

When Crisis Hits: 10 Practical Tools for Parents and Caregivers to Help Teens Manage Distress



Melissa Butler, Ph.D., HSPP
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1



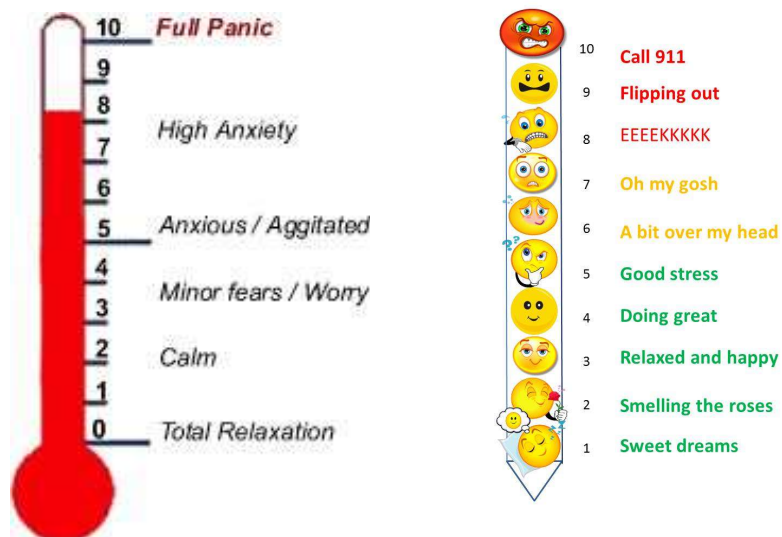
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Tool #1 – Find a way to talk about and measure your teen’s level of distress



3

Distress Scales



4

"SUDS" Distress Ratings		
The Subjective Units of Distress Scale (SUDS) is an easy way to track and let others know how much distress you are having at any given time. The scale ranges from zero to 100.		
SUDS Rating	Level	Description
100	Extreme Distress	Exploding or Completely Overwhelmed! The most you can imagine. Not able to think, only react.
90's	High to Extreme Distress	Ready to explode! You can't think very clearly. At risk to make very bad choices.
80's	High Distress	High levels of fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, agitation, and/or body tension. These feelings cannot be tolerated for long. Bodily distress is substantial. It is difficult to focus on anything.
70's	Moderately High Distress	Feel agitated and tense. Beginning to feel overwhelmed. It's hard to focus.
60's	Moderate Distress	Most people would describe as a "bad day" but still able to do what you need to do.
50's	Mild to Moderate Distress	Unpleasant, nagging negative mood state (i.e. frustrated, feeling down, or worried) but is not enough to produce many bodily symptoms.
40's	Mild Distress	Mild feelings of tension, mild worry, mild sadness, or annoyance or irritation. Unpleasant but easily tolerated.
30's	"Normal"	Alert (but not distressed). Amount of tension and stress needed to keep your attention from wandering.
20's	Peaceful/Calm	Warm, mellow, contented feeling. Like when relaxing at the beach, or at home in front of a warm fire on a cold, wintry day, or walking peacefully in the woods.
10's	Very Relaxed	Awake but very, very relaxed; almost dozing off. Mind wanders and drifts. Drowsy.
Zero	Complete Relaxation	No distress at all. Slow, deep breathing. Asleep.

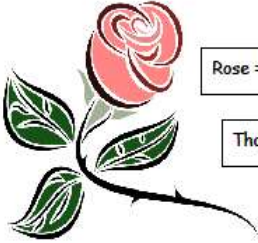
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SUDS Throughout the Week										
SUDS Rating	Level	Week 1	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN	
100	Extreme Distress	Morning								
90's	High to Extreme Distress	Lunchtime								
80's	High Distress	Evening								
70's	Moderately High Distress	Bedtime								
60's	Moderate Distress	Week 2	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN	
50's	Mild to Moderate Distress	Morning								
40's	Mild Distress	Lunchtime								
30's	"Normal"	Evening								
20's	Peaceful / Calm	Bedtime								
10's	Very Relaxed	Week 3	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN	
Zero	Complete Relaxation	Morning								
		Lunchtime								
		Evening								
		Bedtime								

6

Having trouble getting your teen to open up? Try adding Rose, Bud, Thorn into your daily routine

ROSE, BUD, THORN




Rose = Share something positive from your day

Thorn = Share something difficult from your day

Bud = Share something you are looking forward to

Adapted by:
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Indiana University School of Medicine

 **B Riley Hospital for Children**
Evanston Northwestern Healthcare
Seattle Children's Hospital

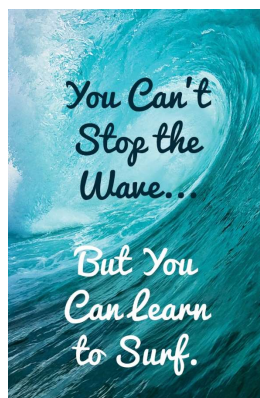
7

Tool #2 – support your teen's use of healthy coping strategies



8

Help your teen “ride out” their emotions and distress



Help your teen
“Ride their Waves”



9

Help your teen find coping strategies that work for them

99 Coping Skills

1. Exercise (running, walking, etc.)
2. Put on fake tattoos.
3. Write (poetry, stories, journal).
4. Scribble/doodle on paper.
5. Be with other people.
6. Watch a favorite TV show.
7. Post on web boards, and answer others' posts.
8. Go see a movie.
9. Do a wordsearch or crossword.
10. Do schoolwork.
11. Play a musical instrument.
12. Paint your nails, do your make-up or hair.
13. Sing.
14. Study the sky.
15. Punch a punching bag.
16. Cover yourself with Band-Aids where you want to cut.
17. Let yourself cry.
18. Take a nap (only if you are tired).
19. Take a hot shower or relaxing bath.
20. Play with a pet.
21. Go shopping.
22. Clean something.
23. Knit or sew.
24. Read a good book.
25. Listen to music.
26. Try some aromatherapy (candle, lotion, room spray).
27. Meditate.
28. Go somewhere very public.
29. Bake cookies.
30. Alphabetize your CDs/DVDs/books.
31. Paint or draw.
32. Rip paper into itty-bitty pieces.
33. Shoot hoops, kick a ball.
34. Write a letter or send an email.
35. Plan your dream room (colors/ furniture).

36. Hug a pillow or stuffed animal.
37. Hyperfocus on something like a rock, hand, etc.
38. Dance.
39. Make hot chocolate, milkshake or smoothie.
40. Play with modeling clay or Play-Dough.
41. Build a pillow fort.
42. Go for a nice, long drive.
43. Complete something you've been putting off.
44. Draw on yourself with a marker.
45. Take up a new hobby.
46. Look up recipes, cook a meal.
47. Look at pretty things, like flowers or art.
48. Create or build something.
49. Pray.
50. Make a list of blessings in your life.
51. Read the Bible.
52. Go to a friend's house.
53. Jump on a trampoline.
54. Watch an old, happy movie.
55. Contact a hotline/ your therapist.
56. Talk to someone close to you.
57. Ride a bicycle.
58. Feed the ducks, birds, or squirrels.
59. Color with Crayons.
60. Memorize a poem, play, or song.
61. Stretch.
62. Search for ridiculous things on the internet.
63. "Shop" on-line (without buying anything).
64. Color-coordinate your wardrobe.
65. Watch fish.
66. Make a CD/playlist of your favorite songs.
67. Play the "15 minute game." (Avoid something for 15 minutes, when time is up start again.)
68. Plan your wedding/room/other event.
69. Plant some seeds.
70. Hunt for your perfect home or car on-line.

71. Try to make as many words out of your full name as possible.
72. Sort through your photographs.
73. Play with a balloon.
74. Give yourself a facial.
75. Find yourself some toys and play.
76. Start collecting something.
77. Play video/computer games.
78. Clean up trash at your local park.
79. Perform a random act of kindness for someone.
80. Text or call an old friend.
81. Write yourself an "I love you because..." letter.
82. Look up new words and use them.
83. Rearrange furniture.
84. Write a letter to someone that you may never send.
85. Smile at least five people.
86. Play with little kids.
87. Go for a walk (with or without a friend).
88. Put a puzzle together.
89. Clean your room /closet.
90. Try to do handstands, cartwheels, or backbends.
91. Yoga.
92. Teach your pet a new trick.
93. Learn a new language.
94. Move EVERYTHING in your room to a new spot.
95. Get together with friends and play Frisbee, soccer or basketball.
96. Hug a friend or family member.
97. Search on-line for new songs/artists.
98. Make a list of goals for the week/month/year/5 years.
99. Face paint.

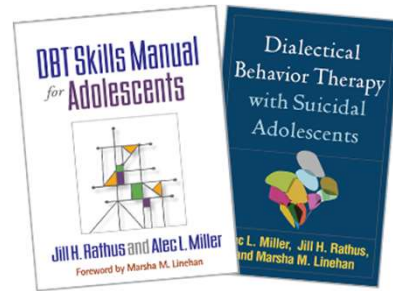
BOYS TOWN
National Hotline
www.yourlifeyourvoice.org

10

“Some of these skills help
some of the people some
of the time.”



Alec Miller, Ph.D




11

The Subjective Units of Distress Scale, --- or SUDS --- is an easy way to track and let others know how much distress you are having at any given time. The scale ranges from zero to 100.


SUDS Rating	Level	Coping Skills
↑ 100	Extreme Distress	
90's	High to Extreme Distress	
80's	High Distress	
70's	Moderately High Distress	
60's	Moderate Distress	
50's	Mild to Moderate Distress	
40's	Mild Distress	
30's	"Normal"	
20's	Peaceful/Calm	
10's	Very Relaxed	
↓ Zero	Complete Relaxation	

**Consider your
teen's level of
distress and note
that different
coping strategies
work best at
different levels of
distress**

12



You can also use this tool to identify what you can do to help your teen at different levels of distress.



The **Subjective Units of Distress Scale** ... or SUDS ... is an easy way to track and let others know how much distress you are having at any given time. The scale ranges from zero to 100.

SUDS Rating	Level	What My Parents Can Do
100	Extreme Distress	
90's	High to Extreme Distress	
80's	High Distress	
70's	Moderately High Distress	
60's	Moderate Distress	
50's	Mild to Moderate Distress	
40's	Mild Distress	
30's	"Normal"	
20's	Peaceful/Calm	
10's	Very Relaxed	
Zero	Complete Relaxation	

13

Create a Crisis Survival Kit



- Usually includes a list of 10 "tools" and an actual kit of items

14

Tool #3 – Help your teen use a distraction technique



- Draw, color, doing something creative
- Do something active
- Find funny memes
- Take pet for a walk
- Alphabet Game
- Count anything (Freckles, Ceiling tiles, Breaths)
- Say alphabet backwards
- Find words in letters of first and last name
- Count backwards from 100 by 7

15

Alphabet Game

- Pick a category: animals, foods, names, places in the world, Pokemon, TV Shows, Sports teams, Harry Potter characters, cars, or create your own!
- Find an item for that category for each letter of the alphabet. For example: Animals ... A is for aardvark, B is for bear, C is for cheetah, D is for dog, etc.

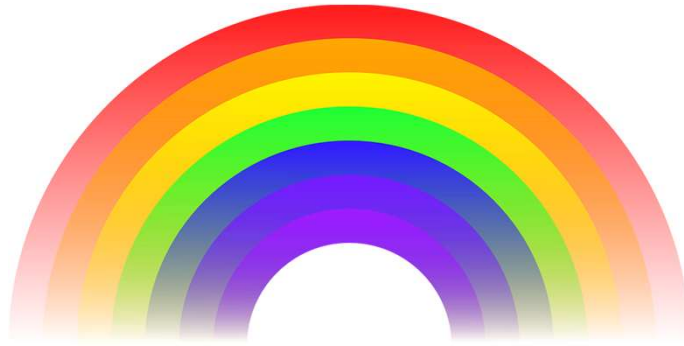


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16

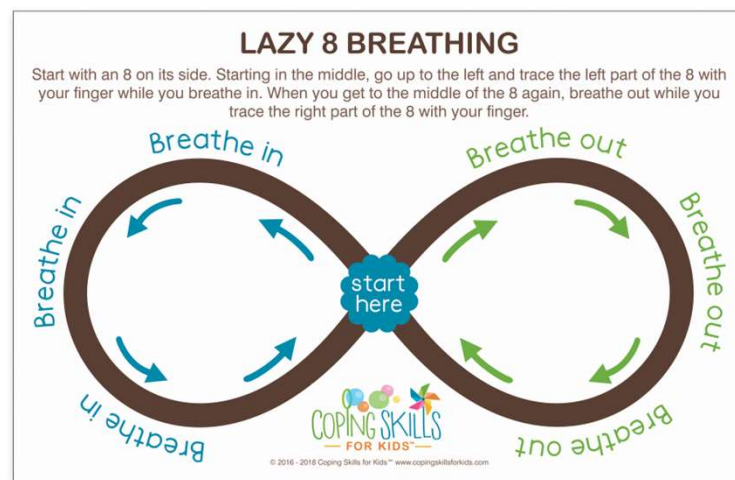
Find the Rainbow



R O Y G B P

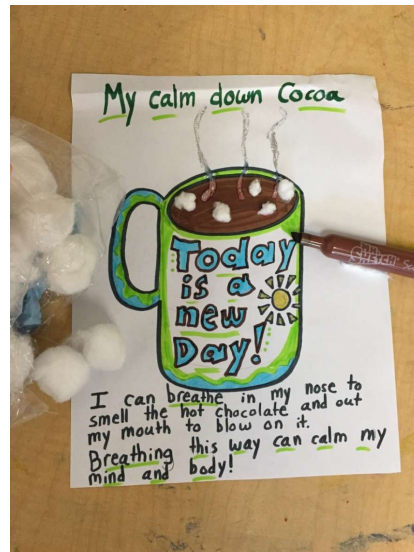
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Tool #4 - Coach them to slow the pace of their breathing down ...



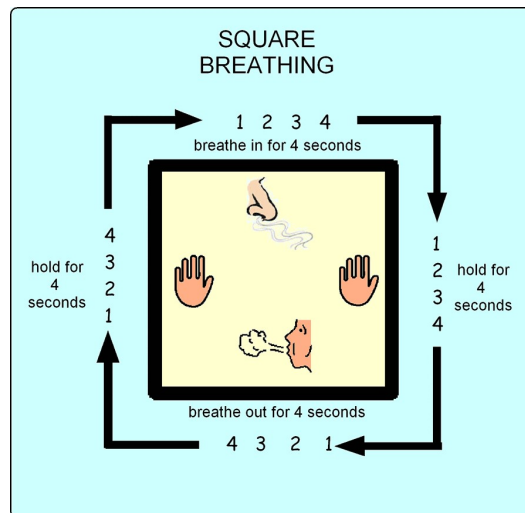
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Hot Chocolate Breathing



19

Four Square Breathing



Repeat at least 4 times....

20

Tool #5 - Coach them to relax tensed muscles...



*"I need
you to
relax your
shoulders
for me"*

21

Squeeze and release



22

Tool # 6 - When Distress is high and nothing else is working



"SUDS" Distress Ratings

The Subacute Distress Scale (SUDS) - or SUDS - is an easy way to track and let others know how much distress you are feeling at any given time. The scale ranges from 0 to 100.

SUDS Rating	Level	Description
100%	Extreme Distress	Exhausted or Completely Overwhelmed! The most you can imagine. Not able to think, any more.
80%	High to Extreme Distress	Really, no escape! The pain is very, very clearly. As far as you can tell, it's all there.
60%	High Distress	High levels of anger, anxiety, sadness, anger, agitation, and/or fear. These feelings are not under control for long. The distress is noticeable. It is difficult to keep your mind on anything.
40%	Moderately High Distress	Not agitated and tense. Beginning to feel overwhelmed. It's hard to focus.
20%	Moderate Distress	Not much could be done for a while now, but still able to do what you need to do.
10%	Low to Moderate Distress	Distress, ranging from mild to moderate. Feeling alone or overwhelmed but not enough to interfere with daily activities.
0%	Low Distress	Mild feelings of tension, mild worry, mild sadness, or frustration or irritation. Unpleasant but easily tolerated.
0%	"None"	None (Not distressed). Absence of tension and stress makes it hard to describe their feelings.
30%	Moderate to High Distress	Significant, unrelenting feeling. (Is often related to the heart and lungs. It's not a good idea to go to the doctor if you're feeling this way.)
80%	Very High Distress	Distress that is very, very intense and overwhelming. Mind wanders and drifts. (Stressy.)
Zero	Complete Relaxation	No distress at all. Deep, deep breathing. Relax.

23

Try a burst of cold temperature



24

Tool #7 – watch what you say and how you say it



25

Improve How Things are Said through Validation

- Validation – lets the other person know that you “get it” and that you understand what they are saying, thinking, or feeling.

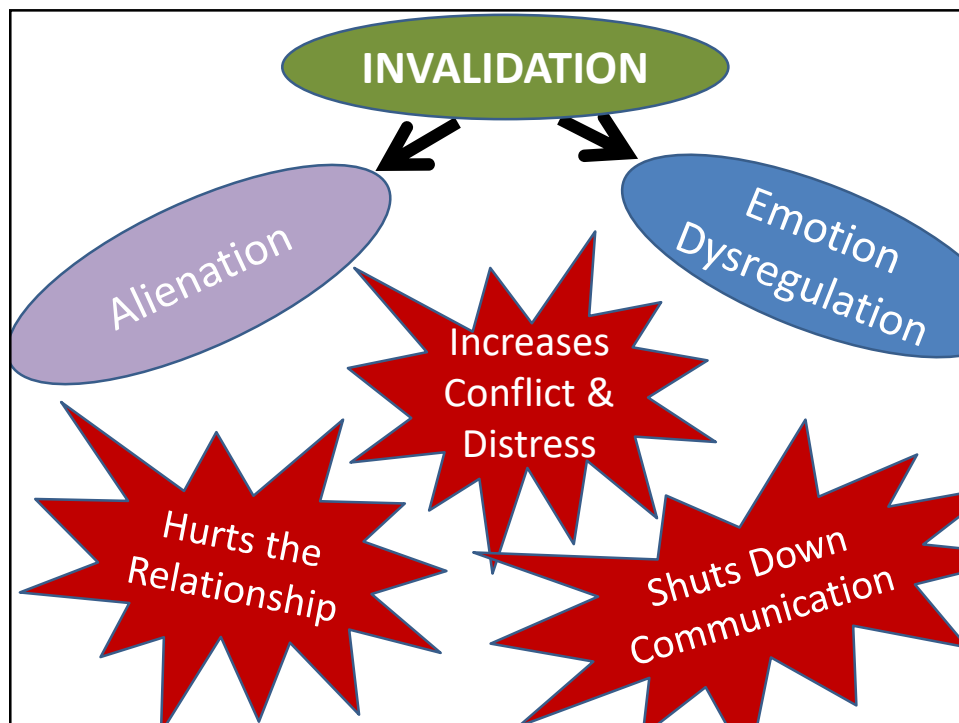
NOTE: It does not mean you approve or like what they are saying or doing but simply that you get it.

26

Work to Avoid Invalidation

- Invalidation – is when you communicate that the other person's feelings, thoughts, and actions make no sense, are “manipulative,” or an overreaction, or is even unworthy of your time.
- “manipulative” “stupid” “overreaction” “attention-seeking”

27



28

We can invalidate with the best of intentions....

- Jane: **"I'm a terrible person."**
- Jenny: **"What are you talking about? You're great."**



29

Ten Things to Avoid Saying to Your Teen



30

How to Validate:

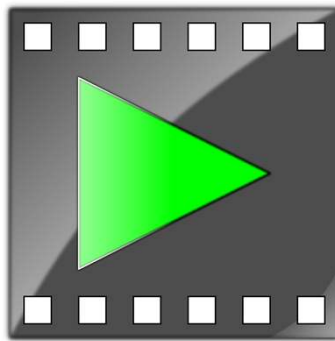
- (1) **Actively listen.** Make eye contact and stay focused on your teen and what they are saying. Don't interrupt.
- (2) **Watch your verbal and non-verbals.** Be mindful of your verbal and non-verbal reactions. Avoid sighing, rolling eyes, angry expressions, and turning away, etc.
- (3) **Go with the Feeling:** Observe what your teen is feeling and reflect back to them without judgment. *"I see that you are disappointed..." "It makes sense that you are feeling sad right now." "I can see that this is hard for you."*
- (4) **Show tolerance:** Look for how the feelings, thoughts, and actions of your teen make sense given their history or current situation. *"I get that you're upset..." "I don't blame you for feeling hopeless about this given your past experience." "I think I'd feel mad too if the same thing happened to me." "I don't get why you are upset but I want to, so let's keep talking."*
- (5) **Respond in a way that show that you are taking your teen seriously with or without words.** If crying, give a hug or a tissue. Ask what they need right now. Do they need you to just listen or do they need you to help them problem-solve?

Adapted from: Rathus & Miller (2015). DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents.

31

Examples of Validation and Invalidation

- <https://youtu.be/1VqbGik05FU>
- <https://youtu.be/DRjyP4wxKK8>



32

Tool #8 - Increase Positive Praise and Notice the Good Things



33

Tool #9 – Know when to get help



34



35

Example of a safety plan

In-Home Safety Check-list

☐ **Adult supervision at all times**

Your child will need to be under supervision, by an adult, at all times. If your child goes to other households, a trusted adult needs to be present who is also aware of the safety plan. Spending time unsupervised at friends houses is not recommended at this time. This means your child can not be left alone and should not be responsible for watching/babysitting others at this time.

☐ **Remove all weapons from the home. This includes, but is not limited to, knives, guns and ammunition.**

If this is not possible, lock up these items in a secure location that your child does not have access to. Lock and store ammunition in a different location than the gun, to reduce risk of gaining access to both.

☐ **Bedroom/House Search**

Search the house and your child's room for any objects that could be used to self-harm. This includes but is not limited to, razors, pencil sharpeners, scissors, make-up sharpeners, belts, ropes, cords, etc. Remove access/lock up these items to reduce risk of self-harm.

☐ **Lock up and/or remove all prescriptions and over the counter medications**

Lock up these items in a secure location or in a lock box. Items include, but not limited to: Tylenol, aspirin, vitamins, supplements, antacids, allergy medications and all prescription medications

☐ **Remove/limit access to all chemicals in the home**

Your child should not have access to chemicals including, but not limited to, alcohol, cleaning supplies, and tools/power tools. Keep in mind that these items must not be accessible to your child at all. It is possible that all these items may have to be removed from your home as "out of reach" is not limiting/removing access from your child.

☐ **Beware of items in the home that could limit airflow. Item include, but not limited to, plastic bags, balloons, belts, cords of any kind, scarves, ropes, bed sheets, etc.**

While it is not realistic to remove all these items from the home, it is important to be aware of these items and what your child is doing with these items, or using these items for. These items (belts, scarves, plastic bags, balloons, cords from vacuums etc.) should not be used without the supervision of a trusted adult.

☐ **If your child drives, take away your child's keys, and do not allow access to driving a vehicle**

Your child should not have access to a car and driving, until deemed safe to resume driving by their outpatient mental health provider

Resources:
You can purchase lock boxes at our **Riley Hospital Safety Store**, located in the Outpatient Center. You can also buy lock boxes/safety boxes at any local hardware store/retail store, or online.

36

Tool # 10 - Self-Care



37

Engage in
Self-Care
and tend to
your own
basic needs

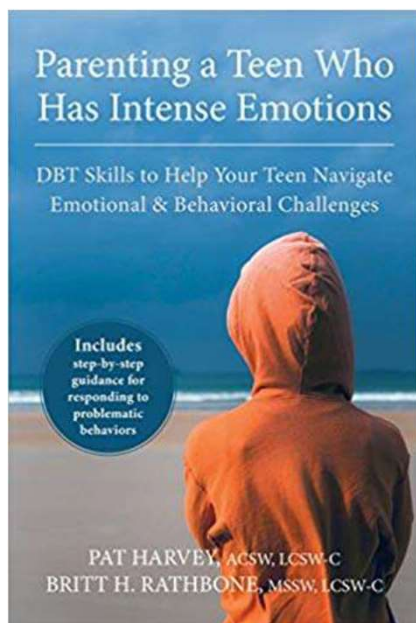


38

Any Questions or Comments????



39



40

Contact Information



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41

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42

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43

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44

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