

Chapter 1

Introduction

I do a lot of things, like use drugs, for no reason.

If I start crying, I am afraid I will not be able to stop. This is why I always fight back my tears!

When my spouse says that to me, I instantly lose control!

Have you heard statements like these in your clinical practice? Have you found that many patients have difficulties perceiving, labeling, accepting, and regulating their emotions in healthy ways? Have you seen how these difficulties contribute to the development and maintenance of your patients' problems? Do you believe emotion regulation difficulties are often responsible for the development and maintenance of mental disorders? Do you believe that enhancing emotion regulation skills could be a promising transdiagnostic target in the treatment of various disorders? Have you had trouble finding techniques to enhance your patients' general emotion regulation skills among the myriad disorder-specific treatment manuals? If your answer to these questions is "Yes!", then you share the experiences that originally served as the starting point for the manual you are now holding in your hands.

After seeing the negative impact of emotion regulation deficits in our own patients, we embarked on a search for ways we could help patients develop these important skills. First, more than 100 scientific studies were analyzed and summarized for what is known about the relationship between emotion regulation deficits and mental disorders. Building on these findings, theoretical frameworks were created that outlined the development of emotion regulation deficits and conceptualized adaptive emotion regulation. Additionally, we explored potential pathways between emotion regulation skills and mental health. In *Part 1* of this manual, we present these findings and theories and discuss the implications for clinical practice.

Following the foundational work, a comprehensive, group-training program was developed to teach emotion regulation skills that could be used with a wide range of populations. This training program became known as Affect Regulation Training (ART). In *Part 2* of this manual, we describe the training in detail in order to equip therapists to deliver ART themselves. In *Part 3*, the final section, we discuss clinical experiences with the ART curriculum, present empirical evidence for the effectiveness of ART, and describe current efforts to expand and enhance the ART program.