



# DBT-Substance Misuse adapted for a Forensic Learning Disability and Autism Population

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and  
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## Who are the Dialectical Intensive Therapies Team Secure (DITT-S)??

- Set up in 2015 and consists of multi-disciplinary professionals all trained in DBT.
  - Meet weekly for Consult
  - Deliver weekly group sessions and weekly individual sessions
  - Deliver staff training
  - Are involved in developing the service
  - Conduct research and present nationally on our work

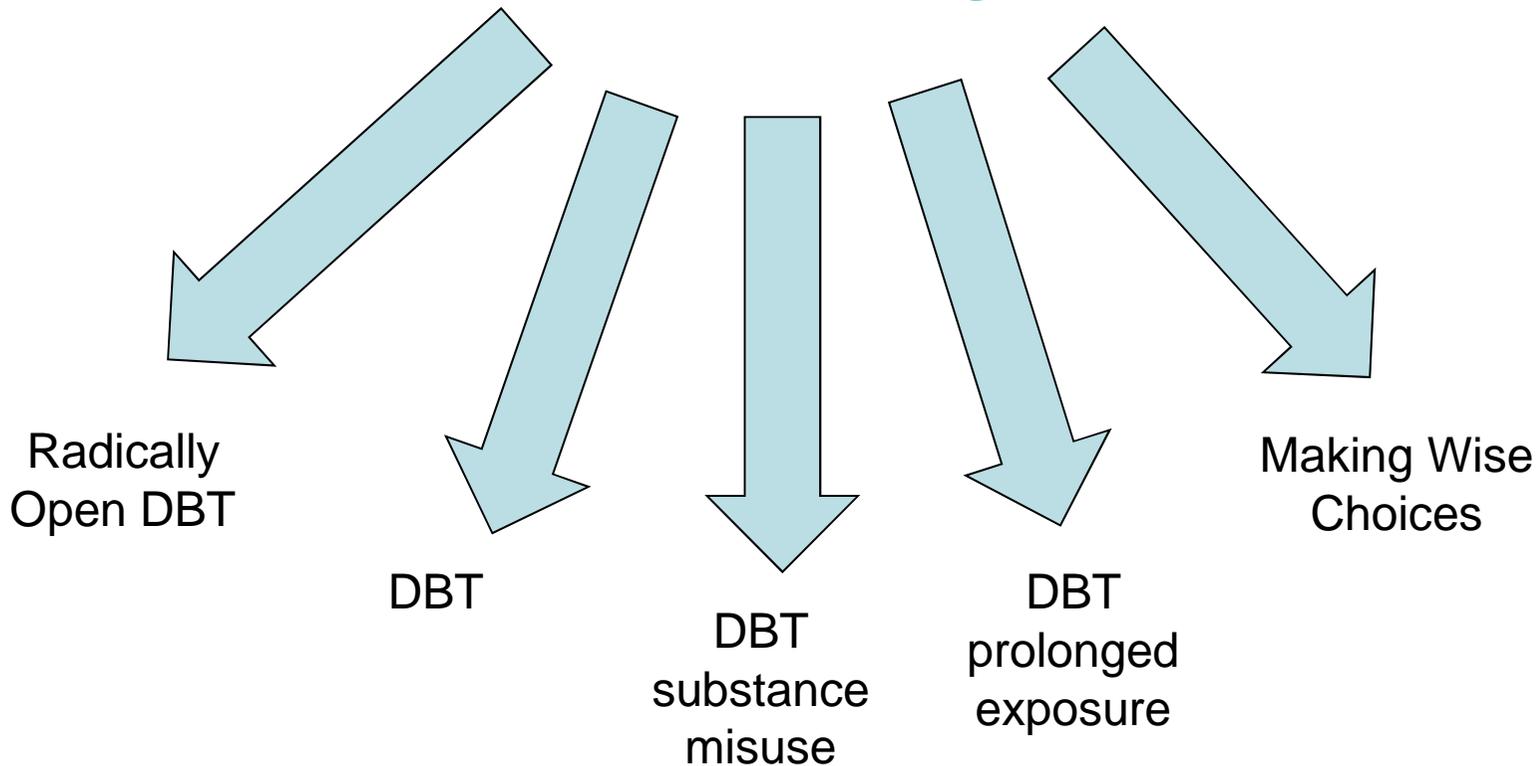
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# DITT-S



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# Substance misuse within offenders with LD/autism

- Results indicate a potentially elevated risk for experiencing a substance use disorder among those who use substances ([Didden, Embregts, van der Toorn & Laarhoven, 2009](#))
- Findings indicate that users with LD/autism may require less exposure for substance use problems ([Westermeyer et al. 1996](#))
- Research indicates that people with LD/autism are less likely to initiate treatment than are non-LD substance abusers ([Slayter, 2010](#)).
- Those with a forensic history are about five times more likely to have current substance use problems (Chaplin et al. 2011)
- People with LD suffer disproportionately from substance use problems, due largely to a lack of empirical evidence to inform prevention and treatment efforts for them.

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# Dialectical Behaviour Therapy

- Mindfulness
- Emotion regulation (managing emotions)
- Distress tolerance (coping in crisis)
- Interpersonal effectiveness (people skills)

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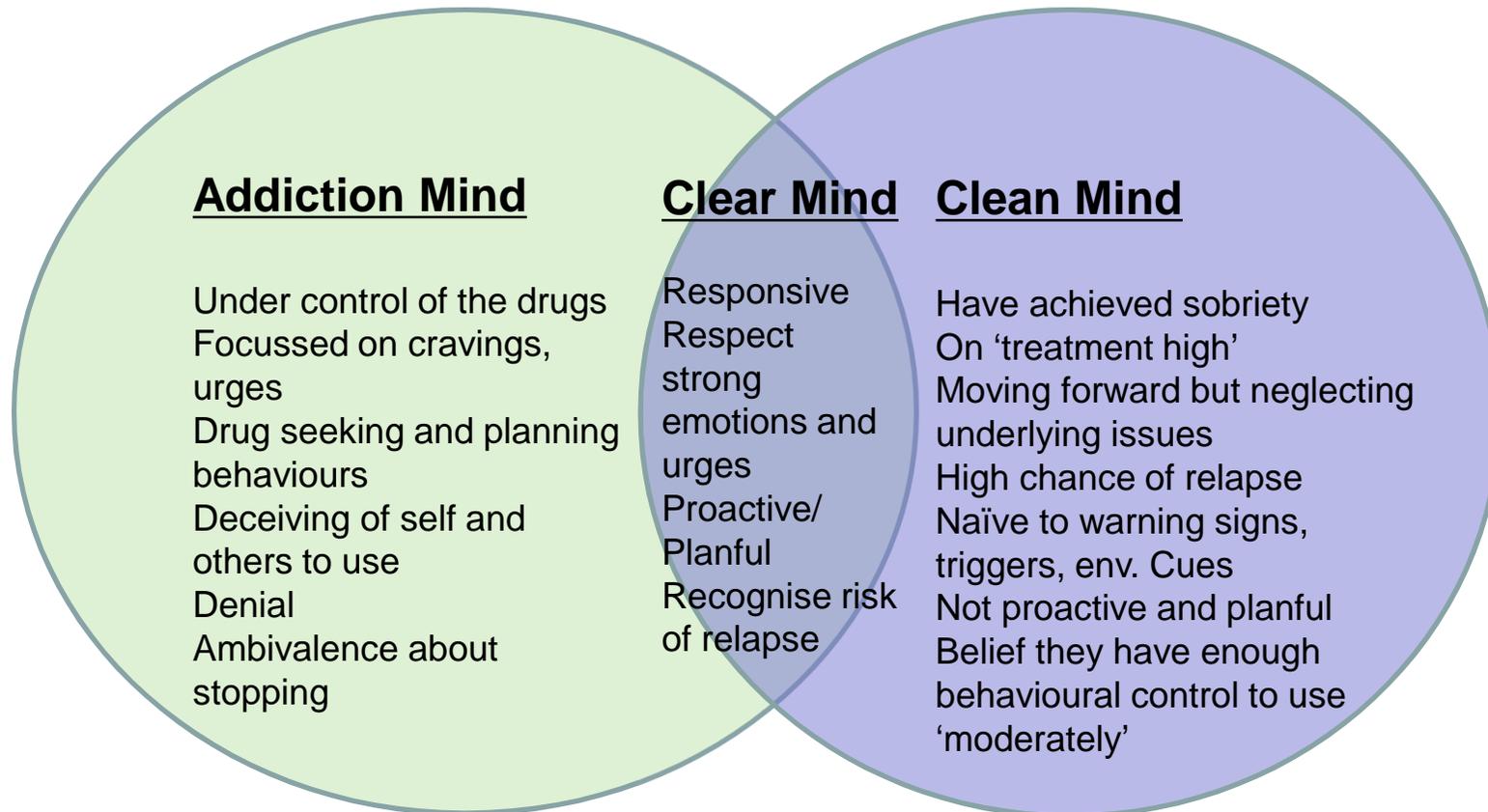
# Dialectical Behaviour Therapy – Substance Misuse

- Mindfulness
  - Observing urges
  - Alternative rebellion
- Emotion regulation (managing emotions)
  - Building a life worth living
- Distress tolerance (coping in crisis)
  - Adaptive denial
  - Burning your bridges
- Interpersonal effectiveness (people skills)
  - Avoiding and Eliminating Clues to use

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# Observing Urges

- Mindfulness module principles – learning to be aware of what is happening in the moment. Being really focused on one thing without judgments
- Urges can be triggered by certain situations, smell, tastes, people, moods and so on. While it is useful to learn about these it is not always possible to avoid triggers and stop them from developing.
- **Key steps to urge surfing**
- **1. Identify the urge** - The sooner you become aware of the craving the easier it will be to overcome it.
- **2. Sit back and watch** - Don't act, just observe.
- **3. Notice the sensations** - This includes both physical sensations and mental sensations, including certain thoughts or images that may be running through your head (“One more won't hurt me.”).
- **4. Use positive statements** – Remind yourself, thoughts and feelings are not permanent. Say things like “this will pass” or “I can ride out this urge.”
- **5. Keep practicing!** - Don't expect to try this one time and be free from your urges, it might need a few trials before you get good at it.

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## Alternative rebellion

- Sometimes we use harmful behaviours as a way of rebelling. That means it can be hard to give up these harmful behaviours

### **BUT!!**

- Alternative rebellion is all about learning to channel the urge to rebel into something less harmful and more fun!
- Rebel effectively! This means be aware of the urge to rebel, do not judge it or try to ignore it.
- Be mindful when you rebel!
- Don't forget your goals! Try to rebel in a way that you will not end up making things worse or hurting yourself or others.



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## Burning your bridges

- Accepting at the most radical level that you are not going to use drugs, alcohol, self-harm or violence again is an important part of your commitment to a life worth living. This means to actively cut off all options of drug use or drinking alcohol. This can include:
  - People -
    - Telling all your friends that you are clean and sober
    - Telling the truth “ruthlessly”
    - Those who may leave you feeling bad about yourself
    - Those who may upset you more often
  - Places -
    - Pubs/ Bars
    - Clubs
  - Things -
    - Throwing out all your drugs and drug paraphernalia
    - Emptying your alcohol bottle/supplies
    - Throwing out telephone numbers for your dealers/change your phone number.

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## Building a life worth living

- Building a life worth living is based on the idea that being involved in meaningful activity and functional relationships is one of the most effective ways of preventing a relapse.
- The focus of the module is to engage in activities that are compatible with this goal and that are incompatible with drug and alcohol use.
- Examples for this include:
  - Working or volunteering on a regular basis.
  - Developing and improving friendships with non-drinking or non-drug-using friends.
  - Developing special interests or hobbies incompatible with substance misuse.

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## Adaptive Denial

- Awareness or acceptance of ongoing abstinence and loss of drug using friends can be too difficult to cope with at times.
- While denial of safe choices that need to be made can increase the risk of relapse, denial of the permanent need for abstinence can feel overwhelming at times.
- Blocking this knowledge or pushing away thoughts or aspects of reality that seem unendurable can be an adaptive use of denial.

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## Avoiding and eliminating cues to use

- Some of the most consistent triggers for relapse are cues in the environment that are linked with using drugs or alcohol.
- Cues often trigger urges to drink or use and get people started on a slippery slope to drug use.
- Some examples of avoiding or eliminating these cues include:
  - Taking a different route home to avoid passing places associated with drug and alcohol use.
  - Throwing away item associated with drug use, include storage boxes etc.
  - Redecorating the bathroom in which drugs were used.

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## DBT-Substance Misuse Skills only group

- Six week group to teach DBT-Subs skills
- 4 patients
  - 2 resided in a locked rehabilitation unit
  - 2 lived in the community
  - Delivered by two therapists (one clinical psychologist, one assistant psychologist)
  - Patients had prior knowledge of DBT

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# Results

## Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI-3)

The SASSI-3 is a screening tool which looks at a person's likelihood to abuse substances (drugs and alcohol). The SASSI-3 assesses risk of developing substance misuse against a number of decision rules. The SASSI-3 demonstrates an overall empirical accuracy of 93%.

	Face-valid alcohol acknowledged use of alcohol;	Face-valid other-drugs acknowledged use of other drugs	Symptoms causes, consequences and correlates of subs misuse;	Obvious attitudes characteristics commonly associated with sub misuse;	Subtle attributes basic personal style similar to subs dependant people	Defensive-ness that may or may not be related to subs misuse	Family vs. control subjects similarity to family members of people who misuse subs	Correctional similarity to people with extensive legal difficulties
Change Over Time								

Mixed results across the board

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# Results

## Standard Outcome Measures

The SWEMWBS is a short version of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) and uses seven of the WEMWBS’s 14 statements about thoughts and feelings. A higher score indicates higher positive mental- wellbeing.

The CORE-LD is a validated self-report outcome measure for clients with a learning disability receiving any form of psychological therapy. A higher the score indicates higher emotional distress.

Assessment	The Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale	CORE – LD Learning Disabilities.
Change over Time		

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## Patient experience of DBT-Subs

### ● What they liked/ found helpful

- 'Learning how to stop drinking'
- 'Doing it in a groups is excellent because you know the patient'
- 'Folder and handouts all cushty'
- 'Cope Ahead of Time Plans'
- 'Doing it with someone else; helping him and him helping me'
- 'Knowing the facilitator'
- 'Made it clear in my head that I don't want to drink again'
- 'Having a laugh in the group'

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### ● What they didn't like/ found less helpful

- 'Nothing'

### ● What could we do to make it better?

- 'Teach staff the skills before we do the group [so they can] help us with homework'
- 'More sessions to do more work'
- 'The effect that alcohol has, so you know what it does to your body'



## What next?

- For those who require DBT subs, these skills are being taught alongside DBT
- Skills only package in place for those who need it
- Plans to integrate DBT and DBT subs skills

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## Any questions?



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