

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the psychological pioneers who developed the theories of CBT, DBT and Positive Psychology. Their work has provided the foundation for this book. It is also dedicated to the practitioners and students of psycho-social education who share my conviction that practical, psycho-educational learning is essential for effective Counseling and Mental Health. Clinicians who incorporate life skills training into their practice realize that, as therapists, they are uniquely positioned to offer life skills to their clients, and thereby help them to make immediate and meaningful changes. With the conviction that life skills are essential to success in both professional and personal life, mental health professionals with a psycho-educational focus can serve as catalysts for long lasting life changes. This book is dedicated to the growing numbers of mental health practitioners who promote psycho-social education in their work, and who provide their clients with new life tools and skills to help them manage challenges throughout their lifetime.



ENDORSEMENTS

“*127 TIPS* delivers a wealth of ideas, skills, and exercises to apply and customize to a vast array of clinical issues and situations. Speaking to eclectic and integrative therapists (who comprise the majority of working practitioners), Judith Belmont taps in-demand and evidence-based treatments for their most practical interventions and teachings. Filled with psychoeducation, handouts, and worksheets for clients, active therapists will find *TIPS* to be a frequent and effective resource.”

Lane Pederson, PsyD, author of *The Expanded Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Training Manual* and *DBT Skills Training for Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment Settings*



For your convenience, we have established a dedicated website to download all the worksheets and exercise from this book. This gives you a choice to photocopy from the book or printing the pages. The exercise will be labeled with the corresponding titles and pages.

go.pesi.com/127TIPS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since the release of the first two books in the *TIPS and TOOLS for the Therapeutic Toolbox* series, I have been delighted to see the increasing interest mental health providers have in using practical, psycho-educational resources in their work with clients. This enthusiastic response has led me to write this third book with more TIPS and TOOLS, which includes recent technological and social media strategies. This book would not have been possible without insights I have gained through working with my clients who demonstrated the positive impact of various “hands on” strategies and interventions.

I am very thankful for the very competent team at PESI for being so supportive and encouraging in the entire process of developing this book, as well my previous books with them. Publisher Michael Olson, Business Manager and Publisher, Linda Jackson, Editor Kayla Omtvedt, and Cover and Layout Designers Amy Rubenzer and Matt Pabich have ensured the high quality of this book. Their integrity and professionalism is much appreciated.

Of course, the support from my family has also been invaluable, especially from my husband, Don, who has encouraged and supported me every step along the way.

If you would like your tip to be included in my next book in this series, please email your tip to: judy@belmontwellness.com



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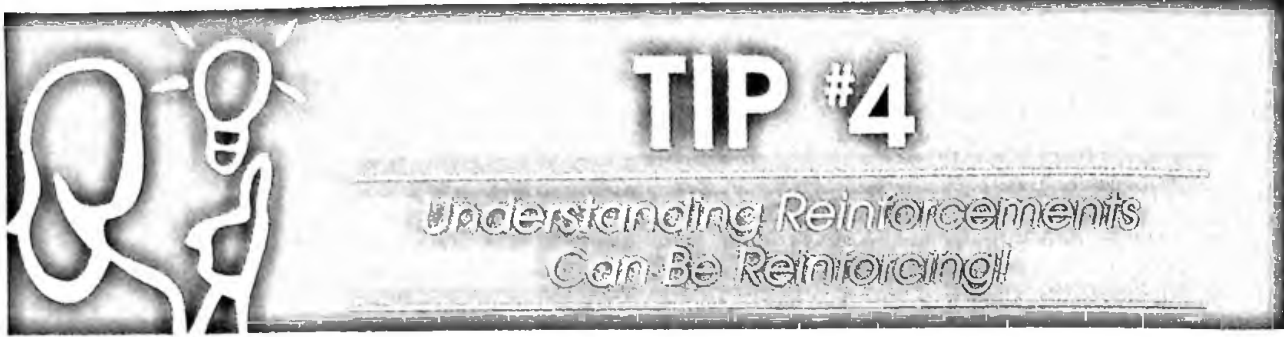
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Using the handout, *Using Behavioral Principles for Positive Change (TIP 3)*, identify examples from your own life of the 4 concepts.

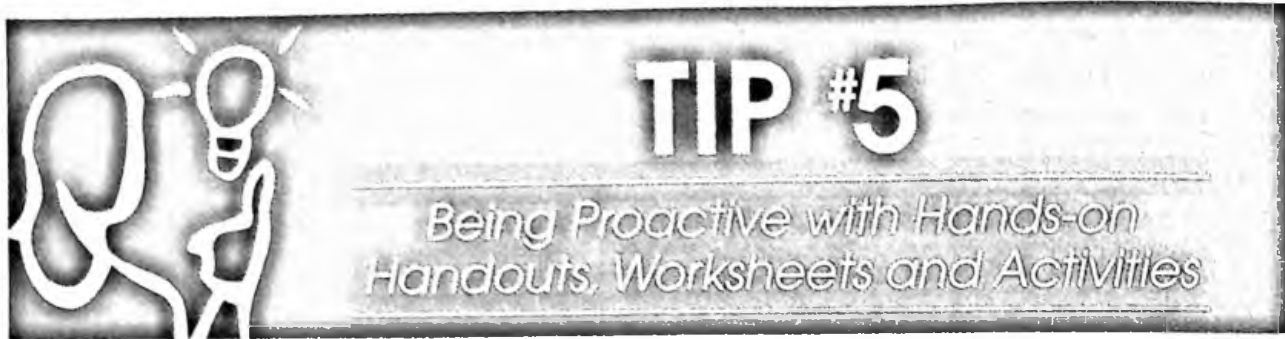
Positive Reinforcement

Negative Reinforcement

Punishment

Shaping

Can you identify which are healthy and which are unhealthy patterns?



THEORY: A *hands-on*, proactive approach helps clients develop new skills along with new insights, and worksheets and handouts provide invaluable skill building opportunities. What differentiates therapists from *good friends* is the expertise, insight, and ability to provide psycho-educational resources to educate clients to develop new strategies for thinking and behaving. Therapists who offer practical worksheets and handouts offer clients a valuable opportunity to learn and practice the *how-tos* for real change.

These skill building and informational materials lead to not only more rapid growth, but also to more longstanding change as new skills replace older ones. The therapist who can provide clients new life tools to manage life's stresses and challenges can offer skills to last a lifetime.

IMPLEMENTATION: This book is filled with handouts and worksheets to reinforce learning. I differentiate handouts from worksheets by referring to handouts as read-only written material to educate and inform, while worksheets provide clients the opportunity to fill in answers and process the information, personalizing their learning. To make more of an impact, a relevant *hands on* activity will further reinforce the concepts learned. Using all three modes of psycho-education (i.e. handouts, worksheets and an experiential activity) help clients make lifelong changes.

For example, CBT itself lends itself well to handouts and worksheets, and most CBT therapists have a repertoire of their own favorite handouts and worksheets, and in this book you will find many in the CBT section. I often make sure my clients have a short and to the point – often bulleted – informative worksheet, and then handouts to tailor their learning to their own situations that they fill out between sessions. I then structure an experiential activity to reinforce the writing and reading exercise. The more modalities of learning, the better. In this way, clients are engaged in various modalities to learn and experience the basic concepts of CBT and will likely incorporate new concepts better than they would have by just talking alone.

One example of a popular exercise from CBT that has been very effective with clients is a simple activity using a rubber band to help clients catch their negative self-talk. I give a rubber band to my client to use on their wrist to “snap” when they *should* on themselves or find themselves thinking irrationally. In the session, I help my client catch their *should* statements, whereupon they snap the rubber band on their wrist. I might even count for them the number of times I hear a *should* statement within a few minute period. Often, they are surprised at the number of *should* statements they make. You might follow up the activity by asking them to record how many times each day they snapped their rubber band on their wrist, even using a portable counter. The word *can't* is also a good word to catch!

Do you have a lot of your own favorite handouts that you created yourself? Those proactive therapists who have created their own materials over the years can self-publish a manual to offer to clients for a nominal fee to cover printing costs, or offer a pdf file for their clients to print themselves. I personally self-published a compilation of my favorite client psycho-educational materials at a local printer, *The Therapeutic Companion*, which accompanied my two previous TIP books. Clients buy my self-published manual for a minimal fee and this provides them with a basic handout supply as well as mini-lessons and activities for life skills learning. Especially for clinics, agencies, schools, and hospitals, consider compiling

your own self-published manuals with your favorite handouts. This way, clients can have an organized compilation of the material to use during and in-between sessions.

PROCESSING: I have yet to find a client who did not appreciate having these “user-friendly” materials at their fingertips to reinforce the session’s topic of discussion and therapy. They make their learning experiential and memorable. Many mental health practitioners, especially those who have been traditionally trained decades ago, underestimate their role of psycho-educator. A pro-active learning approach can offer your client new tools to look at old problems, and can reinforce new skills to last a lifetime.





THEORY: Having visual props on hand to use as metaphors and analogies with clients is invaluable. So useful, in fact, that I reserved a whole section in this book for using metaphors in treatment. Using simple items from everyday life can serve as very powerful tools that evokes emotion and drives home your therapeutic message. As most therapists would agree, when a client “feels” something, the client is more likely to make changes. Metaphors evoke emotion and are memorable. Incredibly powerful metaphors are used so often in everyday life that we become immune to them as powerful agents of change and insight.

IMPLEMENTATION: In my office, I have some “props” that I use to demonstrate points with clients. For example, I use an eraser to make the point that mistakes are necessary to grow and learn. I use a bowling pin to represent assertive behavior. I urge my clients not to get “bowled over” by others, and remind them that even when the pin is knocked down it gets back up, standing tall! I use a crayon to help clients remember it is up to them to put color into their world, and not to see things in black and white! I use the finger trap carnival toy to demonstrate how people get stuck when they are in conflict, trying to prove that they are right. The more they pull, the more they try to be *right*, the more they get stuck!

I love using the image of a deck of cards, showing that even if the king and ace look the best, if you are playing Crazy 8s the lowly 8 is better. How about the really lowly 2 in Deuces Wild? *It ends up being the best card of the deck!* A deck of cards provide a great visualization to remind clients not to compare themselves to others. It’s one thing to say it, it is another thing to *show* it and help them *visualize*. I also make the point that in the case of playing a card game, we play with the cards we are dealt. So even if you are dealt lousy cards in life, it is up to you to play them as best as you can, and you still might have a “winning hand” after all! An additional point I make using playing cards is that we need all kinds of cards to play a game, and we need all kinds of people in this world to make the world go ‘round.

As you can imagine from these examples, props help unleash creativity in both the therapist and the client and they are fun to use too! In group settings, it is fun to brainstorm and share with one another favorite metaphors.

PROCESSING: Most clients love props, and it serves also to lighten up even the most serious session. As the saying goes, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” To the right is a metaphorical *toolkit* my client made up after one of our sessions. She was very excited to bring it in and share it with me, and she keeps it on her kitchen counter with tags reminding her of important metaphors that help her to stay positive and keep calm while dealing with her three young children. Her metaphorical toolkit has provided great comfort to her during some stressful moments of motherhood. She has used her toolkit to teach her children life skills lessons. She is excited to have found a way to impart life skills to her children that she herself never learned until later in life, and by teaching them, it also helps her to stay focused!





“What did you learn in school today?” is one of the most common questions asked by parents to their children every day after school. Yet many adults go through life without ever asking what they learned each day. Being mindful of learning daily lessons allows us to be open to change and growth. We often think of school as the place where people learn, but really life itself is the far more reaching school where we learn every day of our lives.

In fact, life is the greatest teacher of all – it teaches us things that no one else could.

Yes, some of life’s lessons we would rather not have learned and some of what we learn we wish we did not have to – that is exactly what makes life such an excellent teacher. Life has its own natural and logical consequences. If life was predictable and always in our control, how would we learn? Things do not often go as planned, despite our best intentions. However, we can gain solace that we can learn and grow from what life teaches us, no matter what!

So ask yourself every day, “What have I learned?”

This simple question will help you:

- *Find lessons in everything you experience.*
- *Make the best out of things and grow from the most difficult of circumstances.*
- *Think of how you can make something positive come from a difficult lesson, even if this is one lesson you could do without learning!*
- *Make peace with the fact that sometimes you are on the “fast track” and other times you might feel more in the “remedial class” of life. We all learn at different rates.*
- *Focus on moving in a positive direction instead of measuring how far you “should have” come already.*
- *Make peace with the fact that sometimes lessons are learned the hard way.*

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

Write down three things you learned today. For each item you write down, think of how you can use that lesson to improve yourself and your grip on your world. How can you use those lessons learned to improve your future? Think of one practical action you can take based on what you have learned.

Do you want to know how you can increase your odds that you will put your thoughts into action? Tell someone! Studies have shown that just by telling someone what you plan to do, you will be more likely to follow through!

“There is divine beauty in learning... To learn means to accept the postulate that life did not begin at my birth. Others have been here before me, and I walk in their footsteps.”—Elie Wiesel



THEORY: As we all know, life can sting. People come to us with all sorts of hurts and challenges in their lives, seeking to heal but not knowing how to do it. There is no shortage of reasons and ways people feel broken, and besides support and having a safe place to “unload,” they need new tools to move forward. When methods of coping no longer work, even if they had worked or at least seem to have worked in the past, the role of the therapist as the teacher of a ‘new language’ is vital for therapeutic success.

IMPLEMENTATION: Using the metaphor of learning a ‘new language’ with my clients has been helpful in opening doors that were stuck, and has offered hope to many discouraged by being stuck in old patterns. Everyone can relate to the concept that even if you pick up a new language relatively quickly, the first language is still very much ingrained in your habits of thinking and speaking. As we all know, foreigners who come to live in the US still have a distinctive foreign accent even after decades. Their first language is still their default.

I encourage my clients to consider that their emotional first language might have led them to faulty conclusions about themselves. They might still *carry the torch* and describe themselves in judgmental terms, keeping their *first language* as their *inner voice* from unhealthy parents and role models in their youth. Labels such as “lazy,” “loser,” “stupid,” “selfish,” and “fat” might be so much a part of the first language that it has hardened into perceived fact rather than pure fiction. As therapists, by educating our clients that the first language actually might be faulty (more like Pig-Latin!), we can give them a gift of hope that healing is possible if they learn a new, healthier language.

PROCESSING: The following are some pointers that might help in working with your clients.

- It might be useful to consider that their primary psychological language might have been quite faulty—as in the case of emotional, verbal or physical abuse.
- If they get impatient with their progress in therapy, reassure them that it is as if they learned *Pig Latin* for 18 years or more before coming to therapy. It’s hard to break old habits of self-talk – that was your *inner voice* for so long! It will help clients be easier on themselves using this analogy.
- In exploring a new language, you are exposing them to a new culture, a new style of living, and this creates a tremendous opportunity to think flexibly and reinvent how they see themselves.
- This analogy can explain communication problems with family members, friends, and co-workers. Even though we *assume* people in our lives *should* understand us, and get frustrated when others misconstrue what we say, if we can accept that they just might be speaking another language, we will be less likely to anger!
- Learning a new emotional language gives clients hope in the aftermath of shattered dreams, relationship break-ups, and other causes of emotional derailment. The attitude of “Hey Self, I’m a work in progress—I’m learning a new language” can be quite comforting.

Seeing yourself as a therapist who is serving as a psychological and emotional translator, interpreter and language teacher rolled into one will help your clients heal and grow! The key point to reinforce is that no matter how difficult it has been for them learning languages in the past, anyone can learn a language if they keep practicing!

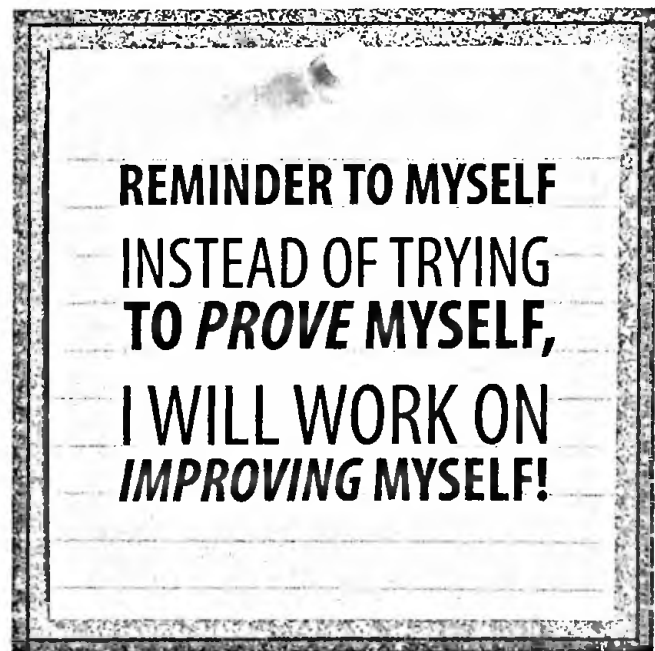


THEORY: Why do people argue? They want to prove a point! What ends up happening? The point gets lost in the disagreement – because what the argument is about becomes less important than being *right*. That is why my clients often will not recall what *started it* or will admit to me that it was “*something so stupid*.” The reason for the conflict then becomes so much less important to them than *proving* they are right!

IMPLEMENTATION: This distinction is a valuable one to use with your client during a session. For a self-help assignment, the following handout will reinforce this distinction. It can be a great guide for *getting to the bottom* of why your client needs to *prove* themselves. Some of the common reasons that people have a need to *prove* are deep seated insecurities, still wanting to prove themselves to a judgmental parent (even if the parent is no longer living but is *alive and well* in their heads), or wanting to feel better about themselves by being superior. Assure your clients that self-esteem never comes from these empty victories, but it comes instead by building themselves up by their own accomplishments and not at someone else’s expense. After all, being right does not make them a better person!

PROCESSING: Hopefully, in the course of treatment our clients realize that proving that they are right is a short term victory at best, and erodes and even destroys a relationship at its worst. First of all, once an argument begins, it is very unlikely that the other person will admit you are right. *Proving yourself* will never work, as it entails being judgmental of *shoulds* to live up to – approval from others, as well as your own *inner critic*. It is not uncommon that my clients who frequently find themselves trying to *prove* something will eventually realize that they are not working on *improving* themselves. This worksheet is a great springboard for making the point that truly *improving* themselves results not from negativity and conflict but from positive actions and thoughts.

After all, being kind rather than being right wins in the end!





Many people confuse reasons and excuses. They often feel guilty and disloyal for saying something about someone who caused hurt in their lives. However, if they do not address their thoughts and feelings, negative feelings will persist and limit their life in the present.

This is the difference:

Excuse: If you give an excuse, you are blaming people and other factors outside of yourself for your behavior, feelings or reactions. Excuses shift the blame and responsibility outside of yourself and you are then a victim.

Reasons: If you look for reasons, you are looking to shed light and understanding on the problem. Trying to understand why you feel the way you do and why you have reacted in certain ways is healthy and necessary to not be controlled by them anymore. There is nothing to feel guilty about if you are seeking to understand and shed light, without focusing on "faults." That is being responsible.

In times of stress, do you tend to make reasons or excuses?

For the following examples, decide if it is a reason or excuse. For each excuse, how would you change it into a reason?

Reason or Excuse

Example: excuse I am insecure because I had a bad childhood.

1. _____ I am angry at him because he is always so critical!
2. _____ The relationship did not work partly because I was not able to tolerate the lack of respect he showed me.
3. _____ My ex cheated on me and that is why I now can't trust anyone.
4. _____ I have trouble trusting people after he cheated on me.
5. _____ I blew up because he would not stop yelling.
6. _____ I realize that I have a hard time dealing with criticism since my parents were critical when I was growing up. I developed an extreme fear of rejection and ridicule which I am working on changing now.

Your Turn: Can you think of an example of an *excuse* that you use in your life that you can transform into a *reason*?

1. _____ (excuse)
2. _____ (reason)



Use this example to differentiate a reason from an excuse.

Excuse: I lack confidence because my dad was very critical of me.

Reason: I have low self-confidence and I have irrational messages in my head that I keep on life support, many from when I was younger. I do not need to listen to them now. My dad was doing his best to raise me, but I need to separate myself from the message that I am not “good enough.”

Thus, reasons give you something to work on, whereas excuses are just a “done deal.”

Write examples of EXCUSES that keep you a victim.

Now transform your EXCUSES into REASONS. Ask yourself, “*How can I change the excuses to reasons so I will use victor and not victim thinking?*”

How would your life be different if you used more REASONS than EXCUSES?

When you focus on REASONS, you can focus on goals to manage the hurt and anger. When you focus on EXCUSES you stay stuck in a point of time and remain a prisoner of forces outside of your control!