

The Chain Analysis

The first skill that's used for analysing our own ineffective behaviours is called the Chain Analysis. It is a series of questions designed to help us examine the events, thoughts, and feelings we experienced in the build up to the activation of behaviours that we were trying not to do. It's intended to support us in understanding and highlighting the consequences of these behaviours, and how these consequences may make it hard for us to make the changes we are trying to make towards the life we want to live. The Chain Analysis worksheet is completed by following the guidelines in a methodical manner, answering questions that describe events leading up to the problem behaviour.

The purpose of a Chain Analysis is to figure out what the problem is, what prompts it, what the function of the behaviour is, what is interfering with the resolution of the problem, and what skills, or aids, you can call upon to help solve the problem. A Chain Analysis is an invaluable tool for assessing a behavior that you are looking to change. Although performing a chain analysis requires time and effort, it provides essential information for understanding the events that lead up to a particular problem behavior. In many cases, your previous attempts to solve a problem fail because the problem at hand is not fully understood and has never been properly assessed.

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~Steven Morris RP.

By practicing chain analysis on a regular basis, we can begin to identify the patterns linking different components of behaviour together. Figuring out what the links are is the first step in finding solutions to stopping the problem behavior. When any of the links of the chain can be broken, the problem behaviour can be stopped. So how do we do a Chain Analysis? There are some basic questions to build an understand for to begin with, and I have adapted these questions to look at things from a multiplistic personality perspective. Taking the dialectical nature of the external world and applying it to the many different parts of our own unique personality system.

These questions are pretty simple, and straight forward, and they are designed to get you thinking about the behaviour pattern you are trying to change from a slightly different perspective than the judgemental, or critical way you might be currently looking at the way you coped with a challenging

situation. On the following pages you will find a list of the questions asked in this adapted version of a Chain Analysis worksheet, along with a brief breakdown of what you are trying to achieve, and why you are trying to achieve it, to help guide you through the process.

We begin with simply stating what the behavioural response we are working on is today. Write a brief description of the situation, and what you did to compromise your values. If you can, include the values you compromised in this section too. Next, we ask about what the prompting events in the environment might've been before you blended with this part and began to act out its behaviour pattern. There are a number of ways I like to do this, and over the years it has developed into an exercise I refer to as ASPHALT.

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Many of you have probably heard of the acronym for HALT, which is Hungry Angry Lonely Tired, and I have used this to great effect in my analysis of prompting events in my own journey. Along the way, I have picked up additions to this exercise from clients, and people I have encountered in meetings. One client in particular presented me with an update that took the terms of HALT and added to it creating ASPHALT. I found this an amazing tool to help me, and the people I support to see the things that may have played a significant role in my behavioural responses. It also has a metaphorical tone to it in that, in order for my life to run a smooth course, the asphalt I am running on needs to be in good working order, otherwise it will be a very bumpy ride. Let's go over each one individually right now before completing the worksheet associated with it.

A = Apathetic

Apathy can be connected to the behavioural protection mechanism of your Detached Protector. In its extreme, this part of your personality dissociates from the situation to keep you safe from the overwhelming emotional experience. In a more minor activation, this part will create the narrative of “I don't give a fuck” to protect you from the perceived problem. When exploring this part of the prompting events, ask yourself if apathy was present in your system, was there a part of you that was convinced you didn't care about something that you actually did. For example, were you telling yourself that you didn't care you weren't invited to the event that most of your friends were, but really underneath it was causing the activation of your core vulnerabilities.

S = Stressed/Sad/Scared

Stress is a word that gets thrown around all the time these days, mainly because the go, go, go mentality of modern society creates it in our lives. If we are not dealing with the presence of stress within your personality it can activate your parts that have their eyes on acting out to escape. Sadness is an emotional experience that can also overwhelm the system if not addressed, and in its extreme can lead to depression. Fear is the driving force behind all the behaviours we are using to cope, so

building your awareness to acknowledge its existence in your system is key to taking it on. In this section, ask yourself was there a part of me that was feeling stressed, sad, or scared, before I acted in the way I am analysing right now.

P = Physical Pain

Physical Pain will often lead to behaviours that are designed to escape from the state of being if its not addressed. Trying to ignore the pain we are in will only increase the impact it is having, or not doing the things we know we can do to minimize its impact is just as problematic for our emotional system as it is for the physical side of things. So, recognizing its presence in the build up to behaviours can shed some light on why we do what we do. Where you in physical or emotional pain prior to the behaviour?

H = Hungry

Diet is a key concept of the foundation for recovery, and any type of behaviour change. If I am not fueling my body with the right type of fuel that's needed, and at the right time that the fuel is required, then my system will get drained which decreases my ability to do the work I need to do. Were you eating enough, or too much, what were you eating, and when were you eating, are all questions to ask when exploring this aspect of behavioural responses.

A = Angry

Anger is a secondary emotion. In that, it is the mask for the primary that triggered it as a response. If you are like I used to be, anger can be the primary reason for reactionary behaviours. Many people told me that I went from 0 to 100 with my aggressive words and anger extremely quickly. What I didn't realize until I looked was that I wasn't starting at zero, I was walking around at a 60 or 70 so it didn't take much to push me over the edge. Ask yourself, was I frustrated, irritated, or pissed off at anything in the build up to this behaviour?

L = Lonely

Loneliness can be at the core of behavioural responses for many people. If we don't feel connected, it is often the case that our personality will go into a state of fight or flight, as connection to others is a matter of survival. Were you feeling lonely, disconnected, or isolated from others in the build up to this part of you acting out?

T = Tired

As with the other parts of the DBT PLEASE skill, sleep is a key concept for the foundation of change. If you are not following healthy guidelines for good sleep hygiene, then your ability to live the life you want to live will be compromised. Ask yourself, how did I sleep the night before this event, how have I been sleeping lately in general?

When you have answered all of these questions, sit back, and take a look at what happened, and the influence these things may have had on your ability to behave in a way that has you living a values-based life. If you are completing this exercise as part of the online courses, use the video attached to this class to help you complete this exercise, if not, use your mindfulness skills to walk you into a place that allows you to complete this from a Wise Mind state. An objective state of mind that has no judgement for the behaviour, or the build up to the part acting out. Use the worksheet on the following page to provide a template for answering these questions. Complete each section to highlight the areas we need to look at, then move on to The Missing Links.

Chain Analysis Worksheet

What is the behavioural response we are working on today? List the facts, the behaviour, and the compromised values in the space provided below. If this is part of your weekly check-in, list it as this as your answer.

Apathetic – Was there anything in your life that you were telling yourself you didn't care about when in actuality you did? If so, write about it in the space provided below, if not move on to the next question.

Stressed/Sad/Scared – Were you feeling Stressed out, Sad or Scared about anything in the time prior to this situation? If so, write about it in the space provided below, if not move on to the next question.

Pain – Were you in any type of physical pain that you're not dealing with, or denying the existence of, prior to the event? If you are aware of any pain, write about it in the space provided below, if not move on to the next question.

Hungry – Was there anything in your diet that could've contributed to your emotional state, were you eating enough on a regular basis, and of the right quality to support your mental health? If not, write about it in the space provided below, if not move on to the next question.

Angry – Were you angry, frustrated, irritated, pissed off, or annoyed at anyone, or anything in the build up to this circumstance playing out the way it did? If so, write about it in the space provided below, if not move on to the next question.

Lonely – Have you been feeling lonely, disconnected from people in your life. Are you socially isolated from your tribe? If you recognize this feeling of social isolation and disconnection in your system, write about it in the space below. If not, move on to the next question.

Tired – How were you sleeping in the build up to this situation, were you getting enough, or too much sleep, was the quality of sleep enough to help you feel rested? If so, write about it in the space provided below, if not move on to the next question.

Now that you have completed this section, in the space provided below, list the areas of ASPHALT that you need to pay attention to, and use this as part of completing the Missing Links worksheet on the following pages.

The area of ASPHALT I need to work on is ...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____