Emotional Regulation Assumptions

- 1. Your emotions serve an important purpose. They bond you to others, add color to your life, and help you react quickly when needed.
- 2. Emotions must be experienced and acknowledged in order to provide richness and safety to our lives.
- 3. Avoidance of emotions is paradoxical. The more you avoid your emotions the more powerful and urgent they become.
- 4. Feelings are correct. What you do with them may be questionable, hurtful, or maladaptive.
- 5. Feelings are not values. Values are thoughts, ideals, and principles. Feelings are sensations, like touch, taste, smell, and sight. They are a way of experiencing the world. They reside primarily in the body and are experiences as physical sensations.
- 6. You must acknowledge and experience an emotion before you attempt to change it. You must be "here" before you can be "there". When you fully experience an emotion, you won't need to change it, the emotion will change itself.
- 7. Feelings are not action. Just because you feel something, you don't have to react on it. Feelings prompt action and increase the propensity for action, but feelings do not cause action. Action is your decision and hopefully, will be a wise and effective decision.
- 8. You are not your emotions. What you feel is one aspect of who you are, but it is not the complete definition of you. You are a complex interaction of all facets of your body, mind, emotions, decisions, values, connections, and principles.
- 9. When you are intensely emotional you may think that you should do something quickly to change the emotion. At this time, your emotions are unlike to provide the most helpful or wise advice regarding your behavior or actions. This is, of course, not a true statement if you are in immediate physical danger. At that time, action is immediately required.
- 10. Emotional regulation requires practice and patience. It is about learning new skills. You have to work hard to achieve beneficial results.
- 11. Emotional regulation is not related to insight. It is about strategy and effectiveness. Knowing yourself better will not necessary grant you the skills for emotional regulation.

Adapted from Dialectical Behavior Therapy by Marsha Linehan, Ph.D.

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