



# The Right Way

Right child. Right place. Right reason.

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**Ronald D. Hunter**  
CEO

## The Road Ahead

Welcome to the first edition of 'The Right Way', a new quarterly publication from Youth Opportunity. We envision this newsletter as a platform to present our practices, methods, and opinions in the treatment of at-risk and troubled young people to a broader audience.

We hope our thoughts might foster greater understanding of the seriousness of this problem and inspire others to join us in this mission. We aspire to contribute to the national knowledge base supporting juvenile rehabilitation. We humbly hope our successes might illuminate the path for others engaged in this critical work.



## Transition Management: Toward Success and Independence

By Jim Hill, President



When a young person leaves our care, we are hopeful. But we worry. We know that the progress we've made together can be undone in a matter of weeks. Studies show that if a young person reverts to the behaviors that brought them to rehabilitation, it is most likely to happen in the first 90 days after release.

What can we do to assure a smooth transition back to their lives – lives that are fraught with temptation and challenges? We can provide them with the fundamental tools of living. We can help their families and communities deliver the support they need. We can stay in touch, and be there for them. We can help them establish their identity with the necessities; the things all of us take for granted. *Continued on page 4.*

### In this issue

- [Introducing The Right Way](#)
- [Transition Management](#)
- [Dialectical Behavioral Therapy in the treatment of human trafficking victims](#)
- [Modules used in DBT](#)
- [Statistics of human trafficking](#)



### The Price Is High

Juvenile delinquency has potentially high stakes for both individuals and society as a whole. Delinquency is linked to higher crime rates in adulthood and other negative outcomes. One estimate suggests that between 50 and 75 percent of adolescents who have spent time in juvenile detention centers are incarcerated later in life. - Childtrends



## Using Dialectical Behavioral Therapy to Treat Human Trafficking Victims

By Marylou Erbland, PhD,  
Director and Clinical Administrator



Many, if not most, of the problems troubled young people face are trauma-based. These behavioral or emotional struggles can manifest in many ways, including suicidal ideation and attempts, self-harming behaviors, substance abuse, acting out behaviors, depression, and anxiety.

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy is a cognitive behavioral therapy developed by Marsha Linehan, PhD, ABPP. Many years of research have shown its effectiveness in treating a wide range of disorders including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depressive disorders, eating disorders, and substance abuse. It is well researched for the adolescent population as well.

At the Center for Success and Independence in Houston, we treat many young victims of trauma and child sex trafficking. We realize that learning skills to cope with the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder must come first. Thus, we have adopted, and achieved encouraging success, with a Dialectical Behavioral Therapy model as a central component for the treatment of our young people.

### Rebuilding Lives

Emotional and behavioral problems are unhealthy coping efforts that evolved from losses and trauma. DBT improves therapeutic outcomes by teaching skills that will decrease harmful actions and replace them with effective, life-enhancing behaviors.



In our treatment of human trafficking victims, who are subjected to extreme degradation, as well as physical and mental abuse, the results have been no less than miraculous.



### The skills training modules of DBT:

**Mindfulness:** the practice of being fully aware and present in this one moment

**Distress Tolerance:** how to tolerate pain in difficult situations, not change it

**Interpersonal Effectiveness:** how to ask for what you want and say no while maintaining self-respect and relationships with others

**Emotion Regulation:** how to change emotions that you want to change



## “Dialectic” implies an integration of opposites. In DBT, that means the synthesis of change and acceptance.

The skills and strategies taught in DBT are a balance of change and acceptance. The four skills modules include two sets of acceptance strategies: mindfulness and distress tolerance, and two sets of change strategies: emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness.

### Teaching Acceptance

DBT therapists accept clients as they are while acknowledging that they need to change in order to reach their goals. The skills and strategies taught are a balance of acceptance and change.

These strategies help the youth get “unstuck” from extreme positions and the therapist from emphasizing too much change or acceptance. This keeps the therapy in balance and moves the client toward the achievement of their goals.

Parent involvement and support are important in the recovery process. Parents learn DBT skills in order to manage and understand their kids more effectively.

### Balance in Treatment and Life

Capabilities are enhanced with the DBT Skills Training listed on the previous page. Skills Training is taught in groups and in individual and family therapy.

DBT individual therapy focuses on enhancing client motivation for change and helping youth apply the skills to specific challenges and events in their lives.

DBT utilizes coaching to provide “in the moment” support. The goal is to teach young people how to use DBT skills to effectively cope with the many different situations that arise in their everyday life.

Case management strategies help the young person learn how to better manage their lives, in the physical and social environments. This helps the young person learn to solve problems themselves and gain a sense of competence and independence.

### Living in the Moment

Through therapy, DBT teaches us to embrace the opposites of change and acceptance, emotion and reason, passion and logic. We work to move clients from

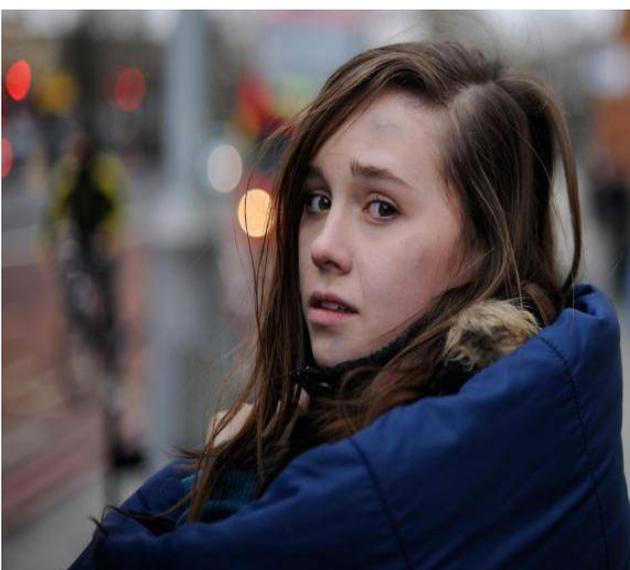
extreme emotional positions to a healthy view of all the complexities of life.

In this way, DBT illustrates that their therapy is like life itself - contradictory - full of change and acceptance. But within those conflicts and opposites, there can be beauty and meaning.

### Effective and Evidence-Based

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy has depth and possibilities that cannot be covered in a short article. I would encourage anyone involved in the treatment of clients presenting with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or the other challenges that can be addressed by DBT, to learn more about it. Clinical evidence shows remarkable efficacy.

In our treatment of human trafficking victims, who are subjected to extreme degradation, as well as physical and mental abuse, the results have been no less than miraculous.



## It's Worse Than You Think

It happens everywhere. In 2016, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children estimated that 1 in 6 endangered runaways reported to them were likely sex trafficking victims. Globally, the International Labor Organization estimates that there are 4.5 million people trapped in forced sexual exploitation globally.

Between 14,500 and 17,500 people are trafficked into the U.S. each year. Human trafficking is the third largest international crime industry (behind illegal drugs and arms trafficking). It reportedly generates a profit of \$32 billion every year. Of that number, \$15.5 billion is made in industrialized countries.

- The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children



## The Big Picture

By Ronald D. Hunter

We must look beyond our daily tasks and see the larger issues. There are causes and effects, with emotional and medical pretexts. There are societal backdrops, family behavioral patterns, and much more.

The challenges we face are complex and theories abound as to the reasons and solutions. The problem of lost and broken young people is a societal crisis of critical dimensions, touching American life with increased homelessness, crime, and endless tragedies of lost potential.

It's time we accept the fact that juvenile crime, and the plague of suicide, addiction, and behavioral abnormalities destroying the lives of so many vulnerable young people is a challenge we must face together, and honestly.

It is not hopeless. Every day we see the profound difference we can make in the lives of lost young people. The Right Way is our way to share what we learn and to contribute to the national dialog surrounding this mission.

Please be in touch and let us know anything you would like to discuss.

## Transition Management *continued from page 1*

*We stay in touch. These troubled young people need to know we will always be here for them.*

Most of our young people are without the simple documentation that all of us take for granted. We help them assemble a personal portfolio, which includes identification, their driver's license, their social security card, any certifications or diplomas they have, a record of their treatment, references, contacts, and a calendar of their scheduled appointments.

It's always a touching moment when we realize that these young people have never had most of these items – basic proof of who they are. The look on their faces when they hold their portfolio reminds us why we do this work. It's as if for the first time, they have proof that they exist.

A Transitional Services Manager is assigned when a young person is admitted. Their job is to maintain contact with everyone and every organization involved in the youth's progress, as identified by a detailed transitional plan. This plan includes records and contacts with all support services in the client's community;

contact information with parents, guardians, or foster parents; juvenile probation officer, if necessary; the conditional release service provider; and school officials. We also make sure appointments are kept and transportation is arranged.

Importantly, we never forget that it's all about individual attention. Our Transitional Services Manager meets with each youth regularly to identify transition needs and to make sure they receive the right services at the right time. We also make sure they have what they need at home, in terms of both resources and necessities.

Helping young people and their families is a gratifying mission. It's also a process that can be monitored and improved. It can be difficult and frustrating. It takes time, patience and effort. But then, there are the moments we wait for and work toward: the good news, the accomplishments, the smiles of pride and achievement. And it's all worth it.