

SESSION 1 SUMMARY

- This was an orientation and overview of the Simple Course. The co-leaders discussed the format of the course and what participants need to know to succeed in the course.
- S = structured I = integral M = mindful P L E = psychotherapy, that is learned easily
- Email: itssimple2023@gmail.com
- Website: www.itssimple2021.com, then click NEWS
- YouTube Channel: [@itssimpleonyoutube1123](https://www.youtube.com/@itssimpleonyoutube1123)
- BOING Group: drop in in-person / online to help participants review and practice the material Mondays 1:00 – 2:30 (444 Douro St, 2nd Floor boardroom)
- There's a Hole in My Sidewalk – central metaphor in the course
- The Simple Course aims to help you identify, become more aware of, get out of, avoid, and repair some of the “holes in the sidewalk” you keep falling into.
- It aims to help you: 1. Expand your window of emotional tolerance 2. Heal your trauma 3. Live a full life

SESSION 2 SUMMARY

DISTRESS TOLERANCE – DBT Skills Workbook

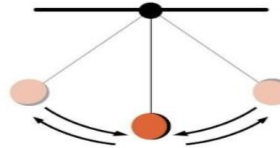
- distress tolerance skills help you cope with painful events by building up your resiliency
- using these skills, tools, and strategies can help widen our window of emotional tolerance so that we're calm and alert more often.



R **RELAX (stop, pause, just don't do it)**
E evaluate
S set an intention
T take action

4 SIMPLE TECHNIQUES (HOW TO USE THE TOOLS)

1. Follow the steps described in the algorithm (recipe)
2. Become more mindful of your "internal dashboard"
3. Stay in the window of tolerance by pendulating
4. Edit, splice, and paste the "videos" of problematic thoughts/feelings/behaviours to practice and develop new ones.



SIMPLE TOOL #1: CRISIS PLANS

1. Choose a specific crisis (deep hole)
2. Identify thoughts/feelings/behaviours that occur during this particular crisis
3. Complete the "crisis plan template"
4. Picture yourself using your crisis plan during the crisis by editing, splicing, and pasting
5. Stay in the window of tolerance by pendulating
6. Repeatedly visualize the "edited" version of your crisis until it becomes effortless
7. Use these steps with each new crisis
8. Practice, practice, practice

SESSION 3 SUMMARY By Kate



70,000 years ago, we started having complex language, abstract thinking, art and culture, symbolic thought, and greater social cooperation. This is called the **COGNITIVE REVOLUTION**.

LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS



Conscious – aware of one's surroundings, thoughts, feelings, and actions in the present moment

Subconscious – mental processes that operate outside of conscious awareness, but can influence thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (eg. habits)

Unconscious – deep mental processes inaccessible to awareness under normal circumstances (eg. repressed memories)

Instincts: brain systems that promote survival.....

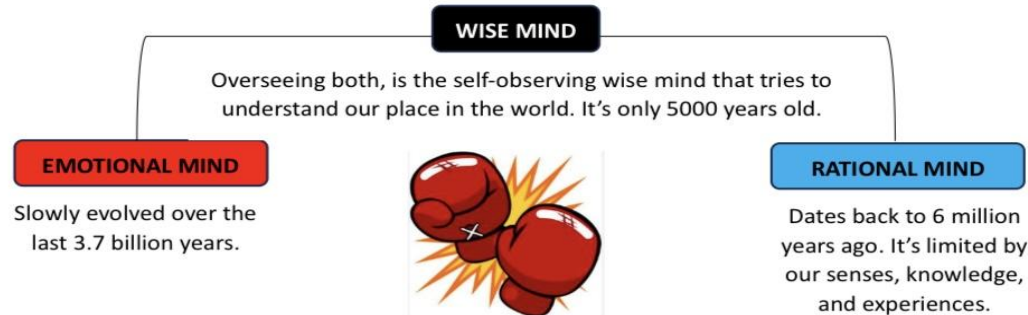
↳ **Emotions:** reactions to stimuli that often arise from our instincts

↳ **Feelings:** subjective interpretations of emotions

seeking / avoidance
fear & rage
lust / reproduction
care / parenting
play

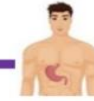
SO... **instincts** can trigger **emotional** responses, which are then experienced as **feelings**.

SOMATIC MIND: This is in our gut/body – intelligence as old as life on earth.



Philosophy – points out the limitations and ever-changing nature of our beliefs, reminding us not to assume that everything we think and feel is true, and urging us to look deeper into reality. We don't have access to the **ULTIMATE TRUTH**, but we can avoid flawed thinking and unsubstantiated beliefs.

Similarly, Wise Mind's goal is to understand itself / ourselves and the universe more deeply.



"REACTING"

SOMATIC MIND is your body / peripheral nervous system. Reacting is an immediate, automatic response.



"ACTING"

EMOTIONAL MIND is dominated by feelings and emotions. When in Emotional Mind, a person may react impulsively based on their feelings, often leading to decisions that are not well thought out. Dysregulated emotions can cloud judgment, making it difficult to think clearly.



"THINKING"

RATIONAL MIND is when a person relies on logic, facts and analysis. The Rational Mind is focused on objective reasoning and problem-solving, often disregarding emotions. While this state can be beneficial for decision-making, it can also lead to a lack of empathy or connection with one's feelings and the feelings of others.



"REFLECTING"

WISE MIND represents a balance between the Emotional Mind and the Rational Mind. It incorporates emotions **AND** logic, allowing for a more holistic approach to decision-making. The Wise Mind recognizes feelings, but also considers rational thought, leading to more balanced choices.

The goal of DBT is to help individuals recognize when they are in each of these states, and to cultivate their Wise Mind, allowing for healthier coping strategies and more effective interpersonal relationships.

Evolutionary Mismatch -



traits or behaviours that evolved in a species are NO LONGER WELL-SUITED to the current environment of that species.

Eg. Our stress-response systems evolved to deal with immediate threats like lion attacks, and today our systems are not equipped to deal with the chronic, ongoing stress of our everyday lives.

It's important to consider your biological wiring and to remember that you didn't evolve to exist in our current environment. This can be a source of many struggles.

SESSION 4 SUMMARY

DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILLS:

1. Radical Acceptance – accepting pain without adding resistance or judgment
“It is what it is”
2. Distraction – distraction from self-destructive behaviour
 - with pleasurable activities
 - by counting
 - by focusing on someone else
 - with thoughts
 - by leaving
 - with tasks / chores
 -
3. Create a Distraction Plan – use this as part of your crisis plan
4. Relax and Self-Soothe – using the 5 senses (smell, vision, sound, taste, touch)
5. Create a Relaxation Plan



SO, in your crisis plan...

Select a **radical acceptance statement** ie. “This too shall pass”

Select a **distraction strategy**

Select a **relaxation and self-soothing method**

Your crisis plan is starting to take shape. Work on it when you are calm and alert, NOT when you're in crisis. Practice the strategies you've chosen so that you're able to easily fall into them when you're outside the window of tolerance.

We covered the sensitive and important topic of suicide. Many people with mental health issues struggle with occasional, frequent, or constant suicidal ideation.

Crisis plans are CRITICAL in suicide prevention. They serve as a proactive strategy to help individuals manage their feelings and behaviours during times of crisis, AND encourage them to seek help when necessary.

DBT holds that the best way to deal with people experiencing suicidality is to help them build a life worth living. This is what makes us resilient when dealing with the stresses that come our way. The goal of the Simple Course is to help participants to build that worthwhile and meaningful life.

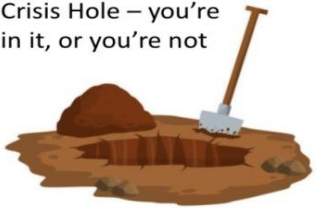
SESSION 5 SUMMARY

MORE DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILLS:

1. Safe-place Visualization – imagining yourself in a safe environment
2. Cue-controlled Relaxation – using a word or phrase to signal to your body that it's time to relax
3. Rediscovering Your Values – using the Valued Living Questionnaire and the Committed Action Worksheet to realign your life with your values
4. Rehearsing Value-based Behaviour – using the **editing, splicing, and pasting technique** is Cognitive Rehearsal
5. Connecting with your Higher Power – faith in YOUR higher power can give you a sense of meaning that helps you to cope with stress

2nd SIMPLE TOOL: Holes Diary Cards

Crisis Hole – you're in it, or you're not



Diary Cards – staircase with steps because there is a spectrum of severity of dysregulated feelings / thoughts / behaviours

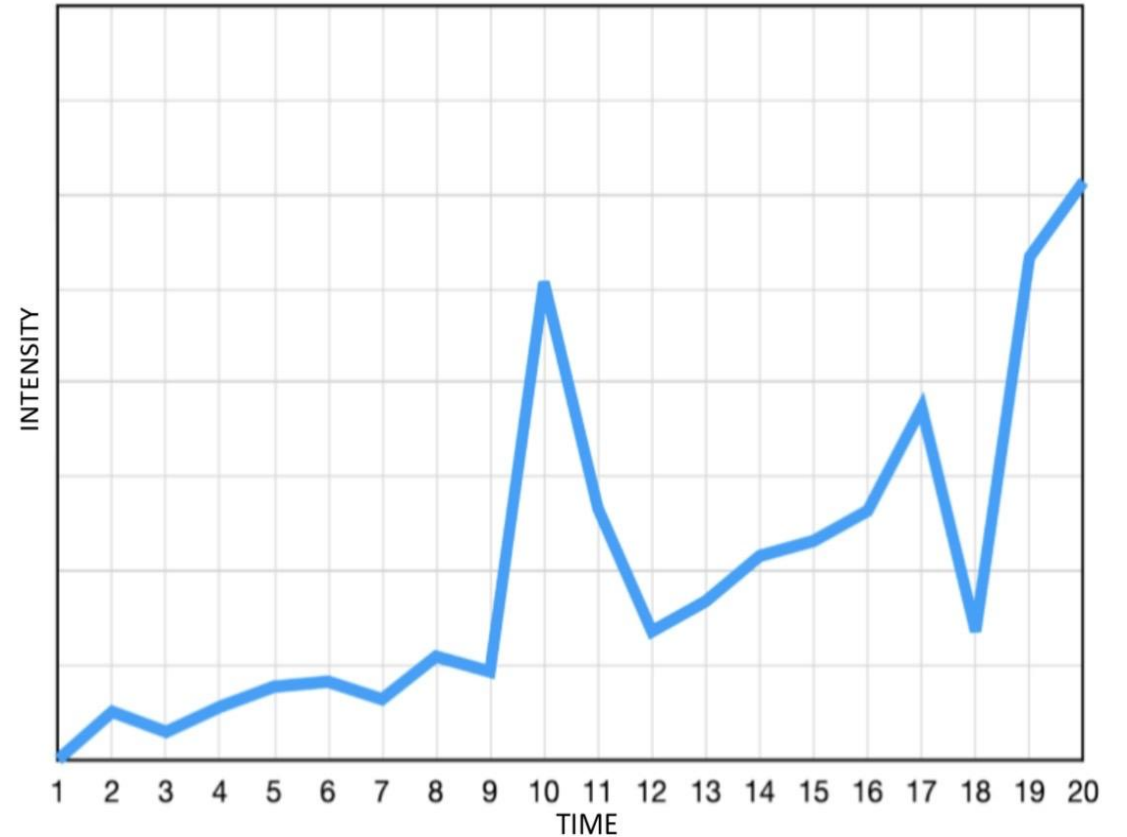


Targets for change can be more severe and closer to crisis OR less intense and closer to the window of tolerance.

Targets can be

- Dysregulated Feelings
- Dysregulated Thoughts
- Dysregulated Behaviours
- Maladaptive Coping Strategies

Topography is how the intensity of the emotion changed over time.



Crisis Plans are for when you're at the bottom of a hole, whereas, Diary Cards will help you become more mindful of when your problematic thoughts / feelings / behaviours arise before you're in full-on crisis.

This is where you will start to see patterns, make changes, and develop your self-awareness with practice.

SESSION 6 SUMMARY

MORE ADVANCED DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILLS:

1. Live in the Present Moment – resist “time-travelling” to the past or future, using breath and body awareness
2. Self-encouraging Coping Thoughts – to remind yourself of how strong and capable you are, eg. “I’m strong enough to handle it”
3. Radical Acceptance – accepting the things you cannot change, eg. “It is what it is”
4. Self-affirming Statements – reminding us of our good qualities, eg. “I’m not perfect but I get better everyday”
5. Feelings-threat Balance – to determine if you should take action or REST
6. Create New Coping Strategies – healthy strategies like journaling, or cleaning
7. Create an Emergency Coping Plan – a plan that you can pull out, that outlines the strategies that are most effective for YOU



So, at this point we have quite the list of Distress Tolerance Skills (20 items). You don’t have to use ALL of them, but keep an open mind and try them all at least once.
You will find 3-4 skills that work best for you, and you’ll practice them, and you’ll master them, and they’ll be able to bring you back into the Window of Tolerance.

*see next page for Updated Personal Skills List *

UPDATED PERSONAL SKILLS LIST

DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILLS

1. Grounding Skills – Set a Daily Intention
2. Grounding Skills – Sensory Soothing Toolkit
3. Grounding Skills – The 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Method
4. Grounding Skills – The Emotional Freedom Technique
5. REST (or PEST for Pause)
6. Radical Acceptance Statements (please specify)
7. Distraction Plan
8. Self-Soothing Plan
9. Safe Place Visualization
10. Cue-Controlled Relaxation
11. Rediscovering Your Values (please specify)
12. Rehearse Values-Based Behaviour (Edit / Splice / Paste)
13. Connect With Your Higher Power
14. Live in the Present Moment
15. Use Self-Encouraging Coping Thoughts
16. Radical Acceptance
17. Use Self-Affirming Statements
18. Balance Feelings & Threat
19. Create New Coping Strategies
20. Create and Emergency Coping Plan

SESSION 7 SUMMARY



Personality: The characteristic set of behaviours, thoughts, and emotional patterns that are present in an individual and evolve from biological and environmental factors.

So, repeatedly falling into holes is a part of personality, and AVOIDING holes involves changing aspects of your personality.

Psychodynamic Theory of Personality: People are viewed as struggling between their animal Instincts and the pressures of socialization. The emphasis is on childhood experience and the unconscious mind.

The interaction between emotional, rational, and wise mind creates a dynamic system that influences behaviour.

Conflicts among these three components can lead to anxiety, depression, and other forms of psychological distress.

NATURE VS. NURTURE

Nature: what is innate to the individual at birth

Nurture: what is learned and due to the environment or circumstances after birth

DUAL PROCESS THEORY

SYSTEM 1

Emotional mind
Accelerator pedal
Limbic system and brain stem
Evolutionarily old
Fast, auto-pilot, non-verbal
Hard to control, no self-awareness

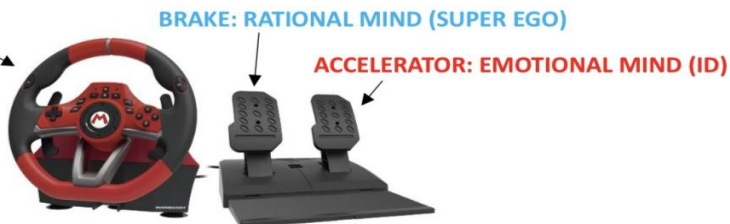
SYSTEM 2

Rational mind
Brake pedal
Cerebral cortex
Evolutionarily recent
Slow, effortful
Linked to language and intelligence

This theory holds that we SIMULTANEOUSLY process information in these two parallel, but very different ways. So, we have two minds figuring things out at the same time, coming to different conclusions, and making different decisions about what to do.

WISE MIND (EGO):

Is a very skilled driver that intimately knows how to use the accelerator and brake to navigate the road of life, avoiding potholes and accidents.



The emotional SYSTEM 1, and the rational SYSTEM 2 aren't very aware of each other, and don't communicate well because they don't speak the same language.

BUT, the language that they do share is symbolism or imagery.

Guess what?!?! WISE MIND THINKS SYMBOLICALLY! It can communicate with both the rational and emotional minds.

If we want to change the balance between the emotional and rational systems, we need to develop our wise minds. We can foster this development, and the Simple Course helps us to do just that!