

ECHO IDAHO

**Opioids, Pain and
Substance Use Disorders**

Behavioral Interventions for Pain

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University of Idaho
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Learning Objectives

1. Provide overview of Evidence Based Psychotherapies (EBPs) for chronic pain management
2. Discussion of common challenges integrating EBPs and/or behavioral health into chronic pain management
3. Recommendations for discussing and encouraging behavioral strategies to patients in pain clinics

Background ¹

- Biomedical interventions often have limited long-term benefit and higher risk for adverse events for individuals living with chronic pain
- Nonpharmacologic and noninvasive therapies are among the first and second-line treatments recommended by current guidelines for chronic pain
 - First-line options include EBPs, exercise, physical therapy, and non-opioid medications
- EBPs that have demonstrated efficacy for improving chronic pain outcomes include cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)

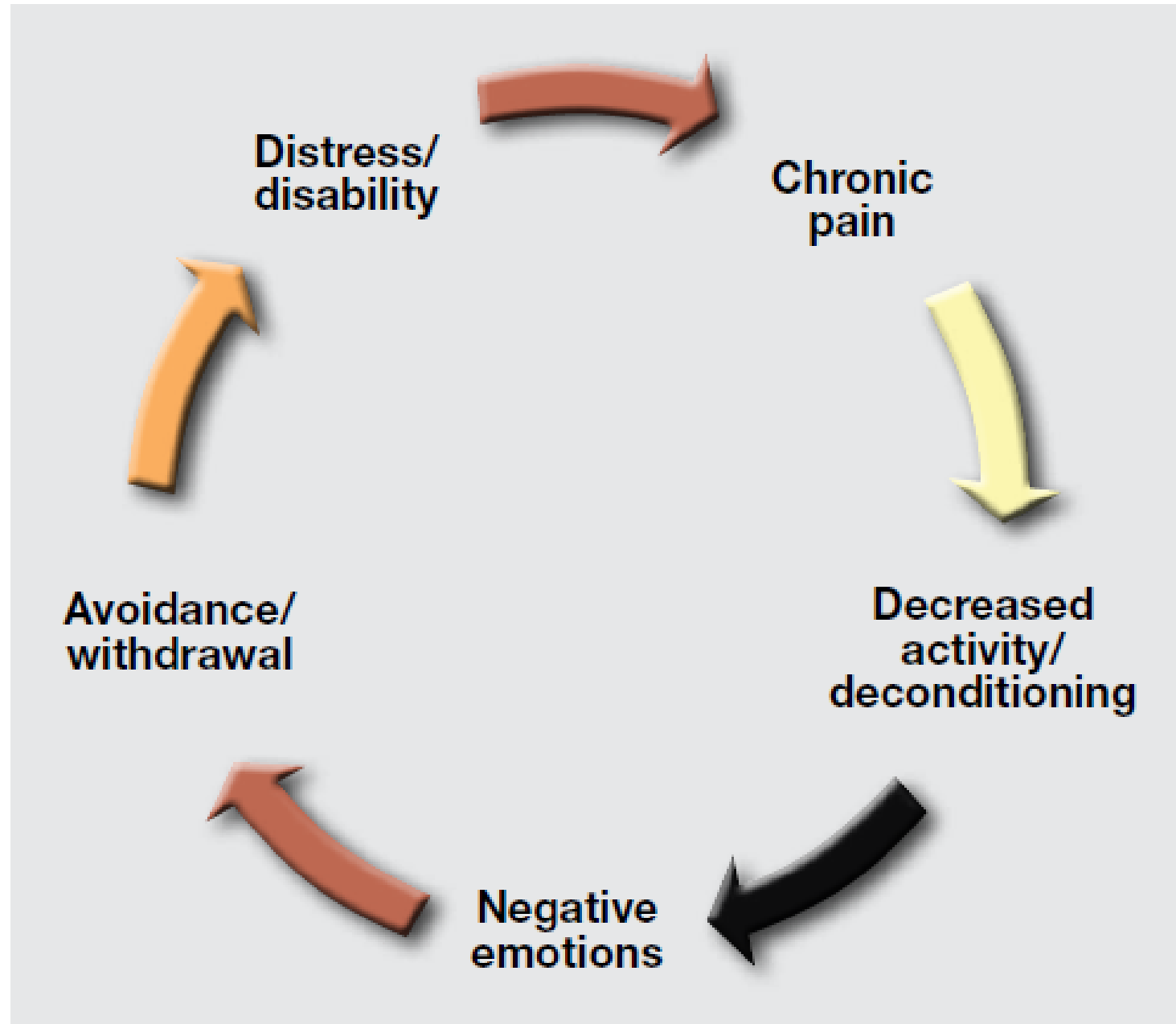
What do we mean by “Evidence-Based” Psychotherapy?

- EBP relies on peer-reviewed, scientific research combined with individual client preferences or needs
- 1998 Criteria: Strong, Modest or Controversial strength of research support ¹
- EBPs are shown to be efficacious and cost-effective for a wide range of psychiatric conditions ²

1. Chambless & Hollon, 1998
2. Cook et al., 2017

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain (CBT-CP)

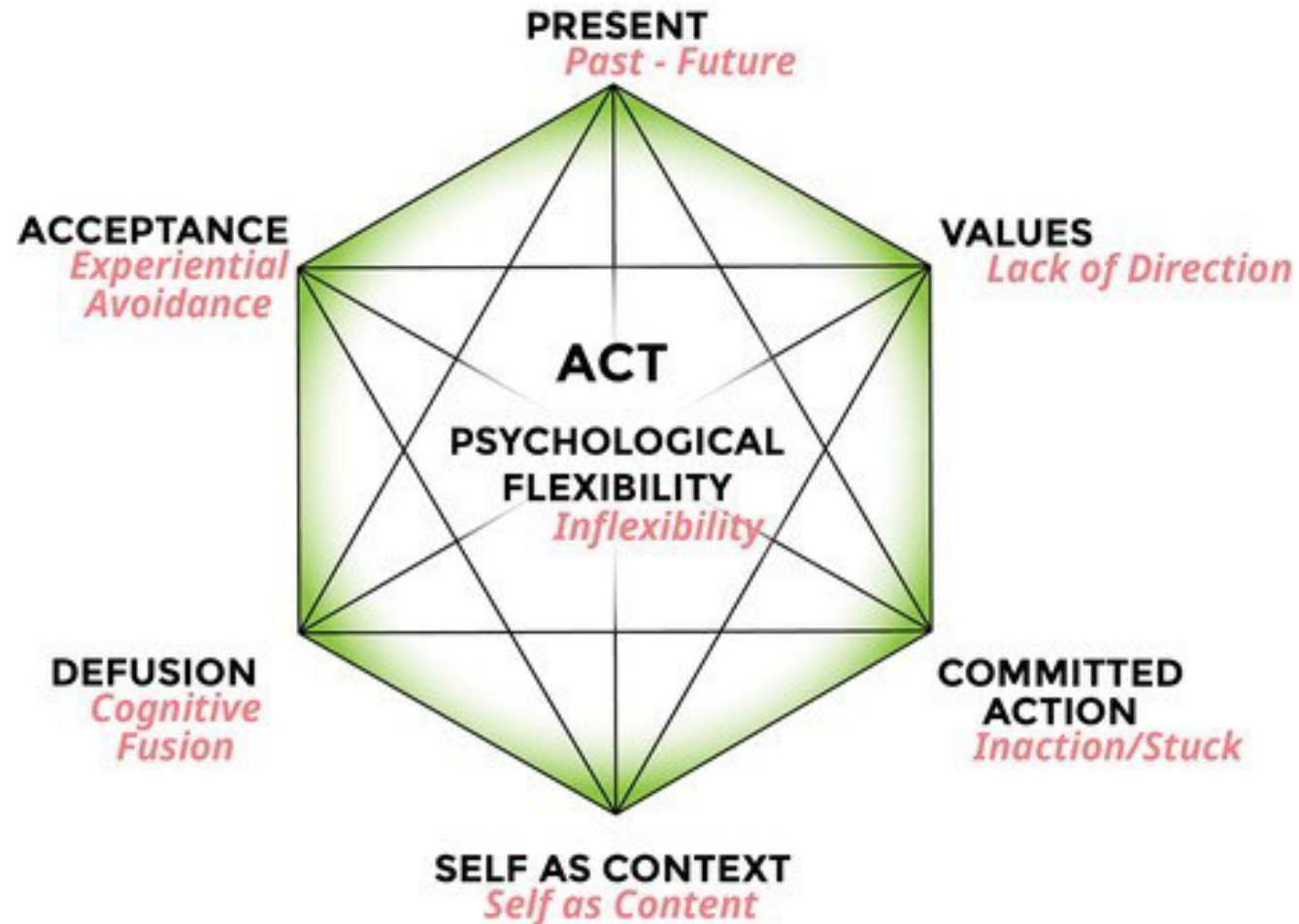
- Time-limited therapeutic intervention that focuses on the relationship between cognitions (thoughts), emotions (feelings), and behaviors
- Goals include improvements in functioning (emotional and physical), increased use of coping skills, reduced pain intensity, and improved quality of life
- Encourages veterans to adopt an active, problem-solving approach to cope with challenges associated with chronic pain
- ***Strong*** research support for chronic pain and depression ¹



Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

- “Third-wave cognitive behavioral therapy that uses acceptance, mindfulness, commitment and behavior change strategies to increase psychological flexibility
- Goals include:
 - **Accepting** experiences instead of rejecting them because they may cause pain
 - **Choosing** behaviors mindfully vs. allowing automatic or conditioned responses
 - **Taking action** and having agency in your life, rather than becoming paralyzed by unpleasant thoughts, memories, or physical sensations
- ***Strong*** research support for chronic pain and depression ¹

Components of ACT



Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

- Developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the 1970's to cope with physical and emotional illness or difficulties ¹
- MBSR is a modern, scientific-based perspective to traditional Buddhist principles of mindfulness and meditation. MBSR combines core concepts of cognitive therapy with training in mindfulness meditation, body scans, and movement.
- Goals include decreasing cognitive reactivity and meeting distressing experiences (i.e., thoughts, feelings, pain) with patience, kindness, curiosity, and empathy.
- ***Strong*** research support for depression ²

1. Kabat-Zinn, 1990.

2. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy | Society of Clinical Psychology, 2019

Pain and Health Benefits of MBSR

- Significant reduction in pain symptoms, mood concerns, and negative body image for chronic pain patients ¹
- Decreased pain sensitivity ² and unpleasant associations of pain ³
- Increased focus on the present moment, and decreased worry and rumination ^{4, 5}
- Improved memory, cognitive flexibility, and self-awareness. Reduced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation in veterans ⁶
- Improved sleep quality and reduced insomnia ⁷

1. Kabat-Zinn et al., 1985
2. Zeidan et al., 2018
3. Gard et al., 2012
4. Gu et al., 2015
5. Goyal, et al., 2014
6. Serpa et al., 2014
7. Chen et al., 2020

Barrier: Pain Knowledge and Beliefs ¹

- Belief that a specific pain diagnosis or cure should be found:
 - Pain Psychology can facilitate acceptance when there is no specific or single cure and help move towards increased quality of life.
- Lack of awareness or understanding of pain triggers:
 - Behavioral health and mindfulness strategies can enhance knowledge and awareness of the individual pain experience and increase options for proactively managing pain.
- Lack of awareness of biopsychosocial factors in the pain experience or pain expression:
 - Behavioral Health support can enhance toolbox of active coping skills including regulation and predictability with movement and physical activity, nervous system regulation, and de-catastrophizing the impact of pain on thinking and mood

Barrier: Therapy Knowledge and Beliefs

- One recurring barrier to CBT, MBSR, and ACT for Chronic Pain is a mismatch between patient knowledge and beliefs about pain and EBP principles:
 - “CBT questions the validity of pain experience or implies that chronic pain was due to a character weakness needing correction.”
 - *“So, you are going to teach me how to think or talk or breathe my way out of pain?”*
- Include in pain education: BH pain management skills are for everyone! These resources should not be offered as a last-ditch effort when someone has “failed” all other options. Rather, BH is a first-line *complement* to your comprehensive treatment plan.

Incorporating BH into Pain Clinics or Pain Education ¹

- Integrating BH directly into specialty care settings may increase efficiency and enhance engagement in EBPs for chronic pain management
- Simplifying referral pathways and removing lines separating treatments for mental and physical health may reduce barriers and address resistance

1. Goldsmith et. al. 2021

Key Points and Pearls

- CBT, ACT, and MBSR are empirically based, efficacious, and cost-effective behavioral therapies for chronic pain management.
- Behavioral management and EBPs are often recommended as a first-line and/or concurrent pain management options, rather than a “last-ditch” effort.
- Discussion of behavioral management and active coping is for everyone experiencing chronic pain.
- Successful buy-in and engagement is enhanced with accurate knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about both chronic pain and behavioral therapy.

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