

The Missing Links

The second skill in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) intended to develop our ability to analyse our own behaviour patterns is called the Missing Links. This is another of the fundamental skills offered in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy that's simply designed to help us when a situation has played out in a way that we have failed to engage in what we know are effective behaviours. This easy-to-use skill helps us to identify what got in the way of doing the things we needed to do, the things we hoped to do, or the things that other people might've expected us to do. Following on from the Chain Analysis skill, the Missing Links analysis is also a series of simple questions that are designed to guide us through the process of analysing the factors associated with not engaging in our effective behaviour patterns, as well as helping us to problem-solve for attempting things of a similar vain in the future.

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~Steven Morris RP.

The missing links questions are intended to help us explore what was needed in the situation, instead of what was done. These questions are designed to help us understand the missing effective behaviour in any situation that different parts of our personality took over our actions. On the following pages you will find a series of questions I have adapted to fit the Multiplistic Personality approach, associated with a Schema Therapy model, to highlight the Missing Link.

Using this worksheet gives us the opportunity to figure out what parts of our personality got in the way of doing what we needed to do, what we agreed to do, or what others expected us to do in the situation we have identified as a problem. The intention is to then use this information to problem solve and connect with the different parts of our personality that were involved, so that we will be more likely to do what is needed, hoped for, or expected next time. As we go through the skills of Mindfulness, Distress Tolerance, Emotion Regulation, and Interpersonal Effectiveness we learn the skills to help us make these changes. However, first we have to know what was missing.

The Missing Links Worksheet

1. What is the situation you are working on today?

2. Are you aware of the behaviour that would've made the difference in the situation? In other words, do you know what you could've done differently to change the way it went?

YES ____ NO ____

If the answer to this question is yes, go to question 3. If the answer to this question is no, what gets in the way of you knowing what to do differently? Brainstorm ideas with your support network, discuss this in group, try to find the skill you could've used to change the outcome of this situation.

3. Were you willing to participate in the behaviour you have identified was missing, to change the actual outcome, at the time of the event?

YES ____ NO ____

If the answer to this question is yes, go to question 4. If the answer to this question is no, what got in the way of you wanting to do what was needed at that time? Can you identify a part of your personality or an active schema in your system? Brainstorm ideas with your support network, discuss this in group, try to find the skill you could've used to change the outcome of this situation.

4. Did the thought of doing what was needed to give the situation a different outcome cross your mind at the time of the event?

YES ____ NO ____

If the answer to this question is yes, go to question 5. If the answer to this question is no, what got in the way of you thinking about what was needed at that time? Can you identify a part of your personality or an active schema in your system? Brainstorm ideas with your support network, discuss this in group, try to find the skill you could've used to change the outcome of this situation.

5. If you were aware of what was needed, were willing to do what was needed, and the thought crossed your mind to do what was needed, what got in the way of you actually doing what was needed at that time? Can you identify a part of your personality, a story, or an active schema in your system? Brainstorm ideas with your support network, discuss this in group, try to find the skill you could've used to change the outcome of this situation.

6. What are the actions you can take to ensure there is a different outcome in similar situations to the one that you are exploring today? Write the commitments you are willing to make to taking these actions in the space provided below and use this information to create a R.A.A.V.E.N script to work with the parts associated with the stories that triggered your response. Use this script to build mastery to take the actions you need to take next time.
