**Handout**

**Working with End of Life, Dying, and Grief**

**Gregg & Shumay ACBS 2020**

# **Traditional approach to End of Life**

## Focused on reducing “bad” emotions

## Reassurance

## Goal: peacefulness

## Challenge catastrophic thoughts about dying

## Explore childhood reasons for fearing death

## Understand cultural norms concerning death

# **Contextual Behavioral Science Perspective on End of Life**

## Different from traditional approach

### Awareness of emotions, rather than control

# **Contextual Behavioral Science Perspective on Loss and Grief**

## Again, different from traditional approach

### Awareness of emotions, rather than control

# **CBS Model Main Elements and Specific Skills**

## Perspective Taking

### Defusing from Self

### Observer of experiences, even these experiences

## Defusion

### Noticing that the thought “it is not enough time” is a thought

## Mindful awareness of present

### Mindful noticing of the present

### Body awareness

### Breath awareness

## Acceptance

## Clarification of Personal Values

### Clarifying values in this present life

### Choosing to live values in the present

### Choosing to lean in to loved ones

### Choosing to engage in meaningful activities

## Committed Action

### Committing to actions consistent with values to do today

### Living values in the life you’re in

# **Therapists Ourselves**

## You are a finite human

### Work is challenging because you must face your own mortality

## **Staying present in the face of our own fear of death or grief**

### Same processes

#### Mindful noticing of emotions

#### Living values in the life you’re in

**Values for Death Exercise**

 imagine you discovered that you had only one year left to live. Imagine the information was given to you in a way that wasn’t traumatic, but also left no room for doubt. Notice what sensations you feel in your body, what thoughts you have. If you notice planning that you would do, take note of what that would be and then let it go. Notice which people your mind thinks of, and what emotions you feel.

  Now imagine you discovered you had six months to live. Notice what sensations you feel in your body, and what thoughts and feelings come with this. Notice what feels like it would be different for you than if you had one year to live. Notice again who your mind goes to, and what you feel.

  Now imagine that you had two months to live. What comes to your mind that you would want to do? Who do you think of? Is it different than one year or six months? Notice the sensations in your body and the thoughts and feelings that are there.

  Now imagine you had only one month to live – 30 days. Notice what sensations you feel in your body, and what thoughts and feelings come with this. Notice what feels like it would be different for you than if you had one year, six months, or two months to live. Notice again who your mind goes to, and what you feel.

  Now imagine you had only one week to live – 7 days. What would you want to do with that time? Who does your mind think about? What feelings do you have? What thoughts?

  Now imagine that you had only one day to live – 24 hours. Notice what sensations you feel in your body, and what thoughts and feelings come with this. Do you feel more anxiety or urgency? Notice again who your mind goes to, and what you feel.

  Now imagine you knew you had only one hour to live. What would you want to do with that time? Who would you want with you? What sensations show up in your body when you think of this? What feelings? What thoughts?

 Now imagine you had 15 minutes to live. Notice what you would want to do and who you would want with you, and if it has changed. Notice what sensations you feel in your body, and what thoughts and feelings are there.

  Now imagine you had five minutes to live. What would you want to do with that time? Who would you want with you? What sensations show up in your body when you think of this? What feelings? What thoughts?

  Now imagine you had one minute to live. Notice what you would want to do with that minute, who you would want with you, and whether this has changed from before. Notice what sensations you notice, and what thoughts and feelings are there.

 Now notice again that you are in room, and that none of this has happened. Notice what you are doing, and who you are with. Notice that there are other people around you who have just imagined the same thing with their lives, and take a minute to think about what they might be feeling. And when you’re ready, go ahead and open your eyes and join them.