

*We have to give up  
the things we like  
about our  
Destructive Coping  
Behaviors and  
ACCEPT the things  
we don't like about  
life-enhancing ones!*

2- Remember Chapter 4  
and "The Mindfully  
Protecting Our Peace and  
Stability Worksheet."  
Our Inner Circle contains  
the most important parts  
of our life...the things  
we want to protect.

3- "It" is whatever is  
bothering us! "It" may be  
sadness over a loss...or  
something that worries  
us or makes us angry.

*Despite our  
problems, we're able  
to Participate  
Effectively WITH  
SOME EFFORT.  
We're taking care of  
our priorities and  
the demands of life  
...which include  
Getting Through  
the work day!  
We're tolerating our  
emotions...and  
we're DOING THE  
BEST WE CAN  
despite the upsetting  
things going on.*

We're stubborn creatures and it's hard to pull us away from the Tried N' True and the familiar and habitual, but WHAT GREAT RELIEF we'll experience as a result!

### **"The Levels of Emotion Chart"**

Check out the chart on the next page (Figure 13.A). It describes how we FEEL and FUNCTION when we're experiencing different levels of NEGATIVE EMOTION. The levels range from 0-10. At Level 0, we're at peace. At Level 10, we're desperately overwhelmed with negative emotion. The far right columns show how active Emotional Mind and Rational Mind are at each level. It's just a guess though! This chart helps to gauge or "measure" our EMOTIONAL INTENSITY and to better understand the EFFECT our emotional level has on our ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY in our life. It also shows how the DBT-CBT Recovery Tools can help us to Participate Effectively during difficult times.

Let's check out these levels. **Levels 0-2** fall in the range of **Mild Emotional Intensity**. **At Level 0**, we're functioning with about 65% Rational Mind and 35% Emotional Mind. That's a pretty comfortable state. We have some problems, but we're letting things roll off of us like water off a duck's back. That means we're Mindfully Protecting Our Peace and Stability and not letting things bother us or get into our Inner Circle.<sup>2</sup> **WE'RE PUTTING HASSLES, IRRITANTS, WORRIES, AND PROBLEMS ON A CLOUD...AND THEY'RE FLOATING AWAY!**

**At Level 1**, "it"<sup>3</sup> crossed our mind just once during our work day. We're able to Participate Effectively in our daily life...and we got a lot of work done!

**At Level 2**, Emotional Mind is now at 45% and Rational Mind is 55%. We're EXPERIENCING our emotions more at Level 2 than Level 1...like once or twice EVERY FEW HOURS rather than just once during our work day. Upsetting thoughts come to mind, but PASS THROUGH. They don't distract us from doing what we need to do. We're managing our emotional stuff VERY WELL. We're getting through our day just fine and we're getting a good amount of work done!

**Levels 3-5** fall in the range of **Moderate Emotional Intensity**. **At Level 3**, we're experiencing our emotions, but we're still managing things and holding on to stability. Its 50-50 Emotional Mind - Rational Mind. We're upset and we KNOW we'll cry LATER when we can do so WITHOUT major consequences...like getting sent home from work or being passed up for a promotion because we're not emotionally stable right now.

START READING from the bottom at Level 0 and read upwards! It'll make more sense that way!

This chart is a handy reference for "measuring" our emotional intensity. It provides descriptions of how we function at different levels of **NEGATIVE EMOTION**. It helps us to better understand the **EFFECT** our emotional levels have on our ability to **PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY** in our daily life.

There are 11 levels ranging from 0 - 10... from Mild to Severe Emotional Intensity.

In the far right columns... is an estimate of the amount of Rational Mind (RM) and Emotional Mind (EM) that's active at each level. These percentages show how much influence each mind state has on our emotional experience... and our ability to function.

These levels and percentages are for descriptive purposes only! They're not based on scientific studies! They're provided as an aid to better understand DBT-CBT principles and concepts.

**Figure 13.A: The Levels of Emotion Chart**

			R	E
			M	M
SEVERE EMOTIONAL INTENSITY	10	I have NO self-control. I AM having a nervous breakdown. I'm going to blow. Ain't nothing short of a miracle will help me now. I'm Big-Time Emotional Mind. I'm 100% overtaken by Emotional Mind.	5	95
	9	I'm about to lose it. I can't handle this. I'm going to cut and then call my sponsor. I've got to do something for relief. I can't deal with this anymore. I could get a 6-pack and take some pills. That would help me feel better, too. I forgot to call-in today. They're probably pissed since it's so late...whatever. Screw it. I was looking for a job when I found this one.	10	90
	8	I'm really upset. Stuff is really bothering me. I can't focus on anything else. I called in sick today. There was no use showing up to work. There's no holding it together today. I couldn't even pretend to be okay. I'm either too angry or too depressed. I really need to call my therapist or sponsor. I'm losing it. If things get too bad, I have a razor taped under the sink and I have full bottles of most of my meds.	15	85
MODERATELY SEVERE INTENSITY	7	I'm really upset. Stuff is really bothering me. I'm thinking about it almost constantly. I keep getting distracted. I'm at work, but I can't get anything done. I'm preoccupied with my stuff. I'm either talking about it or it's churning in my head. Destructive thoughts are going through my mind, thoughts of revenge and Self-Defeating Coping Behaviors. When my boss shows up, I look okay and can act productive and "with it," but, I'm really in trouble. If I don't get control, I'm headed for disaster. I'm beyond, "Fake it 'til you make it."	20	80
	6	I'm pretty upset. I'm starting to feel overwhelmed. I had three sales calls to make. I only did one. I needed to call them back with some info but didn't feel like it. I'll have to do it tomorrow. I showed up for my AA meeting late and left a few minutes early so I could avoid everyone. I went home, flipped channels on the TV, and my sponsor called. That was nice. I agreed to meet him for coffee in the morning. I fell asleep on the couch and slept there in my clothes most of the night.	30	70
MODERATE EMOTIONAL INTENSITY	5	I'm experiencing my stuff. I have a lot to do and need to focus on my work. I spent half my work day preoccupied with my stuff, but at least I got something done. I showed up for Choir Practice, that was nice. Though I had to force myself to go and wasn't in the mood when I got there, I felt better afterwards...good enough that I got through the rest of the evening without any great impulse to do something stupid. I felt lazy, lit all my candles, took a warm bubble bath, and went to bed early without straightening the kitchen.	40	60
	4	I did alright most of the day. I cried for a few minutes in the bathroom, but dried up when Gracie came in. I think she knew, but she didn't say anything. I took care of most everything that had to be done today at work. I subbed for the bowling league like I agreed to do, but I didn't feel up to going out with folks afterwards. I came home and played on the computer for a few hours before I went to bed.	45	55
	3	Upsetting thoughts, feelings, and concerns are definitely there, but, I'm okay for now. I expect to cry or to experience my feelings later, but, I'm holding together alright. I'm able to Participate Effectively with some effort.	50	50
MILD INTENSITY	2	Upsetting thoughts, feelings, and concerns are there. I notice them once or twice every few hours, but right now, they're more of a passing thought or feeling. I'm able to keep my mind on my work and I'm doing fine for hours at a time. I'm getting through my day just fine...despite it all.	55	45
	1	Upsetting thoughts, feelings, and concerns are minimal. I'm doing good. I think it crossed my mind just once today at work. That's a great change! I'm starting to get caught up at work!	60	40
	0	I'm at peace. Things are fine. As usual, there's always something going on that can be irritating or upsetting. However, I have a good attitude. I'm feeling good. Stuff's rolling off me like water off a duck's back!	65	35

**At Level 4**, Emotional Mind is building (55%). It's taking over. Rational Mind is down to 45%. There's some slippage. Emotional Mind is interfering with our ability to function.

Which parts of the story suggest problems functioning ADEQUATELY? \_\_\_\_\_

We weren't able to hold back our emotions, but we had ENOUGH CONTROL to get ourselves to a fairly safe place to cry. Thank goodness it was a nice co-worker who saw us rather than someone who likes to tell on people and get them in trouble! We're also slipping because we didn't go out to Denny's after bowling like we usually do. We didn't feel up to socializing, so we went home instead.

At this level, what successes did we have? \_\_\_\_\_

*Though not 100%,  
we did pretty good  
for what we were  
Going Through!*

We were SUCCESSFUL because WE WENT TO WORK and we MET MOST of our work PRIORITIES. We got most everything done that we needed to do!

THAT'S SUCCESS WHEN BIG STUFF IS GOING ON IN OUR LIFE!

Also, we went bowling. We had people depending on us and WE DID WHAT WE AGREED TO DO. Once home, instead of sitting around and being preoccupied with upsetting thoughts, WE DID A LIFE-ENHANCING COPING ACTIVITY.

We KEPT OUR MIND BUSY by playing on the computer!

Check out **Level 5**. What slippage do you notice? \_\_\_\_\_

4- Based on the story, we USUALLY enjoy Choir Practice...and straightening the kitchen is part of our evening routine...(unfortunately not mine!).

We're slipping by spending HALF our work day preoccupied with our stuff. Also, we didn't feel like going to Choir Practice and we didn't straighten the kitchen.<sup>4</sup>

These are DEFINITE WARNING SIGNS **FOR US** that we're STARTING to LOSE CONTROL. WE'RE STRUGGLING. Notice Emotional Mind is 60% and Rational Mind is 40%. THE SCALES ARE TIPPING and Emotional Mind is beginning to weigh heavily on us.

What successes did we have? \_\_\_\_\_

*Though Emotional Mind is really building, we were ABLE to do what we NEEDED TO DO TO BE OKAY... and to Mindfully Protect Our Peace and Stability.*

*We SUCCESSFULLY FORCED ourselves to PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY in our life EVEN THOUGH WE DIDN'T FEEL LIKE IT. We MET THE PRIORITIES of the day by going to work and Choir Practice. Getting half a day's worth of work done is BETTER than none! We DID A LIFE-ENHANCING COPING BEHAVIOR AND IT WORKED! We FOUND SOME PEACE by going to Choir Practice, ENOUGH THAT WE GOT THROUGH the evening without any great impulse to do something destructive. Though we felt lazy, WE DID ANOTHER POSITIVE COPING ACTIVITY. We lit candles and took a warm bath! IT WORKED, TOO! IT GOT US THROUGH to bedtime. WE MADE IT! WE DID AWESOME!*

Check out **Levels 6 and 7**. They fall in the range of **Moderately Severe Intensity**. At **Level 6**, distress is getting the best of us. Emotional Mind is 70% and Rational Mind is 30%. We're overwhelmed with our emotions and distress. What slippage do you notice? \_\_\_\_\_

*We tried to watch TV to get our mind off our troubles. We just flipped channels. We tried a productive coping activity but couldn't get our mind into it.*

Major slippage is making ONLY 1 of 3 sales calls and NOT Following Through with what We Needed to do WITH THE ONE sales call we made. We did good to force ourselves to do a Life-Enhancing Coping Mechanism...but, we didn't Follow Through with it. We ARRIVED LATE to the AA meeting and LEFT EARLY so we could avoid people. TV didn't work for us, either. WE WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH OUR DISTRESS. We weren't able to focus on a program and we didn't enjoy it. We just flipped channels. Also, we didn't or couldn't force ourselves to get ready for bed. We slept on the couch in our clothes. Major problems here.

What successes did we have? \_\_\_\_\_

We made one sales call and we forced ourselves to go to the AA meeting. We agreed to meet with our sponsor the next morning and we DID NOT RELAPSE. We're STILL TRYING to hold on. WE ARE HOLDING ON, but not by much. We MUST GET HELP at this point or we're headed down Relapse Road.

At **Level 7**, we're only 20% Rational Mind. Emotional Mind is in the driver's seat. We're TOTALLY PREOCCUPIED WITH OUR STUFF. We're thinking about our troubles constantly. We're very distracted. We're not getting anything done at work. We're having destructive Emotion-Driven Thoughts. This marks a very

*We can't have too many days in a row of not getting anything done at work. The truth, when people are going through tough emotional times, unproductive days are very normal.*

critical time in our recovery. It is VERY positive that we have enough Rational Mind going on to pull it together...to LOOK LIKE we're okay when the boss sees us. It's also very positive that we're Mindful of being seriously troubled and headed for disaster if we can't overcome this emotional state.

What else is very positive? \_\_\_\_\_

*It's also VERY POSITIVE that we SHOWED UP FOR WORK. We're Mindfully Protecting Our Peace and Stability by going to work and pulling it together when the boss is around. WE MAINTAIN OUR JOB and we protect everything in the Big Picture of Our Life that depends on us having a job and cash flow.*

*We didn't call in sick...so, we may lose our job. We're in our "Screw it" mentality and we don't care.*

**Levels 8-10 hit the Severe Intensity Level.** This is when bad things happen. **At Level 8**, we BELIEVE we can't hold it together to look okay at work...so we call in sick. IF WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABUSING SICK TIME, we've probably maintained our job by calling in. We still have 15% Rational Mind going on and we KNOW we need to get help, but Emotional Mind is PLANNING RELAPSE by cutting or OD'ing. If we don't make the call, we're likely to relapse into old patterns of self-harm.

*We'll have to do Damage Control to manage the losses we're going to suffer...because we waited too long to get help.*

**At Level 9**, WE'RE EMOTION-DRIVEN. We PLAN to cut BEFORE we get help. We believe the Emotion-Driven Lies that "I can't handle this." and alcohol or extra pills will "help me feel better." We have SOME Rational Mind going on because we KNOW we need help. IF we get help, we'll have a chance to do Damage Control and plead for our job back...or we can quickly find a new one. If we don't get help, THE CYCLE OF SUFFERING STARTS HERE.

*It's much better to Go Through the consequences of hospitalization than the consequences of hospitalization AND relapse. That's a double whammy of distress that we should avoid.*

**At Level 10**, we'll probably do something destructive. HOPEFULLY, we'll use the 5% of Rational Mind to THINK BEFORE WE DO. Hopefully, Wise Mind will kick in and urge us to act in a way to bring about the miracle...like calling for help. At this point, WE'LL PROBABLY END UP WITH SOME CONSEQUENCES and treatment...no matter what we do.

We can MINIMIZE CONSEQUENCES by calling for help and NOT DOING destructive behavior. If we call 9-1-1 and end up in the hospital, we're MUCH better off than if we O.D., cut, pull a drunk...and end up in a hospital or jail AND the Cycle of Suffering. If we act on how we feel, we'll have all the EXTRA PROBLEMS OF RELAPSE and the losses in life that a relapse causes. We need to call for help BEFORE things get really bad.

*The Out-of-Control behavior of Bipolar Mania qualifies for Level 11 whether or not psychosis is involved!*

A Member suggested adding Level 11. She described times when things get SO BAD that she becomes psychotic and loses all contact with reality. This would be 0% Rational Mind. She related that she becomes VERY paranoid and hears voices saying ugly things about her. She stated that these voices encourage her to act on her paranoid beliefs and to harm herself. She told the Group that during these times, she ends up saying and doing things that cause painful losses across the Big Picture of Her Life. Several other Members shared that their Level 11 occurs when they become manic. They related that they lose their good judgment and end up doing all kinds of impulsive and irrational things. They noted that their Out-of-Control behavior causes them serious life problems and painful losses, too. Have you ever been at the 11<sup>th</sup> Level? Describe your experience. \_\_\_\_\_

Members are asked to identify the level they were at when "Something Happened" and they ended up in treatment. If you've been in treatment, what level are you USUALLY AT right before you end up in treatment? \_\_\_\_\_

What level are you currently at? \_\_\_\_\_

What's your highest and lowest level today? \_\_\_\_\_

What level or levels are you at MOST of the time? \_\_\_\_\_

What's the level of your best functioning over the past month? \_\_\_\_\_

What's the level of your best functioning over the past year? \_\_\_\_\_

At what level should YOU seek help? \_\_\_\_\_

Most Members believe we should call our support person, sponsor, counselor, or crisis worker at Level 5 or 6. Knowing what they know now...they want to get help BEFORE things BEGIN TO GET Out-of-Control. At Levels 5 and 6, we still have a fair amount of Rational Mind going on. This helps us to seek support...and to accept the Rational Mind and Wise Mind understandings and suggestions offered to us!

### **APPLICATION: How Coping Mechanisms Reduce Negative Emotion**

Check out "The Emotional Thermometer" on the next page.<sup>5</sup> Think of Columns A, B, and C to be "temperature gauges" that measure our emotional intensity.

The level of emotion in **Column A** has reached the Severe Emotional Intensity level of Level 10. This marks the absolute breaking point...when we totally "lose it"...like when the lid blows off the teapot. This is when we're experiencing SEVERE emotional distress and are Big-Time in Emotional Mind.

5- This graphic shows how low our emotional intensity goes when we use Self-Destructive Coping Behaviors and Life-Enhancing Coping Behaviors.

These levels are based on "The Levels of Emotion Chart" in Figure 13.A.