

Using the RAAVEN to Practice Mode Management

Modes are the behavioural responses our parts use to cope. Sometimes our modes are effective for Living the Life we Want to Live, and sometimes they are not. Mode management is all about supporting effective and adaptive choices in our behavioural responses. We do this by creating new habitual responses by practicing them in our daily routine, working the skills of DBT Distress Tolerance on a daily basis. Finding the specific times in a day that are triggering, and using these times to practice the skills of ACCEPTS and IMPROVE to create the new habits we need to create. Choose one thing from these lists at these particular times of day, and practice, practice, then practice some more, so these new behavioural responses will be a part of our repertoire when we need them the most.

The principles of Living the life I want to live are at the core of everything we do in this model of behaviour change, so before we get into using the skills of Mode Management that can help us be the person we want to be, there's a couple of things we need to make sure we have in place. First, it's incredibly important to have a solid foundation from which to build. So, take some time to complete the exercises attached to the videos on this subject. Look at your support network, and consider what you need to make it stronger, to set boundaries with people, and to structure your circle of support in a way that's effective for you to live the life you want to live.

“Effective and adaptive Mode Management is dependent on our system being free from the rigid perspective of an individual part. This is the very essence of Dialectical Thinking.”

Steven Morris RP.

Next, look at your daily routines and set up your life to achieve the success you're trying to achieve. Without routine and structure, it's incredibly difficult to make behavioural changes, because it's too easy for us to slip into old behavioural responses. Routine and structure builds new habits. Research has proven, time and time again, that following a guide and tracking what we do leads to success in any type of program that's intended to create behaviour modification. Try, to the best of your ability, capability, and willingness, to take care of yourself physically. Once again, research has shown that our physical wellbeing is strongly linked to our emotional and psychological wellbeing too.

Give yourself the best chance of success by taking the medication and supplements that are needed, in the way they were intended to be taken. List your barriers to treatment, and the resources you can use to overcome these barriers. This includes what it looks like if you're slipping into a relapse mode. Make sure you're eating a healthy diet, avoiding mood altering substances, exercising regularly, practicing good sleep hygiene, and doing these daily to create the consistency we need for this to become just something that we do. All of this is wrapped up in the DBT PLEASED skill, so take a look at the video that's available on this subject.

Finally, when it comes to building our foundation, it's important to be practicing the skills of mindful awareness, according to the DBT philosophy on this subject. There is no right or wrong way to practice mindfulness, so whatever you're doing, if it's working, keep doing it. At the same time, learn to pay attention to what's happening in your system at different points in your day. Listen to your thoughts, your feelings, your physical sensations, and your urges to act. Observe and describe them as parts of your personality, nonjudgmentally and effectively. For more on the way we do this, take a look at the video on the DBT what and how skills.

“Dialectical thinking is only possible through Cognitive Defusion, without it we blend with a part of our personality and follow its behavioural response without questioning its effectiveness.”

Steven Morris RP.

Living the Life I Want to Live is about living according to our true authentic values and beliefs, so the second thing we need to do before we talk about Mode Management, is make sure we've taken the time to complete the exercises on this particular subject. Recognise which areas of life are important to you, right now, and have a solid understanding of what it looks like for you to be the person you want to be in those areas of life, as these are the beliefs that create the code by which we are basically trying to live. Driving our metaphorical bus in this general direction is a difficult thing to do, as what generally gets in the way are the many different stories we've created in the past.

When one, or multiple versions of these stories are active in our system, we are usually in a fear-based state which, in this work, is what we know as “distress.” Practicing Mode management is all about managing the parts of our personality that are reacting to this distress. Fight, flight, freeze, submit, or distract are the responses we use to cope. Instead of falling into old behaviours that are not wrong or bad, just often maladaptive and ineffective, we learn to activate new effective

and adaptive behaviours that keep us in line with Living the Life we Want to Live, according to our true authentic values and beliefs. Values and Beliefs drive all of the work, so know what these are for you. When our system's in Distress, it's often because there's some kind of issue with our values and beliefs, so noticing the distress is an absolutely essential thing to have the capability to do, as it's the one thing that triggers our mode management skills into action.

Notice the Distress

How do you notice the distress, what are you feeling, what are you thinking, what physical sensations are you experiencing, or what urge are you battling within your personality system. Are you fighting your way out of a difficult situation, using anger and aggression to control the way things are. Are you avoiding things that you'd normally do, procrastinating, or practicing experiential avoidance. Maybe you're frozen, lacking a reaction of any kind, hoping the thing you're afraid of will simply pass you by. Or maybe you're just giving in to the internal or external narrative, in an basic attempt to keep you safe.

One of the more common signals of a system in distress is an inability to focus or even stay in one place. Distraction is often tied to fear. So, when you find yourself distracted ask yourself the question, what am I afraid of right now. All of this takes a level of mindful awareness. One that we need to practice in our One Mindful Activities. This builds the muscle we need to build so we can notice the distress, and when we do, we activate STOP!

The STOP Skill

The STOP skill is probably the most important skill in the DBT skills Training program. So, when we notice the distress we Stop, Take a Deep Breath, and Observe and Describe the part of our personality, non judgementally. If we do this with authenticity, because we've been building awareness through our journalling practice, and we can recognize the parts and appreciate their purpose, we can unblend from the part that's trying to take over our bus, and open a dialogue instead of reacting the way this part normally wants us to react.

Keep in mind, if we're not able to achieve this unblending, we can use the TIPP skill to settle things down and then try again. But, if you are in an unblended state, you can start to run through the RAAVEN exercise that you've previously worked on for this particular part. If you know this part through your previous journalling work you can appreciate its purpose in your system. Let it know what it is you appreciate. If you don't know this part, see if you can get curious with it, either now or later when you're journalling about your day. Validate the emotional experience, don't make it wrong. Emotion Regulation starts with validation, so don't forget this important step. Just like an individual person, when a part feels validated it's open to the possibility of new ideas, so education is now possible.

Education.

In Mode Management, educating our parts is all about bringing them up to speed with the impact of their behaviour. Not making them wrong but letting them know how its not effective for us to live the life we want to live and be the person we want to be. It's at this point, we can now decide what it is we want to do to negotiate with the part we're trying to work with.

Negotiation

In Mode Management, the negotiation aspect of the RAAVEN skill is all about what you're going to do to cope with the distress. We've used the skills of ACCEPTS and IMPROVE to practice these things in our daily routine, so hopefully we've got a good idea of what works. Ask the part to let you do it, so you can demonstrate the benefits of doing things this new way. The key to this is to actually take the action. If you don't, then nothing changes, and the part won't trust you in the future. Take the action you said you were going to take. Then, once you've taken it, pay attention to positive events and point out the benefits to your system. In particular the part you made the negotiation with, as this is what leads to what we call Self Trust.

Doing the work:

On the following page, you will find the RAAVEN worksheet to help you develop the narrative we need for Mode Management. If you can download it, print it out, and take the time to use it to work with your known parts to manage their behavioural responses. There are also links to each of the videos and worksheets for each of the skills we need for mode management in the description of the video connected to this PDF.

RAAVEN Worksheet

Recognize and Acknowledge:

I am noticing that there is a part of me that's...

I hear you and I see you in my system.

Appreciate and Accept:

I appreciate you because you...

Thank you, I appreciate the fact that you are doing this for me.

Validate:

I completely understand why this is because...

It's totally ok that you feel this way, there is absolutely nothing wrong with your emotions, and you're allowed to feel the way you do.

Educate:

In actuality, what's happening is...

Negotiate

Moving forward, I would like to...

If you allow me to do this, I will show you...