced breathing* and *distracting with activities*.

I'd like to be able to tolerate my emotions right now so I don't make things worse.

I would appreciate if you called me back. Thank you."

This is a
DEAR MAN!

"Hi this is _____ and my phone number is _____.

I am having difficulty getting out of bed to get ready for work.

I'm currently experiencing sadness at 8 out of 10.

I've already tried to use *mindfulness of current emotion* and *check the facts*.

My goal is to change how I feel so that I can get to work.

Please call me back."

Examples of ineffective phone coaching requests:

"Hi this is _____. I really want to kill myself right now. Call me back. Bye."

(ineffective method for asking for help).

"Hi this is _____. I had a really hard day. My friend and I got into a fight. She's really stupid and I'm really mad at her now. I just want to talk about it with someone."

(This client appears to just want to talk/vent, which is not an appropriate use for skills coaching)

"Hi this is _____. I am freaking out right now and don't know what to do. I haven't tried any skills yet. I know I should use a skill, but I don't want to right now."

(We cannot coach clients who are not willing to use skills.)

"Hi this is _____. I'm having a really hard time figuring out what to do about all the bad grades I'm getting in school. Can you help me?"

(Given that phone coaching calls are brief (5-10 minutes), larger problem-solving questions are likely better suited for individual therapy sessions.)

Note: If you make a request for phone coaching that is not effective, we may not call you back, as we do not want to inadvertently reinforce ineffective communication.

If this is difficult for you, we will practice this and help you improve!



Options for Solving Any Problem

When life presents you with problems, what are your options?

1. **SOLVE THE PROBLEM**

Change the situation . . . or avoid, leave, or get out of the situation for good.

2. **FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE PROBLEM**

Change (or regulate) your emotional response to the problem.

3. **TOLERATE THE PROBLEM**

Accept and tolerate both the problem and your response to the problem.

4. **STAY MISERABLE**

Or possibly make it worse!

1. **TO PROBLEM-SOLVE:**

Use interpersonal effectiveness skills

Walking the Middle Path (from interpersonal effectiveness skills)

Use problem-solving skills (from emotion regulation skills)

2. **TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE PROBLEM:**

Use emotion regulation skills

3. **TO TOLERATE THE PROBLEM:**

Use distress tolerance and mindfulness skills

4. **TO STAY MISERABLE:**

Use *no* skills!

