



Specialising in Personality Disorder
and Complex Trauma



Chain Analysis: What is it and how is it helpful for people with BPD

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Objectives

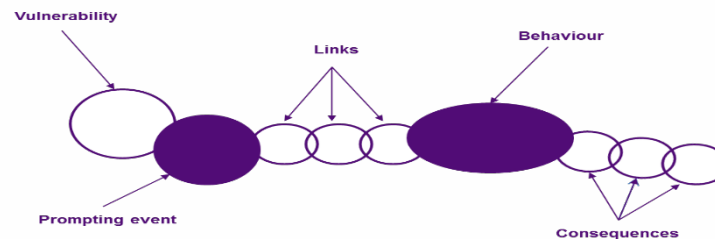
- To give an overview of why we use chain analysis
- To demonstrate how to do a chain analysis, step by step
- To show how we would use this with clients to help them move towards their life worth living

Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT)

- Understands BPD as resulting from pervasive emotion dysregulation *and* a lack of the necessary skills required to regulate this
- Core aim is to help individuals with BPD learn ways to manage emotions using behavioural learning principles so that they can create their *life worth living* (the ultimate goal in DBT)
- DBT uses chain analysis as a key tool to help clients change problem behaviours to get them closer towards their goals

What is a chain analysis

- Behavioural therapy tool
- A 'map' of moment to moment behaviours before and after a problem behaviour has occurred
- Behaviour understood as a series of linked components: Thoughts, emotions, actions, sensations, events
- These links are “**chained**” together to see how each link might lead to the target behaviour
- Chains occur in almost all individual sessions within a DBT program





Why do a chain analysis?

- Helps therapist and client understand what occurs when a client engages in a problem behaviour
- Provides therapist with an empirical method to test out theories about the factors controlling a client's behaviour
- The process of completing a chain, highlighting what led up to a problem behaviour and identifying consequences, can be a validating experience for a client
- Provides therapist with ideas for selecting solutions to prevent the behaviour occurring again

WHAT'S IN A CHAIN

There are 6 key components to a Chain



Target Behavior
A specific behavior that you want to change



Prompting Event
The event that sparked the chain leading to the target behavior



Vulnerability Factors
What made you vulnerable to the prompting event



Links
Behaviors and events between the prompting event and target behavior



Consequences
The short and long-term consequences of the target behavior



Solutions
Solutions you can use to change your behavior in the future.



Target Behaviour

Target behaviour:
self-harmed via
cuts to wrist with
blades

Prompting Event

Friend
cancels
plans last
minute
because
they are
sick

Target behaviour:
self-harmed via
cuts to wrist with
blades

Consequences

Friend
cancels
plans last
minute
because
they are
sick

Consequences:

- 15 minutes of relief from painful emotions
- Sore wrist and more scars to hide
- Shame and guilt

Target behaviour:
self-harmed via
cuts to wrist with
blades

Links on the chain

Looking forward to movie with new friend

Friend cancels plans last minute because they are sick

Felt intense shame and sadness

Urge to get away from emotional pain

Thought "I don't deserve to have friends, I will be alone forever"

Went into the bathroom and got blades out

Target behaviour: self-harmed via cuts to wrist with blades

Consequences:

- 15 minutes of relief from painful emotions
- Sore wrist and more scars to hide
- More shame and guilt

Vulnerabilities

Up until
3am
playing
video
games

Looking
forward to
movie with
new friend

Didn't eat
lunch to
save room
for movie
snacks
later
tonight

Friend
cancels
plans last
minute
because
they are
sick

Felt intense
shame and
sadness

Thought "I
don't deserve
to have friends,
I will be alone
forever"

Urge to get
away from
emotional
pain

Went into
the
bathroom
and got
blades out

Target behaviour:
self-harmed via
cuts to wrist with
blades

Consequences:

- 15 minutes of relief from painful emotions
- Sore wrist and more scars to hide
- More shame and guilt



Solution Analysis

- Identify **skilful behaviours** to replace problem links in the chain.
- Develop prevention plans to **reduce vulnerability** next time
- Remove any potential barriers to skilful behaviour
- **Repair negative consequences** of the problem behaviour for the environment and for oneself

Solution Analysis



Acknowledge disappointment as understandable, try calling support worker

Urge to get away from emotional pain

Did some intense exercise and progressive muscle relaxation to reduce emotional arousal

Up until 3am playing video games

Looking forward to movie with new friend

Friend cancels plans last minute because they are sick

Felt intense shame and sadness

Thought "I don't deserve to have friends, I will be alone forever"

Went into the bathroom and got blades out

Have 3 regular meals a day and try to get 8 hours sleep per night

Didn't eat lunch to save room for movie snacks later tonight

Throw away the blades so next time they're not there

Target behaviour: self-harmed via cuts to wrist with blades

- Consequences:
- 15 minutes of relief from painful emotions
 - Sore wrist and more scars to hide
 - More shame and guilt

Some tips for your chains

- Make sure you get to at least one solution they can try for next time
- Check that client feels able and willing to use the skills suggested
- For frequent behaviours, try conducting a chain on the times client manages not to engage in a behaviour
- Don't worry if it gets messy (using a whiteboard makes life easier)

References

- Landes, Sara J. (2018) 'Conducting Effective Behavioural and Solution Analyses' in Swales, M (Ed) *The Oxford Handbook of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Linehan, M.M. (1993a) *Cognitive Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder*. New York: Guilford.
- Rizvi, Shireen L. (2019) *Chain Analysis in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy*. New York: Guilford.