

# DECODING THE ABCS OF EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENT



As allies in treatment, caregivers can contribute to positive outcomes by becoming familiar with evidence-based treatments and associated coping skills. While caregivers are not expected to be experts in various treatment modalities, understanding the basic skills and terminology can contribute to providing emotional and behavioral support to loved ones. Caregivers may find additional benefits in supporting their own mental health journey.

## DIALECTICAL BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (DBT)

DBT helps individuals learn skills for regulating overwhelming emotions in order to reduce problematic behaviors. DBT focuses on teaching skills that support better self-awareness, conflict management, self-soothing and interpersonal relationships.



**Mindfulness:** The repeated effort to focus on the present moment



**Distress Tolerance:** Management of emotional distress



**Emotion Regulation:** The ability to deal with strong or overwhelming feelings



**Interpersonal Effectiveness:** The ability to interact well with others

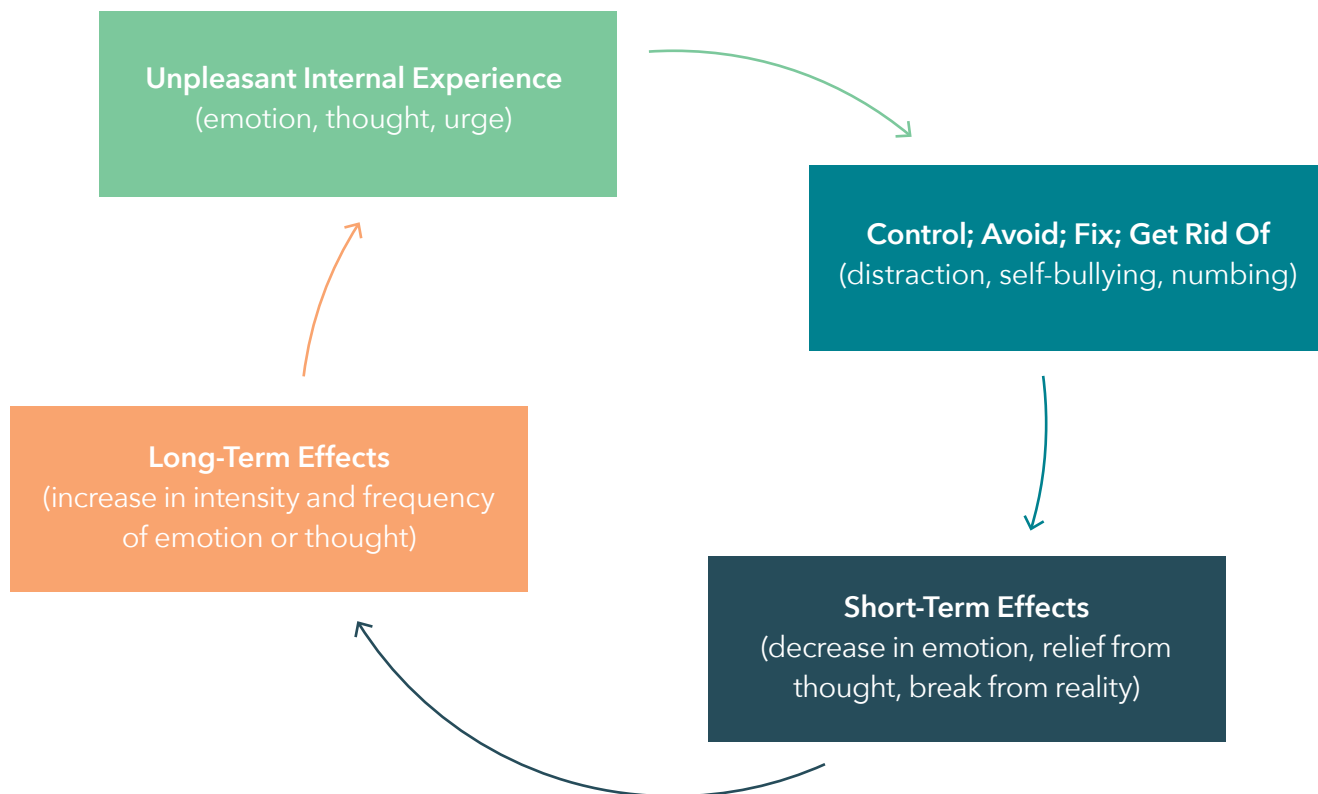
## CAREGIVER TIPS

- **Be prepared and willing** to feel the discomfort when your loved one is in distress (use grounding skills like box breathing).
- **Accept your loved one's emotions** by leaning in and validating their emotions. DO NOT skip this step!
- **Resist the urge to disagree** (“that doesn’t make sense to me”); overidentify (“I totally get it and here’s what I would do”); fix (“let me call and deal with it for you”); problem-solve (“why don’t you practice your skills”).
- **Practice value connection** by empowering your loved one to embrace their values and to connect on shared values.

## ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY (ACT)

ACT helps people acknowledge and accept their thoughts and emotions, as opposed to trying to change them. There is strong evidence that some thoughts or emotions cannot be changed. When this is the case, ACT teaches how to accept such thoughts and feelings without letting them dominate or overtake one's life.

### CYCLE OF AVOIDANCE



### ACT SKILLS STEP BY STEP

- 1. Mindfulness:** Getting in contact with the present moment. Use five senses; regulate breathing; pause and notice without judgment.
- 2. Observing Self:** The part of ourselves that can notice our thoughts and feelings without reacting to them but instead approaching with curiosity. Practice saying: "I notice I am having the thought..." or "I notice I am feeling..."
- 3. Acceptance & Willingness:** Opening up to your emotions and being willing to feel them. Use self-compassion; lean in and breathe into the emotion.
- 4. Diffusion:** Creating distance from ourselves and our thoughts. Practice saying, perhaps in a silly voice: "I'm having the thought that..."
- 5. Values:** A compass that helps guide our actions in the direction we want to live our lives. Ask yourself: "What is important to me?" or "What do I want to stand for?"
- 6. Committed Action:** Taking steps toward your values and carrying along the difficult emotions and thoughts that may show up. Ask yourself: "What is the smallest, easiest step I can take in service of my values?"

## EXPOSURE AND RESPONSE PREVENTION (ERP)

ERP helps individuals overcome anxiety-based avoidance issues by having them face and experience situations that provoke fear. The goal is to feel the distress and still have the thought, without engaging in avoidant behavior.

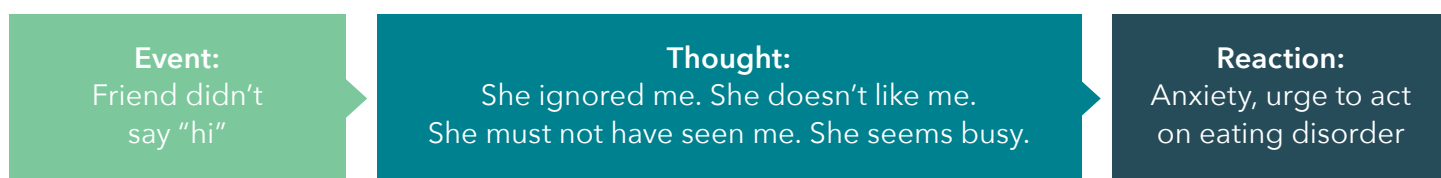
### ERP SKILLS STEP BY STEP

- 1. Identify a target/focus area and values:** "How does this exposure lead you to your values?"
- 2. Build a hierarchy to guide exposures:** "What are you avoiding that you want to integrate into your life?"
- 3. Rank anticipated distress levels and willingness using a 0-10 scale:** "How much distress do you anticipate experiencing?" or "What is your willingness to do the exposure?"
- 4. Identify safety behaviors/avoidant behaviors:** "How might you try to decrease your distress during the exposure?" or "What will you do to re-engage in the exposure plan?"
- 5. Create a plan for a valued activity post-exposure:** "What will you do later today to take care of yourself?"
- 6. Modify and repeat:** "When will you repeat this exposure?" or "How will you change or enhance this exposure for next time?"

## COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

CBT helps people change behaviors, assuming that psychological problems are based on learned patterns of unhelpful behavior and faulty or unhealthy ways of thinking. By changing behaviors, individuals can learn effective, healthy ways to cope.

### DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK



### CBT SKILLS

1. Self-monitoring
2. Thinking activities
3. Using thought logs (written or electronic apps)
4. Increasing awareness of thoughts that may precipitate eating disorder behavior
5. Urge surfing
6. Challenging negative automatic thinking (about self, body, etc.)
7. Identifying solutions to problems
8. Creating a recovery mindset

For additional resources, visit [EatingRecovery.com/FamilyFriendsSeries](https://EatingRecovery.com/FamilyFriendsSeries)  
For more information or if you have questions, please email [Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM](mailto:Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM)