

## Can'ts to Cans

**Tip:** When you think in terms of **cans** instead of **can'ts** you are more in control of your reactions and your life.

**Activity:** Ask the group if they have statements that they tell themselves that use the word **can't** that lead to feelings of emotional upset, anxiety, or depression.

**Example:**

- *"I **can't** get over this."*

As a group, turn the **can't** into a **can**.

- *"I **can** get over this even if it is hard."*

Have group members break into pairs and share an example from their own lives where they turn their **can'ts** into **cans**.

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*It takes just a shift of perception  
to have a "can-do" attitude.*



## Exaggerated to Specific

**Tip:** When we examine the unhealthy ways we think, we can often identify exaggerated words we tell ourselves.

**Activity:** Ask group members to think of some extreme, exaggerated, words that signal they are thinking in irrational ways. As a group, turn these exaggerations into specific statements that communicate how they are truly feeling.

Exaggerated Self-Talk	Specific Self-Talk
<i>"They <b>never</b> help me out."</i>	<i>"I am frustrated that they are not as helpful as I want."</i>
<i>"This is just <b>hopeless.</b>"</i>	<i>"I get discouraged sometimes."</i>
<i>"I <b>hate</b> when that happens."</i>	<i>"I don't like when this happens."</i>

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*When we change our thinking from exaggerated to specific, we feel so much better.*



## Introduction to DBT

**Tip:** The word “dialectic” in DBT means “opposite.” When we embrace all the dialectics in life, we are more likely to accept the inconsistencies and paradoxes of life that we cannot change.

**Activity:** Ask the group members to share some of the conflicting thoughts and feelings they experience. For example, do they sometimes feel love for someone close to them and other times feel very angry with them? Do they feel extremely happy at times and other times feel sad?

After sharing, have them brainstorm how different their life would be if they made peace with those opposites.

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*Addressing our conflicting thoughts  
and feelings is the way to achieve  
inner peace and life balance.*



# Observing Head

**Tip:** Distancing yourself from your upsetting thoughts and reactions will help you stay grounded.

**Activity:** One way to improve your ability to cope with upsetting thoughts and events is to look at them with an **observing head**. This is when you look **at** your thoughts rather than **from** them.

## Example:

- Looking **from** your thoughts: *"He is making me so upset."*
- Looking **at** your thoughts: *"I am having the thought that he is upsetting me but I am the gatekeeper of my own thoughts and reactions."*

Have group members go around and think of a personal example where they can use an observing head.

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*When you keep an observing head,  
you can stay calm during even  
the most upsetting times.*



# Metaphors for Growth

**Tip:** ACT makes frequent use of metaphors which make important, and sometimes difficult, concepts easier to learn.

**Activity:** Share the following metaphors with the group:

**Beach Ball in Water:** When we resist what we cannot change, it is like we are trying to push a beach ball into water. It keeps popping right back up. Likewise, the more we suppress our thoughts, the more they resurface.

**Quicksand:** Resisting our intense emotions and repetitive thoughts is like trying to escape quicksand. The more we resist, the more we sink.

After sharing these metaphors with the group, ask them how they can relate to them.

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*The more we struggle against the causes of our suffering, the more we suffer.*



# Growth Mindset

**Tip:** Those who have a growth mindset are happier than those with a fixed mindset.

**Activity:** A fixed mindset sees achievements as the measure of self-worth, leading to a sense of failure when goals are not met. A growth mindset focuses on the importance of effort and learning, which leads to resiliency.

## Example:

- **Fixed Mindset:** *"I'm really bad at relationships."*
- **Growth Mindset:** *"I am working hard to improve my relationships."*

Have group members take turns stating which type of mindset describes them best, offering an example. Transform each fixed mindset example into a growth mindset.

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*Change your mindset and  
you change your life.*



## Post-Traumatic Growth

**Tip:** Those who have experienced trauma are too often defined by their past rather than their present and future.

**Activity:** Explain to the group that post-traumatic stress comes in various forms such as abuse, accidents, being a victim of crime, war, and loss.

Have members break into small groups to discuss the following:

- What has been traumatic for you that you are willing to share?
- Do you find it hard to move on after trauma? Why?
- How have your adversities made you a better person?
- Who can you ask for support?

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*As author Shawn Achor encourages us, "fall up" instead of falling down.*

