

# Increasing Academic Motivation in Children and Adolescents with Learning Disabilities

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# Overview: Academic Motivation

- Definition
- Populations and Co-morbidity
- Using CBT/ REBT Techniques
- AM Groups
- Activities
- Case Examples

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# Motivation:

Purpose + Incentive + Inspiration

- Why students engage in tasks
- What motivates them to learn
- Environments' effect on learning
- What goals promote learning

# Social Cognitive Constructs

- Self Efficacy: belief that you're capable of carrying out task to completion
- Attributions: belief about the cause of success or failure
- Self-Determination: extrinsic/ intrinsic, rewards, inspiration

# Goal Theory

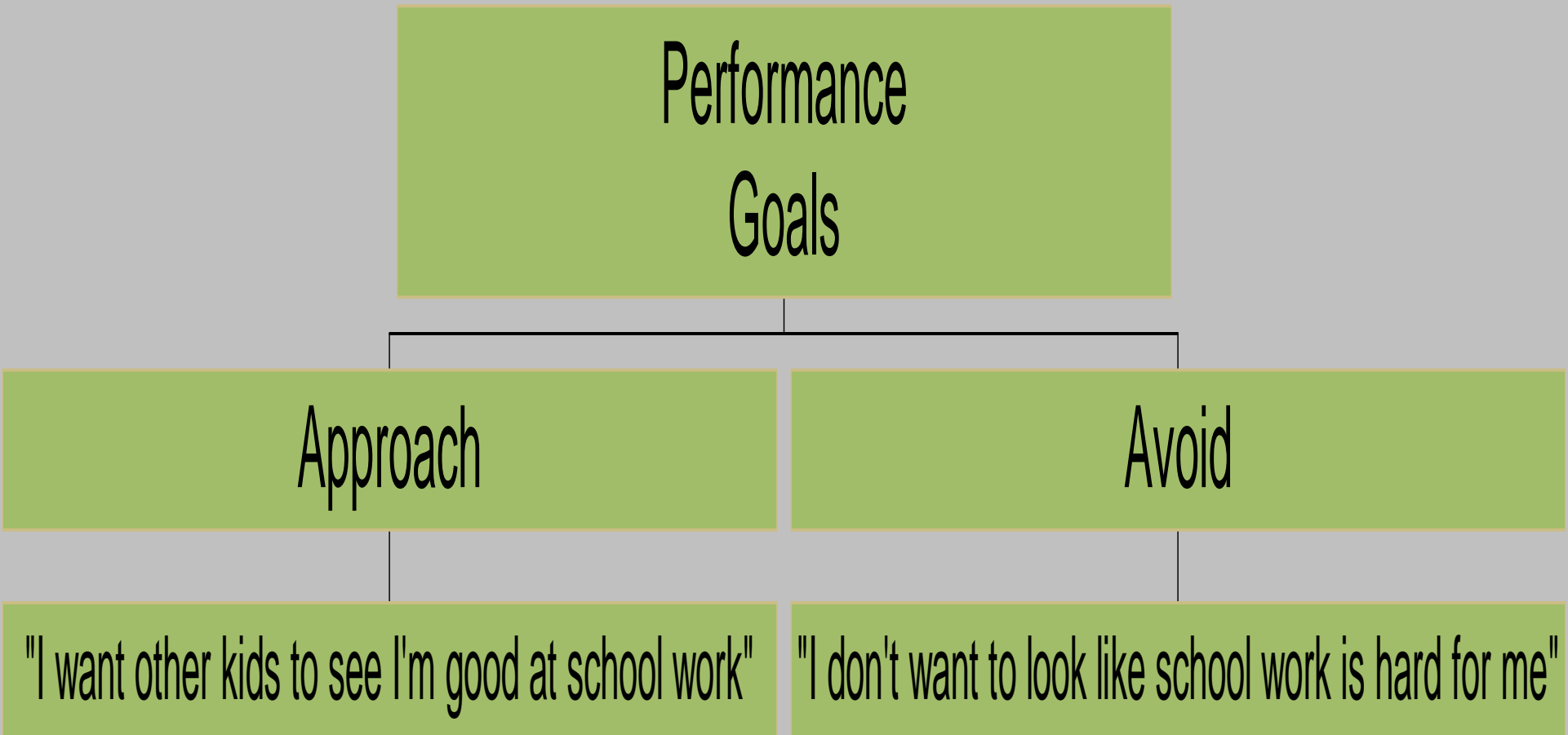
- Mastery Goals

Purpose of achieving is personal improvement and understanding

- Performance Goals

Purpose of achieving is demonstration of ability or concealment of lack of ability

# Performance Goals: Good or Bad?



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# Population: LD

- Specific categories of LD
  - Language
  - Academic Skills
  - “Other”
- Invisible (hidden) and life long
- Average to above-average IQ
- Erratic
- Gap b/w capacity & performance

# Areas Affected by LD

- Oral Expression
- Written Expression
- Reading
- Handwriting
- Spelling
- Mathematics and Reasoning
- Social Skills

# LD and Attributions

Individuals with LD are..

- More likely to make external attributions for both success and failure

Individuals with LD have..

- Lower global self concept

# Common Comorbid Dx

- LD and ADHD
- LD and Depression
- LD and Anxiety Disorders
- LD and Social Skills Deficits

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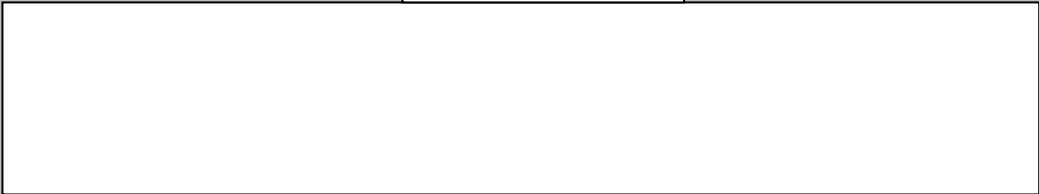
# Using CBT to Increase AM

- LD focus areas
  - Antecedent control
  - Consequence control
- Comorbid focus areas
  - Helplessness, anxiety, depression

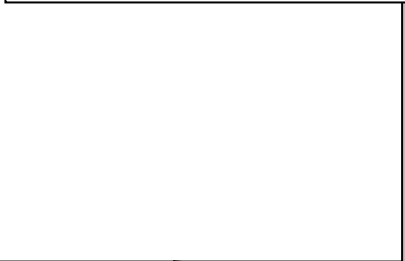
# Why children/adolescents with LD respond to CBT

- Structured
- Short term
- Transparent
- Results oriented
- Collaborative
- Similar to remediation, coaching

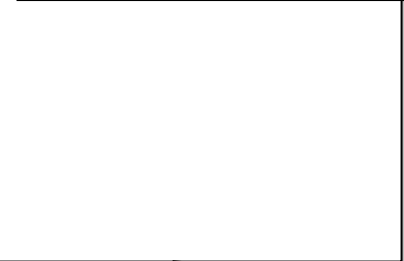
Situation



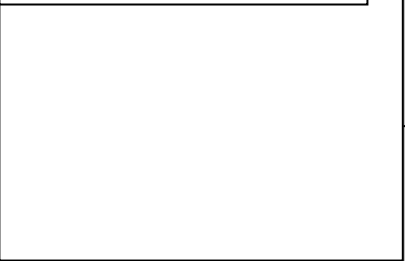
Automatic Thoughts



Alternative Thoughts



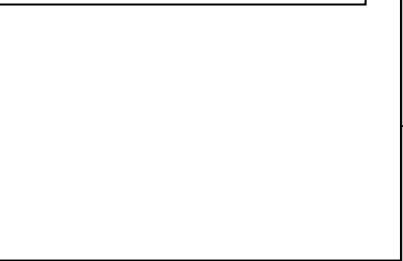
Auto. Behaviors



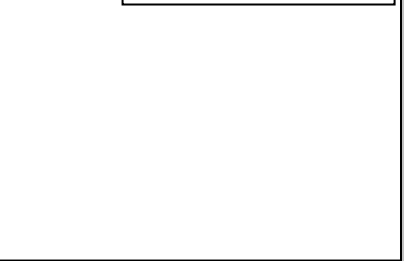
Auto. Feelings



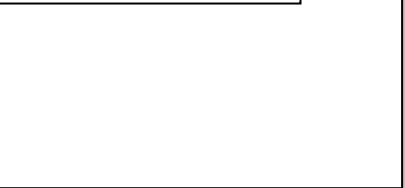
Alt. Behaviors



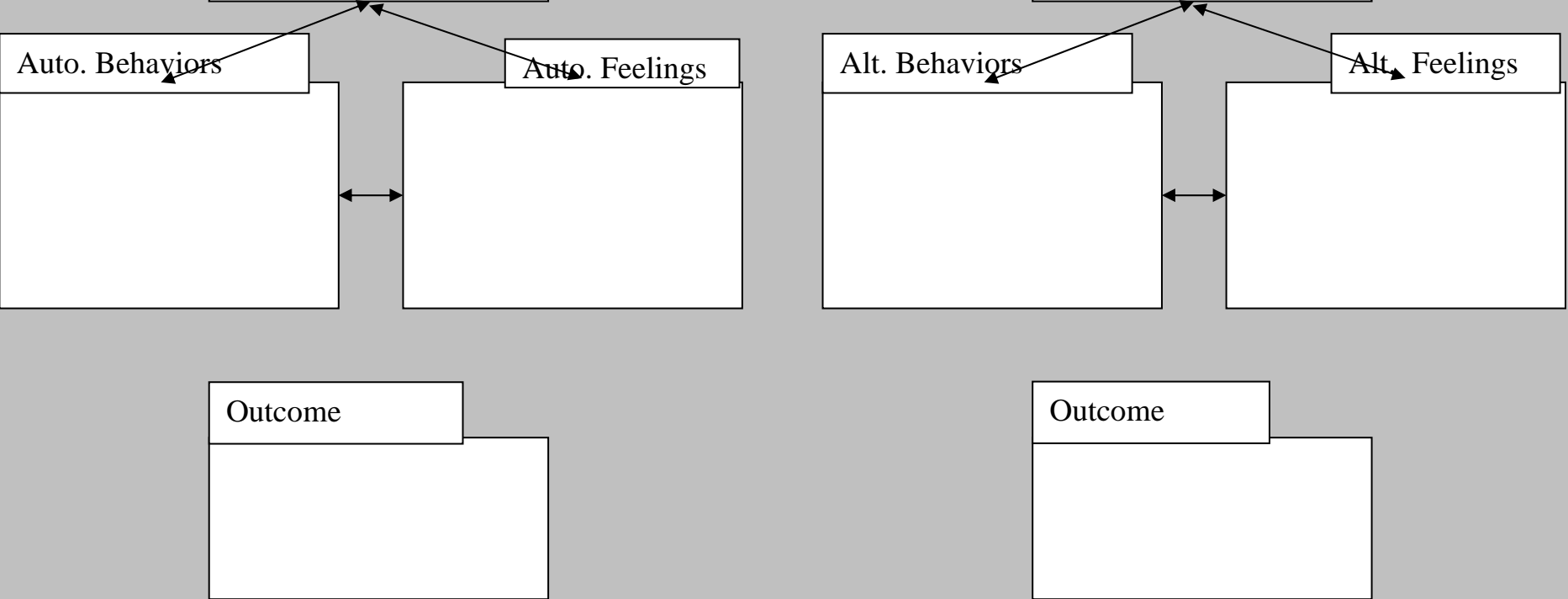
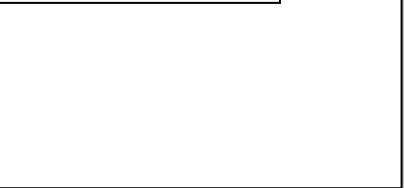
Alt. Feelings



Outcome



Outcome



# Case Example

- 14 yo female, D/O in Written Expression, Executive Functions
- Common automatic thoughts:  
‘I’m not better than others at anything’... ‘My mother likes my sister more’... ‘If I were a better student people would like me..’

# CBT Techniques

Self-Talk

Appropriately asking for help

Reframing

Labeling feelings, body signals

Recognizing self-attributions

Problem Solving

Relaxation

Thought Stopping

# Self-Monitoring

- Effort thermometer
  - 0-100
  - What was hard?
  - What was happening then?
  - Feelings?
  - Thoughts?
  - Actions?
  - What did you learn from this?



# Self-Monitoring Example

## ➤ Effort thermometer

- 20/100
- What was hard?
- What was happening then?
- Feelings?
- Thoughts?
- Actions?
- What did you learn from this?



# Self-Monitoring Example

## ➤ Effort thermometer

- 20/100
- History assignment
- What was happening then?
- Feelings?
- Thoughts?
- Actions?
- What did you learn from this?



# Self-Monitoring Example

## ➤ Effort thermometer

- 20/100
- History assignment
- I was confused
- Feelings?
- Thoughts?
- Actions?
- What did you learn from this?



# Self-Monitoring Example

## ➤ Effort thermometer

- 20/100
- History assignment
- I was confused
- I felt annoyed
- Thoughts?
- Actions?
- What did you learn from this?



# Self-Monitoring Example

## ➤ Effort thermometer

- 20/100
- History assignment
- I was confused
- I felt annoyed
- I shouldn't have to be doing this!
- Actions?
- What did you learn from this?



# Self-Monitoring Example

## ➤ Effort thermometer

- 20/100
- History assignment
- I was confused
- I felt annoyed
- I shouldn't have to be doing this!
- I acted like the class clown
- What did you learn from this?



# Self-Monitoring Example

## ➤ Effort thermometer

- 20/100
- History assignment
- I was confused
- I felt annoyed
- I shouldn't have to be doing this!
- I acted like the class clown
- Next time, I'll ask for help



# Self-Monitoring Example 2

## ➤ Effort thermometer

- 30/100
- Tutoring
- I got embarrassed
- I felt sad and angry
- I'm stupid
- Gave up
- Actually, I'm not the only one



# REBT: Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

- Action/results-oriented therapy
- Identifies self-defeating thoughts, beliefs, actions
- Helps replace them with more effective, life-enhancing ones

# The ABC's of REBT

**A**

**Activating  
Events**

Past  
Present  
Future

**B**

**Beliefs**

Thoughts  
Attitudes  
Assumptions

**C**

**Consequences**

Emotions  
Actions  
Behaviors

# Example of ABC's

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
Forgets HW	I'm so stupid, I always forget important things	Ashamed

# Types of Irrational Beliefs

- Dogmatic Demands
  - shoulds, absolutes, musts
- Awfulizing
  - It's awful, terrible, horrible
- Low Frustration Tolerance
  - I can't stand it
- Self/Other Rating
  - I'm/he/she is bad, worthless

# Disputing Irrational Beliefs

- Where is holding this belief getting me?
- Where is the evidence to support this belief?
- Is my belief logical?
- Is it really awful?
- Can I really not stand it?

# Case Example

- 14 yo female
- Sxs: depression, anxiety, poor planning and organization, difficulty with written expression and memorization
- Dx: Early onset Bipolar, LD NOS

# Case Example

**A**

Poor grade  
on test

Finishes 5  
minutes  
early

**B**

Mother  
disappoint-  
ed

Must have  
done  
something  
wrong

**C**

Anxious

Self-  
Downing

# Disputing Irrational Beliefs

- *Where is this belief getting me? Is it really so awful if she's disappointed? I've made improvements, maybe her expectations are unrealistic*
- *Maybe it's a good sign that we're ending early!*

# Mixed emotions

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
Science Test	did horribly didn't study right mad at self waste of time	Guilty Shocked Angry Miserable Hurt

# Disputing mixed emotions

- At least I got some of ?'s right
- No matter how bad or good I do, nothing will stop me
- It's not like anything bad is really going to happen
- In a year from now, I'll just be proud that I did it w/out messing up. I won't remember the rest.
- I gave my best effort

# Pros and cons

	<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
<b>SHORT TERM CONSEQUENCES</b>	<p>I would get better grades</p> <p>Mom and Dad would like me better than sister</p>	<p>I would be annoying like (?)</p> <p>Organization is boring!</p> <p>Harder to impress people bc higher standards</p>
<b>LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES</b>	<p>I would get into a good college</p> <p>If you save receipts for things you can deduct from taxes</p>	<p>Organization is only useful in horrible boring corporate jobs</p>

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# Academic Motivation Groups

- Goal: Increase willingness to
  - Approach learning tasks
  - Engage in learning environment
  - Display effort while working
  - Persist when tasks are difficult

# Example of a session - 1

- Objective
  - *Understand AM perceptions*
- Knowledge Base
  - *Stress level impacts perception*
- Strategy
  - *Estimate level of stress*

# Example of a session - 2

- Objective

- *Link feelings related to academic failure*

- Knowledge Base

- *Performance v. Mastery Goals*

- Strategy

- *Role-play scenarios*

# Example of a session - 3

- Objective

- *Understand concept of learned helplessness*

- Knowledge Base

- *The power of attributions*

- Strategy

- *Thinking, Feeling, Action Form*

# Example of a session - 4

- Objective

- *To discuss reasons for avoidant behavior*

- Knowledge Base

- *Anxiety is a cause of avoidant behavior*

- Strategy

- *Learn relaxation techniques*

# Case Example

- 16 yo male adolescent
- Currently 10th grade, repeat. 5<sup>th</sup>
- Sxs: Delayed expressive and receptive language, below age level in reading and writing, poor concentration, low self-esteem, difficulty making decisions

# Case Example cont'd

- Dx: LD NOS, Expressive Language Disorder, Dysthymia
- Tx: Speech/language, 12:1:1, counseling, psycho-education, outpatient psychiatry, Zoloft
- Strengths: Strong social skills, takes feedback and criticism well, works well with peers in small group, loves sports

# Use of AM Techniques

Activity	Example
Use of Imagery (relaxation)	Batting Cage on Baseball Field
Tracking Form: Embarrassed to speak in front of class	Monitor thoughts, feelings, use imagery next time
Use of Self-Talk	Role model (baseball player) who was in a slump

# Measurements

- Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich)
- Achievement Motivation Profile (Friedland)
- Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (Midgley et al)

# Conclusion

“People are disturbed  
not by things,  
but  
by the views  
they take of them”

*Epictetus*

# Thank You....

- Norman Brier, Ph.D.
- Albert Einstein College of Medicine
- St. Luke's-Roosevelt
- Albert Ellis Institute
- Walworth Barbour American School

# Recommended Texts

**Brier:** Enhancing Academic Motivation: An Intervention Program for Young Adolescents

**Dweck:** Mindset

**Lavoie:** The Motivation Breakthrough - 6 secrets to Turning On the Tuned Out Child

**Reinecke et al:** Cognitive Therapy with Children and Adolescents - A casebook for Clinical Practice

**Safran et al:** Mastering Your Adult ADHD : A Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment Program Therapist Guide (Treatments That Work)

**Strichart et al.:** Teaching Study Skills and Strategies to Students with Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorders, or Special Needs