

Enabling

- 1) What is their dysfunctional emotion trying to make you do?
 - a. "Please help me avoid this. It's too uncomfortable!"
 - b. "Please do this for me! I am helpless/incapable"
 - c. "Listen to me! Take my concerns seriously"
 - d. "Reassure me that it's OK [I am OK]"
 - e. "Don't let me be alone"
 - f. "Leave me alone!!" (anger)
- 2) Don't do it...when their emotion is dysfunctional (extinction)
- 3) Suggest how they can more skillfully respond to their distress or to the situation, or how to better influence you.
- 4) When they demand you enable them, give a gentle and compassionate explanation why you are withholding.
- 5) Consider a compromise if they meet you halfway.

Reduce Reliance on Emotion-Driven Behaviors

Explanation for Extinction in a specific situation (Rather Than Enabling):

Teen: Can you please come right now and bring me home?

Parent: Do you remember how I did a GIVE DEAR MAN telling you that I was no longer going to pick you up early from school [come home early to be with you] when you're upset? What were my reasons?

Teen: I don't understand why you can't be more supportive with my anxiety disorder.

Parent: I guess you're forgetting some of our previous conversation. I don't want to make you worse by contributing to escape and avoidance, which keeps you stuck in this pattern of feeling overwhelmed because you would never learn to deal with that situation or those emotions. Do you want me to review the coping skills plan with you or do you want to contact your therapist?

Teen: You're being really mean right now.

Parent: I'm truly sorry that the process of becoming stronger is so hard. I really wish there was an easier way. I have to follow my values of helping you in the long-term even if it means temporarily feelings worse as you learn how to face stressful challenges. With practice it will eventually become less overwhelming.

Global GIVE DEAR MAN for blocking avoidance:

"I have noticed that you often avoid going to school in the morning. Many days you are late or miss entirely. Tell me more about your thoughts and emotions when that happens. What is the worst part about being at school? [AFTER GETTING ANSWER] It makes sense that you would feel that way and try to not feel that distress and it's a short-term strategy for feeling better that does not help in the long-term. I'm worried about you staying stuck in this trap. Avoidance guarantees that school will stay overwhelming or feel even harder. Using skills to stay in the challenging situation and cope with it is the most effective way to build confidence and make you less overwhelmed by these situations. Do you remember what we learned in the DBT group about opposite action? Did your therapist already go over with you a plan for how you can manage it?"

Encouraging opposite-to-fear action in a specific situation:

Parent: Are you going to your friend's house to swim?

Teen: No, I don't want to go any more.

Parent: What?! You really like hanging out with her. What's going on?

Teen: She invited a few other people over so that would be too uncomfortable.

Parent: I know social anxiety is really difficult. It makes sense that you would not want to feel that distress and it's a short-term strategy for feeling better that does not help in the long-term. I'm worried about you staying stuck in this trap. Avoidance guarantees that this kind of situation will continue to make you anxious...forever. Using skills to stay in the challenging situation and cope with it is the most effective way to build confidence and make these situations less uncomfortable. Do you remember when we learned about opposite action in the DBT group?

Teen: Yeah

Parent: What did your therapist tell you to do in this kind of situation?

Teen: To do it.

Parent: Yes, but that is really hard. How about we break it into small pieces? It's much more effective to go for a little bit, rather than not at all. How about we set up a plan for you to leave early? You can send me a text if you want me to pick you up early. I will call you, you can answer it in front of them, and I will give a good excuse why I need you to come home early. Sound OK?

Encouraging opposite-to-depression action in a specific situation:

Parent: Please come to dinner now?

Teen: I'm not hungry?

Parent: Please come to the table even if you don't eat.

Teen: I don't really feel like it today.

Parent: Are you feeling down?

Teen: Kind of, I guess.

Parent: I thought I noticed that today. I know it's really hard to do stuff when you feel depressed. Depression makes us want to isolate and avoid things. That's true for everybody and letting depression control us makes depression worse. Acting depressed feeds depression. It's a really nasty trap. Can you please come join us for at least 10 minutes? Opposite action may not get rid of depression, but it makes it much less severe over time if you keep doing it.