

# Phone Coaching 101

## Phone Coaching is...

- Brief (5 to 10 minutes).
- A tool to facilitate your use of skills in “real life” situations.
- Available when a rupture in the therapeutic relationship cannot wait to be resolved.

## Phone Coaching is NOT...

- 24/7 on-call crisis services, as therapists are not always available.
- Reporting hopelessness, urges, a crummy day, etc., without willingness to try skills.
- Therapy over the phone.

## Tips to get the most out of a coaching call

- Identify your SUDS score, your current goal, and what skills you have tried.
- Reach out **BEFORE** a crisis becomes too overwhelming.
- Putting your request into a **DEAR** will help clarify your needs and goals.
- If your therapist is not available, **leave a message** (or if your therapist agrees, send a text). Assume that your therapist has not saved your number in their phone and will not call you back unless you leave a message requesting that they do so.
- When in doubt, try the TIPP or ACCEPTS skills until your therapist can get back to you.

## Troubleshooting challenges in life threatening emergencies:

- If you leave a voicemail or text that suggests, hints, or explicitly states that you are at heightened risk, and then you are unavailable for us to assess further, the team may consider it necessary to send someone to come find you and ensure your safety (e.g. an emergency contact, a mobile crisis unit, the police). To avoid involvement of third parties, stay near your phone so the therapist can contact you quickly and assess you directly. Third parties often have different standards of risk and may intervene differently than DBT approaches, and we want to avoid such involvement.
- We are *not* mandated reporters when you specifically state that you will not harm yourself or others and you will instead do \_\_\_\_\_ skill. If you cannot commit to safety after coaching, a therapist may be required by law to inform others.
- Because therapists sleep, lose their phones, etc., you will want to have a backup plan for when you are in crisis and your therapist is unavailable. The National Suicide Hotline, North Delaware Crisis Line, Crisis Text Line, and the Trans Lifeline are examples. Identify one or two such crisis lines, save it/them in your phone, and be willing to call if your therapist is unavailable during life threatening emergencies.
- If you have already engaged in life threatening behavior, your therapist will not do phone coaching for 24-hours. This is to avoid accidentally reinforcing target behaviors. Further, if you have already engaged in life threatening behavior, medical attention via 911 or an emergency room may be justified.