

The Decider Skills Review September 2020

A Decider Skills course (32 therapeutic skills) was held via zoom, replacing a planned face to face course for people who were on the waiting list for intensive DBT services. The course was adapted due to covid 19, when face to face was no longer an option. This was challenging both for the trainers in terms of delivering the skills via this medium and for the client group who had to adapt to this new format.

Prior to the start of the course, service users had contact with DBT services who assessed and referred them. The DBT peer support worker had contact to complete client clinician agreements and pre scores using Core 10 and BSL 23. It was found to be immensely valuable to have the DBT peer support worker there for the sessions she was able to attend and she had effectively completed the preparation with the participants. She was also given the opportunity to work through the Decider self help course with the participants which enabled her to be a link person in relation to understanding what the course entailed, expectations of the course and client group.

Prior to the introductory session everyone was emailed and provided with an access link and password to the online training course. This training course is a stand alone course, providing for each skill -written detail, an information video clip and a video demonstration and explanation. They each were supplied with a self help skills manual which detailed The Fizz and The Fizz scale and detailed each skill with signs and examples, provided homework sheets and additional resources to help with developing the skills.

Our course began with an introductory session and had the usual hiccups of internet connection problems which was also an issue for some people at some sessions. The "camera on" rule from the client/clinician agreement was enforced when one participant was reluctant.

Introductory session the course was outlined and the format of sessions to follow explained. Everyone was encouraged to send any questions to us that arose via the email supplied. During the session people could use the chat function if they preferred this to speaking. The concept of The Fizz was explained and the importance of monitoring our mental health and developing a personal Fizz scale to allow for intervention using a skill to create a better outcome.

Session 1 :We reviewed the Distress Tolerance skills

Session 2 :We reviewed the Mindfulness skills

Session 3 :We reviewed the Emotional Regulation skills

Session 4 :We reviewed the Interpersonal Effectiveness skills

Review session: All skills were reviewed. Discussion included favourite/most used skills, and examples of when skills had or could be used.

Between sessions, motivational emails were sent encouraging practice and development of the skills and acknowledging that changing from established patterns of behaviour is challenging. All were made aware that practice was necessary and expected throughout. Attention was drawn to the statement at the bottom of each page of their Decider Skills book reminding them to Read Reflect Practice Reflect Practice.

It was decided to hold the review session later than planned allowing longer access to the online course, giving participants additional time to work on the skills.

Trainers' Learning and Development

1. Homework completion needs to be obligatory and emailed before each session. This will be added to the client clinician agreement.
2. Weekly sessions will be used in future to maintain momentum, breaking the learning in to smaller blocks and to aid group cohesion.
3. The Decider is fun and this element was challenging to create fully online and was not as evident in the sessions as in face to face groups. The trainers will work on injecting more humour into the sessions.
4. The latter sessions were more interactive with greater discussion. While this is usual in face to face groups in the trainers' experience; this is something that should be increased earlier if possible.

Summary review

14 people were referred. 13 started. 11 completed.

The course is viewed as having been a successful pilot. While all scores on measures have not yet been returned, those received have been generally encouraging with useful, positive comments. The medium of zoom proved challenging to assess engagement and level of commitment. It was evident that some worked really steadily, that others struggled at times and with some participants, it was hard to read their involvement and learning.

However, the scores show one quiet participant made significant improvement. Although questions were encouraged via email this was rarely used. There was good feedback to the motivational emails sent weekly. This group expressed that some skills were more difficult to implement and practice; in particular Breathe and Self Care. We are keen to see if the amendments we plan to implement will be of benefit.

The Decider model includes providing a Graduate group that runs monthly. This is for all clients that have completed the skills training for maintenance and as an update/refresher. Reinforcing the need to practice the skills is of paramount importance. Research completed by The Decider has shown that this group is very effective as it helps to embed and reinforce skills.

Tara Doherty and Ruth Martin

Authorised Trainers for The Decider, Northern Ireland

2nd October 2020

skillsbridge101@gmail.com