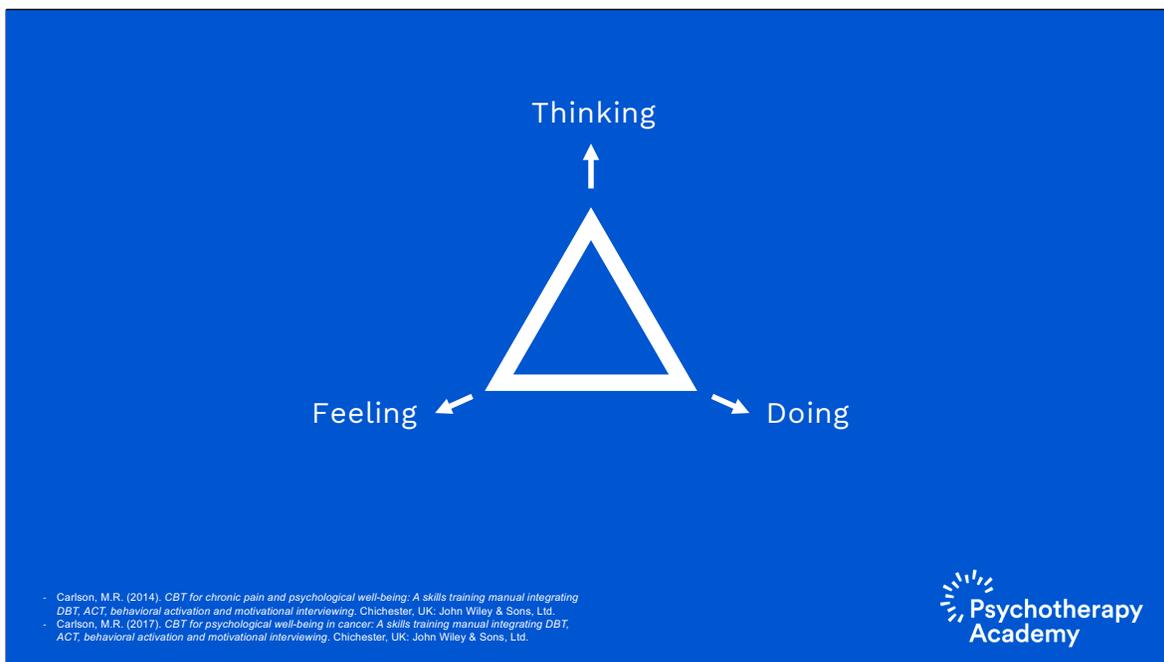


## The Functioning Triangle



Mark Carlson, Psy.D.

In this module, we're going to go over something that I created quite a few years ago called the Functioning Triangle.



The functioning triangle is a geometric shape that has thinking on the top, feeling on the bottom left, and doing on the bottom right. I usually pair this in the mindfulness module teachings, where we're looking at insight and pattern recognition.

**\*References\***

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Goal: The Functioning Triangle



Understand where they primarily function



How they understand and interact with their environments



Identify common strengths and barriers

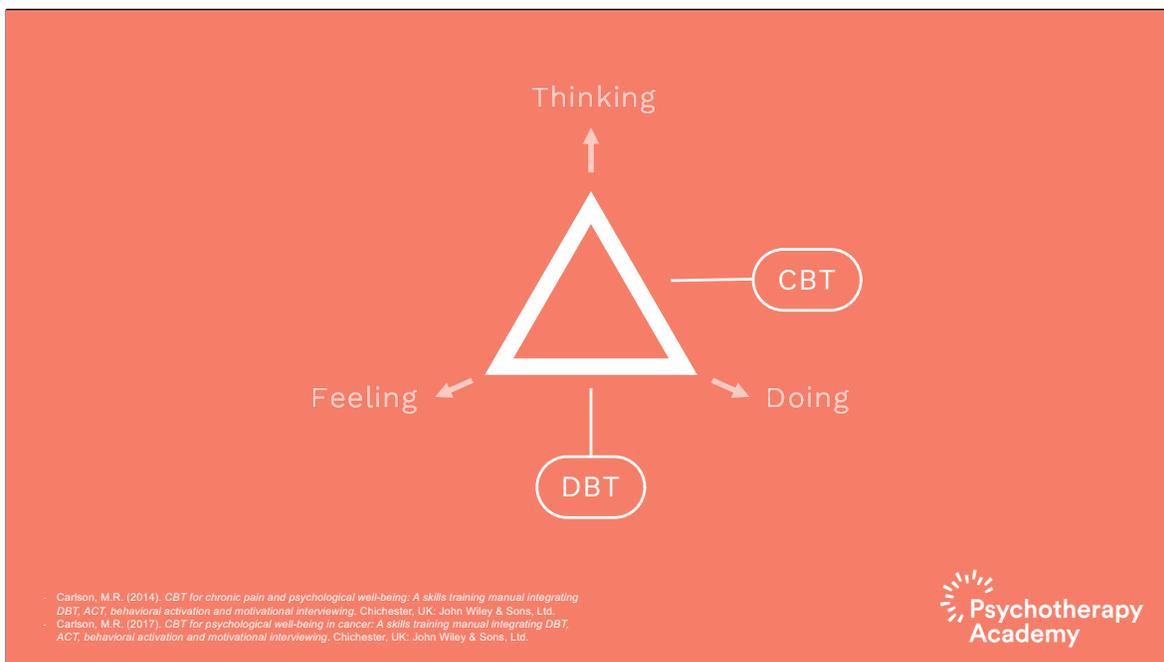
- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.  
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And the goal is to get individuals to understand where they primarily function or what their primary filters are for how they understand and interact with their environments. We're also attempting to identify common strengths and barriers and to be able to take a strength-based approach. So let's get into the functioning triangle.

### \*References\*

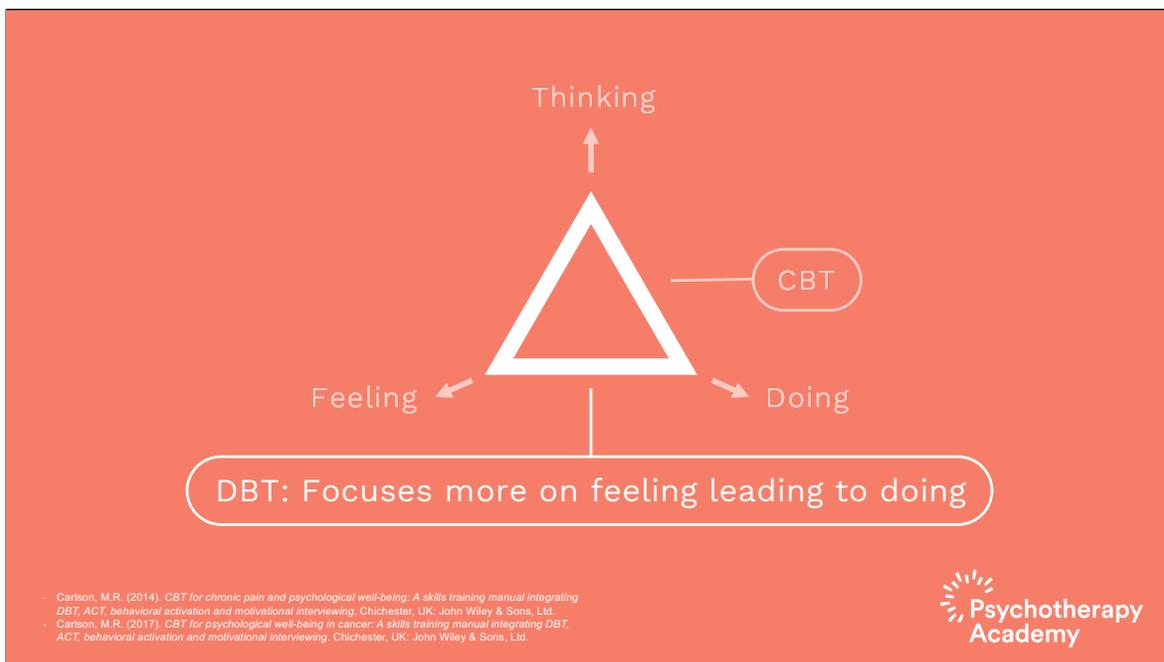
- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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First off, when we look at the triangle, I have CBT over on the right and DBT at the bottom. And CBT being on the right is between thinking and doing. And DBT at the bottom is between feeling and doing. This is a helpful visual for a lot of our clients because they'll have come into DBT with a history of, I've been in therapy for X amount of time or can you help me understand what CBT or DBT is. And CBT traditionally is taking a look at that connection between thinking and doing and that's what the standard approach is for a lot of CBT.

**\*References\***

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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DBT focuses a bit more on the feeling leading to doing and that delineation is identified by clients. Oh, now, I understand what we're doing. It's like before we were talking about how my thought patterns would do this, how they would get in the way, how they would help me. I could generate different narratives and then come up with action plans or a treatment plan to address areas in my life that I want to target for change. DBT takes a little bit of a different approach, instead of focusing more on cognition, it focuses more on emotion and emotion in behavioral patterns.

**\*References\***

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## DBT

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Based on emotional experience, validation,  
and leading toward change

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So this is something to spend a little bit of time with your clients to kind of talk through some of the similarities and differences. And as you know, a lot of DBT is based in emotional experience, validation, and leading toward change where cognition is not one of the primary focal points of the approach. It does address it. But in Dr. Linehan's delineation of where the focal points of DBT are, she talks about 10% to 15% of the approach focused on cognition.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Thinkers and Feelers



Thinkers lead through thought



They weigh options or generate plans before acting



Feelers lead through emotion



They take action based on how they feel

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So the functioning triangle talks about thinkers, feelers, and doers. Thinkers lead through thought about situations or their experience and they typically weigh options or generate plans before acting. Feelers, they lead through emotion. Their view of their environment is through the lens of emotion first and they take action based on how they feel or how their gut leads them or what they hope to feel and then that generates action.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Doers



They lead through action



They see the world through what needs to be done

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Doers, they lead through action. They see the world through what needs to be done, lists, tasks and then they jump in on action. Sometimes, they lead specifically with action not looking at generating a plan or acknowledging emotion before they do something. So the triangle is a nice way to just kind of break this down and we're going to spend time on each one of these concepts talking about what their strengths are and what some of their challenges are.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Thinkers



Look at the world through a lens of analysis



Focus on understanding things before problem-solving



Tend to be judgmental at times



Tend to be cautious

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So when we focus on the thinker, let's take a look at their strengths first. They tend to be quite analytical. They look at the world through a lens of analysis. They tend to be patient. They're calculating. They look at recognizing patterns and they want to focus a bit more on insight and understanding things before they move to problem solving but problem solving is also one of their distinct strengths. Now, some of the challenges that thinkers are faced with is they tend to be judgmental at times which can significantly save them time but can generate consistent barriers. And they tend to be cautious.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Thinkers



Focus on a plan  
before acting



Can neglect  
themselves



Want to keep  
going and in that  
thought pattern

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They tend to focus on more of a plan and what they can do before they actually act. And they can actually neglect themselves by not reinforcing their actions along the way. When we're looking at change or sustainable change, they tend not to want to get distracted but they need to reinforce successive approximations to a goal or baby steps in a direction. They just want to keep going and in that thought pattern.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Thinkers



Want to stay with the plan and the action that's generated from the plan



May be too perfectionistic

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And so what happens is once they get a plan and they want to act, they don't want to reinforce the actions. They want to stay with the plan and with the action that's generated from the plan. A significant barrier for many thinkers is the perfectionistic quality of, "I don't want to act before I come up with the perfect plan, the plan that takes into account a bunch of different things that can get in the way, and I want to problem solve these barriers before they even arise and I want to think of so many different alternatives and things that I can do before I act" or they want to just be perfect in what they do and if they can't be perfect in a plan they won't start the action.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Thinkers



This intellectual approach to things can be risk-avoidant



It can paralyze them by trying to generate an amazing plan

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And at times, this intellectual approach to things can actually be risk-avoidant, “well, I have a good plan, but until it's really good or I got to think it through more, I'm not going to act.” And what happens is life starts to pass these individuals by because they're coming up with the perfect plan. They're coming up with the different versions or iterations of something and how they would respond to those iterations before acting. And it can actually paralyze them and create this concept of being risk-avoidant by trying to generate an amazing plan.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## The Functioning Triangle



The 3 concepts  
are intertwined



Identify strengths  
and areas of growth

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So they start to see how these three concepts really are intertwined but one tends to be primary, another secondary and another tertiary. And those can shift over the course. All clients have strengths and areas of growth that this training can help them to identify to be able to apply what they do well to areas that they struggle in.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Thinkers



Tend to be three Cs: cool, calm, and calculating



Effective problem solvers, and lead with analysis

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Now, thinkers tend to be three Cs - cool, calm and calculating. They're effective problem solvers and they lead with analysis. And when you're teaching this skill, it's helpful to kind of generate in the moment whether this is in individual therapy or group therapy, what are some examples of thinkers because sometimes let's just start with a base core understanding before we get a little more advanced into the concept. So some examples of thinkers we take it to professions. It's easier for clients to kind of identify. So, accountants, accountants are working with numbers.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). CBT for Chronic Pain and Psychological Well-Being A Skills Training Manual Integrating DBT, ACT, Behavioral Activation and Motivational Interviewing. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). CBT for Psychological Well-Being in Cancer: A Skills Training Manual Integrating DBT, ACT, Behavioral Activation and Motivational Interviewing. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Thinkers: Examples



Surgeons, engineers,  
planners, strategists



People who lead with  
thought, pattern  
recognition, analysis

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.  
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.



They're cool, calm and calculating. Surgeons, engineers, planners, strategists, people who are working in IT or working with computers, these are really nice examples about people who lead with thought, pattern recognition, analysis. And when clients can identify, hey, wait a second, I get it, I can relate to these professions that do that, it leads to some really good generation of discussion especially when something's not super clear where they'll come up with, well, a therapist, a therapist needs to be thinker because you're analyzing and doing things like that.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Therapists



Objective and  
subjective



Validating emotional  
experience



Generate plans,  
give feedback

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.  
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.



We are attempting to be objective. And we're human beings; we're also subjective. But I also need to be validating emotional experience so I need to be plugged into the emotionality of the individual that I'm working with. I also need to be active in generating plans, assisting in giving feedback, facilitating learning, teaching skills. So a therapist needs to be all three just like you to attach to the complexity of your experience but we do tend to have a primary filter or a primary way of interacting with our environment, and that's what we're looking for in the initial teachings.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Thinkers: Challenges



May not be able to sustain effort when emotions are high



Tend to be inflexible in their thought patterns

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And now going back to the thinkers, there are significant challenges as well. They can get blindsided by their emotion. They may not be able to sustain effort when emotions are high because they tend to just keep going and can burn themselves out because they tend to be inflexible at times in their thought patterns.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Thinkers



May miss opportunities while they plan



When something starts to happen that they didn't plan for, they can freeze

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They may miss opportunities while they plan for what they're going to do. And they can neglect their own needs because what they attempt to do is prioritize their effort and in that inflexibility when things start to change or alter, or something starts to happen that they didn't plan for, they can freeze instead of going with the flow. So those are some strengths and areas of growth for our clients who are primarily thinkers.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Key Points

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- The functioning triangle combines thinking, feeling, and doing.
- It is designed to help with insight and pattern recognition.
- Identify strengths and challenges to create an action plan for all categories.



So, here are a few key points. The functioning triangle is just that, a geometric shape that has thinking on the top, feeling on the bottom left, and doing on the bottom right. And what this is designed to do is I usually pair this in the mindfulness module teachings where we're looking at insight and pattern recognition.

Identify strengths and challenges of thinkers, feelers, and doers and learn how to create an action plan for all categories.

## Key Points

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- CBT focuses on the connection between thinking and doing. DBT focuses more on the feeling leading to doing.
- Thinkers lead through thought. Feelers lead through emotions. Doers lead through action.



CBT traditionally is taking a look at that connection between thinking and doing. DBT focuses a bit more on the feeling leading to doing.

Thinkers lead through thought about situations or their experience and they typically weigh options or generate plans before acting. Feelers, they lead through emotion... and then that generates action. Doers, they lead through action. They see the world through what needs to be done, lists, tasks and then they jump in on action.



Next Presentation:

## **The Functioning Triangle: The Feeler**

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## **The Functioning Triangle: The Feeler**



Mark Carlson, Psy.D.

Now, let's address the group of the feelers. These are individuals who interact with their environments typically through the lens of emotion, passion, creativity.

## The Feeler: Strengths



They tend to be creative



They can find options where others may get stuck



They're intuitive

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Strengths of the feeler, they tend to be creative. They can see and view things in a very different way than many other people. They can find options where others may get stuck. They tend to be very passionate. They're intuitive. You'll hear language like trust your gut, trust your instincts. They tend to be visionary. They can see sometimes the greater, broader, bigger picture but also they can see the trees at times too when they tend to be challenged with things.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## The Feeler: Strengths



They're relationship-focused



How they interact is based on how those around them are responding or feeling



They want to connect

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They're relationship-focused. A lot of times how they feel or how they interact is based on how those around them are responding or feeling. They tend to be curious. They are individuals that want to learn. They want to connect. And I find this very interesting is there is also typically a ton of energy here because emotions oftentimes breed not only motivation but it breeds energy and there's this kind of big motor at times. And it can be short, intensive and it can be kind of longer and drawn out.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## How Long Can an Emotion Last



Most emotions typically burn out



Or another emotion comes in and takes a primary role within a 24- to 36-hour period

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We talk in group and in individual therapy about typically how long can an emotion last or a crisis, which is a good time to be addressing this is when we're talking about strengths and challenges of the feeler. We talk about typical emotions even when they're pretty intense last 36, maybe 45 hours, crises maybe up to 72. And so where these numbers come from is we track emotionality through diary cards and what we find is most emotions typically burn out or another emotion comes in and takes a primary role within a 24- to 36-hour period and most crises resolve themselves within a few days.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## The Feeler: Emotion Patterns



Emotion is involved in a cycle



The cycle is interrupted with different emotions

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These are long extended things, but there tends to be patterns. And that's what we're looking at because sometimes it's a rinse-and-repeat thing. It just happens over and over and it feels like an ongoing emotion but it's actually an emotion that's involved in a cycle. So another strength here is that, yes, they have a real broad range oftentimes of emotional experience, but they can get caught in a cycle where it seems like it goes on forever, but it actually is interrupted with different emotions and different levels of intensity.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Feelers: Challenges

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- Scattered
- Unpredictable emotions
- Impulsive
- They can burn out

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So now, let's take a look at some of the challenges that our individuals who identify themselves as feelers can experience. They can tend to be scattered. Emotions can be all over the place, unpredictable. They tend to be impulsive at times where they'll act on the emotion without thinking or generating a plan, and then they can burn out because they'll act on a real high, intense emotional experience and then just fry and have to sleep or rest for a period of time or find different ways to disengage if the emotion is powerful or if the emotion is a powerful negative or painful experience.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Getting Away From Pain



- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.  
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.



This is typically also when we talk about three different ways that individuals want to get away from their painful emotional experience. So this is where we'll interject escape, avoid, and alter. If you're having a painful emotional experience, you're going to want to escape it, alter it in some way or avoid feeling it in the future, or do things to avoid feeling it now. And so we'll talk about those types of barriers or the urges that emotions can generate.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Feelers: Challenges



Procrastinate



Too focused on relationships



Emotional sponging

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Individuals who are feelers can procrastinate. They can avoid and find different ways to attempt to push off the planning or the action piece because they can get stuck in that emotional cycling. They tend oftentimes to be too focused on relationships. So instead of using relationships to their benefit or as sounding boards or as support, they engage in something that we refer to as emotional sponging where they actually take on somebody else's emotional experience as their own, and they feel it as it's their own experience where they're actually adopting it or taking it from individuals in their environment.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Feelers in Action



- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.  
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.



A quick example, if somebody is a feeler and they're in a group therapy setting and somebody else is going through a really painful emotional time or experience, not only can they reflect, use themselves as a sounding board and then take on that experience but also you'll see this as that sponging piece. So their energy will start to match the other individual or individuals in the room, or they'll want to avoid feeling that or that emotional sponging and they'll jump right in and try to fix it for the individual.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Feelers: Focus on Relationships

A powerful asset or  
a powerful barrier



Follow the emotion  
instead of follow the  
plan or the action

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But that focus on relationships can be a primary asset for the individual but it can also generate a pretty powerful barrier. And what happens is because emotions wax and wane you'll see that they'll start to engage in a plan or a project, and as the emotion changes, fizzles or another emotion comes in in a primary slot, they'll disengage the project to or whatever the plan is to focus on whatever the next powerful emotional experience is. And so you'll see them follow the emotion instead of follow the plan or follow the action.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Feelers: Professions and Examples



Artists



Musicians



Motivational  
speakers



Social media  
influencers

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.  
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Let's go over a few examples of where we find this as common experience or common examples is looking at some professions, artists. Artists are known as being feelers, being connected to their emotional experience. They're creative, passionate, and they're intuitive, and they're curious and they explore their world through emotion and motivation. Musicians are very similar as well. Motivational speakers. We oftentimes hear clergy and religious leaders being here which generates a lot of discussion.

When we're dealing with teens or people who are a little more tech-savvy, social media influencers often come into this category because they motivate. They generate experience with the people who follow them or view them through social media platforms. So you'll see that pretty common here as well.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Feelers: Goal

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Explore what they are seeing

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The goal is to not correct somebody if you don't agree with their experience, but it's actually exploring what they're seeing and what parts of this profession or their experience of this profession do they attach that high degree or connectedness of emotionality.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Key Points

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- The functionality triangle is a concept that clients identify as a therapy-altering training.
- It becomes part of the culture of the therapeutic experience.



Now, a few key points when we're talking about feelers and the functionality triangle is a concept that many clients identify as a therapy-altering training. They will go back to this over and over. It becomes part of the culture of the therapeutic experience whether that's in individual or in group therapy.

## Key Points

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- All clients have strengths and areas of growth.
- Thinkers intellectualize, feelers emote, doers act. The key is to take a strength-based approach.
- Find the strengths and apply that to new learning or barriers.



All clients have strengths and areas of growth. This is a nice way to identify what that is through their primary orientation to functioning or interacting with their environment or their experience. And again, thinkers intellectualize, feelers emote, doers act. The key is to take a strength-based approach. Find the strengths and where the energy is and apply that to new learning or barriers.



Next Presentation:

**The Functioning Triangle:  
The Doer**

 Psychotherapy  
Academy

# **The Functioning Triangle: The Doer**



Mark Carlson, Psy.D.

Next, let's introduce the doer. These are the individuals who have a real drive or a real energy around constantly being in motion, in action. We're exploring a primary filter or way of interacting with their environment or their experience.

## Doers: Strengths



Action oriented



Generate and create  
their own momentum



Tend to act before  
thinking and feeling

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The doer has a lot of strengths. They tend to be action oriented. They complete tasks. They come up with lists and they can generate and create their own momentum. They're driven and highly ambitious individuals. So these are individuals that tend to act before thinking and feeling. Something is kind of approaching them or they have some experience, they're prone to go into motion before they step back and view the picture, try to understand it more or check in with their own emotional experience or lens. They tend to jump in with behavior or action first.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Doers: Challenges



Focused on the trees as opposed to the forest



They can be impulsive



They can start things before they're ready

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Now, this leads to some pretty significant challenges at times. They're focused on the trees as opposed to the forest. So they see a tree and they move toward it. So at times, they can miss the big picture because they're not looking at the complexity of the experience. They're looking at one kind of idea or one concept. They focus on that and move immediately. And so they can tend to be again very similar to the feeler is they can be impulsive because they want to lead with that action. So therefore, they can actually start or do things before they're ready, before they have a plan.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Challenges: Sustaining Change



They can get overwhelmed



They tend to stop and not complete the project



They can be highly distracted



They focus on immediate challenge

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So sustainability of change can be really challenging because they can get overwhelmed. They don't take care of themselves and spend time to validate or reinforce a lot of their actions or experience so they run a high risk of burnout. And these individuals even though they have a bunch of lists and to-do things, they tend at times to start and stop and not complete the project all the way to the end or see things through because they start too many things because they can be highly distracted because as soon as one plan starts moving, something else generates or captures their attention that requires immediate action. They put the other project on hold and shift over straight to here with action instead of generating a plan and starting to prioritize - what are my needs, what are my desires, what are my wants. They focus on high-energy things that are right in front of them, that immediate challenge.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Doers: Risks



Start too many things



Change tends not to be sustainable



Emotions tend to be a distraction

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So again, a lot of strengths, a lot of energy and action and tasks that get at times completed but they can also have that other flip side of the coin where they start too many things. The change tends not to be sustainable because again they create this pattern of, “I’m going to lead with action, I will come up with the plan as I go”. And emotions tend to be a bit of a distraction. Instead of taking more of a balanced approach of, “it’s fine by starting, that’s totally okay”, is “I’m going to start” but then they do need to build in, okay, now what’s the plan? “I’m already on this course. Is this the best course?”

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). CBT for Chronic Pain and Psychological Well-Being A Skills Training Manual Integrating DBT, ACT, Behavioral Activation and Motivational Interviewing. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Pattern Recognition: Validation



How do I reinforce my drive for continual action?



Put the pause button



Generate self and other validation and reinforcement

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Let's start looking at pattern recognition and analysis and start building in plans of self-validation, others' validation and how do we solicit that and how do I reinforce my continual drive or the need or that desire for continual action. So if you can put the pause button on the doer once they start and look at the more complex picture, these individuals can really accomplish some amazing things. But they are prone to burnout if we don't hit that pause button and have more time to generate that self and other validation and reinforcement and constantly look at, do we need to alter the plan? Do we need to alter the plan? What happens if this? So teaching them those cognitive skills of analysis and pattern recognition to be able to balance that continual motor.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Doers: Professions and Examples

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- Athletes
- Single parents
- Construction workers
- Waiters and waitresses
- Transportation workers

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So again, let's take a look at a few professions where you're going to find doers to where we can have some running examples and some further insight into what doers do and where do they function. A lot of times I am not the one who proposes these examples. They need to be client-driven so it's in their own language. But here are some examples for our individuals who are primarily doers in their interaction with their environment or their own experience. Clients have identified athletes, single parents because they're constantly on the move, construction workers, waiters and waitresses, individuals who work in the field of transportation.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Doers: Professions and Examples



People who follow  
a template



Doesn't require a lot of  
emotional experience to  
function



Doesn't require a lot  
of pattern recognition  
or planning

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And the common theme here what you're going to find with doers is people who follow a template, where there's a way to do something and they just do it over and over and over and over again which doesn't require a lot of emotional experience to function at a high level and it doesn't require a lot of pattern recognition or planning over and over and over to where they have a template. They have a way of doing things and they tend to follow it or engage in that kind of rinse and repeat. I do the same thing over and over and over again.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Doers



It's more devoid  
or distanced from  
emotion



Doesn't deviate  
from the plan



Our job is  
to validate,  
understand

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And I have had individuals say it's almost like a robot. And I understand what they're talking about there because it's more devoid or distanced from emotion. They already have a program that they're going to follow so it just executes the plan and doesn't really deviate from the plan. So I can make sense of that, but again, our job isn't to agree or disagree. Our job is to validate, understand where the commonality is and to be able to use their examples in their own lives.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Key Points

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- Thinkers intellectualize, feelers emote, doers act.
- This concept gives clients a way to understand their own experience.
- Focus on clients' primary orientation to functioning and generate a strength-based approach.



So a few key points here. Thinkers intellectualize, feelers emote, doers act. This is a concept that clients identify oftentimes as a therapy-altering training. It gives them insight and a way to understand their own experience and have that clarity come out of chaos. All clients have strengths and areas of growth that can be identified with this training. We want to focus on their primary orientation to functioning. The key is for us to help generate a strength-based approach.

## Key Points

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- Doers are task driven.
- They can get overwhelmed with unfinished lists and tasks.
- Teach the skills of self-validation, self-reinforcement, and engaging in others.



The key to the doers is they want action. They're task driven. They're ambitious. But sometimes, they can miss the forest for the trees. They can quickly run out of energy. They tend to be inflexible at times. They can tend to be hyperfocused at whatever task is at hand. And when pressed to change focus, they can get overwhelmed with unfinished lists and tasks. And again, how to find balance with this is to teach the skills of self-validation, self-reinforcement, engaging in others.

## Key Points

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- Asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.
- Teach pattern recognition of when to alter course



Asking for help is a strength. It is not a weakness and understanding that even though when we pick our course and we start on that course, we may have to step back to alter our plans. So how do we teach that pattern recognition of when do we alter course, how do we identify when your strength is now becoming neutral before it even becomes a barrier?



Next Presentation:

## **The Functioning Triangle: Secondary Orientation**

 Psychotherapy  
Academy

## **The Functioning Triangle: Secondary Orientation**



Mark Carlson, Psy.D.

Once your clients get an understanding and a pretty good working knowledge of their primary orientation whether they're a thinker, a feeler or a doer, we want to get more information on board about how they interact with their environment, themselves and others.

## Getting More Information About Interactions

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- Individual's lives are complicated
- There are options and that is good
- We want to show the gray area

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.  
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And one of the ways to do that is to look at how each individual's lives are complicated. It's not just so simple that you're a feeler all you do is feel. There's more richness in the world. And we don't want to overcomplicate things but we do want to match the complexity of individual's experience to show them that there are a lot more options out there than what you may be used to engaging in or experiencing because we want to show that options are good. Most of the world is not just black and white. It's more complicated than that. And so we want to show that gray area.

DBT talks about dialectics and putting things on a continuum to break down that all or nothing, black and white, right and wrong.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Functioning Triangle:

Use this to assist individuals in pattern recognition by exploring their orientation

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- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

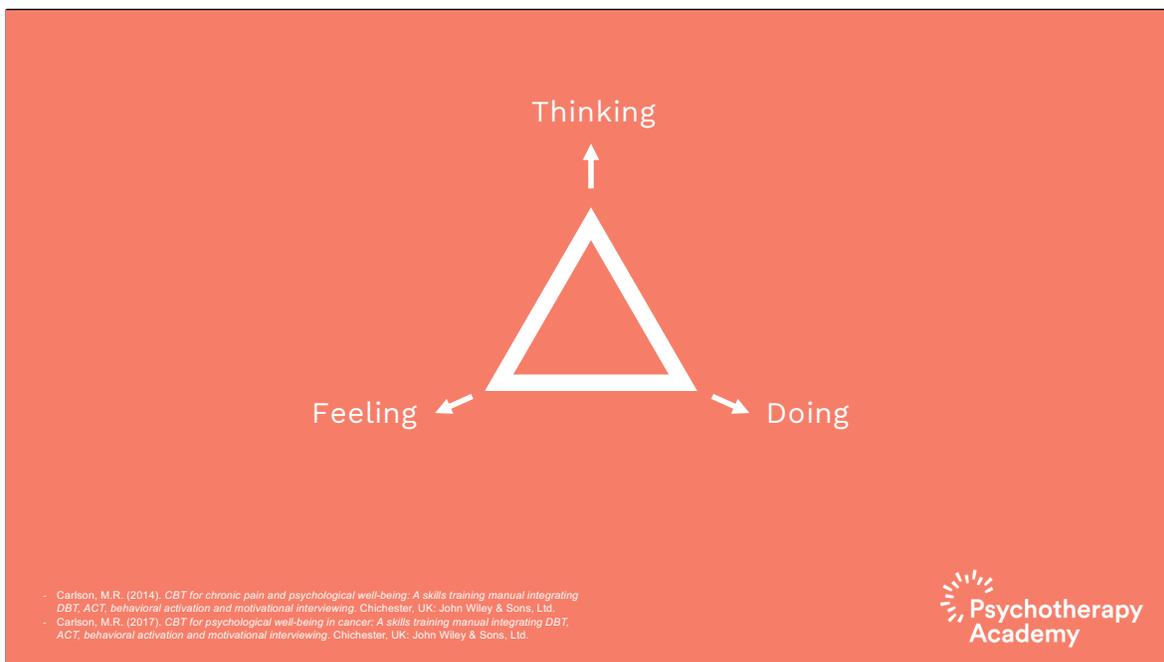


Okay, my primary orientation, how I walk into a situation is I'm a thinker.

Well, this happened. So what did that trigger? Did that trigger planning? Did that trigger immediate action? Did that trigger emotionality? So you can use this functioning triangle to assist individuals in pattern recognition through exploring their orientation. But a couple of different ways is to take this in a more advanced route if you choose and if your client is ready.

### \*References\*

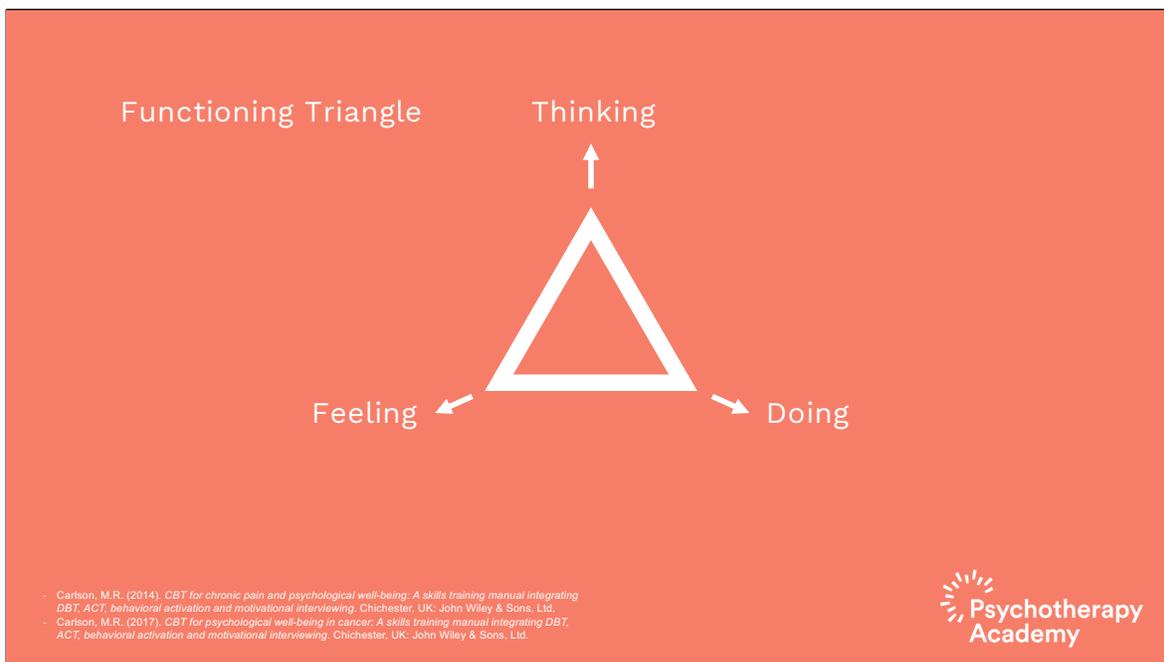
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So I take the triangle out again and I ask them, where would you put yourself on one of the diagonal parts of the triangle or one of the base parts of the triangle? Would you put yourself between a thinker and a feeler, a thinker and a doer, a feeler and a thinker? So I go through those examples and I say, okay, put yourself in the dead center to start between those two concepts on the triangle. And then I ask them, okay, now that you've identified this is your primary and this is your secondary, are you more toward your primary or are you pretty balanced between your primary and secondary?

**\*References\***

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.



And so I want you to understand and teach to your clients that not only is this fluid but it's not just as simple as here's my primary and here's my secondary. It's here's my primary and I'm really distanced from my secondary and my tertiary one is way out there. So you see how complicated you can get with this. But the more complex we get with this, the more it's going to match individual's experience. So take time.

**\*References\***

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Moving Toward Complexity



Understand  
the primary  
orientation



Keep in mind  
the secondary  
orientation



Address the  
complexity



Move toward  
freedom and  
choice

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 Psychotherapy  
Academy

Where I want to transition now is where we go with our clients is how do we initiate movement. So once you understand that this is your primary orientation to how you function in the world or with yourself or in relationships, now I want to take a look at, well, the secondary one has to be kept in mind for us to be flexible, to address the complexity of the experience. And with that, I want to initiate movement. So let's talk about if we find somebody with a strength in one of these areas, how do we initiate that movement toward complexity or that movement toward freedom and choice ultimately ending with responsibility for one's own experience and action?

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Initiating Movement: The Thinker



Appeal to logic to gain acceptance



Reality, planning, analysis



Create a plan that incorporates rewarding positive steps

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So initiating movement. The thinker. Appeal to logic to gain acceptance. So with the thinker, enter their reality; enter their planning, their analysis, their problem solving. Enter there. Create a plan for step two that incorporates rewarding positive steps because we want to build in that immediate support that the individual can create for themselves or solicit from others

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Initiating Movement: The Thinker



Engage their plan  
with support



Get support from  
others on board



Accept where we're  
at and start moving  
from there

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And then engage their plan with support. Get supports from others on board, so self, other, and environment, right, is we want a plan that engages supports that they can reinforce or validate themselves. They can get others on board to do the same thing and then look at whatever systems they're attached to. So again, we want to accept where we're at and then start moving from there. So, the way to gain that initial acceptance is appeal to logic.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Initiating Movement: The Feeler



Validate their emotional experience



Create a plan to balance thinking and feeling

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Let's take that same concept and now apply that to the feeler. The feeler, we're not appealing to logic here. What we're going to do is enter their reality by validating their emotional experience or validating the emotional impact that something is happening or occurring in their lives to gain that acceptance or that starting point. So for the feeler, we want to lead with validation, not lead with logic. Then we're going to, in step two, create a plan that balances that thinking and feeling. Once we've validated that, yes, you have every right to experience or feel what you are, and let's generate a plan or do something about that.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Initiating Movement: The Feeler



Build on positives  
and strengths



Problem solve to  
address barriers



Create a plan  
with supports from  
relationships

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.  
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Do we want to build on this if this is a real positive thing and it's a strength? Or if this is a barrier, do we need to generate some form of problem solving or plan to address it, incorporate your strengths and then move toward action? And then again, for that last step, engage this plan with supports especially with feelers who are more based in relationships and engaging other people. This is a big part for them is again self, other, environment, exploring how do you have a relationship with yourself and how can you generate your own motivation, momentum, reinforcement, acceptance, validation and then how can you solicit that in a healthy way with others and from your environment or the systems that you're engaged in.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Initiating Movement: The Doer



Slow them  
down to gain  
acceptance



Step back and  
observe what's  
happening



Make meaning  
of individual's  
experience

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Sometimes with the doer, the first thing we have to do is slow them down and acknowledge thinking and feeling to gain acceptance. So one of the things that we can do with the doer is we just talk about the pause button. Just pause, step back and engage in mindfulness, observe and describe, okay. So I want to step back and observe what's happening within myself whatever it might be, in my environment. Describe. Put words on your experience because what we're doing with observe and describe is making meaning out of an individual's experience. So then the individual once they get that, they want to go right back into participate and we're going to go, slow down.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Initiating Movement: The Doer



Build in self-validation  
and reward



Engage in  
problem solving



Have reinforcement  
built in early and often

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We're going to build in self-validation and reward. We're going to engage in problem-solving, okay, pros and cons whatever that might be. And then what we're going to do is generate that plan where we have reinforcement built in early and often. So we just talk about the pause button for a second. Notice what's happening around you and engage specifically in the mindfulness category of skill training in DBT then moving to problem-solving and pros and cons, things like that. And then create a parallel plan as they act building in validation and support from self, other, and environment.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## When to Address Duality



Use it with  
people who are  
struggling



Or if this is a  
new concept  
to them



Start with  
a common  
experience

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It's helpful to talk about the concept of duality because some people will say, well, wait a second, it's not just I have this primary and then a secondary and then a tertiary experience. There are some times where I have this parallel process or these multiple things happening all at once. Well, I want to talk to them about the concept of duality.

Spend time in therapy on this issue, especially with people who are struggling or this is a new concept to them. So I want to talk about duality, the global feature first, common experiences that we can all identify with. So I want to have that global piece that we can all identify with. And oftentimes, I take it back to a painful experience first.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Addressing Duality: Pain



A natural  
experience



Escape, avoid, or  
alter it: disengage  
from the pain



An urge to do  
something, to  
move away

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So I talk about pain. Pain is a natural part of most people's experience, right? And so if there's a painful experience, what do we want to do? Escape, avoid or alter it for most people. They want to disengage in some way from the pain. And people are like, yeah, I can relate to that. I can relate that when there's something painful that happens I have an urge to do something different or I problem solve how to get away from it or lessen its impact or I just act to move away from it as quickly as I can. So that's the global experience.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Addressing Duality: Individual Level



Take it down to the idiosyncratic level



How has the client experienced pain?

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Now, I want to take it down to the individual level or the idiosyncratic level and these are experiences that are unique specifically to you, specifically to the client sitting across from you or the clients in your group. So even though that I can relate to pain as an example, what's an idiosyncratic way that maybe you experienced your pain that may be different from anybody else? Maybe you have a thought that other people can't relate to or an experience of that pain that generates another primary emotion that is confusing to other people or an urge that a lot of people can't necessarily understand or connect to, that you want to keep hidden. Like SI, SIB, TIB are great examples of that.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Duality



A way to relate to other people's experience



Allow clients to relate to something global but also have their own experience

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And so I want to talk to them about for most experience we have this concept of duality is that, yes, I can relate to other people's experience or this idea or concept and there's room for me to be an individual within it. And that oftentimes is a mind-blowing thing for a lot of our clients because they look at, well, I should be doing something else or I shouldn't be doing this, where we're giving them permission to not only relate to something global but also have their own unique experience within it.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Duality



Use it to break  
power struggles



Such as arguing



Or those who feel  
like you need to  
agree with them

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If you have ever engaged in a power struggle with a client, this is a great way to break that power struggle. It's not about right or wrong. It's about being both at the same time. It's about understanding that, yes, 95% of my experience is similar to other people and I still get 5% just to be me because I am the only me on the planet. It's a great way for people who want to argue with you as a therapist or feel like you need to agree with them where this is where we can talk, no, it actually doesn't or I don't need to agree with you, just help me understand your experience. This is one of those tools I suggest all of us as therapists have in our tool bag.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Key Points

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- Identify primary approaches to change and consider the secondary orientation.
- Start with acceptance, not necessarily insight or true validation.



So a few key points. As we identify primary approaches to change and to the functioning triangle, consider the secondary orientation to address the complexity of human experience. Initiating action on any level starts with acceptance, not necessarily insight or true validation. Those can be tools to gain that acceptance.

## Key Points

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- The duality of experience can get clients unstuck, but also keep you out of power struggles.
- Secondary targets can be treatment adherence.
- The more balanced the approach to change, the more they will engage in the therapeutic process.



Exploring the duality of experience can get many clients unstuck, broaden and enrich their experience, lead to self and other validation but also as a therapist keep you out of power struggles or get you out of them if you find yourself in one. Spend time with this module. This lays the groundwork potentially for the entire course of treatment. And secondary targets in this module can be treatment adherence. The more balanced the individual's approach to understanding change that they have, the more they will potentially demonstrate meaningful engagement in the therapeutic process.



Next Presentation:

**Homework: Thinkers, Feelers,  
and Doers: Creating Acceptance  
and Change Handout**

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## **Homework: Thinkers, Feelers, and Doers: Creating Acceptance and Change Handout**



Mark Carlson, Psy.D.

Next, let's review the homework and tools for this section. The first handout is the functioning triangle and the second handout is where we're taking a look at acceptance and change, targeting thinkers, feelers and doers.

## Handout 1: Introducing the Triangle



Introduce what the triangle is



Make sense or interact with our environment, our experience

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So the first thing that I do is I introduce what the triangle is the thinker on top, the feeler on the bottom left, the doer on the bottom right. I talk to them about CBT is typically found in the part of the triangle between thinking and doing where DBT is at the base of the triangle typically found between feeling and doing.

Each one of us typically has a primary orientation, a secondary orientation, and a tertiary orientation. If they get locked into the language of orientation, I just talk to them about filters. This is a way that we make sense or interact with our environment, our experience, how we interact with ourselves and others, and systems that we're a part of.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## The Thinker: Strengths and Challenges



Analytical, patient,  
problem-solvers



Inaction, self-neglect



They can be viewed  
as risk-avoidant

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The thinker has strengths typically in being analytical, patient, calculating, recognizing patterns, and they can engage pretty effectively in problem-solving. Some of the challenges is this individual can be viewed as judgmental, too cautious. This approach can lead to inaction, potentially self-neglect, and a lack of reinforcing or validating oneself.

They can be perfectionistic and they can look at coming up with perfect plans or generate too many plans and ideas for alternate ways of doing things and tend to be overprepared and may never take the step toward action. So, they can also be viewed as risk-avoidant. This is not about being right or wrong. This is about understanding how do I primarily interact with the world or with my own experience.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## The Feeler: Strengths and Challenges



Creative, passionate,  
intuitive



Relationship-focused  
and curious



Can be impulsive



Can procrastinate  
and avoid

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So then we talk about the feeler. They have strengths of being creative, passionate, intuitive. They tend to be visionaries. They can see things differently than many other people. They tend to be very relationship focused and they're curious. They want to understand. They want to kind of get in with things. Some of the challenges that they experience - they can feel scattered, they can be impulsive. This can lead to SI, SIB, and TIB is typically where you're going to find some of the roots for that, suicidal ideation, self-injurious behavior, treatment-interfering behavior. They can procrastinate and avoid.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## The Feeler: Challenges



Can self-neglect



Tend to emotionally sponge



They can disengage or not complete projects

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They can be too focused on relationships and engage in self-neglect because they're focused on other people. They can tend to emotionally sponge as in take on other people's emotions or experience as if it's their own. And they can disengage or not complete projects and tasks because emotions lead to distractions that get in the way of their planning or their action. This is just one way to explore that through the functioning triangle handout.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## The Doer: Strengths and Challenges



Tend to engage in potentially multiple tasks



Can create their own momentum



Can miss the big picture



Can start before they're ready

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Now, the doer, they're action-oriented. They tend to complete tasks or engage in tasks and potentially multiple tasks. They can generate or create their own momentum. They tend to be driven and highly ambitious. Some of the challenges is they can miss the big picture. They're focused on the tree, not necessarily the forest or the complexity of the experience. They tend to focus on one aspect of it which typically involves behavior and action. They can start before they're ready, before they're planned out, before they have a sustainable plan and vision for what change actually is.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## The Doer: Challenges



Can engage in self-neglect by not reinforcing or rewarding



May start too many things all at once

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They run a higher risk of burnout because they can engage in self-neglect by not reinforcing or rewarding their own action or their own experience. They can easily get overwhelmed and they may start too many things all at once, and then they have plan after plan after plan or task after task after task that they're engaged in without seeing anything all the way through to completion.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Thinkers, Doers, Feelers: Examples



Thinkers: accountants, surgeons, engineers, planners



Feelers: artists, musicians, people who focus on emotionality



Doers: athletes, construction workers, waiters and waitresses

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Thinkers, people who engage in the three C's cool, calm, calculating is what we talk about here. Some examples are accountants, surgeons, engineers, planners, strategists, individuals who work in the fields of IT and computers. Some examples of feelers might be artists, musicians, people who focus on that emotionality, that drive, that passion, motivational speakers, clergy or religious leaders, social media influencers. And finally, some examples for the doers, athletes, single parents, construction workers, waiters and waitresses, transportation employees, or people who follow a template that is designed to be just done over and over and over without continual emotional experience or continual problem solving that's needed.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Carlson, M.R. (2017). *CBT for psychological well-being in cancer: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## Handout 2: Acceptance and Change



Identify just one  
primary orientation



Focus on the  
primary aspect first

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So next, let's take a look at the second handout which is creating acceptance and change. And what we're looking at doing here is how I introduce this to individuals or in a group setting is I talk about on page one you have your primary orientation to change. A is for thinkers, B is for feelers, C is for doers. I would like you to identify just one primary orientation and fill that area out at the start of therapy with this concept. Later on, we're going to fill out the rest of the page but I want you to just focus on the primary aspect first.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Example: The Thinker

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How is my thinking getting in the way



I judge myself so harshly at times, it paralyzes me

So in this example, let's take the thinker. So I had a client, Gary. This is just kind of a summary of what Gary would kind of fill in or talk through. Gary talks about as a thinker. How is my thinking getting in the way of creating acceptance and change is the first question on the form. Gary talks about: I judge myself so harshly at times, it paralyzes me so then I do nothing.

## Example: The Thinker



How is my thinking helping me to create acceptance and change?



I have more options than what I might feel like I have at the time



Engage in reflective communication

The second question, how is my thinking helping me to create acceptance and change? Well, Gary responds, I know I have more options than what I might feel like I have at the time. So intellectually, he gets it. He just feels stuck. And what I want to do when I'm exploring this is engage in reflective communication. I want to paraphrase what they're saying to make sure that I'm getting the kind of vibe and the gist or the understanding of what they're experiencing.

## Example: The Thinker

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How can I use my thinking to create acceptance and change?



Create an action plan for things I can struggle with



The third question, how can I use my thinking to help create acceptance and change going forward? Can I use logic to create acceptance? Well, Gary responds, I can create an action plan for things I can struggle with every day so they're ready to use when I need them. So basically, Gary, what you're talking about is for things that are a day-to-day issue for you, you can create some action plans to where as soon as something happens you've already problem-solved it and you can jump in and segue to action. And he's like, yes, absolutely.

## Avoid, Alter, Escape



Point out when they have avoid, alter, or escape behaviors or urges



This is meeting a need through either a healthy way or an unhealthy way



It may meet your needs but long term, there may be more effective ways

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And so then on the left-hand side of the sheet you'll see where I actually have avoid. What I'm looking at is when individuals are talking about their orientation to change, I want to point out when they have avoid, alter, or escape behaviors or urges listed out so I can see right away going, okay, yes, this is meeting a need through either a healthy way or an unhealthy way by using escape, avoid, or alter like long term. Short term, it may meet your needs but long term, there may be more effective ways to do that. So my job as a therapist is use reflective communication, understand what they're talking about, elicit their responses from this, and then kind of frame it in where it's working and where it's not working, short-term, mid-term, and long-term in my timeline.

### \*References\*

- Carlson, M.R. (2014). *CBT for chronic pain and psychological well-being: A skills training manual integrating DBT, ACT, behavioral activation and motivational interviewing*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
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## Secondary Orientation for Change



Gary is a self-professed thinker



Is your secondary orientation a feeler or a doer?



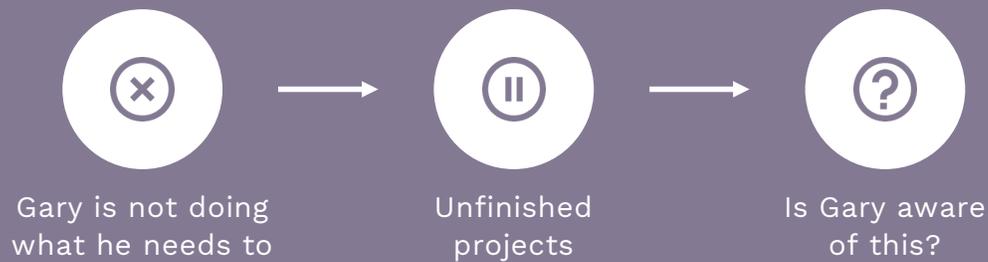
How are my actions getting in the way of acceptance and change?



Then we move to page number two. This is the secondary orientation for change and we're going to stay with Gary for a second as Gary is a self-professed thinker. Because if his primary is a thinker, I don't want him to fill out his secondary orientation as a thinker. I want him to identify, is your secondary orientation a feeler or a doer?

In Gary in this example, he was a thinker with his secondary orientation of being a doer. So on page one, he filled out thinker. On page two, I only want him to fill out doer, only a secondary orientation at this point. So you'll see the questions are very similar if not reworded from the first. So how are my actions getting in the way of creating acceptance and change?

## Secondary Orientation: Doer



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Gary, for a secondary orientation as a doer said he's constantly doing things to distract himself and he's not doing what he needs to do. And he says, I have too many unfinished lists and projects that just gets in the way for him. So I talk to him about, okay, so your primary orientation is creating plans and generating these concepts and ideas of what you can do, and in your secondary orientation, when you act, you tend to be potentially mindful of being distracted in doing this as a pattern or you don't finish things. Is that right, this is kind of new information for you? Or are you aware of this? And that's what I want to explore.

## Secondary Orientation: Acceptance and Change

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How are my actions helping me to create acceptance and change?

Then we move on to the second question in this category. How are my actions helping me to create acceptance and change? And he says then, this is where he's meeting his needs, this is where we get to focus in, it feels good to accomplish things. Again, self and potentially other reinforcement. I take a break between tasks which helps to rest. And I'm like, love it.



So here, when it feels good to stop doing a task, you can actually refill your energy units. And he's like, yes, and it gets in the way if it's just, I can't complete things, and I just keep going over some of the same ground. So it can be a strength and a barrier. And he's like, yes. And here's where we start to see the complexity working in of being a thinker and a doer, which is exactly what we're trying to do is understand that life is complicated. Let's start matching that with our language and our pattern recognition so we can move toward movement.

## Secondary Orientation: Acceptance and Change

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What behaviors  
can I engage in?



What thoughts and  
emotions should I  
pay attention to?

The third question, what behaviors can I engage in to create acceptance and change? What thoughts and emotions should I pay attention to for helping creating acceptance? Gary talks about, well, I can organize my actions, I can focus on my needs before my wishes. And I stopped him right here and I'm like, Gary, let's hold on. So I talked to him about, well, let's take a look at that. It's not just needs and wishes. Let's look at this on a continuum of needs, desires and wants or wishes. And I remember Gary talking in frame of this going, yeah, well, that totally makes sense for me because I'm neglecting my needs because I want something different than what I have, and I wish it would be so.



We can gain a lot of momentum, insight, understanding, and pattern recognition with these tools in either individual or group settings

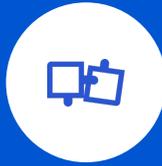


And so you can see that we can gain a lot of momentum, insight, understanding, pattern recognition with these tools in either individual or group setting. So wishing something is one of the easiest ways to engage and disengage. And in that way, I can start working on a task so I feel like I'm getting some change or movement. And then when I don't complete it, I feel really crummy, I judge myself and it leads to inaction which is a bunch of unfinished tasks. And again, you can see the pattern recognition and awareness that this is starting to generate for him. And he's like, I can schedule time to rest and validate what I'm doing and still focus on what needs to be done and prioritize that.

## Addressing Complexity



What happens when your primary filter needs to shift?



Play around with combinations



It's a way to show the complexity of experience

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So what happens when your primary filter needs to shift? What does that look like? And then what happens with your secondary filters or your secondary orientations when your primary shifts or even when your primary stays consistent? So start playing around with combinations of these things because then when we're looking toward validation and acceptance we're starting from a more realistic, enriched starting point than just a singular point in space and time. So it's a nice way to show the complexity of experience without overwhelming the individual. We don't want to do this until they have a pretty good handle on the core concepts. We don't want to overwhelm or overcomplicate a process. So that is a much more advanced way of using these tools.

### \*References\*

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## Key Points

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- Introduce the functioning triangle.
- Generate examples to ground them into their own experience.
- What we're looking at is to understand how they interact with themselves, others, and the environment.



So here are a few key points. Take time to introduce the functioning triangle. Generate client examples to ground them into their own experience. Once they get an understanding of what their primary functioning or their orientation is toward their experience, go ahead and transition to the acceptance and change handout. And again, what we're looking at is to enrich somebody's experience, to understand how they interact with themselves, others, and the environment.

## Key Points

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- Identify themes of escape, avoid, and alter.
- End with a clear action plan or a review of the treatment plan.
- Introduce these handouts to generalize what is being learned in therapy.



The therapist's role is oftentimes to identify themes of escape, avoid and alter. When people have painful emotional experience, they typically engage in one of these three things. As a therapist, I want to point that out because that is a driving force of pattern recognition because that's what typically takes us off course or challenges our primary orientation to functioning. I want to end with a clear action plan or a review of the treatment plan. And introduce these handouts to generalize what is being learned in therapy to the rest of their lives.

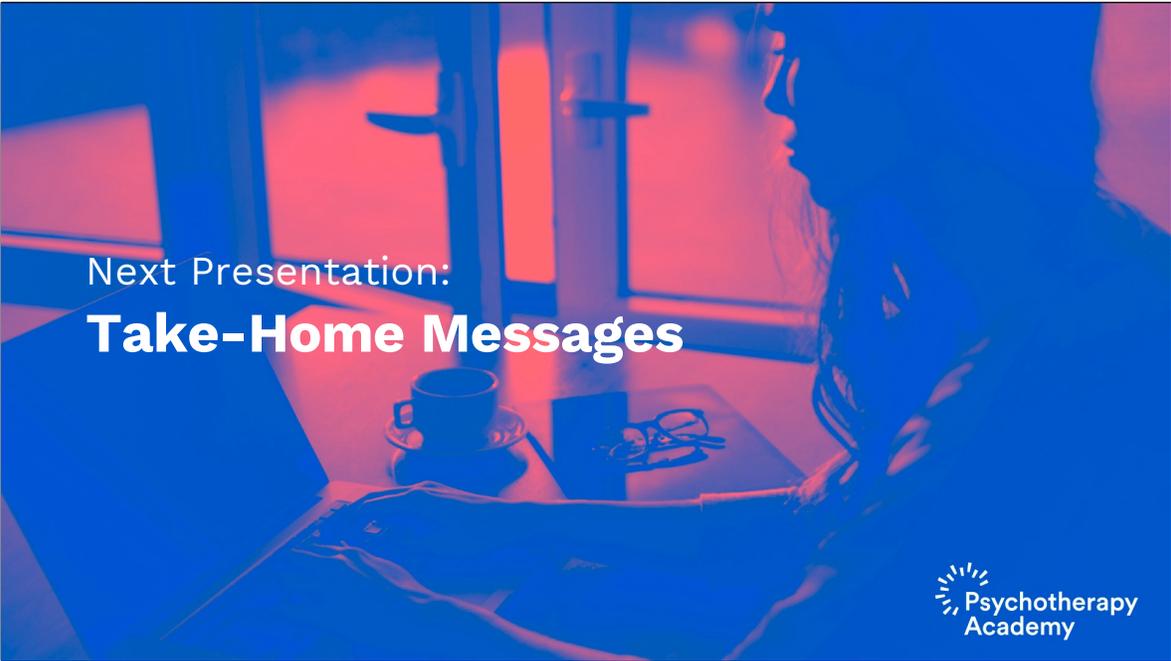
## Key Points

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- Focus on TAG: teach, apply, generalize.
- Teach them to be independent, not dependent on the therapeutic process.



We want to focus again on that concept of TAG teach, apply, generalize. And that's what I'm using these handouts to do is to teach what's happening, to show that in therapy we work on it, its application in therapy with a plan to take it outside of therapy to generalize to their lives and their experience outside of therapy. And as a byproduct, we want to teach them to be independent, not dependent on the therapeutic process.



Next Presentation:  
**Take-Home Messages**

 Psychotherapy  
Academy

## Take-home Messages



Mark Carlson, Psy.D.

I wanted to provide you with a few take-home messages for this section.

## The Functioning Triangle

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Therapy-altering  
training



Foundational for  
everything else in DBT

What we covered here as the core concept is the functioning triangle. This is a concept that a lot of our clients talk about as being a therapy-altering training. We typically engage this early on in somebody's DBT skill training or course of treatment and it can lay the foundational work for most everything else that is taught in traditional or applied DBT.

## The Functioning Triangle



A primary orientation  
to interacting



You're either a  
thinker, a feeler,  
or a doer



They have strengths  
and areas of growth

So what the functioning triangle talks about is this concept of a primary orientation to interacting with the world or somebody's own experience. You're either a thinker, a feeler, or a doer. So when something happens internal to you or external to you, you either think about it, you feel about it, or you do about it. And so let's explore all of those because they have strengths and areas of growth.

## The Functioning Triangle

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You have a primary and  
a secondary approach



So if you're a thinker  
primary, maybe you're  
a feeler secondary



Once we identify that not only do you have a primary approach, but you have a secondary approach. And most of us are one thing and another all at the same time, just one's in the lead. And then, for those of you who want to do an advanced training, add the rest of the triangle where you have a primary, a secondary approach, and a tertiary approach. So if you're a thinker primary, maybe you're a feeler secondary, and a doer tertiary, and it's what combination of these best reflects who you are most of the time.

## Sustaining Change

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Thinkers lead  
through thoughts



Feelers lead  
through emotions



The doer leads  
through action



So what we're looking at doing is sustaining change over time. That is part of the concept of what we're doing in therapy. So thinkers lead through thoughts about the situation. They weigh options before acting. Feelers, they lead through emotions. They take action based on how something feels or what they hope to feel. The doer leads through action. They see what needs to be done and they jump in.

## Strength-based Approach



All clients have strengths and areas of growth



Target their areas of growth or challenges



Use their secondary orientation to grasp their complexity



All clients have strengths and areas of growth that can be identified through this to be able to take a strength-based approach. Take their strengths to target their areas of growth or challenges. And as we identify how we primarily approach change, we need to consider that secondary orientation to gain the complexity of our human experience. Initiating action typically starts with acceptance, not insight.

## Duality of Experience

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Can help clients  
get unstuck



Can help the therapist  
to facilitate that process



Use it in individual  
or group therapy

And again, please take time. One of the primary things to take from this module is explore the duality of experience because that can help clients not only get unstuck but it can help you as a therapist to facilitate that process and also challenge if you ever find yourself participating in a power struggle with your clients or with your group. So please take your time to explore that not only as a demonstrated tool for you but explore that with your clients, whether that's in individual or in group therapy.