

DBT Skills Group #5- Accumulating Positive Emotions

1. Some fun facts about memory:
 - a. The brain's neurons combine to allow for an extraordinary amount of memory storage. Recent estimates are as high as 2.5 petabytes (2.5 million gigabytes)
 - b. The main parts of the brain involved with memory are the amygdala, the hippocampus, the cerebellum, and the prefrontal cortex. The amygdala is involved in fear and fear memories and is “non-verbal”.
 - c. Our strongest memories are often multi-sensory – we remember sights, smells, sounds, sensations, as well as emotions.
 - d. When we tell or retell experiences to ourselves or others, we confirm and strengthen memories – but also change them.
2. Recent research suggests that people remember more negative memories than positive memories (over-all unaided recall), and young adults (20-30's) are more highly focused on negative memories than at other ages. Why do you think this is so?
3. Strong memories often have an emotional impact that can be more pervasive, even causing physical symptoms, especially when it comes to traumatic events.
4. The good news is that people can also benefit from reliving positive experiences, such as remembering the overall sense of well-being that comes from feeling happy, content. Good memories can cause the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with feelings of pleasure. Happy memories positively affect our mental health and can be used therapeutically to reduce symptoms associated with bad memories.
5. We can accumulate positive **EMOTIONS** by remembering positive experiences AND listening to other's positive experiences. As you remember or tell your experience, try to recall and describe different details and different sensations (smell, feel, sound, etc.)
6. Remembering positive experiences can also be a really important way to identify what makes you feel happy and fulfilled. It is a wonderful first step when thinking about how to be happier or more fulfilled in your job/career/avocation, and to rediscover what you may feel is missing, or what you want more of, in your relationships and life.
7. Remembering past positive experiences, or trying to participate in things that make you happy (or used to make you happy) can also be challenging. Why?
8. Exercise and homework:
 - a. Exercise 1: If you would like, share a positive memory with the group. If possible, recall different senses and feelings that you recall.
 - b. Exercise 2: Identify 2-4 activities from the attached sheets or your own ideas – ideally one per day – that you will treat yourself to this week. Then
 - c. Commit to doing this. Mindfully experience these activities, and write down (pen and paper ideally) what you remember and felt during this activity.

Exercise 1: Re-experiencing a Positive Memory

Identify a positive memory – any specific moment or time in your present or past when you felt particularly happy, fulfilled, at peace and/ or content

What details do you remember, including senses: sights, smells, tastes, sound, sensations and feelings (e.g., wind or sun on your face, hot/cold, etc.). Try to bring it to life in your mind in words.

Who were you with? What do you remember feeling?

What do you think makes this a happy or positive memory?

EMOTION REGULATION HANDOUT 15



([Emotion Regulation Worksheets 9, 10, 13](#))

Accumulating Positive Emotions: Short Term

Accumulate positive emotions in the short term by doing these things.

BUILD POSITIVE EXPERIENCES NOW

- INCREASE PLEASANT EVENTS that lead to positive emotions.
- Do ONE THING each day from the Pleasant Events List.
(See *Emotion Regulation Handout 16*.)
- Practice opposite action; AVOID AVOIDING.
- BE MINDFUL of pleasant events (no multitasking).

BE MINDFUL OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

- FOCUS your attention on positive moments when they are happening.
No multitasking.
- REFOCUS your attention when your mind wanders to the negative.
- PARTICIPATE and ENGAGE fully in each experience.

BE UNMINDFUL OF WORRIES

Such as . . .

- When the positive experience will end.
- Whether you deserve this positive experience.
- How much more might be expected of you now.