

THE
E B R I G H T
COLLABORATIVE

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Dear Ebright Community Members,

As most of you may know by now, I am leaving the Ebright Team after almost one and half years of being a part of it. While my time as a DBT therapist is coming to an end, this is also a new beginning for me on my journey of building a Life Worth Living. As I am transitioning from Ebright, I have been reflecting on DBT and on how I will be taking it with me wherever I go. I am currently understanding the treatment from the following metaphor, which I thought I'd share with the Ebright community. Perhaps it will help others on their own personal journeys:

I think of DBT as going on a trip; a journey with the ultimate goal of building a Life Worth Living. Whenever you go on a trip, it is of the utmost importance that you learn about the place you are traveling to in order to be prepared. What's the climate like? What kind of food can I expect to find? Are there specific landmarks that I definitely want to see? In DBT, we would call this the pre-treatment phase.

After doing your research, you would next want to plan for your trip and pack your suitcase. I think of packing the suitcase as getting ready to learn skills. Make sure to leave plenty of room because you will continue to add to it throughout your trip. Fortunately, you'll also have your own personal tour guide each step of the way (we call this person your individual therapist). Your tour guide works on a team with other tour guides in order to stay sharp in their skills because your journey of building a Life Worth Living is top priority! It's important to note that this will be a pretty lengthy trip (six months to one year), but you also went through a long road to get here. **YOU DESERVE THIS! TREAT YOURSELF!**

At the beginning of your trip, everything will feel very new. You will start to meet others along the way who seem to be speaking a different language from you. That's alright! Over time, you'll be speaking their language too (we call it "DBT speak!"). Now it's time to hit your destinations (or as we like to call them, your DBT skills modules)!

First stop: Mindfulness Town's Center; the land of learning to live with eyes wide open. Here, you'll learn how to observe, describe, and participate in the world, one-mindfully, nonjudgmentally, and effectively. You'll learn how to take each moment for what it is, without attaching your own interpretations to it, and without allowing the past or future to fog up the present moment. You'll also learn all about doing what works. This



destination is pretty centrally located, so if you miss something, do not fret! You'll be traveling back here multiple times throughout your trip. Still, be *mindful* that what you learn at Mindfulness Town's Center will be needed at every other destination you travel to.

Next stop is Distress Tolerance Island; a place where you will learn all about getting through the moment without making it worse. Get ready for some surfing lessons! I must warn you that the skills you learn here will not necessarily help you to feel better. However, they will help you to get through painful, distressing situations, without making things worse. Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "But Andrea, why would I want to experience pain on vacation?" It's true, no one wants to experience pain. And also, pain is a part of life. It cannot be avoided, so we might as well learn how to ride the wave. Expect to do a lot of surfing while you're here.

Up next will be Emotion Regulation Jungle. Get ready to go on a safari! Now that you've learned how to ride the waves of your emotions without making things worse, the next step is to learn how to make situations more tolerable (and yes, hopefully feel better, too!) You will learn all about what your emotions are doing for you, much like you would learn about the different animals on a safari and what they do for survival. All of our emotions are linked in survival in some way. Once you understand what your emotions are doing, you can then use that knowledge to change how you feel or problem solve distressing situations. It is also imperative to be mindful of the various problems that may arise while on a safari, be it fever, mosquito bites, sunburn, or sickness. To address these potential issues, you will learn a set of skills to reduce your vulnerabilities and to be prepared for potential troubles that lay ahead.

Last but not least, is the pool of Interpersonal Effectiveness. You've spent a good amount of time traveling to different landmarks and participating in various activities on your trip. Now it's time to relax at your hotel and take advantage of the pool! Keep in mind that other people will be swimming with you. Interpersonal Effectiveness skills will help you to identify your goals in interpersonal situations and prioritize them. These goals will fall into three different categories: objective effectiveness, relationship effectiveness, and self-respect effectiveness. These goals are likely to shift across situations, and even across specific moments in time. Hopefully, the skills you learn while you are here will also help you to identify who you may want to take along with you on your travels and who you may be content with leaving in the pool.

Depending on how long you've chosen to go on vacation, you may find yourself at each destination multiple times. Before you know it, your trip will be over and you'll be getting ready to board your plane. Remember those people you met earlier on in your trip that seemed to be speaking a different language? My guess is you're speaking quite fluently right about now and can probably understand them much better. All of the skills learned throughout your travels will help you to find what we call in DBT, your "wise mind". Your wise mind is inherent wisdom, which we all, as human beings, possess. Finding your wise mind is so important because it is essential to building a Life Worth Living.

When I first entered the DBT world, I used to think about a Life Worth Living as a destination. However, I've recently changed my view on this. Your destinations are the smaller goals or milestones you work towards throughout your trip, with the DBT skills being the tips and tricks that help you along the way; but a Life Worth Living? That's the entire journey. For a very long time, my Life Worth Living goal was to become a



therapist. A value behind that goal is that I want to dedicate my life to making sure everyone has a reason to smile. Being a DBT therapist has been an incredible journey for living out this value, but it is not my final stop. I still want to dedicate my life to helping others to be happy and build lives worth living, but my DBT journey has come to an end. Just like any other kind of travel, I may find myself back here, returning for another trip. However, right now, my wise mind is telling me that my Life Worth Living goal is to focus more energy into working with and/or in support of children. Wherever that leads me next, it is crucial that I bring my skills with me. Fortunately, I have already packed my suitcase.

Wherever you go, whatever you do, I hope you always remember that DBT is about packing a suitcase; a suitcase that you can always bring with you. Whether you've just started your trip or are getting ready for graduation, never forget that building a Life Worth Living is not just a stop along the way; it's the entire journey! I will truly and deeply miss each and every one of you. Thank you for the ways in which you have all touched my life and contributed to my Life Worth Living. Safe travels!

Best Wishes,
Andrea A. Morrow, MSW

