PAIN IS INEVITABLE, MISERY IS OPTIONAL: EMOTION REGULATION SKILLS IN PAIN TREATMENT

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Integrating Dialectical Behavior Therapy with the Twelve Steps
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Disclosure Information

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OBJECTIVES

- Gain a better understanding of the interaction between biological, psychological and social factors related to chronic pain

- Understand the challenges in self-regulation with pain disorders

- Identify the vital role of emotion regulation skills in promoting self-care

- Learn effective emotion regulation skills used with the chronic and acute pain population for a more comprehensive treatment approach
CHRONIC PAIN

- Any pain lasting more than 12 weeks
- Affects an estimated 20% of the population worldwide
  - Approx 25.3 million in the U.S. (Nahin, 2015)
- Current ICD-10 includes diagnostic codes for Chronic Pain

Treede, R.D. et. al. 2015
Physiological Change

Fight or Flight Response

Stress Mediators

Allostasis
Allostatic Load

THE STRESS RESPONSE
ALLOSTATIC LOAD

- Primary Response
  - Release of Hormones

- Secondary Response
  - Behavioral Responses

McEwen, 2016
THE OVERLAP OF CHRONIC PAIN AND STRESS

- Stress: A process by which a challenging emotional physiological event or series of events results in adaptive or maladaptive changes required to regain homeostasis and/or stability

- Chronic Pain and stress are both adaptive in protecting the organism

Abdallah, C.G. and Geha, P. 2017
Chronic Pain is a risk factor for developing depression and anxiety (D/A)

Depression and anxiety may influence the longitudinal course of D/A

Patients with depression are at high risk of experiencing chronic pain

Mood swings, anger expression and interpersonal relationships affected

Gerrits, MM. 2014
INCREASE IN MALADAPTIVE BEHAVIORS

- Opioid misuse
- Excessive alcohol or other drug use
- Taking more medications than prescribed
- Isolation
- Relationship strain
- Definition of Addiction:

“Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors. Addiction is characterized by inability to consistently abstin, impairment in behavioral control, craving, diminished recognition of significant problems with one’s behaviors and interpersonal relationships, and a dysfunctional emotional response. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death.”
1. What have you seen with patients/clients who present with chronic pain issues (i.e. Behaviors, complaints, worldview, etc...)

2. How do they make you feel? What's your countertransference to them?

3. How do you currently treat these patients or how is chronic pain incorporated into their treatment plan?
Inability to express emotions at the intensity appropriate for the situation

Challenges in maintaining non-anguished emotional expression

Lability
Scar Hypothesis → Vulnerability Factors → Creating Life Traps

EMOTION DYSREGULATION
EMOTION REGULATION

- Close association between emotions and pain
- Effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience
- Ability to use healthy strategies
- Stay in line with one’s values and goals
EMOTION REGULATION

- Ability to identify and label one’s own emotions
- Maintains balance with changing emotions
- Reduces vulnerability to “Emotional Mind”
- Consistently uses skills to maintain a balanced state
## Emotion Regulation Skills

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“Moment to moment, non-judgmental awareness, cultivated by practice…”

Having our mind “full” of what is going on in the present moment

Data demonstrates that consistent mindfulness practice:

- Improves mood
- Decreases stress
- Improves level of acceptance and open-mindedness
- Decreases heart rate and blood pressure

Kabat-Zinn, 2018; Walsh, et. al, 2019
DISTRESS TOLERANCE

- Distracting with a skill
  - Contributing
  - Counting Your Blessings
  - (opposite)Emotions
  - Meaning
  - Relaxation
  - Seeking Guidance
  - Encouragement

- Accepting Reality
  - Radical Acceptance
  - Turning the Mind
  - Willingness vs Willfulness
Relationship Dynamics

Sick Role
Codependency

Re-Creating New Roles

Mutual Support and Allies

Mutual Purpose / Mutual Respect

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS
INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS SKILLS

Three goals of Interpersonal Effectiveness:

• Keep Relationships
• Cope with Conflict
• Negotiate with Others

Skills

• DEAR MAN
• SHARE
• Solution Focused Feedback
Cognitive Restructuring

Examining Automatic Thoughts

Relaxation Training

Physical Activity

Relapse Prevention Techniques
SCHEMA-FOCUSED SKILLS

- Negative Belief Systems
- Life Traps
- Operant Behavioral Techniques
TRAUMA

- Co-morbidity
- Mutual Maintenance
- Shared Vulnerability
- Shared emotional and physiological responses to stress
GROUP ACTIVITY

1. What are some interventions or modalities you use with depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns?

2. Which of these models we discussed do you think would be beneficial for your patients or a specific patient?

3. What therapeutic differences have you noticed with chronic pain patients vs. other patients?
INTEGRATION IS KEY

Group Sessions

Individual Coping Skills Coaching

Individual Therapy Sessions

Follow-up Check-Ins
SUMMARY/QUESTIONS
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