



# **DBT Skills Adaptations for Adults with IDD**

- Timothy Crabtree, LPCC-S, Syntero
- Tiffany Martin, Goodwill Work & Community Services

# Who We Are & What We Do

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- Goodwill Columbus Work & Community Services (WCS) provides Vocational and Adult Day Services for individuals with IDD and comorbid mental health and behavior challenges. Goodwill and Syntero have partnered together to provide person-centered therapeutic interventions to meet the needs of this population of people.
- Syntero is a non-profit mental health agency providing outreach and outpatient mental health services in Central OH.

# Work & Community Services

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- Serve 150+ individuals a year
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Adult Day Services
- Minimum wage paid vocational training
- Specialize in mental health and high behavioral needs



## **External Mobile Work Crew Opportunities**

- Retail Processing
- Goodwill Store work crew
- Goodwill Warehouse work crew
- Goodwill E-Commerce
- Lopaus Point Waffles
- OPRA/ LeadingAge janitorial work crew

## **Volunteer opportunities**

- Meals on Wheel
- Faith Mission Food Bank
- Columbus Library
- Franklin Co. Dog Shelter
- Keep Columbus Beautiful
- Jordan Crossing
- LifeTown
- Roots Café
- Ronald McDonald House

## **Internal work opportunities**

- Retail processing
- White Castle data entry
- Collating jobs- OASB/ Sunny 95/ Columbus Library/ Association of School Boards
- Mask production- ended

## **Skill Labs Programming**

- Bike repair
- Woodworking
- Computer/ Technology
- Daily Living Skills/ Fine Motor Skills
- Recreation/ Gross Motor Skills

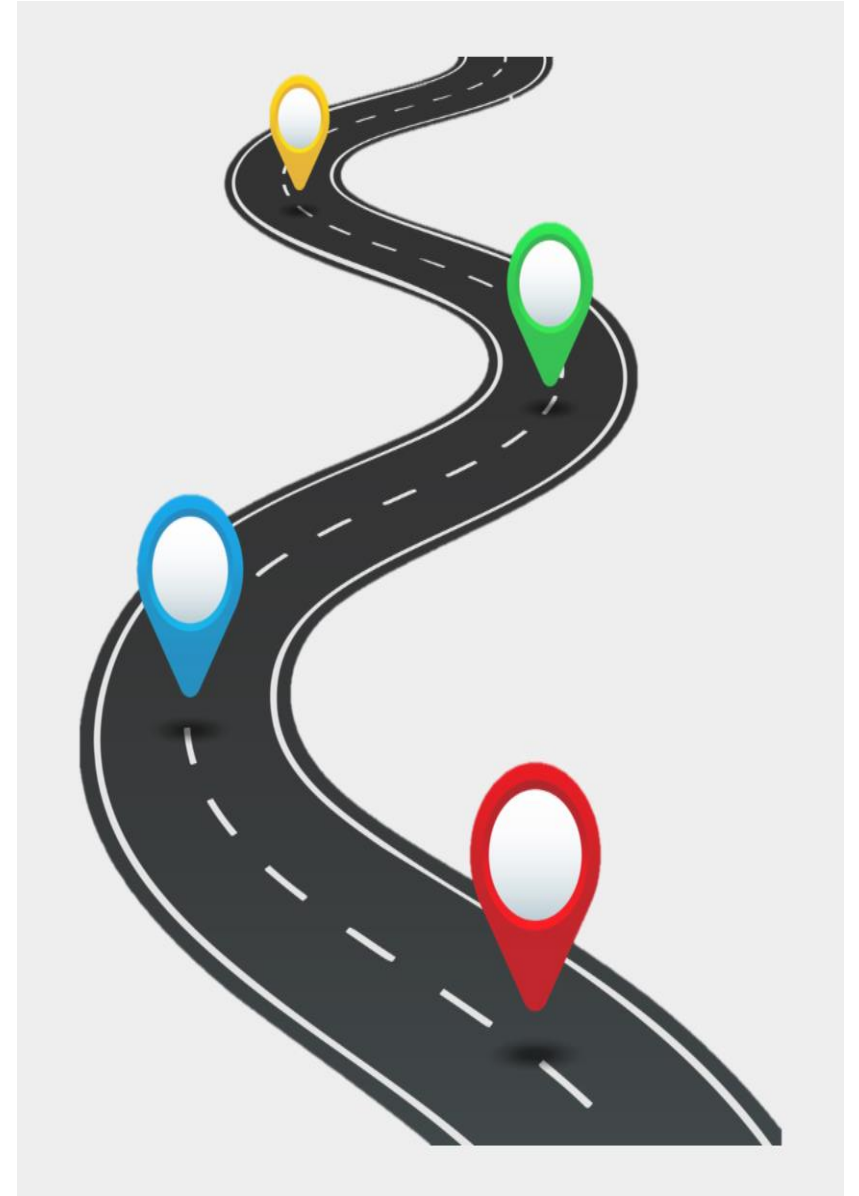
# Syntero's Mental Health Mission at WCS

- To help enhance and support a trauma informed care workplace.
- To provide mental health preventions and interventions that assist with creating a safe and productive work environment for all.
- Delivery of services include use of Dialectal Behavior Models to train clients and staff on skills that assist them in their ability to be successful at the workshop, in community settings, and achieve competitive employment in the community.

# Our Journey

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- Address Trauma Informed Care in the workplace
- Review assumptions and format of traditional DBT and limitations
- Review assumptions and formats of DBT-SP and DBT-W and limitations
- Introduce our adaptation - psychoeducational model and its limitations
- Provide training on Action Skills for the workplace



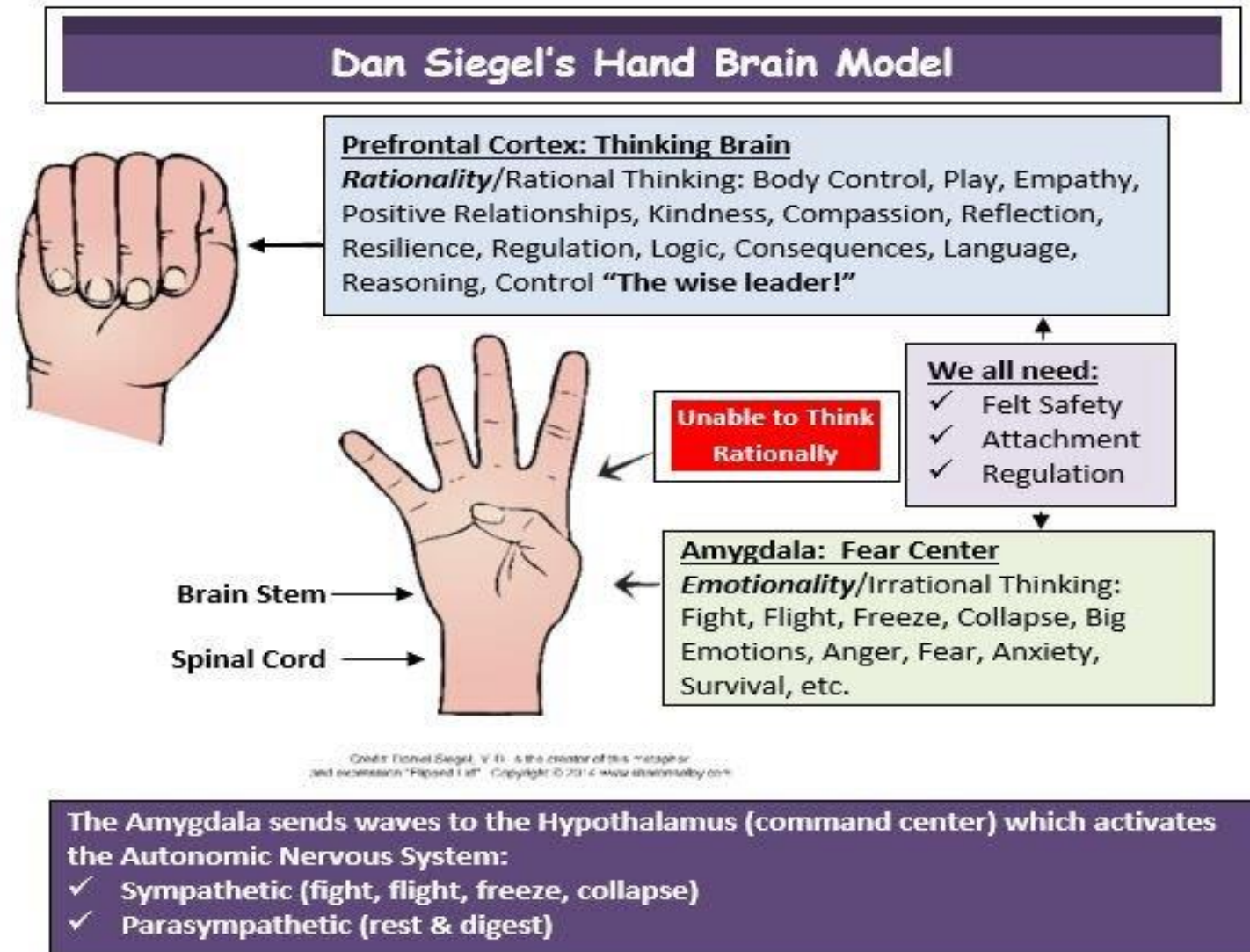
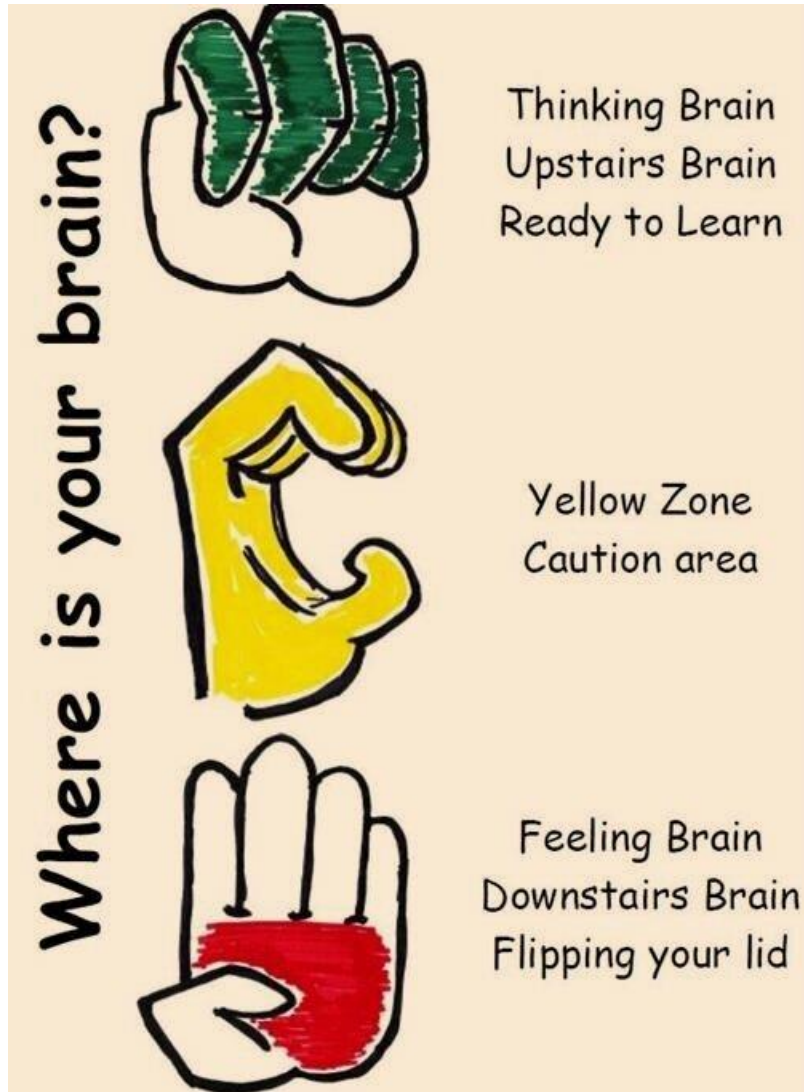
# Trauma Informed Care in the Workplace

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# Trauma Impact on Brain





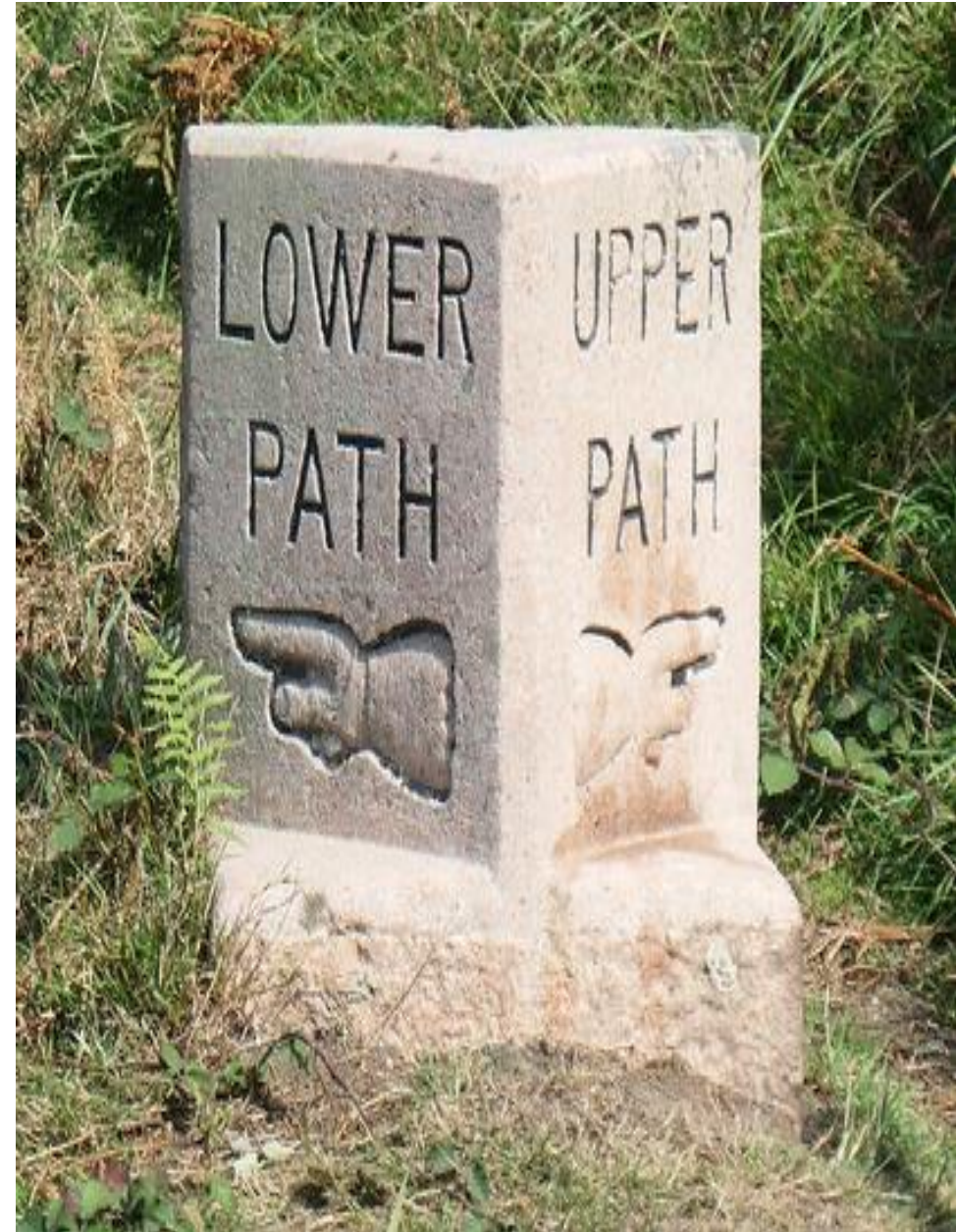
# How Reactions & Responses Impact Us

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- Any perceived threat to our safety is met with a heightened and guarded responses.
- Any words that are said in a harsh, disrespectful, or reactive tone is met with increased energy and negative emotional responses.
- Any perceived words that are judgmental, or critical are met with defensiveness and will likely increase their energy and responding in a manner that is not helpful in the moment.

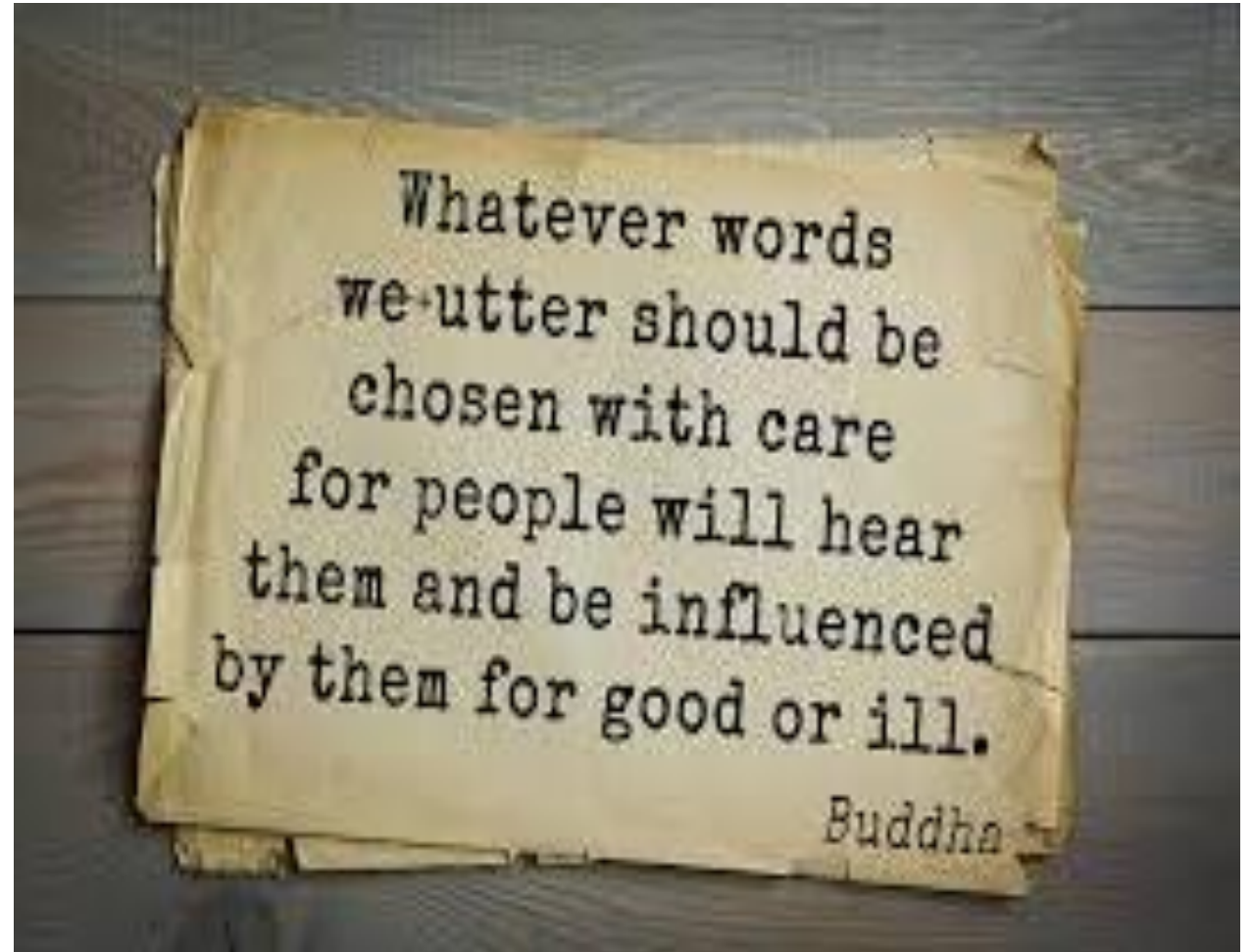
# A Choice

- When we encounter high stress or high energy from another individual our faster Lower Pathway is activated, and we enter our Flight/Fight/Freeze part of our brain which denies us access to our rational brain in the moment and we cannot process information successfully in this moment.
- By countering our heightened response with a slowing down our bodies response, we have access to our Higher Pathway which gives us access to our Logic/Reasoning/Decision Making part of our brain.



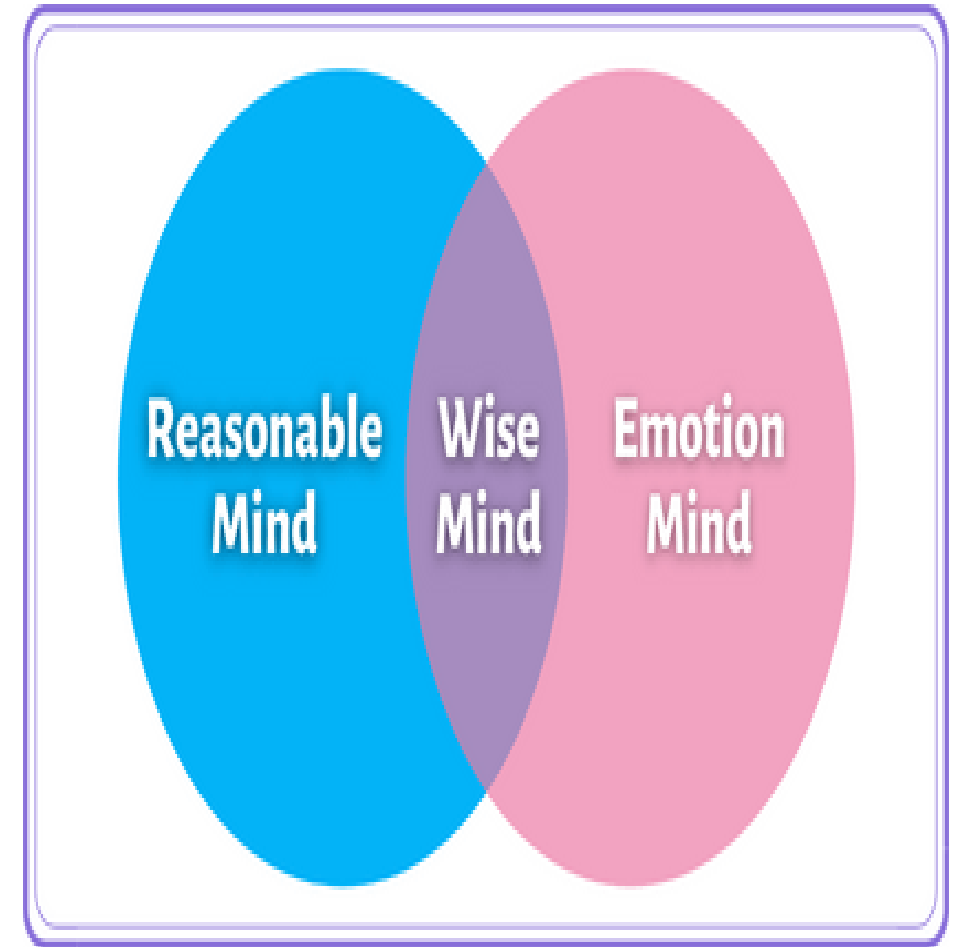
# Words Matter

- **Non-Judgmental**
- **Non-Threatening**
- **Non-Punitive**
- **Positive Focus**
- **Helpful**



# Dialectical Behavioral Therapy

- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy is a mindfulness-based skills training intervention that was initially designed to treat individuals with borderline personality disorder and those with intrusive suicidal thoughts. (Marsha Linehan)
- It has since been applied to meet the emotional dysregulation needs of other populations, including adults with IDD.





# DBT for Special Populations (DBT-SP)



- Development is a lifelong process with opportunities for learning and re-learning
- Dialectical thinking is not contraindicated for individuals with IDD
- Individuals with IDD have the potential for growth
- Individuals with IDD can learn to be less emotionally reactive to their environments and interpersonal interactions



# Phase 1: Small Group Therapeutic Treatment Model

- 10 weeks
- 45 minutes
- Concepts of Original DBT Model
- DBT for Special Populations Curriculum



# Limitations of Phase 1

- Small group format – self selected
- Viewed as “therapy”
- Literacy levels
- Abstract concepts
- Not specific to job and community employment
- Lack of generalization of skills into the workplace
- Staff were not able to model or provide prompts
- Confusion with “behavior plans”



# Phase 2 Preparation: 3<sup>rd</sup> DBT Model

## DBT Related Job Skills (Feigenbaum; Koons et al.)



- Decrease behaviors likely to prevent getting a job
- Increase use of skills to get ready to work – generalizing skills
- Decrease behaviors likely to interfere with keeping a job
- Increase use of skills on the job
- Working mind – Wise mind

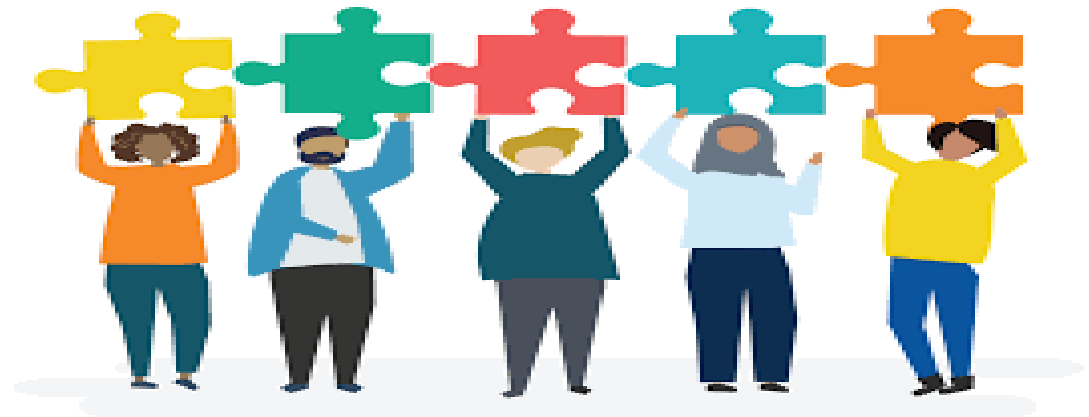
# Psychoeducational model

## Traditional/Adapted

- Wise Mind
- Mindfulness
- Emotion Regulation
- Distress Tolerance
- Relationship Effectiveness

## Psychoeducational DBT

- Emotion Regulation
- Distress Tolerance
- People Skills



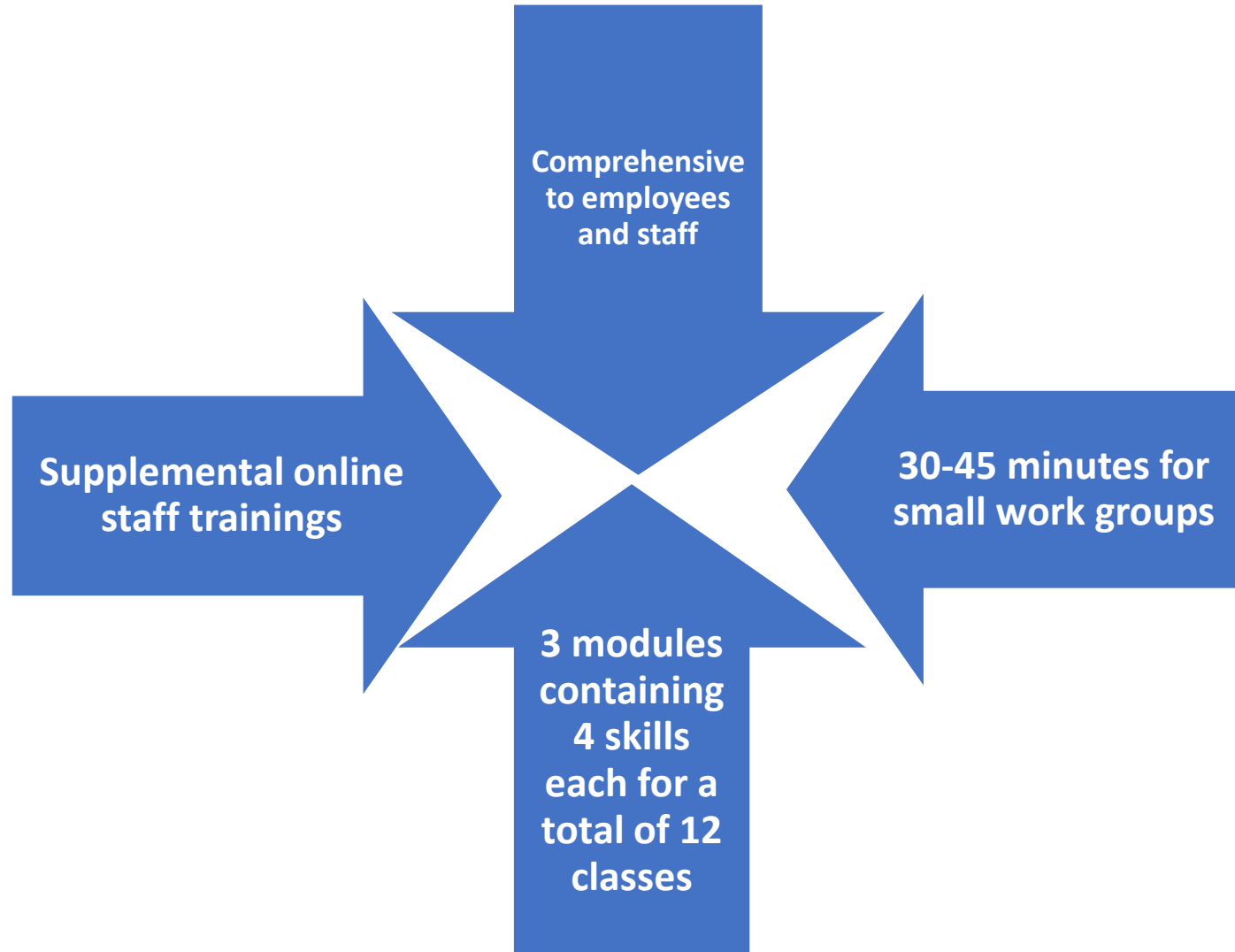
# Phase 2 Psychoeducational Model

Consideration for DBT Related Work Place Model





# Phase 2 levels of delivery of information





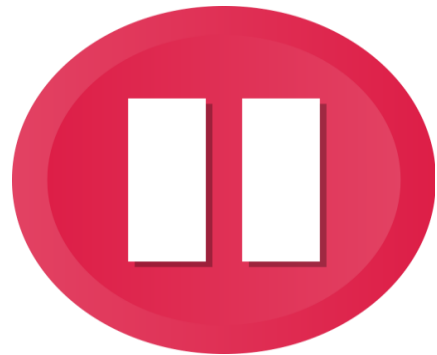
# Tools We Used

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- Practice cards for each of the 12 skills provided after each training
- Combination cards for each module (4 skills) provided after each module completed
- Practice posters for each skill posted in work areas
- Practice posters for each module (4 skills) posted in work areas
- Event Posters

# Emotion Regulation

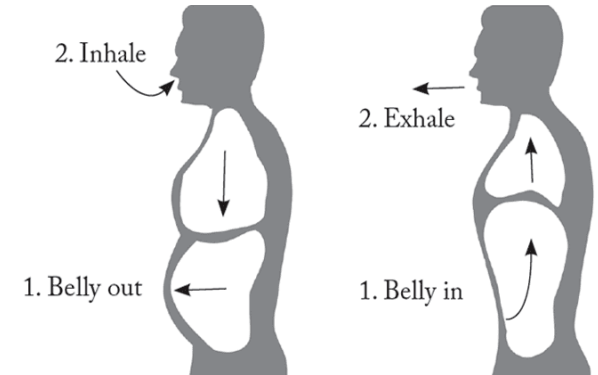
**Press the Pause Button!**



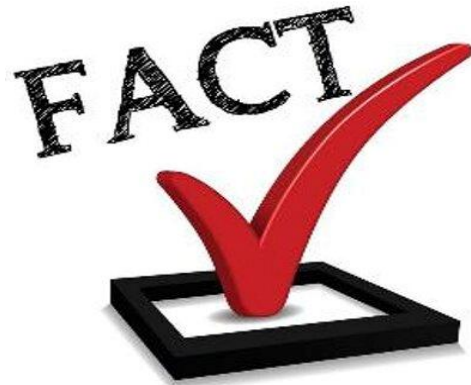
**Identify Emotions**



**Belly Breathing  
(Mindful breathing)**



**Check the  
Facts**



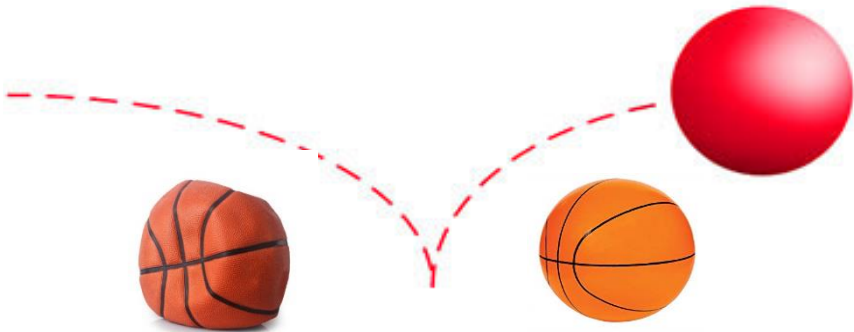
**Opposite to  
Emotion  
Action**

# Distress Tolerance

## Using Our Five Senses



## Bounce Back



## Change the Channel



## Acceptance



# Interpersonal Effectiveness

# Communication



# Conflict Resolution



# Cooperation



# Compassion Skills





# Limitations of Phase 2

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Limited Staff buy-in and lack of active participation

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Abstractness/Complexity of concepts

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Lack of modeling and prompting by staff

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Lack of awareness of when to use skills

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Still perceived as “other” or “therapy”

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Did not fit the “work” model training for all

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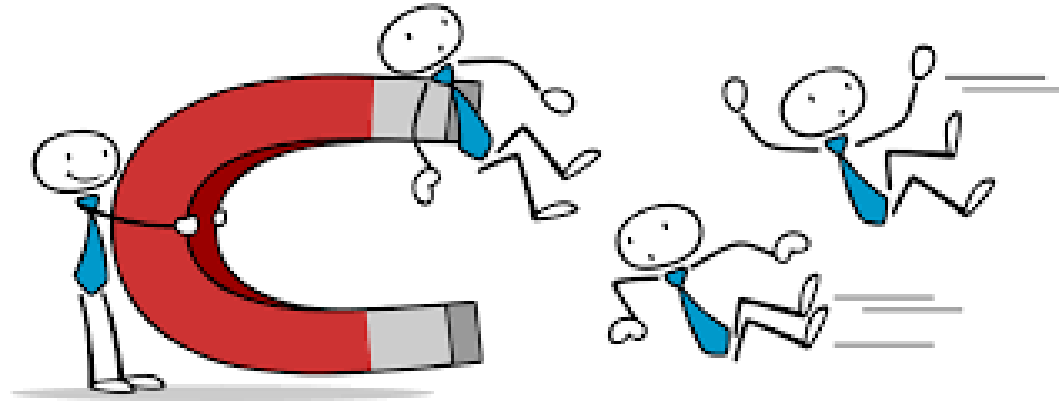
“Coping Skills” too close to language of behavior plans

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1 year to train all participants in small groups – lack of continuity between modules (gap)

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# About Retention



- Clients were able to identify and recall and were able to demonstrate the following skills without prompting
  - Press the Pause Button
  - Mindful Belly Breathing
- With prompting
  - Check the Facts
  - Opposite to Emotion Action
  - Use of 5 senses to tolerate distress

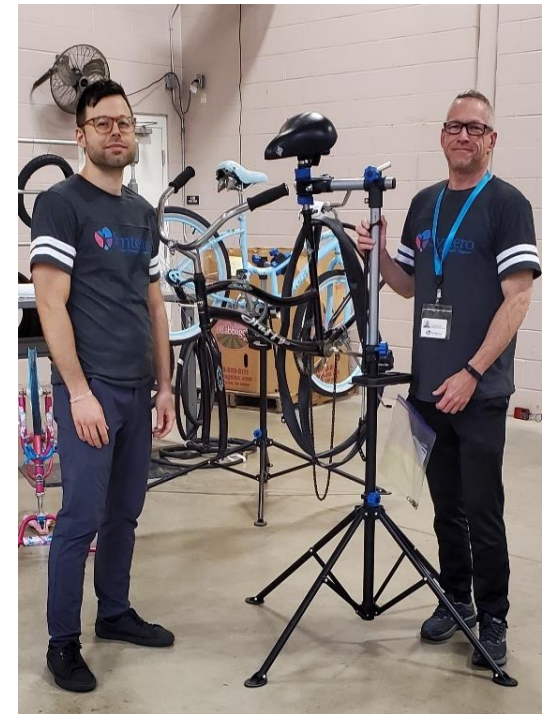
# **Work & Community Service Changes**

- Skill Labs were created
- 5 Skill Labs available
- 90-minute blocks
- More opportunities for community activities
- More volunteer community opportunities
- Increased number of gainful employment jobs in community
- Importance of Workplace Skills vs Coping Skills

# Woodworking Skill Lab



# Fine Motor Skills Lab



# Bicycle Repair/ Refurbish Lab





# **Phase 3**

## **Targeted Training – Action Skills**



# Action Skills

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- Language Important to move from coping skills to work skills
- Emphasized benefits of staff use of skills within training
- Incorporated awareness of energy levels into training to help assist with when to use the skills
- Expanded trainings to include staff and clients of other Adult Day Service programs



# Phase 3 Action Skill Trainings

**Focus on skills for workplace for everyone**

- Importance of staff use in order to manage high stress environment
- Importance of modeling and using same skill sets as clients/participants/co-workers
- New staff onboarding orientation training
- Use of posters at warehouse and community work sites
- Streamlined single 30-minute training



# Action Skills Overview

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Emotion Regulation

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Mindful Breathing

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Levels of Energy

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Check The Facts

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Opposite to Emotion Action

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Choices including Distress Tolerance and People Skills

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Positive Thoughts, Words, and Actions

## ACTION SKILLS



**PRESS THE  
PAUSE BUTTON**



**BELLY  
BREATHS  
2 OR 3**



**I Can Choose  
Positive Thoughts  
Positive Words  
Positive Actions**



# Phase 3 Action Skills

- Focus on Choices
- Focus on Positives
- Focus on Emotion Regulation
- Also, opens up ability for staff to prompt use of distress tolerance and people skills when identifying choices

# Action Skill

## Positive Choices

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- I can choose positive thoughts
- I can choose positive words
- I can choose positive actions





# Energy Level Check Poster

<b>Green</b> 	<b>Most Productive</b>	<b>No Change</b> 
<b>Yellow</b> 	<b>Less Productive</b>	<b>Decrease Energy</b> 
<b>Blue</b> 	<b>Not Productive</b>	<b>Increase Energy</b> 
<b>Red</b> 	<b>Not Productive</b>	<b>Seek Support</b> 

A large orange circle is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge. The text 'Takeaways- Action Skills' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font inside the circle.

# Takeaways- Action Skills

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Language that is trauma informed and concrete to be accessible to different cognitive levels

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Use of visual prompts to assist with learning and practice

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Focus on cultural change - skills for everyone (at all levels, leaders, clinicians, staff, employees and clients)

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Increase staff ability to manage stressors and prevent increasing reactions from clients

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Increase client ability to be successful in community and work settings with skills they can independently use and or are easily prompted

# Phase 4

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## Action Skills for Staff



# Objective & Overview

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- Objective: identify strategies to interact with our clients in a safe, supportive and healthy way, rather than react to our body tension, thoughts, and emotional responses as we engage clients.
- Research identifies that high stress triggers our body responses and can impact our reactions. High stress can lead to low work satisfaction and can increase the amount of energy we expend, which interferes with our ability to support those we serve.

# Action Skills

## Tool that Help Us Help Others

- Taking a beat before responding or reacting
- Participants/Clients trained using Pause Button as prompt for this

## Awareness of Energy level

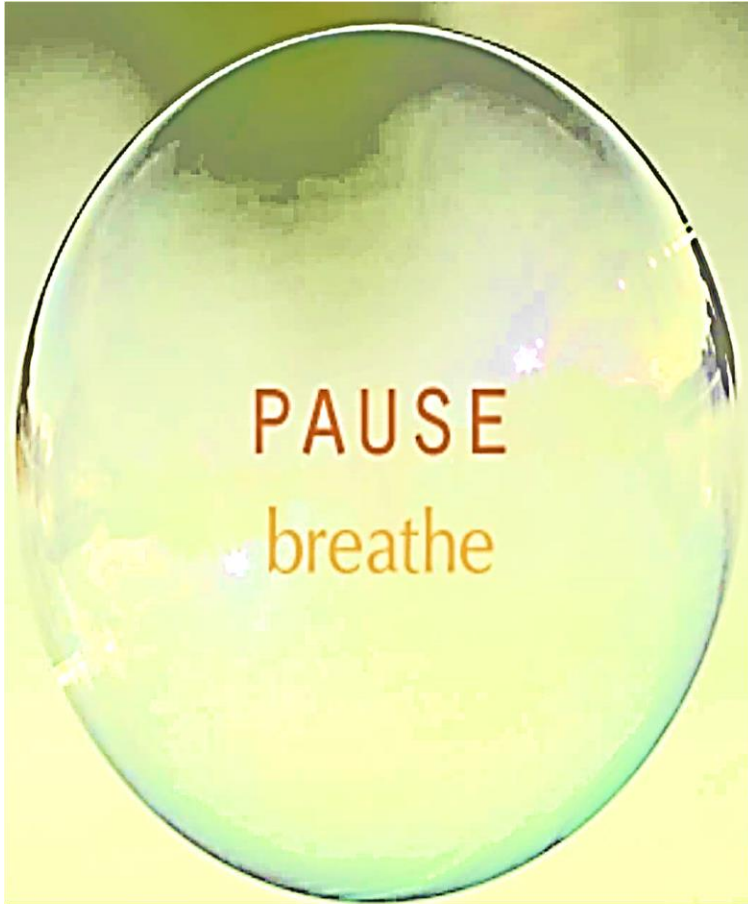
- Being aware of our energy level is key
- Being able to respond/react with the right energy level can be key to our success



# Pausing & Breathing

**A few seconds is all we need**

## What It Does For Us



Assists us in calming our  
stress reaction



Allows us to think before we  
react or act

# Awareness of energy levels



Rule of thumb is to use a medium energy level that is:

- In our middle range of green which is calming but has energy
- Can help us and them focus without unwanted intensity

# How Reactions Impact Responses



Heightened responses will likely increase our client's energy level and reactions/responses to us.



Using a forceful tone versus a direct and firm tone will likely be met with resistance to us.

# Energy Zones For Working

**Work  
In**



Enough Energy



Moderate Energy

**Move  
From**



Low Energy



Excessive Energy

# Respond With Different Level Of Energy

Person 1  
Energy  
Level

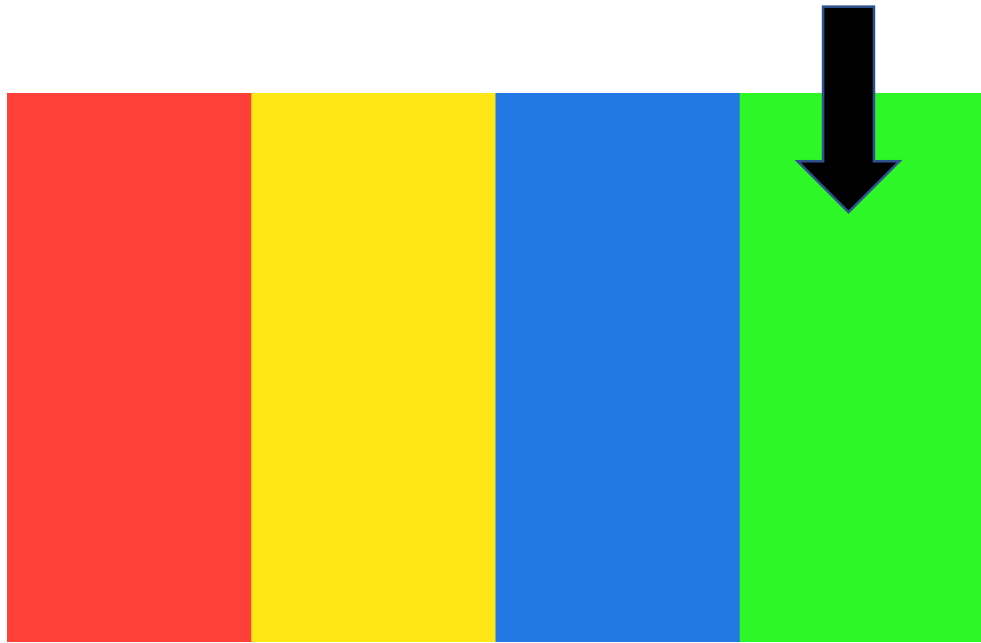
Excessive  
Energy

Person 2  
Response  
Level

Calm, Cool,  
Collected Energy



# Awareness of Energy Levels



Rule of thumb is to use a medium energy level that is:

- In our middle range of green which is calming but still energized
- Assists with keeping the focus without unwanted intensity

# Energy Changing Choices



**We can use our brief pause  
to change our energy**

- **Reduces tension and heart rate**
- **Increases our logical brain**
- **Frees us from our initial level of energy and triggering responses**

# Reactions & Responses

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKrgu0MUSWE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzUc3Eqzzos>

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Any perceived threat to their or our safety is met with a heightened and guarded responses.

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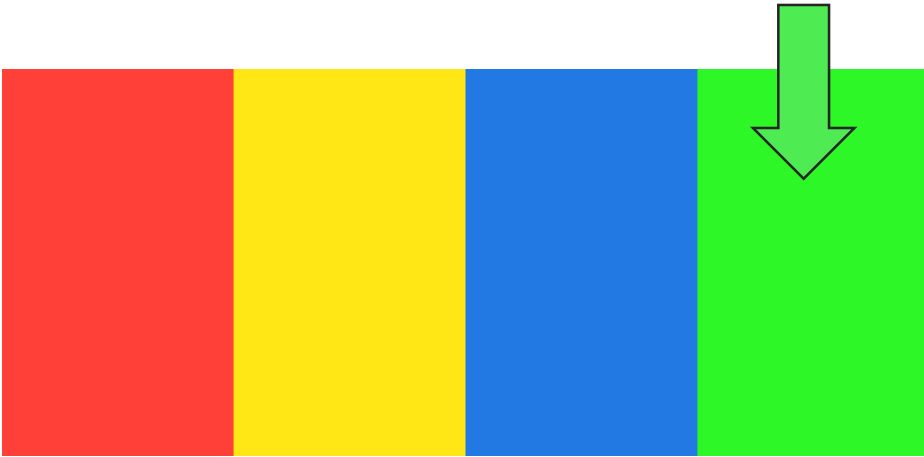
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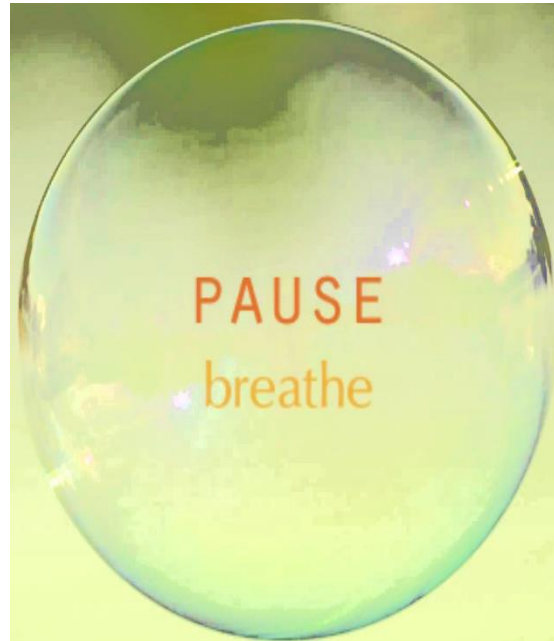
# STAFF ENERGY CHECK STATION

What is my energy level right now?



Rule of thumb is to use a **medium** energy level that is:

- In our middle range of green which is calming but still energized
- Assists with keeping the focus without unwanted intensity



## Staff Action Step

A couple of seconds is all you need!

**Get to Green**

Do it now! **Do it for yourself!**  
Do it for everyone else!

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“Your action will impact you and everyone around you”

# **DBT Skills Adaptations for Adults with IDD**

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- **Phase 1: Use of Small Group Therapy Model**
- **Phase 2: Psychoeducational Classroom Group Model**
- **Phase 3: Workplace Action Skill Model**
- **Phase 4: Action Skills for Staff**
- **Incorporated use of varied DBT Models**
- **Trauma Informed care focus for everyone**
- **Re-imagined by using more concrete visuals to address literacy limitations**
- **Use of active engagement, many opportunities to model and practice skills,**
- **Modeling skills and prompting of skills in community and work settings**



# References

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- Yaribeygi, H., Panahi, Y., Sahraei, H., Johnston, T. P., & Sahebkar, A. (2017). The impact of stress on body function: A review. *EXCLI journal*, 16, 1057–1072.  
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# Thank You

- Timothy Crabtree, LPCC-S, Syntero  
[tcrabtree@syntero.org](mailto:tcrabtree@syntero.org)

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[Tiffany.Martin@gwcols.com](mailto:Tiffany.Martin@gwcols.com)