Handouts for Walking
the Middle Path
INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS HANDOUT 14

(Interpersonal Effectiveness Worksheets 11–15)

Overview:
Walking the Middle Path
Balancing Acceptance and Change

DIALECTICS
Balancing opposites while entering the paradox of “yes” and “no,” “true” and “not true,” at the very same time.

VALIDATION
Including the valid and understandable in ourselves and others.

RECOVERING FROM INVALIDATION
From a nondefensive position, find the valid, acknowledge the invalid, and radically accept yourself.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGING BEHAVIOR
Use behavioral principles to increase desired behaviors and decrease undesired behaviors.
Dialectics

DIALECTICS REMINDS US THAT

1. The universe is filled with opposing sides/opposing forces.

   There is always more than one way to see a situation, and more than one way to solve a problem.

   Two things that seem like opposites can both be true.

2. Everything and every person is connected in some way.

   The waves and the ocean are one.

   The slightest move of the butterfly affects the furthest star.

3. Change is the only constant.

   Meaning and truth evolve over time.

   Each moment is new; reality itself changes with each moment.

4. Change is transactional.

   What we do influences our environment and other people in it.

   The environment and other people influence us.
INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS HANDOUT 16
(Interpersonal Effectiveness Worksheets 11, 11a, 11b)

How to Think and Act Dialectically

1. There is always more than one side to anything that exists. Look for both sides.
   - Ask Wise Mind: What am I missing? Where is the kernel of truth in the other side?
   - Let go of extremes: Change “either-or” to “both-and,” “always” or “never” to “sometimes.”
   - Balance opposites: Validate both sides when you disagree, accept reality, and work to change.
   - Make lemonade out of lemons.
   - Embrace confusion: Enter the paradox of yes and no, or true and not true.
   - Play devil’s advocate: Argue each side of your own position with equal passion.
   - Use metaphors and storytelling to unstick and free the mind.
   - Other ways to see all sides of a situation:

2. Be aware that you are connected.
   - Treat others as you want them to treat you.
   - Look for similarities among people instead of differences.
   - Notice the physical connections among all things.
   - Other ways to stay aware of connections:

3. Embrace change.
   - Throw yourself into change: Allow it. Embrace it.
   - Practice radical acceptance of change when rules, circumstances, people, and relationships change in ways you don’t like.
   - Practice getting used to change: Make small changes to practice this (e.g., purposely change where you sit, who you talk with, what route you take when going to a familiar place).
   - Other ways to embrace change:

4. Change is transactional: Remember that you affect your environment and your environment affects you.
   - Pay attention to your effect on others and how they affect you.
   - Practice letting go of blame by looking for how your own and others’ behaviors are caused by many interactions over time.
   - Remind yourself that all things, including all behaviors, are caused.
   - Other ways to see transactions:

Examples of Opposite Sides That Can Both Be True

1. You can want to change and be doing the best you can, AND still need to do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change.

2. You are tough AND you are gentle.

3. You can be independent AND also want help. (You can allow somebody else to be independent AND also give them help.)

4. You can want to be alone AND also want to be connected to others.

5. You can share some things with others AND also keep some things private.

6. You can be by yourself AND still be connected to others.

7. You can be with others AND be lonely.

8. You can be a misfit in one group AND fit in perfectly in another group. (A tulip in a rose garden can also be a tulip in a tulip garden.)

9. You can accept yourself the way you are AND still want to change. (You can accept others as they are AND still want them to change.)

10. At times you need to both control AND tolerate your emotions.

11. You may have a valid reason for believing what you believe, AND you may still be wrong or incorrect.

12. Someone may have valid reasons for wanting something from you, AND you may have valid reasons for saying no.

13. The day can be sunny, AND it can rain.

14. You can be mad at somebody AND also love and respect the person.

15. (You can be mad at yourself AND also love and respect yourself.)

16. You can have a disagreement with somebody AND also be friends.

17. You can disagree with the rules AND also follow the rules.

18. You can understand why somebody is feeling or behaving in a certain way, AND also disagree with his or her behavior and ask that it be changed.

19. Others: ____________________________

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS HANDOUT 16B

Important Opposites to Balance

1. Accepting reality AND working to change it.

2. Validating yourself and others AND acknowledging errors.

3. Working AND resting.

4. Doing things you need to do AND doing things you want to do.

5. Working on improving yourself AND accepting yourself exactly as you are.


7. Emotion regulation AND emotion acceptance.

8. Mastering something on your own AND asking for help.


10. Openness AND privacy.

11. Trust AND suspicion.

12. Watching and observing AND participating.

13. Taking from others AND giving to others.

14. Focusing on yourself AND focusing on others.

15. Others: ____________________________________________

16. Others: ____________________________________________

17. Others: ____________________________________________
### Identifying Dialectics

For each group, check the most dialectical response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1A. Pay attention to your effect on others.</th>
<th>5A. Examine a difficult relationship by looking at how the interactions over time between you and the other person may be problematic.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1B. Assume that others’ reactions to you are unrelated to your treatment of them.</td>
<td>5B. Assume that difficulties in a relationship are caused completely by you or by the other person.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Saying:**

- **2A.** “I know I am right about this.”
- **2B.** “I can see your point of view, even though I do not agree with it.”
- **2C.** “The way you are thinking doesn’t make any sense.”

**Saying:**

- **3A.** “Everyone always treats me unfairly.”
- **3B.** “I believe the coach should reconsider his decision to cut me from the team.”
- **3C.** “Coaches know best who to keep on teams and who to cut.”

**Saying:**

- **4A.** Judge friends as disloyal and uncaring if they start changing in ways you don’t like.
- **4B.** Accept that interests change.

**Saying:**

- **5A.** “It is hopeless. I cannot do it.”
- **5B.** “This is a breeze. I’ve got no problems.”
- **5C.** “This is really hard for me, and I am going to keep trying.”

**Saying:**

- **7A.** When you disagree with someone, be sure and be very clear about your point of view.
- **7B.** When you disagree with someone, try and see their point of view.

**Saying:**

- **8A.** Demand that relationships be stable without changing.
- **8B.** Embrace change and see it as inevitable.

---


Validation

VALIDATION MEANS:

• Finding the kernel of truth in another person's perspective or situation; verifying the facts of a situation.
• Acknowledging that a person's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors have causes and are therefore understandable.
• Not necessarily agreeing with the other person.
• Not validating what is actually invalid.

WHY VALIDATE?

• It improves our relationships by showing we are listening and understand.
• It improves interpersonal effectiveness by reducing:
  1. Pressure to prove who is right
  2. Negative reactivity
  3. Anger
• It makes problem solving, closeness, and support possible.
• Invalidation hurts.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO VALIDATE

• The valid (and only the valid).
• The facts of a situation.
• A person's experiences, feelings/emotions, beliefs, opinions, or thoughts about something.
• Suffering and difficulties.

REMEMBER:

• Every invalid response makes sense in some way.
• Validation is not necessarily agreeing.
• Validation doesn't mean you like it.
• Only validate the valid.


A “How To” Guide to Validation

1. **Pay Attention:**
   Look interested, listen, and observe. No multitasking. Make eye contact. Stay focused. Nod occasionally. Respond with your face (e.g., smile at happy statements; look concerned when hearing something painful).

2. **Reflect Back:**
   Say back what you heard or observed to be sure you actually understand what the person is saying. No judgmental language or voice tone!
   Try to really “get” what the person feels or thinks. Have an open mind. (No disagreeing, criticizing, or trying to change the person's mind or goals.) Use a voice tone that allows the other person to correct you . . . and check the facts!
   **Example:** “So you are mad at me because you think I lied just to get back at you. Did I get it right?”

3. **“Read Minds”:**
   Be sensitive to what is not being said by the other person. Pay attention to facial expressions, body language, what is happening, and what you know about the person already. Show that you understand in words or by your actions. Be open to correction.
   **Example:** When you are asking a friend for a ride at the end of a long day and the person slumps down, say, “You look really tired. Let me look for someone else.”

4. **Understand:**
   Look for how the other person feels, is thinking, or if he or she is making sense, given the person's history, state of mind or body, or current events (i.e. the causes)—even if you don't approve of the person's behavior, or if his or her belief is incorrect. Say “It makes sense that you . . . because . . .”
   **Example:** If you sent a party invitation to the wrong address, say, “I can see why you thought I might be excluding you on purpose.”

5. **Acknowledge the valid:**
   Show that you see that the person’s thoughts, feelings, or actions are valid, given current reality and facts. Act as if the person's behavior is valid.
   **Example:** If you are criticized for not taking out the garbage on your day, admit that it is your day and take it out. If people present a problem, help them solve it (unless they just want to be heard). If people are hungry, give them food. Acknowledge the effort a person is making.

6. **Show Equality:**
   Be yourself! Don’t “one-up” or “one-down” the other person. Treat the other as an equal, not as fragile or incompetent.
   **Example:** Be willing to admit mistakes. If someone introduces him- or herself by first name, introduce yourself by your first name. Ask other people for their opinions. Give up being defensive. Be careful in giving advice or telling someone what to do if you are not asked or required to do so. Even then, remember you could be wrong.

## Interpersonal Effectiveness Handout 18A

### Identifying Validation

For each A and B pair, check the more effective response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A. Think about your day when the other person is talking about his or her day.</th>
<th>B. Throw yourself into listening about the other person’s day.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. If you are uncertain of people’s thoughts and feelings, ask them what they are thinking or feeling, or try to imagine yourself in their situation.</td>
<td>B. Assume that if people want you to know what they are thinking or feeling, they will tell you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Observe the small clues that indicate what is going on in social situations.</td>
<td>B. Observe only what people say, and ignore nonverbal signals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Jump to conclusions about what people mean.</td>
<td>B. Realize that the same behavior can mean many things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Remember that people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors don’t always match. Check the facts.</td>
<td>B. Assume that you can tell exactly what people are feeling and thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Evaluate other people’s behaviors and thoughts, and tell them that they are wrong or that they should be different when you feel sure you are right.</td>
<td>B. If you do not agree with what another person is doing or thinking, try to understand how it could make sense if you understood the causes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Assume that if you tell a person his or her request of you makes sense, that’s all you have to do to validate the person.</td>
<td>B. When a person asks you for something, giving the person what has been asked for is validation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Assume that other people’s reactions to you have nothing to do with yours to them.</td>
<td>B. Treat each person with respect and as an equal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recovering from Invalidation

NOTICE THAT INVALIDATION CAN BE HELPFUL AND PAINFUL AT THE SAME TIME

Remember: Invalidation Is Helpful When

1. It corrects important mistakes (your facts are wrong).
2. It stimulates intellectual and personal growth by listening to other views.
3. Other: ____________________________

Invalidation Is Painful When

1. You are being ignored.
2. You are not being repeatedly misunderstood.
3. You are being misread.
4. You are being misinterpreted.
5. Important facts in your life are ignored or denied.
6. You are receiving unequal treatment.
7. You are being disbelieved when being truthful.
8. Your private experiences are trivialized or denied.
9. Other: ____________________________

(continued on next page)
Be Nondefensive and Check the Facts

- Check ALL the facts to see if your responses are valid or invalid. Check them out with someone you can trust to validate the valid.

- Acknowledge when your responses don’t make sense and are not valid.

- Work to change invalid thinking, comments, or actions. (Also, stop blaming. It rarely helps a situation.)

- Drop judgmental self-statements. (Practice opposite action.)

- Remind yourself that all behavior is caused and that you are doing your best.

- Be compassionate toward yourself. Practice self-soothing.

- Admit that it hurts to be invalidated by others, even if they are right.

- Acknowledge when your reactions make sense and are valid in a situation.

- Remember that being invalidated, even when your response is actually valid, is rarely a complete catastrophe.

- Describe your experiences and actions in a supportive environment.

- Grieve traumatic invalidation and the harm it created.

- Practice radical acceptance of the invalidating person.

Validate Yourself Exactly the Way You Would Validate Someone Else
**IDENTIFYING SELF-VALIDATION**

For each A and B pair, check the more effective response when someone else invalidates you.

| 1A. Describe your own experience, point of view, emotion, or action in a matter-of-fact way. | 4A. Jump to anger and call yourself a wimp if you start feeling sad or alone. |
| 1B. Say, “How stupid of me,” or put yourself down for your response. | 4B. Accept that it hurts to be invalidated, and feel the pain. |

| 2A. Blast the other person and argue your point of view, even if you might be wrong. | 5A. When you make a mistake, remind yourself that you are human, and humans make mistakes. |
| 2B. When someone disagrees with what you think or do, be open to being wrong and being OK with that. Check the facts. | 5B. Blame and punish yourself for being wrong; avoid people who know you were wrong. |

| 3A. When you are checking the facts (if only in your mind), stand up for yourself if you are correct or if your response is reasonable. | 6A. See yourself as “screwed up” or “damaged goods,” and give in to shame and misery. |
| 3B. Assume that your experience of the facts is wrong. Give up and give in. Judge yourself and the person who invalidated you. | 6B. Respond and talk to yourself with understanding and compassion. Remind yourself that all responses are caused and make sense if you explore the reasons long enough. |
Strategies for Increasing the Probability of Behaviors You Want

Describe behaviors for yourself or others that you would like to start or increase:

**Reinforcer =** A consequence that increases frequency of a behavior.

**Positive reinforcement =** positive consequences (i.e., reward).
Behavior is increased by consequences a person wants, likes, or will work to get.
Examples: ______________________________

**Negative reinforcement =** removal of negative events (i.e., relief).
Behavior is increased by consequences that stop or reduce something negative.
Examples: ______________________________

**Shaping =** Reinforcing small steps toward the behavior you want.

- Reinforce small steps that lead toward the goal.
- As new behavior stabilizes, require a little bit more before reinforcing.
- Continue until you reach the goal behavior.

Examples of steps to a goal behavior: ______________________________

**Timing counts.**

- Reinforce behavior immediately after it occurs.
- When shaping new behavior, at first reinforce every instance of the behavior.
- Once behavior is established, gradually start to reinforce only some of the time.

CAUTION: When you vary reinforcement, behavior becomes very hard to stop.
INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS HANDOUT 21
(Interpersonal Effectiveness Worksheet 15)

Strategies for Decreasing or Stopping Unwanted Behaviors

**Extinction** = Stopping an ongoing reinforcement of behavior.

Extinction leads first to a burst of behavior, and then to a decrease in behavior.

Examples: ____________________________________________

**Satiation** = Providing relief or what is wanted before the behavior occurs.

Satiation reduces motivation for behavior and thus decreases its frequency.

Examples: ____________________________________________

**Punishment** = An aversive consequence that decreases a behavior.

Behavior is decreased by consequences the person dislikes or will work to avoid.

Examples: ____________________________________________

Behavior is decreased by consequences that stop or reduce something positive.

Examples: ____________________________________________

Behavior is decreased when something the person wants is withheld until harmful effects of problem behaviors are corrected and overcorrected.

Examples: ____________________________________________

- Be sure that punishment is specific, is time-limited, and fits the "crime."
- Avoid a punitive tone; let the consequence do the work.
- If a natural punishment occurs, don’t undo it. Don’t add arbitrary punishment.

**Be sure to reinforce alternative behavior to replace behavior you want stopped.**

- Extinction and punishment weaken or suppress behavior, but do not eliminate it.
- Extinction and punishment do not teach new behavior.
- To keep a behavior from resurfacing, reinforce an alternative behavior.
- Punishment works only when the punisher is (or is likely to be) present.
- Punishment leads to avoidance of the person punishing.


Tips for Using Behavior Change Strategies Effectively

Summary so far:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase behavior (Reinforce)</td>
<td>• Add positive consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Remove aversive consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaken behavior (Extinguish)</td>
<td>• Remove reinforcer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide relief before unwanted behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppress behavior (Punish)</td>
<td>• Add aversive consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Remove positive consequence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not all consequences are created equal.

“One person’s poison can be another person’s passion.”

Context counts. A reinforcer in one situation can be punishment in another.

Quantity counts. If a reinforcer is too little or too much, it will not work.

Natural consequences work best. Let them do the work when possible.

Ask what consequence the person would work to get (reinforcer) or work to avoid (punisher).

Observe changes in behavior when a consequence is applied.

Behavior learned in one situation may not happen in another.
Identifying Effective Behavior Change Strategies

For each A and B pair, check the more effective response.

- **1A.** When you are trying to increase a behavior, it is most effective to wait for the full desired behavior before reinforcing, so the person does not think that halfway is good enough.
- **1B.** When you are trying to increase a behavior, it is most effective to reinforce small improvement in the right direction, or else the person may not continue to improve.

- **2A.** The most effective punishment is intense anger and swift verbal criticism.
- **2B.** The most effective punishment is to find one that fits the severity of the problem behavior.

- **3A.** It is most effective to reinforce behavior immediately after it occurs.
- **3B.** It is most effective to reward behavior after a delay so that the person does not expect that you will always provide a reward.

- **4A.** It is common that people reward others’ problematic behaviors without even realizing it.
- **4B.** People do not reward others’ problematic behaviors, because that would be stupid.

- **5A.** If a person’s problem behaviors work to get things he or she wants, it is most effective to punish those behaviors to make them stop.
- **5B.** If a person’s problem behaviors work to get things he or she wants, it is most effective to stop reinforcing those behaviors and instead give rewards when the person uses more skillful strategies to get what he or she wants or needs.

- **6A.** When you are punishing, figure that a nonspecific punishment will be a lot more effective, since it can’t be avoided.
- **6B.** Use a specific and time-limited negative consequence to decrease behavior.

- **7A.** If a person’s mean behavior makes you feel hurt, it is most effective to punish the behavior by taking away gifts that you previously gave the person.
- **7B.** If a person’s mean behavior makes you feel hurt, it is most effective to punish the behavior by not doing favors for the person until his or her behavior improves.

- **8A.** After a punished behavior stops, it is most effective to reward an alternative behavior that you want.
- **8B.** After a punished behavior stops, it is most effective to continue the punishment, so that you send a very clear message that the problematic behavior is unacceptable.