

Ben Caunt- Bondi Psychology

BPsych (Hons), MCLinPsych, Yoga Teacher Cert.
Medicare No. 4275652J, AHPRA No. PSY0001177189

Suite 403, 35 Spring St
Bondi Junction, NSW, 2022
Ph: 0457610093

“RIDING THE WAVE” - A Dialectical Behaviour Therapy metaphor for mastering emotions

One way of thinking about our emotions is to think of them like the ocean.

If you imagine the sea, you might picture it as flat, calm and blue, or as crashing surf, or small rocking waves.

Just as the ocean can change, so can our emotions. With the ocean, it is the weather that might cause changes—high winds or still, sunny days can make a difference to how the waves react. In our lives, things that may affect our emotions can be problems with friends or family, stress about school or things that happen in our environment and around us that may affect our emotions.

Sometimes you can see a storm brewing that might whip the waves up, other times the change may happen with little warning. But what we know for certain, about the sea and about our emotions, is they chop and change.

So, like waves, our emotions may at one moment be calm and serene, and at another rocky and angry. We might float along on a happy emotion, or be swept away by anger, we might experience small emotional ups and downs, or a big wave of sadness and hopelessness might dump us.

We can let our emotions push us around and move us along—or we can learn how to harness our emotions. We can learn how to float with our feelings, letting them wash over us, or how to surf the big feelings, not letting them crash over us, but taking control, and riding the wave!

This module will help you learn how to ride the waves of emotion—not to be swept away by them, but to recognise weather changes (emotional warning signs), go with the flow, and deal with getting dumped by a wave. Once you know how to ride the waves, you should have the skills to surf any breaker that comes your way.

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RIDING THE WAVE OF AN EMOTION



Observe your Feeling

Notice it

Step back

Get unstuck

Experience your Feeling

As a wave coming and going

Try not to block the feeling

Don't try to get rid of it

Don't try to push it away

Don't try to hold on to it

Don't try to make the feeling bigger

Remember, you are not the feeling

You don't need to act on it

Remember times when you have felt differently

Become more comfortable with your feeling

Don't judge it

Radically accept it as part of you

Name your feeling

Invite it home for dinner and sit with it