

Interpersonal Effectiveness

UNC COMP 523

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Overview

- Interpersonal effectiveness: what and why
- Dialectical behavior therapy
- The 3 interpersonal goals
- Obstacles to interpersonal effectiveness
- Clarifying your goals
- Interpersonal skills

What is interpersonal effectiveness?

- Being effective in collaboration (i.e. with 2+ people)
- Effective is about *goals*, not morality or truth

Why interpersonal effectiveness?

- Why not? Don't you want to be effective?
- Where else in the major will you learn this?
- Anecdotally, our alumni tend to be better at "soft skills" than those from engineering schools
- This is doable, even for the relationally inept (like I used to be)

Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT)

- "The dialectic" is an idea rooted in Greek philosophy (διαλεκτική)
- Starts with two different positions *and* a desire to arrive at the truth through dialogue
- Resembles debate, but without rhetoric and emotional appeals
- Hegel's stages: thesis, antithesis, synthesis

The DBT world view

1. everything is connected, part of the whole of reality
2. reality consists of internal opposing forces

Core practice: mindfulness

"Mindfulness is the act of consciously focusing the mind in the present moment without judgment and without attachment to the moment."

- opposite of habitual, automatic behavior
- letting go of judgments (at least during mindfulness)
- "observe and describe"

Core practice: validation

- There are reasons behind a person's desires and preferences
- "I see why you want that."
- "I'd want the same thing in your position."
- What kind of counselor would you prefer: a validating one or a judgmental one?
- You might not want to want something, but understanding why you do can help you work on it
- Validating the desires can unlock insights and new ideas

The 3 goals of interpersonal effectiveness

1. Objective goal: getting what you want (or refusing a request)
2. Relationship goal: get, maintain, or improve a relationship, or end an unwanted one
3. Self-respect goal: liking yourself and your words and actions at the end of the day
 - All 3 goals are present in all interactions, to varying degrees
 - Be mindful of all 3, so that you can prioritize between them

Obstacles to interpersonal effectiveness

- lack of interpersonal skills
- indecision
- interference from emotions
- prioritizing short-term goals over long-term ones
- other people are getting in the way
- counterproductive beliefs

Clarifying your goals

- Objectives
 - What specific results or changes do I want from this interaction? What do I have to do to get the results? What will work?
- Relationships
 - How do I want the other person to feel about me after the interaction is over? What do I have to do to get (or keep) this relationship?
- Self-respect
 - How do I want to feel about myself after this interaction is over? What do I have to do to feel that way about myself? What will work?

Exercise

- Prompt: Diego's landlord keeps his apartment deposit unfairly.
- What are the objective goals?
- What are the relational goals?
- What are the self-respect goals?
- What might the priorities be?
- Think, pair, and share

Skills overview

- Objectives skills: DEAR MAN
- Relationship skills: GIVE
- Self-respect skills: FAST

Objectives skills: DEAR MAN

Relationship skills: GIVE

Levels of validation

1. pay attention
2. reflect back
3. "read minds"
4. understand (how does their position make sense?)
5. acknowledge the valid
6. show equality: treat the other person as an equal, not greater or lesser than you, not fragile, not incompetent

Self-respect skills: FAST

- F: (be) Fair, to yourself and the other person; validate your own feelings and wishes too
- A: (no) Apologies: don't apologize for what you want
- S: Stick to values: don't compromise on your own values (unless it's very important)
- T: (be) Truthful: don't lie or exaggerate. Don't act helpless when you're not.

Acknowledgements

- DBT Skills Training Manual, 2nd edition, by Marsha M. Linehan