

Examples of Parent Interventions

Self-Hatred/Shame can get stronger when you correct their negative self-statements (enabling). Instead, get them to practice their skills.

Teen says "I'm ugly"

Parent: Your mind just created a judgment. Please try try again but this time with mindful language. Describe the thought instead of encouraging judgment

Teen: I really don't look good

Parent: That's still a judgment, and if you keep encouraging judgments, you will only stay stuck, suffering from this over and over again. Please try something like "I noticed thinking about how I look and feeling some shame, and I observed the judgment "ugly" came into my mind.

Teen: "I think I'm ugly"

Parent: That's a little closer. Can you please try saying something like what I just said to do even more to prevent that thought from controlling you

Teen: OK. I will

Parent: It would be most effective to do it now...please...it really will help

Teen: I can't

Parent: I know it's hard at first. Just repeat after me "I noticed thinking about how I look and feeling some shame"

Teen repeats the statement

Parent: "and I observed the judgment "ugly" came into my mind."

Teen repeats the statement

Parent: Fabulous. Thank you

Offensive Distortions: Reduce arguments, and reduce the impact of extreme distorted thinking by getting them to practice their mindfulness and Check The Facts skills.

Teen says Why do you always have to judge me?

Parent: You think I'm judging you now?

Teen: Yes

Parent: So your mind just sent you the thought that I am judging you right now? Negative assumptions about you? What exactly are you thinking that I'm thinking?

Teen: That I'm just being irresponsible, because I am lazy, don't care about you or what you want, and want to make things difficult for you. I'm just really depressed and you don't seem to care about me

Parent: OK. I see. Your mind sent you assumption thoughts about my thoughts about you. To reduce conflict it's useful to use mindfulness to get some distance from those thoughts so we can see they are guesses that need to be checked out. Since we cannot directly observe others thoughts we often make of errors. Please try try again but this time with mindful language. Describe those thought about me.

Teen: I think you're judging me

Parent: That's a little closer. Can you please try saying something like this do even more to unglue from those thoughts about me? Something like "When you gave me feedback about school, my mind sent me the thought that you are judging me, like I'm lazy, irresponsible, and just trying to be difficult."

Teen: OK. I will

Parent: It would be most effective to do it now...please...it really will help

Teen: I can't

Parent: I know it's hard at first. Just repeat after me "When you gave me feedback about school"

Teen repeats the statement

Parent: My mind sent me the thought that you are judging me

Teen repeats the statement

Parent: Thank you for practicing that. Now please check the facts. Find out the truth about what I'm thinking

Teen: What were you thinking about me?

Parent: I wasn't aware of feeling judgmental about you or having thoughts that you were lazy or irresponsible, but I was probably feeling a little frustrated about you not doing the things we had talked about to improve your attendance and grades. I can see how that could have come across as judgmental, so I'll work on conveying more gentleness and compassion. I'm so worried about your struggle with school and I'll work on being more effective to help you.

Attempt to Reduce Reliance on Escape Coping

Global GIVE DEAR MAN

"I have noticed that you often ask me to pick you up early from school [come home early to be with you] when you're upset. Tell me more about your thoughts and emotions when that happens. What would happen if I did not? What would it be like for you? It makes sense that you would feel that way and try to find a way to feel better...and it's a short-term strategy for feeling better that does not help in the long-term. I'm worried about you staying stuck in this pattern. Using skills to stay in the challenging situation and cope with it is the most effective way to build confidence and make you less overwhelmed by these situations. Do you remember that we learned this opposite action skill in group? Do you see how it will help you in the long-term for me to not rescue you from your distress, and instead help you use your DBT skills? I have to be true to my values to do what I think will help you in the long-term even if it means facing stressful challenges. Even if you have not made a firm decision to do this opposite action work. Do you understand how I can't go along with strategies that I think will make you worse? I don't want to fall into enabling your avoidance."

GIVE DEAR MAN in a specific situation

Teen: Come and get me.

Parent: Do you remember how I did a GIVE DEAR MAN telling you that I was no longer going to pick you up early from school [come home early to be with you] when you're upset? What were my reasons?

Teen: I don't understand why you can't be more supportive with my anxiety disorder.

Parent: I guess you're forgetting some of our previous conversation. I don't want to make you worse by contributing to escape and avoidance, which keeps you stuck in this pattern of feeling overwhelmed because you would never learn to deal with that situation or those emotions. Do you want me to review the coping skills plan with you or do you want to contact your therapist?

Teen: You're being really mean right now.

Parent: I'm truly sorry that the process of becoming stronger is so hard. I really wish there was an easier way. I have to follow my values of helping you in the long-term even if it means temporarily feeling worse as you learn how to face stressful challenges. With practice it will eventually become less overwhelming.

Reducing Reinforcement of Self-Injury and Suicidality

GIVE DEAR MAN

GIVE:

When you said “I want to harm myself” what did you really mean? Do you need something in your life to be different? Did you need something from me? Want me to really understand how horrible you feel or how difficult your situation is?

Teen answers the questions, then parent continues:

So it sounds like what you really wanted was...and saying “I want to harm myself” was a way to...

Saying “I want to harm myself” has resulted in other people...[CHANGING THEIR BEHAVIOR]

DEAR:

When you say you want to harm yourself I worry that your brain will learn that suicidal behavior is the way to influence people to change their behavior in ways that help you escape from [GET YOU THROUGH] the situations that make you feel overwhelmed. We do not want your brain to rely on suicidal behavior to deal with overwhelming situations when a person relies on escape coping then they never learn to handle those situations and they will always seem overwhelming to the highest level. So can you please instead ask for...directly.

Confronting Lying

- 1) First describe the facts about previous conversations, direct observations, and other facts
- 2) Highlight your confusion about apparent discrepancies
- 3) Ask person to explain

“My memory is that you said (I was told by ____ that you said)... but I saw/heard (but was told that)... Those two things don’t seem to match... Help me understand”

“I remember you first saying that... but now you are saying that... Those two things don’t seem to match... Help me understand.”

Consequences for Ineffective Behavior

Teen: Can you drive me to my friend's birthday party this weekend?

Parent chooses one of the following three options:

Parent: Yes...if you have enough points

Parent: Yes...after you complete a thorough repair, using the checklist.

Parent: I don't think I have the energy. I'm planning to use this weekend for some self-care to recover from your recent severe non-compliance, combativeness, insults, and destructive behaviors. Those behaviors have caused me a lot of stress and I still feel hurt. I'm sure a repair will help, so let me know if you want to do one.

Interpersonal Repair

Parent: Thank you for your apology, but I have gotten many apologies before so much more is needed. I want you to complete a thorough repair, using the repair checklist. Here's a copy in case you want to give it a try.

Teen: What I said should be good enough. I don't have to do it your way.

Parent: OK. You don't have to. Let me know if you change your mind.

Teen: I already apologized. Can you take me to the birthday party?

Parent: Sure...after you complete a thorough repair, using the checklist.

Teen: I already apologized. What I said should be good enough.

IF CONTINUED REFUSAL:

Parent: OK. Let me know if you change your mind. [parent walks away]

IF TEEN DOES THE REPAIR:

Parent: Thank you for attempting a repair with the checklist. As you went through the steps, I filled out the checklist so you could see which parts I thought you completed. Would you like to see it? Let me know if you would like me to explain any of it.

GIVE DEAR MAN / Reward Plan - Step One

"We have seen a lot of days of missing school and homework, non-compliance, insults, and aggressive behaviors. We are really worried that you're on a path of self-destruction and that you won't be able to support yourself after you turn 18, and therefore spiral downward further. What's going on? What strategies can we use to get more success? Can we identify some rewards you can earn for more days of effective behaviors? What do you want to earn?" [at this point make heavy use of natural consequences and do not buy anything new for your teen unless there are objective improvements in targeted behaviors]

GIVE DEAR MAN / Reward Plan - Step Two

Parent: Here is a draft of a Reward Plan and we would like your input before we implement it next Monday.

Teen: I don't agree with this plan for you to take away my stuff if I don't do what you want.

Parent: We agree. We don't like it either. My preference is to just use GIVE DEAR MAN to make a very clear request for you to [change your behavior]. I also tried to offer you bribes. We tried everything else we could think of and even though there has been some improvement, there is still a lot of non-compliance, insults, and aggressive behaviors.

Teen: You're just trying to punish me. I don't have to do it your way. It's my life and if I choose to barely scrape by in school then I should be allowed to.

Parent: We tried everything else we could think of and they mostly failed, so we can't think of anything else to try other than this. You're right that you don't have to do anything. But if you do what we are asking you'll earn privileges, favors, technology, and an awesome trip. It's up to you.

Teen: It's not fair. I have always had full access to use my phone. You shouldn't use it to punish me.

OPTION 1:

Parent: I agree. We fully want you to have it, and you will...as long as you get to school consistently, turn in your assignments, and treat us gentle and kind. I'm sorry we can't use a more relaxed method right now, but it's the only thing I can think of to motivate you right now. Can you help us better understand what is getting in the way? Please ask your therapist if you have trouble getting these behaviors. We have some ideas on how to get up on time in the morning or ways to get more homework done, so let us know if you want us to help you figure it out. We also suggest you do a GIVE DEAR MAN on us so we can figure out how to provoke you less or improve our relationship. What do you need us to do differently? We are sure that there are certain things we need to improve, and just need to further clarify what those behaviors are. Can we meet with a family therapist to help us get along better?

OPTION 2:

Parent: It sounds like you are starting a MAN on us. MAN is usually after GIVE DEAR. If you do a full GIVE DEAR MAN on us we would consider instead trying a more light-weight bribe-based Reward Plan for a few weeks (until May 1). If there is enough improvement by that time then we would not need the more controlling plan. Even though there has been some improvement, there is still not enough school attendance and homework, and a lot of insults, and aggressive behaviors. We will bump up to a severe behavior plan in a few weeks (on June 1) if we do not see more improvement. Can I tell you what that would involve so there is no confusion? Please show me that the more strict plan is not needed. If you maintain effectiveness with the current plan for two months you can graduate off all behavior plans and all the things you want can flow to you more easily. Does that sound good?

MODELING MINDFULNESS OF JUDGMENTS

“You shouldn't do that. I'm sorry. That's a judgment. I shouldn't say that. Oops. That's another judgment thought. I'm certainly going to work on sticking to the facts. Let me try that again. It would be more useful if you didn't do it that way. Can you please consider doing it the way I suggested? I think it will be more likely to work. And it's certainly not effective for me to speak with judgments when I am trying to persuade you.”

“I just noticed the judgment thought 'That's a stupid idea' come into my mind. But I'm not going to say that. Instead, I'll just say 'I don't like that idea and I doubt it will work'.”

“I noticed the judgment thought 'That's a stupid question. Everybody knows that'. But I'm not going to say that. Instead, I'll just say 'I'm surprised he asked that question. The answer is obvious to me and I expect most people know it.' ”

PROMPTING MINDFULNESS OF JUDGMENTS

Teen: “I'm a loser”

Parent: “So a judgmental thought just popped into your mind. Can you please just stick with the facts when you think about yourself? I certainly don't have that thought about you. Judgments will increase your suffering to the max, and also get in the way of working on yourself. Judgments create their own reality and keep us stuck. A compassionate approach is much more effective. You could say something like 'I would like to have friends who are more compatible with me' or 'I wish I wasn't so socially anxious'. Social anxiety is very common and is nothing to be ashamed of. I also had a lot of social anxiety when I was your age. Say something like that right now, in your own words if you like. Go ahead, give it a try. Please. Learning this skill will help you not get pulled into depression as much.”

PROMPTING MINDFULNESS OF JUDGMENTS

Teen: “You're a jerk”

Parent: “So you just had a judgmental thought about me. Can you please just stick with the facts when you give me feedback, so we can more effectively work as a team here? Judgments only create battles and are not effect in getting others to change. They feed anger and anger always backfires. A gentle and direct approach is much more effective. You could say something like 'I hate it when you talk to me in a harsh voice and focus on making me do something and don't show any interest in understanding me'. Please give it a try. You'll see this way work out so much better.”

MODELING MINDFULNESS OF ASSUMPTIONS

“I’ll make something very different for dinner tonight. You don’t want Mexican food two nights in a row. Wait a minute, that’s a mind-reading thought. I’ll check the facts. What do you want for dinner tonight?”

“I’m not going to bother applying for that job because I won’t get it. Wait a minute, that’s a future thought, not a fact. I don’t have a crystal ball. Let me try that again. My mind sent me the thought ‘That’s a long shot because most people who apply have more experience, and my co-worker agreed with me.’ I can also check the facts by submitting my application and see what happens, even if my coworker and I think it’s a long shot. What do I have to lose?”

PROMPTING MINDFULNESS OF ASSUMPTIONS

Teen: “I won’t pass this class”

Parent: “Wait a minute, that’s a hopeless thought, not a fact. I certainly don’t share your pessimistic view, but neither of us has a crystal ball. Can you please just stick with the facts here? Instead, you can say something like ‘my mind sent me the thought ‘That’s a long shot. I had a C average before the last test. I didn’t feel good about the last test and I feel so unprepared for the final. I’m feeling really frantic about my grade.’ You can also check the facts by asking your friends about their grades in the class, checking again to see if your last grade is now posted, and asking your instructor if he is considering grading on a curve. Instead of letting that hopeless thought control you, can you please say something like that? Right now please.”

PROMPTING MINDFULNESS OF ASSUMPTIONS

Teen: “I won’t make any friends at this new school”

Parent: “So a hopeless thought just went through your mind. That’s a thought, not a fact, and I certainly don’t share your pessimistic view. But neither of us has a crystal ball. Didn’t you and your therapist prepare some notes on alternative ways to think about this? I think she called it a cue card. Can you please take it out now and read those other ideas? I would love to help if you don’t mind reading them in front of me.”

PROMPTING MINDFULNESS OF ASSUMPTIONS WITH SOCRATIC QUESTIONS

Teen: “I won’t make any friends at this new school”

Parent: “So a hopeless thought just went through your mind. That’s a thought, not a fact, and I certainly don’t share your pessimistic view. But neither of us has a crystal ball so there are other possibilities. Can you think of other possible ideas of how the year might unfold that could create opportunities for you to connect with the other kids there?”

PROMPTING MINDFULNESS OF ASSUMPTIONS

Teen: "You're mad at me and judging me"

Parent: "So you just had a mind-reading thought. That's a thought, not a fact, since we don't have magical powers to read minds. That's your assumption or your interpretation of what I said. It would be really useful if you would acknowledge that and then find out the truth. You could say something like 'I just had a thought that you are angry and judging me' and then ask me to tell you what I am really thinking and feeling. Please try saying something like that. Right now please."

Teen: "I think you're angry and judgmental right now"

Parent: "Thanks. That's pretty close. Can you also say 'I know that's my assumption and there's a possibility it's not true'. You can even acknowledge that there is a slight chance your thought is not accurate. Can you try again please?"

Teen: "I know that's my assumption and there's a tiny chance it's not true"

Parent: "Thanks. And can you think of other possible ideas of what I might be thinking and feeling about you right now? If you practice flexible thinking your emotions won't control you as much and you will have smoother relationships. Nobody likes others making negative assumptions about them. I know you hate it when I do that to you. I'm also trying to do it less often."

Teen: "You might be softly judging me without any anger because maybe you calmed down already."

Parent: "Can you think of other possible ideas of what I might be thinking other than judging you?"

Teen: "No. I don't think so."

Parent: "OK. That's fine for now. Now go ahead and find out what I'm really thinking and feeling right now."

Teen: "Are you mad or judging me?"

Parent: "Thanks. That's pretty close. You asked a yes-or-no question. It's even more effective to ask an open ended question like 'What are you thinking and feeling about me right now?' Go ahead and try asking that way."

Teen: "What are you thinking and feeling about me?"

Parent: "Thanks for checking the facts rather than making a negative assumption about me. I was only feeling sad, disappointed, and concerned for you that you did it again. I didn't notice any judgmental thoughts for feelings. I certainly was feeling stressed and so maybe I wasn't very warm and that could have come across as judgmental. I'm sorry if that happened."