## **Dialectical Abstinence**

## **ABSTINENCE**

(Swearing off addictive behavior)

Pro: People who commit to abstinence stay off longer.

Con: It takes longer for people to get back "on the wagon" once they fall off.

VS.

## HARM REDUCTION

(Acknowledging there will be slips; minimizing the damage, but not demanding perfection)

Pro: When a slip does happen, people can get back "on the wagon" faster.

Con: People who commit to harm reduction relapse quicker.

## SYNTHESIS = DIALECTICAL ABSTINENCE

The goal is not to engage in addictive behavior again in other words, to achieve complete abstinence.

However, if there is a slip, the goal is to minimize harm and get back to abstinence as soon as possible.

Pros: It works!

Cons: It's work. You don't get a vacation.

(You're always either abstinent or working to get back to abstinence.)

An example of expecting the best and planning for the trouble spots: Olympic athletes must believe and behave as though they can win every race, even though they have lost before and will lose again.