



Biopsychosocial Serenity: A Framework for Counseling

Change and Acceptance Skills for Individuals with
Comorbid Pain and Anxiety/Mood/Substance Use
Disorders

Jane Blansfield Finch, LCSW

NC Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting

September 15, 2017

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The Serenity Prayer

[God] Grant me –

The Serenity to **accept** the things I cannot
change

The Courage to **change** the things I can

And the Wisdom to **know** the difference

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The Biopsychosocial Model

Understanding mental and physical dis-ease as a complex interweaving of factors

- Biological: Genetic and experiential impacts
- Psychological: Learning – Habits, association & reinforcement
- Social: Peer relationships, modeling, fitting in



Start with what is known

- ▶ Many clients are haunted by the questions “Why? How did I get here?”
- ▶ Explore and discuss:
 - ▶ Family history
 - ▶ Medical history
 - ▶ Past traumas
 - ▶ Coping mechanisms
 - ▶ Relationships

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Then, what can be changed?

- ▶ Start where the client is. Most want to try cutting back/moderating at first
 - ▶ Motivational Interviewing
 - ▶ The Marty Mann Test
 - ▶ The life raft

Place a checkmark in the boxes that represent what you can change or control:

		Past	Present	Future
Others':	Thoughts			
	Feelings			
	Actions			
Your:	Thoughts			
	Feelings			
	Actions			

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Biological change

- ▶ Diet/nutrition
- ▶ Exercise
- ▶ Sleep
- ▶ Mindfulness meditation

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Psychological change

- Habits – take one thing at a time
- Reinforcements – teach more effective ways to manage stress
 - CBT: Recognize, Avoid, Cope
 - DBT: Distress Tolerance, Emotion Regulation
- Rewards – find new ones

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Social change

- Evaluating “playmates” including family members
- Cutting off contacts with suppliers
- Developing a sober support system
 - Mutual self-help groups: AA, SMART, Women for Sobriety
 - Meet-up groups

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Accepting acceptance

- Acceptance does not require liking or condoning
- Radical acceptance

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Accepting dependence

- ▶ Dependence usually is not reversible
 - ▶ Pickle vs. cucumber
- ▶ Grief process
- ▶ Renewing commitment a day/week/month/year at a time

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Accepting pain

Pain + non-acceptance = suffering

Pain + acceptance = pain

- ▶ Grief process
- ▶ Living as fully as possible within limitations

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Accepting anxiety, mood disorders

- ▶ Moral weakness vs. medical condition
- ▶ The brain is an organ of the body
- ▶ Taking responsibility for self-care
- ▶ Living as fully as possible within limitations

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Accepting trauma

- ▶ The events are in the past
- ▶ Ongoing reactivity can be reduced
 - ▶ Yoga, meditation
 - ▶ Somatic approaches
 - ▶ EMDR
- ▶ Resilience

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I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.

- Maya Angelou

Some days, doing "the best we can" may still fall short of what we would like to be able to do, but life isn't perfect on any front-and doing what we can with what we have is the most we should expect of ourselves or anyone else.

- Fred Rogers