

Family Connections

Problem Management Skills

Options for Relationship Problems

Options for Approaching Problems

(Linehan)

- # 1 Radical acceptance:
accept and tolerate both the problem and your response to the problem
- # 2 Change the way you feel about it
- # 3 Solve the problem
- # 4 Stay stuck and miserable

If you don't want to stay miserable, then realistically, you must focus your energy on either acceptance or change.

Increasing Your Inter-personal Effectiveness

Increasing Your Interpersonal Effectiveness

(Linehan)

Balance:

- ❖ Effectively try to achieve your OBJECTIVES
 - Describe
 - Express
 - Assert
 - Reinforce
 - Mindful (of your goals)
 - Appear confident
 - Negotiate
- ❖ Effectively maintain the RELATIONSHIP
 - Gentle Interested Validate Easy manner
- ❖ Effectively maintain your SELF-RESPECT
 - Fairness Apologies not needed Stick to values and Truth

Exercise # 1

*Practice each of these skills separately in easy situations, then in more and more complicated and upsetting situations. Practice with somebody or in your head **before** you actually say anything.*

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**Change
Strategies**

**Accurate
Expression:
Timing**

**Goals
and
Strategies**

Change Strategies

Accurate Expression: Timing

- Know what you want:
Use mindfulness to identify what you feel, think, and want
- Is the time right?
Use mindfulness of the other person to figure out whether she or he is able to validate or work on this RIGHT NOW
 - ◆ Can your relative handle this right now? If not, WAIT
- If the timing is right, tell the other person what your goal is, obtain agreement on the goal and proceed.
 - ◆ Don't let the conversation get to a place where they can say no. Either change the subject or slow down

Match Your Strategies To Your Goals

<u>Strategy</u>	→	<u>Goal</u>
Describe the situation, Reactions	→	Sort out feelings
Describe	→	Communicate emotion, wants, opinions
Validate	→	Support the other person
Negotiate	→	Correct injustice
Work together on solution mindfully, engage in problem management	→	Get the other person to change (They have to want to change!)

Exercises # 2 and # 3

Exercise #2 Pick a relatively minor problem that you have with someone other than your relative. Using mindfulness, identify on paper what you think, feel, and want.

Exercise #3 Using the Goals and Strategies, implement the steps with that person.

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Problem Definition

PROBLEM SOLVING AND PROBLEM MANAGEMENT

Problem or Target Definition

Goals of Problem Definition: What's the *TARGET*?

- ▲ For family members to develop a clear, specific definition of the problem from each person's perspective, with the understanding that the definition can be different from each perspective. (This is more difficult than it looks)
- ▲ Do not discuss making any changes until this definition has been specified.
- ▲ Make no attempt to solve the problem in this phase.

Step One

Step One: In Stating the Problem, Always Begin With Something Positive

- ▲ Be brief
- ▲ Validate the value of the relationship, the other's value as a person, family member's feelings, thoughts, legitimate actions.
 - * helps create a receptive atmosphere
 - * demonstrates a desire for a collaborative discussion
 - * demonstrates that problems in the relationship are not the only things you notice

Step Two

Step Two: Be Specific

- ▲ Formulate the problem mindfully in terms of behavior (e.g., behavior of other person in this situation, rather than the situations themselves or the personality of the other person). Use relationship mindfulness and be *descriptive*.
- ▲ What is it about the behavior that is problematic (e.g., frequency, time, place of occurrence)?

Step Three

Step Three: Express Your Feelings

- ▲ How do you feel when the other person engages in this behavior? What are the consequences?
- ▲ Validate your own feelings; that is, do not disown them as "wrong" or "foolish."
- ▲ Be careful not to downplay or exaggerate how you are feeling in order to protect yourself or punish your relative. Doing so is self-invalidating.

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Step
Four

Step Four: Identify Your Role in the Problem

- ▲ Most problems are mutual problems.
- ▲ Avoid placing the sole blame for a problem on the other person, or yourself.
- ▲ Be specific.
- ▲ What do you do (or what you have not done) that may contribute to the problem behavior, including its maintenance?

Step
Five

Step Five: Deal with Only One Problem at a Time

- ▲ Avoid the temptation to go into a list of complaints. (Puts people on the defensive)
- ▲ Keep the problem at a level that is solvable, one thing at a time

Step
Six

Step Six: Summarize What the Other Person is Saying

- ▲ Increase understanding by highlighting areas of miscommunication or misperception.
- ▲ Validate the other person's statements and perceptions (This will slow you down and keep you from reacting impulsively)

Step
Seven

Step Seven: Avoid Making Inferences about the Problem Behavior: Stay Mindful

- ▲ Talk only about what you observe (e.g., "When you do X, I feel Y")
- ▲ Keep discussion of problem on track.
- ▲ Avoid blaming the other person or yourself (e.g., character judgments, ascribing motives).

Step
Eight

Step Eight: Commitment

- ▲ Make sure you want to solve the problem - Does it need to be solved, or just understood?
- ▲ Do you all jointly commit to working on a solution?
- ▲ Or, do you agree that just talking about the issue so far has been a sufficient benefit to the relationship and may have resolved anything corrosive going on? If this is true, tension should be decreased, and both people should notice the decrease (see Relationship Mindfulness, and Validation handouts).
- ▲ Commit to visit this issue again to make sure it is OK. (Note when.) (e.g., you can say: "Are you willing to work on this? Can we talk again tomorrow to iron out details?" During entire process, keep things simple. Don't keep rehashing things)

Exercises #4, #5, #6

Exercise #4 Pick a relatively minor problem you have with your relative.

Using mindfulness, identify what you think, feel and want.

Exercise #5 Using the Goals and Strategies, implement the steps you would take, writing them down. Be prepared to do a role play in class.

Exercise #6 Go through the eight steps of Problem Management writing down what you will say you when you discuss the problem with your relative.

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Problem Analysis

- ❖ Choose a specific instance of the problem to analyze
- ❖ Describe the sequence in detail, step by steps, like you would describe a chain reaction
- ❖ Remember that if we understood every detail, every person's behaviors would make perfect sense

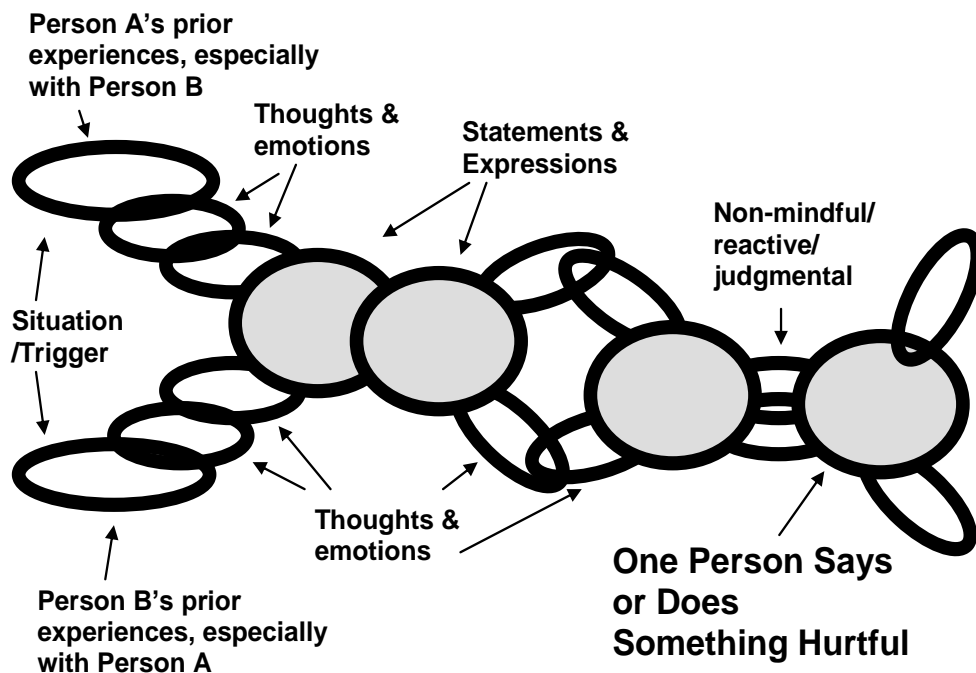
Links on the Chain

Problem Analysis: Links on the Chain

- ❖ Vulnerabilities
- ❖ Trigger, or prompting event
- ❖ Emotions, thoughts, judgments (inside somebody's head)
- ❖ What each of you said
- ❖ Did the interaction "work"?

(From Fruzzetti, 2006)

Graphic



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**Target
Something
You
Did
to
Change**

Target Something You Did To Change

- ❖ Choose a specific target of your own
- ❖ Use any of the skills from FC to try to change what you did
 - Reduce your vulnerabilities
 - Let go of your own judgments
 - Reduce your reactivity
 - Stay focused (mindful) of your goal
 - Self-validate your primary emotions
 - Validate your loved one
 - Soothe yourself or your loved one

Brainstorm

Brainstorm

- ❖ With your new skills, start to discuss the problem again
- ❖ Staying balanced, brainstorm possible solutions that work for both
 - Win/win vs. Lose/lose (or even Win/lose)
 - If anyone wins, the relationship loses
 - Negotiate, negotiate, negotiate

**Contract
and
Commit
to a
Solution**

Contract and Commit to a Solution

- ❖ Commit to a trial period, if possible, for your new solutions
- ❖ Specify what each of you will do
- ❖ Discuss the pros and cons of your solution, and whether it is realistic or not: What will likely get in the way?
- ❖ Troubleshoot whatever problems are likely to sabotage your solution
- ❖ Commit to continuing to try EVEN if your first (or second or third) efforts are not successful. Remember: If it were easy, you would have solved this a long time ago.

**Implement
and
Follow Up**

Implement and Follow Up

- ❖ Implement your new solution. Practice any parts you can ahead of time, maybe role play, get support, imagine how you will handle adversity and set-backs
- ❖ Keep practicing until it works!
- ❖ Support and validate each other for your hard work
- ❖ Set a date for checking in on how the solution is going, and revise and recommit as needed.

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Non – Collaborative Techniques

Techniques for Non-Collaborative Problem-Solving (The other person is unwilling, at least at first)

The initial goal: Promote a collaborative effort

- 1) “Foot-in the-door” –DBT technique. This technique aims to find some inducement that will encourage the other person to want to problem solve. The key is to think of what will encourage the other person to want to open up dialogue.
- 2) Use Core Mindfulness Skill-Effectively, Reinforce in DEAR MAN

(Remember to negotiate. There is likely to be more than one solution to a problem)

Taking a Step Back

If that approach is not successful: Taking a Step Back

- 1) Put the issue on the shelf for a few days, if possible. Timing can often make a big difference. Also, consider whether the person is able to give you what you are requesting...Do they have the capability to do it, i.e., Can they call you when you want them to?
- 2) “Observe your limits.” Does the person’s behavior go beyond what you are willing to tolerate, what is healthy for you to tolerate, or what is healthy for them for you to tolerate? If yes to any or all of the above, remove yourself from the situation and/or decline to comply with a request.
- 3) Sometimes you might need a time out, or “Relationship Vacation.” This might be a consideration if and when the other person is not willing to work towards problem solving a particular issue that you feel is crucial at that moment in time and is truly burning you out.

Exercises # 7 and #8

Exercise #7 When the time is right, using mindfulness of the other person, figure out when she or he is able to work on the issue. Implement the above steps.

Exercise #8 If you need to use non-collaborative problem solving, write down why and how you will implement it.

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**When
Change
Just Isn't
Happening**

**Remember: Family members do burn out.
You need to take care of yourself.**

When Change Just Isn't Happening

- ❖ Another option is true, radical acceptance of reality -- if changes that you want are NOT actually happening.
- ❖ Non-Acceptance/non-change really is a place of intense suffering
- ❖ Consider true or radical acceptance

**Step 1:
True
Acceptance**

***3 Steps To Radical (True) Acceptance* ((Fruzzetti)**

Step 1 Cease and desist: At least temporarily STOP trying to change it

- ▲ Don't try to make the other person change his or her behavior (unless it is dangerous)
- ▲ Tolerate your own disappointment----let go of judgments and anger (acknowledging judgments and not expressing them will help reduce them)
- ▲ Accept that the other person's behavior may still bother you. (e.g., not willing to go to AA meetings).

Step 2 Be mindful of negative consequences

The focus turns from tolerating disappointment/anger to noticing the full range of effects of your previous "don't accept" position, including what is missing, or you lose, by focusing on the problem.

The consequences of disappointment and anger include:

- ▲ being more vulnerable to further conflict
- ▲ more emotional distance from the other person
- ▲ more misery for the other person
- ▲ more misery of your own
- ▲ one or both stop participating in the relationship, which leads to further distance, conflict and unhappiness

**Step 2:
Be
Mindful
of
Negative
Consequences**

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Step 3: Let go of Suffering and Engage in Your Life As It Is

Step 3 Let Go Of Suffering and Engage In Your Life As It Is

- ▲ Understand the “meaning” of the other’s behavior
 - In her or his history
 - Given current/typical context
 - Related emotions, beliefs, desires, etc.
- ▲ Imagine your life as it is...and this dimension NEVER changing
- ▲ Practice “stimulus control” or adjusting the things to which you pay attention; what have you been missing by focusing on the “problem?”
- ▲ Engage fully in your life as it is (most of the time): what you have, not what’s missing; what you love, not what you wish were different

Exercise # 9:

Identify a situation that you might want to accept radically.

Go through the three steps above and write down your thoughts and feelings as you try to implement the steps.

Practice Exercises

Practice Exercises

1. Identify a situation where you need to do accept things as they are. Go through the three steps above and write down your thoughts and feelings as you try to implement the steps.
2. Pick a relatively minor problem that you have with someone other than your relative. Using mindfulness, identify on paper what you think, feel and want.
3. Using the Goals and Strategies Table on Page 35, implement the steps with that person.
4. Pick a relatively minor problem that you have with your relative. Using mindfulness, identify on paper what you think, feel and want.
5. Using the Goals and Strategies Table on Page 35, implement the steps you would take; write them down. Be prepared to do a role play in class.
6. On paper, go through the eight (8) steps of Problem Management and write down what you will say you when you discuss the problem with him or her.
7. When the time is right, using mindfulness of the other person, figure out when she or he is able to work on the issue. Implement the above steps.
8. If you need to use non-collaborative problem solving, write down why and how you will implement it.