



DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY WORKBOOK

BY JO RUST



Hi there!

My name is Jo Rust. (Yes, that's really my name)

I describe myself as an eternally optimistic scientist, creative soul, and lover of adventure who believes in miracles, kindness, and love.

I have suffered from mental illness for over 3 decades, and have had a very intense journey in learning how to better cope with my little myriad of mental health difficulties. I have an unquenchable passion for mental health education and have studied and researched (and continuously do) all things psychology, neuroscience, epigenetics, psychoneuroimmunology, and psychiatry. I wish I had been taught or had access to all this information when I was much younger, which is why I create these freely downloadable ebooks.

Jo Rust



WHAT IS 'DBT'?

Dialectical Behavioural Therapy is a type of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. It's a type of talk therapy aimed to help, especially those, who struggle with experiencing intense emotions.

Dialectical thinking refers to the ability to logically view issues from different perspectives. It also relates to opposing forces.

It aims to teach you how to accept difficult emotions, learn the skills to manage them, and ultimately bring about positive change in your life.

This therapy framework aims to equip you with tools you can implement in your daily life to help you better cope with negative/difficult thoughts & emotions.

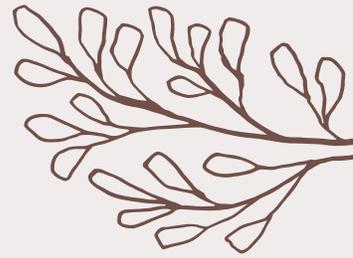
DBT was originally developed to help treat patients suffering from Borderline Personality Disorder. Today it's used to help treat a number of other conditions including depression, eating disorders, self-harm, anxiety, PTSD, and substance use disorders.



THE 4 MODELS OF DBT

1. MINDFULNESS
2. INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS
3. EMOTIONAL REGULATION
4. DISTRESS TOLERANCE

MINDFULNESS

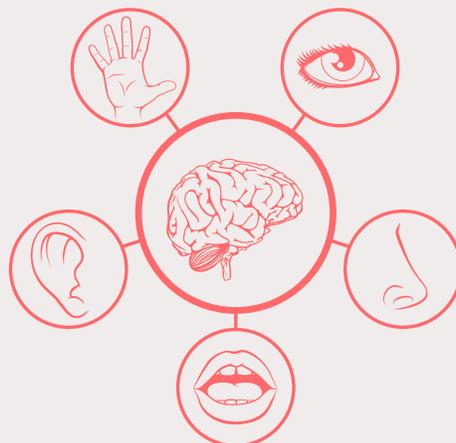


What is 'Mindfulness'?

When we talk about mindfulness, many people immediately picture having to practice intrinsic yoga poses. That's not what mindfulness is.

Mindfulness is, quite simply put, the act of '**living in the moment**'. It helps you to focus on what's happening inside you (thoughts, feelings, impulses), whilst using your senses to **become aware of what's happening around you in a nonjudgmental way**.

Mindfulness skills help you to slow down, take a step back and focus on using healthy coping skills when you are experiencing emotional pain.



Mindfulness:

What Skills & How Skills



What Skills

Teaches you what you're focusing on ex:

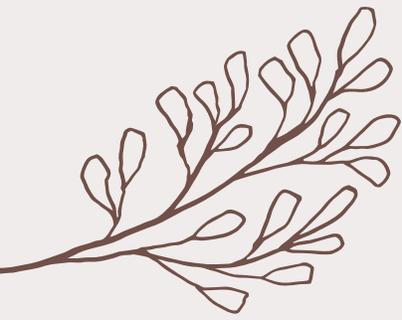
- The present
- Your awareness in the present
- Your emotions, thoughts, and sensations
- Separating emotions and sensations from thought



How Skills

Teaches you *how* to be more mindful by:

- Balancing rational thoughts with emotions
- Using radical acceptance to accept different aspects of yourself
- Taking effective action
- Practicing mindfulness skills regularly
- Overcoming things like restlessness and doubt



WISE MIND



RATIONAL MIND

- Intellectual
- Use past experiences
- Think logically
- Use facts
- Do research
- Focused

WISE MIND

- Intuitive thinking
- A balance between rational and emotional mind
- Living mindfully

EMOTIONAL MIND

- Difficulty thinking rationally and logically
- Make decisions based on emotions
- Tells us how we are really doing
- Uses core psychological needs
- Reactive

MINDFULNESS

How Skills

1. NON-JUDGMENTALLY

In order to begin observing our thoughts and emotions objectively, we must commit to being non-judgmental about them. Within the mindfulness practice, there are no good thoughts, bad thoughts, or unwanted thoughts. They're all equal as we don't judge.

Letting go of our opinions is part of the relief that we experience when practicing this skill. By doing this we are able to let go of the stress created by us trying to resist that which causes us pain.

When we notice ourselves judging, we know that we've wandered from mindfulness, and we begin again. Mindfulness is a vacation from judgement.



MINDFULNESS

How Skills

2. ONE-MINDFULLY

The act of **focusing on one thing at a time**. This is essentially the opposite of multi-tasking. Meditation is a good example of this practice.

Another example of this practice in everyday life would be: doing the dishes. You're JUST doing the dishes. You're not thinking of other tasks you still need to complete. You're not listening to music. You're just immersed in washing the dishes. Feeling the warmth of the water. The smell of the detergent. The color of the water and the bubbles and different dishes. The shapes of the different dishes. The texture of the different dishes.

We can choose to do almost anything one-mindfully.



MINDFULNESS

How Skills

3. EFFECTIVELY

The act of applying, learning, and honing our practice. To be effective at something means to be able to produce the desired result. This means strengthening our mindfulness muscles as we progress.

The more we practice, the more we become aware of the space between our thoughts and our actions. This gives us the ability to practice not acting on impulse.

Becoming more skillful at this practice also helps us to become less judgmental, of others and ourselves. We can let go of emotions that feel like they stand in our way and nurture our sense of compassion.



MINDFULNESS

What Skills

1. OBSERVING

Observing is sensing or experiencing without describing or labeling the experience. It is noticing or attending to something. The benefit of this practice is that the mind becomes quiet.

Eventually, you will be able to observe things without a running commentary of a talkative mind. Preoccupation, rumination, distraction, and daydreaming are all examples of a talkative mind.

Just notice the Experience. Notice without getting caught in the experience. Experience without reacting to your experience.

Have a “Teflon Mind,” letting experiences, feelings, and thoughts come into your mind and slip right out.



MINDFULNESS

What Skills

2. DESCRIBING

Describing is using words to represent what you observe. Observing is just noticing, there are no words. Describing is a reaction to observing.

Self-awareness is the ability to name an emotion like sadness as sadness from a slightly detached viewpoint.

Thoughts are often confused with facts. If 'I can't do this' comes into your mind, this does not necessarily mean that in fact, you can't do whatever. Describing is using words to represent what you observe.

Describing is "just the facts." Judging is labeling something in an evaluative way. The ability to apply names to behavioral and environmental events is essential for both communication and self-control. Learning to describe requires that you learn not to take your emotions and thoughts literally – that is, as a literal reflection of environmental events. Feeling afraid does not necessarily mean that a situation is threatening to your life or welfare.

MINDFULNESS

What Skills

3. PARTICIPATING

Enter into your experiences whole-heartedly. Let go of fear, judgment, and self-consciousness. Throw yourself completely into participating in an activity.

Participating is entering wholly into an activity, becoming one with the activity. It is throwing yourself into something completely. It is spontaneous behavior to a certain extent, although you can also do it mindfully.



How Skills Worksheet

Practice Exercises For HOW Skills

Non-judgmentally:

Sit in a chair or lie on your back on the floor. Close your eyes. Breathe in deeply and slowly through your nose, all the way into your belly. Then exhale slowly through your mouth. Now start counting your breaths. Say to yourself in your mind: "One" as you inhale, and "Two" as you exhale. Count up to ten. Then start over again from one. Do this five times. Whilst you're doing this exercise, notice any thoughts that might enter your mind.

When a thought enters your mind just label the thought with the word: "Thinking". Then imagine that thought merely floating away in the air. Keep doing this every time you feel distracted by thoughts entering your mind.

How Skills Worksheet

Practice Exercises For HOW Skills

One-mindfully:

Choose an activity. Whether it be washing dishes, dancing, going to the gym, mowing the lawn, going for a walk/run or whatever.

Use your senses to help immerse yourself in the present moment. For example, if you're mowing the lawn use your senses to notice what the freshly cut grass smells like. Focus on identifying all the colors you possibly can in your environment. The warmth of the sun shining down on you. Run your hands over the grass and focus solely on what it feels like. Focus on your breathing as you push the lawnmower.

If you feel yourself getting distracted by thoughts, just use your labeling skill and label the thought as "thinking", then allow it to float away and gently bring yourself back to the present moment.

How Skills Worksheet

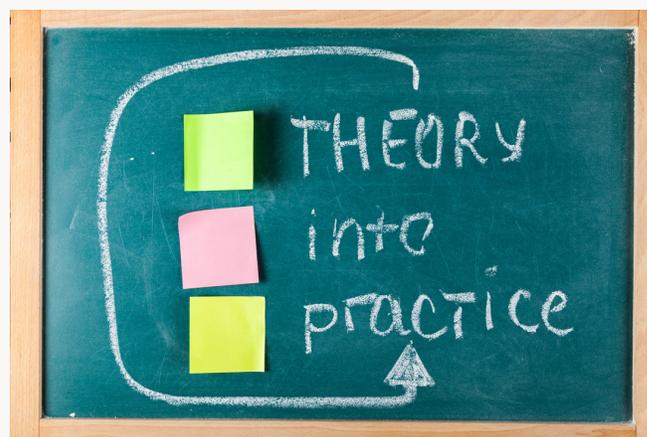
Practice Exercises For HOW Skills

Effectively:

Now choose 3 days to practice the above skills. We all know the saying: 'practice makes perfect', so now we need to practice our new skills on a regular basis to strengthen these skills. Just like we do a muscle.

All you need is 10 to 20 minutes, 3 days a week. This can be first thing in the morning, during the day, or last thing before you go to bed.

Set yourself a reminder on your phone or put it in your calendar with an alert.



How Skills Worksheet

Practice Exercises For WHAT Skills

Observing:

Try and observe thoughts and sensations without any judgment.

- Experience one hand on a cool surface (ex. a table, chair or wall) and one hand on a warm surface (ex. against your body).
- Sit quietly and notice the first 3 thoughts that enter your mind. Don't label them. Just notice them. Then imagine them floating away on a cloud.
- Stroke your upper lip a few times. Then stop stroking and see how long it takes before you can't sense your lip anymore.
- Check how long you can observe. It is common to have to start and restart many times in the course of 1 or 2 minutes.

How Skills Worksheet

Practice Exercises For WHAT Skills

Describing:

Choose an object. It could be anything. A water bottle, a shoe, a chair etc.

Now describe the object in every little detail.

Ex. This is a water bottle. It is made of glass. It has a pattern of blue and grey flowers painted on it. The painted lines stand out when I run my fingers over them. The top is made of wood but has a rubber inner. It is a screw-on top. The bottle feels cold to the touch. It is shaped like a pear.

No judgment. Just physically describing the object using facts.



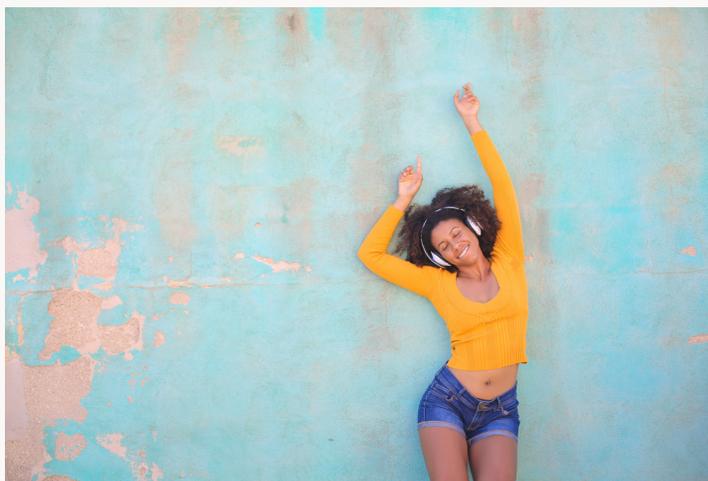
How Skills Worksheet

Practice Exercises For WHAT Skills

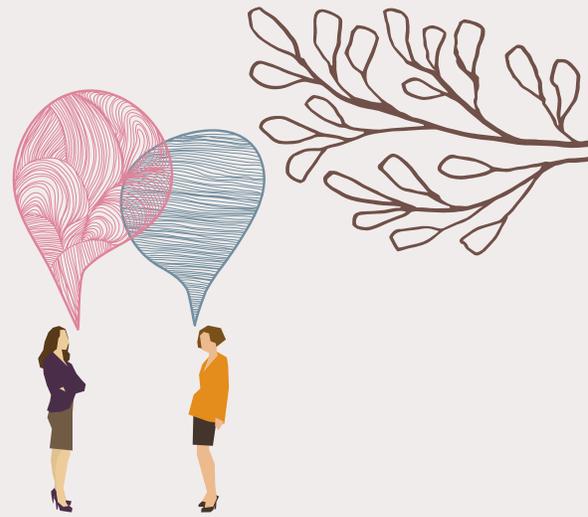
Participating:

This one might make you feel really awkward at first if you're anything like me.

Put on your favorite song. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and start dancing it out. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Just move your limbs and body naturally. Even if you think it might look silly - remember: no judgment. Let go of self-consciousness and just immerse yourself in the activity. Don't think about it. Just dance.



INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS



This is the main focus of Dialectical Behavior Therapy.

The quality of our relationships with colleagues, friends, and loved ones has a significant influence on our overall well-being, self-confidence, and sense of self.

Interpersonal Effectiveness skills help us to better understand and adapt to others' communication styles and behavior patterns to build and maintain more positive relationships.

This in turn helps us to know what questions to ask, network and build rapport, manage challenging situations better, and listen and communicate more effectively.



INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Acronyms

Our relationships are like a tall tree. A tree requires a system of healthy roots to nourish and support it. As the roots grow, the tree also grows taller and stronger.

Like trees, your relationships with others also have roots. In order to grow a relationship, the roots need to be healthy as well.

Interpersonal Effectiveness skills provide us with a way to nurture these roots and build or maintain healthier relationships.

You can easily remember these skills by their acronyms: **THINK**, **FAST**, **GIVE**, and **DEAR MAN**.



INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

T.H.I.N.K

This skill was developed to reduce negative emotions toward others.

THINK - about the situation from the other person's perspective.

HAVE EMPATHY - what might it feel like to be in the other person's shoes?

INTERPRETATIONS - of the other person's behaviors. Think about possible reasons why they might have behaved the way they did? Ex. "Everything always has to be on his/her terms" = He/she has control issues = he/she grew up in a household where there was no stability and therefore feels scared when not in control = it might look like he's/she's a control freak from the outside, but in reality, he/she is afraid of not being able to control his/her environment and perhaps he's/she's just not very good at communicating that. (Or even aware of it)

NOTICE - the other person. Notice when they're trying to be kind and improve the relationship. Notice they look scared but trying to mask it with anger. Simply take note.

KINDNESS - in your response. This doesn't mean you have to forgive and forget immediately. It simply means being kind with your words. Ex. "What you said really hurt me. I hope we can talk about this and fix it sometime in the future, but right now I need some time to myself". A kind response will be better for the long-term relationship than yelling or name-calling.

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

F.A.S.T

This skill is focused on maintaining your self respect during conflict.

FAIR - To yourself and others. This includes both your thoughts and actions. When you're being fair, you're not using judgmental statements such as: "He/She's the worst", or "I'm so useless". You're able to take a step back and assess a situation from a place of fairness. Ex. What is currently going on for this person (or in your own life) that's making them act/ react like this?

(no) APOLOGIES - This doesn't mean NEVER apologizing. Apologising can be very powerful in relationships. This just means not apologizing if you've done nothing wrong. Don't apologize for making a request, having an opinion, or disagreeing.

STICK TO YOUR VALUES - Stand up for what you believe in. Stick to your values. If you're not sure about what you value, do some self-examination. (Exercise below) If you say you value friendship, but you constantly fail to show up in your friendships, then you don't value friendship.

TRUTHFUL - Avoid dishonesty such as exaggeration, acting helplessly as a form of manipulation, or outright lying.

Using the four steps of FAST will allow you to maintain your dignity and come out of a situation feeling good about yourself, regardless of how you feel about the outcome.

Exercise

Know yourself/ Skills assessment

Rate yourself on the following skills:

1	I am very poor at that skill
2	I am poor at that skill
3	I am sometimes good at that skill
4	I am usually good at that skill
5	I am always good at that skill

Introducing yourself	1	2	3	4	5
Listening - taking in what people say	1	2	3	4	5
Listening - showing interest in people	1	2	3	4	5
Communicating feelings	1	2	3	4	5
Dealing with anger/ hostility	1	2	3	4	5
Responding to praise	1	2	3	4	5
Responding to expression of anxiety	1	2	3	4	5
Responding to negative feedback	1	2	3	4	5
Coping with apathy and expressions of disinterest	1	2	3	4	5
Coping with silences in conversations	1	2	3	4	5
Appreciating other people's feelings	1	2	3	4	5
Giving information	1	2	3	4	5
Advising on emotional issues/ difficulties	1	2	3	4	5
Seeking clarification	1	2	3	4	5
Asking open-ended questions	1	2	3	4	5
Waiting for replies	1	2	3	4	5
Changing direction of conversation	1	2	3	4	5
Expressing support	1	2	3	4	5

Self-disclosure as appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
Making a conversation more serious	1	2	3	4	5
Making a conversation less serious	1	2	3	4	5
Summarising what people have said	1	2	3	4	5
Holding someone's interest and attention	1	2	3	4	5
Finishing conversations in a positive way	1	2	3	4	5
Organising skills	1	2	3	4	5
Time management	1	2	3	4	5
Liaising with others	1	2	3	4	5
Resolving conflict	1	2	3	4	5
Finishing tasks	1	2	3	4	5

Observing your answers above, you can make a list of skills you can spend some time working on improving. List all skills you rated as a 1,2 or 3. A simple online search will give you some tools you can utilise to help improve these skills.

For example: let's say you struggle with 'resolving conflict'

You can try to use the following language:

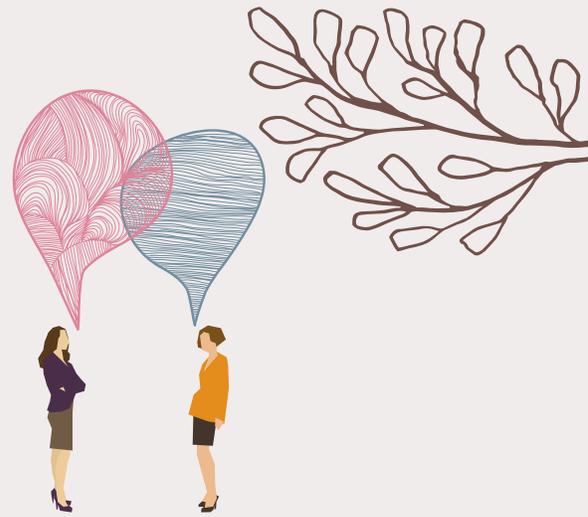
"I feel....",

"When you..."

"Because..."

Ex: I feel like you don't respect me when you show up late because punctuality is important to me.

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS



While THINK and FAST can be used in all interpersonal communication, they are especially helpful when there is conflict in the relationship. For everyday interpersonal communication, you can use the skills GIVE and DEAR MAN to grow a healthy relationship.

The GIVE skill is useful in every interpersonal relationship. Whether it's your first time meeting this person or you've been married for 45 years, GIVE will help to build and maintain positive relationships.

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

G.I.V.E

GENTLE - in your approach. When you're gentle, you are being mindful of the other person's emotions. This will help the person with whom you're communicating to feel loved instead of attacked. Communication is always better when no one is feeling defensive.

INTERESTED - in what the other person is saying. Interest can be conveyed through words and/or body language. Using words, you can ask the person questions about what she is saying or simple "uh-huh" "oh really?" responses. You can convey interest through body language by maintaining eye contact, actually listening to what is being said, and making a facial expression.

VALIDATE - Confirm not only that you hear what the other person is saying, but that you understand it by echoing the emotion back to her. If she is telling you that her friend canceled their lunch date for the third time in a row, you might say "How frustrating! You must feel so disappointed!"

EASY MANNER - Present yourself as being relaxed and comfortable throughout the interaction. You will be more approachable.

Both verbal and nonverbal communication is essential in the GIVE skill. These actions will set you up for effective interpersonal communication in each of your relationships.

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

D.E.A.R M.A.N

DEAR MAN is the interpersonal skill used to ask for something in a respectful and effective way that builds and maintains a relationship-- whether or not you actually get what you are asking for.

DESCRIBE - the situation in a simple way. If you want to go to the movies with your friends, you could briefly describe the situation by saying, "My friends are going to see the new comic book movie this weekend."

EXPRESS - what you would like. "I would like to go to the movie with them."

ASSERT - why this is important to you in a way that is respectful, and not aggressive. "I haven't been able to spend much time with them since track season started, so it would be really meaningful if I could spend time with them."

REINFORCE - when you do get what you asked for. "I promise I'll have my room clean and my homework is done before I leave for the movie."

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

D.E.A.R M.A.N

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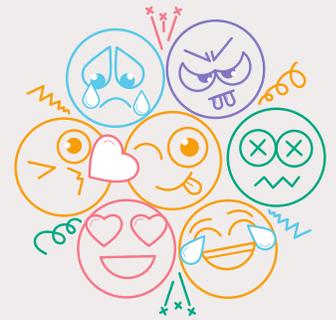
MINDFUL - Stay in that moment. Don't worry about the past or future, such as what your friends will say if you can't go. Just be in that moment.

APPEAR CONFIDENT - are you scared out of your mind to ask your boss for a raise? She doesn't need to know that. Approach the situation in a confident way.

NEGOTIATE - when it doesn't look like you're going to get the result you were wanting, be flexible. Negotiate to find a happy middle ground for both parties.



EMOTIONAL REGULATION



What is 'Emotional Regulation'?

Emotion regulation is a dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) skill to help us understand the function of emotions, the action urge, or reaction that accompanies each emotion, and whether to give in to or oppose these urges.

The following skills also help reduce vulnerability, increase resiliency against unwanted emotions, and improve overall mental health.





EMOTIONAL REGULATION



Why do we use emotional regulation?

Practicing emotional regulation is very helpful in reduces vulnerability towards unwanted or overwhelming emotions. It also helps to build resiliency for when these emotions do come up. Emotional regulation skills are preventative in nature.

Understanding emotions.

Emotions help provide feedback about our immediate environment and each emotion you experience has a purpose. This is usually referred to as your 'gut instinct'. Past, present, and possible future events can also evoke certain emotions depending on your thoughts and focus. Whether you're living in the now, thinking back on certain experiences, or worrying/ being excited about possible future events.

Past experiences also affect how you react to certain triggers emotionally. Emotions also help communicate how we feel to those around us. Whether it be verbal or nonverbal. (body language)

Where thoughts are the language of the brain, emotions are the language of the body. It is very useful to be able to identify an emotion and consider what that emotion might be trying to tell you about a situation.

We also have primary and secondary emotions. Ex. Getting enraged because someone cut you off in traffic = primary emotion. Feeling shame because you didn't control your emotions = secondary emotion.



EMOTIONAL REGULATION



ABC PLEASE Skills

The purpose of the **ABC PLEASE** skills is to help decrease vulnerability to unwanted/ overwhelming emotions. In the past, these were known as 'PLEASE MASTER'.

A

ACCUMULATING POSITIVE EXPERIENCES - By regularly participating in activities that we enjoy, as well as setting and working toward long-term goals, most of the negative experiences we have won't seem as detrimental.

B

BUILD MASTERY - This skill reminds us to constantly work on improving ourselves and our talents. As we learn and master a new hobby or skill, we feel successful and accomplished on a regular basis. We become more confident and learn that we can be successful in other areas, as well.

C

COPE AHEAD - We are often aware of the situations that will make us uncomfortable before they happen. Coping ahead helps us to prepare in advance for these situations. If, for example, you have a test coming up, you are able to prepare ahead by studying, talking with your teacher, and identifying a self-soothing skill to use during the test. This preparation will likely decrease the anxiety you feel before and throughout the exam.



EMOTIONAL REGULATION



ABC PLEASE Skills

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PLEASE

Treat **P**hysical **I**llness

Balanced **E**ating

Avoid Mood-**A**ltering Drugs (non prescribed)

Balanced **S**leep

Exercise

The **PLEASE** skills are guidelines to help us take care of our physical health since our physical health is closely tied to our mental health. When we are sick, exhausted, or otherwise unhealthy, we are more susceptible to negative emotions. By caring for our bodies we increase the likelihood of a more positive emotional experience.



EMOTIONAL REGULATION



OPPOSITE ACTION Skills

The dialectical behavior therapy skill of **opposite action** helps us take control of our emotions when they don't fit the facts

Each emotion we experience comes with an action urge, or behavior, associated with it. After identifying the emotion you're experiencing, try to identify the associated behavior. If you are feeling ashamed, the behavior might be isolating from others². If you are feeling happy, the behavior might be smiling. When you are feeling proud, it might be giving the person a hug. Exactly what the action looks like will be different for everyone, but each person experiences an urge associated with each emotion they feel.

Often, these action urges make sense for the situation you're in. These urges are often intended to protect you. But emotions aren't always right. For example, feeling fearful before public speaking and having the urge to run away doesn't fit the fact. Public speaking does not put your life in danger; therefore, you don't need to run away. When the emotion doesn't fit the fact, you'll want to identify an action that opposes the emotional urge. If you're feeling ashamed and experience the urge to isolate, you could intentionally seek out the companionship of a safe friend and speak your shame. While this is easier said than done, you'll almost certainly feel better afterwards. Individuals with borderline personality disorder may find opposite action particularly useful, as their action urge is commonly a self-destructive behavior.



EMOTIONAL REGULATION

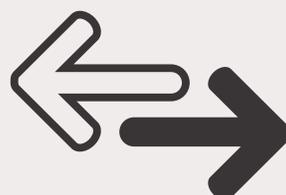


OPPOSITE ACTION Skills

Though challenging, the opposite action strategies can reduce and eventually eliminate self-destructive urges.

Opposite action is most effective when it's done "all the way", meaning that you act opposite in thoughts, words, and deeds. Although it's difficult at first, continue practicing opposite action until you start to feel differently. Eventually the action urge will be replaced with the new, more productive action. Because you know how to counter the urges of your unpleasant emotions, they'll be easier to tolerate and you will bounce back quicker.

Each time we practice an emotion regulation skill, we decrease the likelihood that a negative emotion will severely impact us. When we regularly practice the ABC PLEASE skills, we keep ourselves more mentally, emotionally, and physically healthy. This increases our positive emotions and reduced vulnerability to unpleasant emotions. By identifying our emotions and their urges, as well as evaluating whether or not they fit the facts, we are able to healthily alter the way we feel. Emotion regulation skills help us understand that we do have some control over the emotions that we feel and how they impact us.



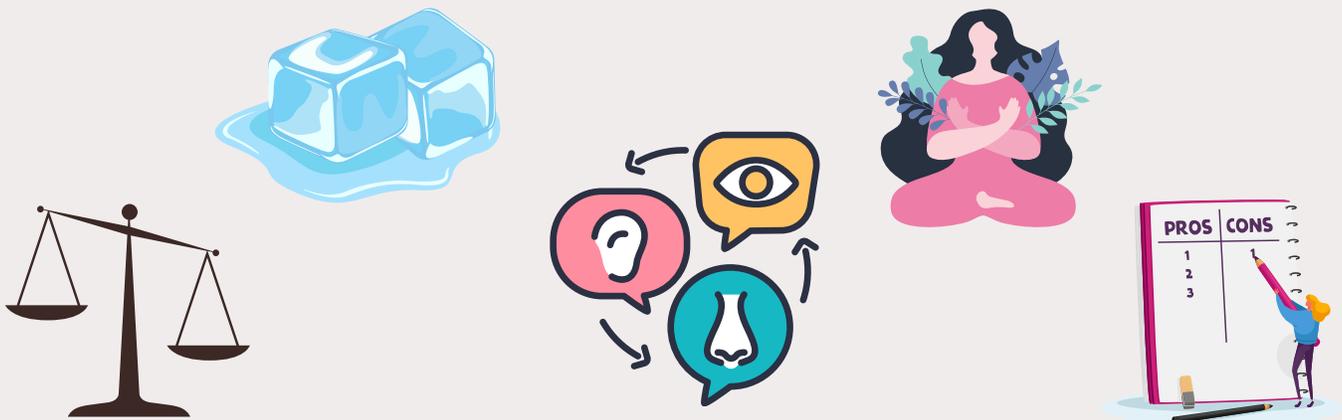


DISTRESS TOLERANCE



What is 'Distress Tolerance'?

We all experience crises in our lives. Sometimes these crises are big, like a divorce, a death, or a layoff. Sometimes these crises are small, like traffic, a long line at check out, or not knowing what to wear that day. DBT distress tolerance skills help you get to a more manageable emotional place for crisis survival.





DISTRESS TOLERANCE

SKILL 1

TIPP

SKILL 2

ACCEPTS

SKILL 3

IMPROVE

SKILL 4

PROS & CONS

SKILL 5

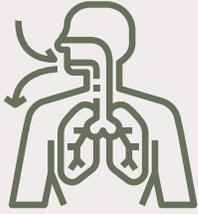
SELF SOOTHE

SKILL 6

RADICAL
ACCEPTANCE

SKILL 7

STOPP



DISTRESS TOLERANCE



TIPP



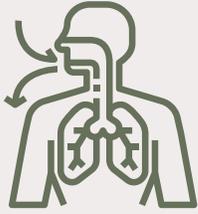
You're at your emotional breaking point. Maybe the worst has happened, or maybe it was just the "last straw". The DBT distress tolerance skill you need is TIPP. This skill is designed to bring you down from the metaphorical (hopefully not literal) ledge.

TIPP stands for **Temperature**, **Intense exercise**, **Paced breathing**, and **Paired muscle relaxation**.

TEMPERATURE - You're at your emotional breaking point. Maybe the worst has happened, or maybe it was just the "last straw". The DBT distress tolerance skill you need is TIPP. This skill is designed to bring you down from the metaphorical (hopefully not literal) ledge.

TIPP stands for **Temperature**, **Intense exercise**, **Paced breathing**, and **Paired muscle relaxation**.

INTENSE EXERCISE - Do intense exercise to match your intense emotion. You're not a marathon runner? That's okay, you don't need to be. Sprint down to the end of the street, jump in the pool for a few laps, or do jumping jacks until you've tired yourself out. Increasing oxygen flow helps decrease stress levels. Plus, it's hard to stay dangerously upset when you're exhausted.



DISTRESS TOLERANCE



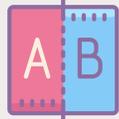
TIPP



PACED BREATHING - Even something as simple as controlling your breath can have a profound impact on reducing emotional pain. There are many different types of breathing exercises. If you have a favorite, breathe it out. If you don't, try a technique called "box breathing". Each breath interval will be four seconds long. Take in air four seconds, hold it in four seconds, breathe out four, and hold four. And then start again. Continue to focus on this breathing pattern until you feel calmer. Steady breathing reduces your body's fight or flight response.

PAIRED MUSCLE RELAXATION - The science of paired muscle relaxation is fascinating. When you tighten a voluntary muscle, relax it, and allow it to rest, the muscle will become more relaxed than it was before it was tightened. Relaxed muscles require less oxygen, so your breathing and heart rate will slow down.

Try this technique by focusing on a group of muscles, such as the muscles in your FEET. Tighten the muscles as much as you can for five seconds. Then let go of the tension. Let the muscles relax, and you'll begin to relax, as well. Now work your way up one muscle group at a time, ex. calves, quads, tummy, back, arms, neck, scrunch up all the muscles in your face. Alternating between tensing and then relaxing.



DISTRESS TOLERANCE

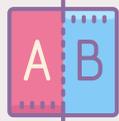
ACCEPTS



The DBT distress tolerance acronym **ACCEPTS** is a group of skills to help you tolerate a negative emotion until you are able to address and eventually resolve the situation. In an early season of the 90's sitcom Friends, Monica is dating Pete Becker. He calls her from out of town and says, "We need to talk." Monica wonders if it is a good talk, or a bad talk? She is in psychological distress waiting for his return. The skill set she would use while waiting for Pete to come home is ACCEPTS.

This DBT skill stands for **Activities**, **Contributing**, **Comparisons**, **Emotions**, **Push away**, **Thoughts**, and **Sensation**. These techniques are designed to keep your emotions manageable until you can resolve the problem.

ACTIVITIES - Engage in an activity, and this can be just about any healthy activity. Read a book, make strawberry jam, go for a walk, call your friend, wash the dishes. Anything that keeps you busy and keeps your mind off the negative emotion will help. If you finish, move on to a new activity. (You could potentially have a very productive day while awaiting that dreaded situation!)



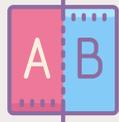
DISTRESS TOLERANCE

ACCEPTS



CONTRIBUTING - Do something kind for another person. Giving service can help you relieve emotional distress in a couple ways. An act of service is also an activity that, as mentioned above, will help get your mind off of the problem at hand. Additionally, we feel good about ourselves when we help someone else, and that in itself can help you deal with stress. Help cook dinner, mow the neighbor's lawn, or bake cookies for a friend or relative. Each of these contributing ideas will distract you from your current situation.

COMPARISONS - Put your life in perspective. Is there a time when you've faced more difficult challenges than you're facing today? Maybe not—maybe this is the most intense situation and most intense emotion you've ever experienced. (If so, you may need to jump back up to the TIPP section.) If that's the case, is there another person who has suffered more than you? Are you in your safe home, while in another part of the world someone else is searching for food and shelter after a natural disaster? The goal of this exercise is not to add more distress and emotional pain to your current situation. Instead, use this skill to add a different perspective to what you're experiencing right now.



DISTRESS TOLERANCE



ACCEPTS

EMOTIONS - You have the power to invoke the opposite emotion of your current distressing feeling. If you are feeling anxious, practice meditation for 15 minutes. If you're feeling depressed, go ahead and Google Image search "adorable puppies". (If you're in need of a real laugh, search "ugly puppies".) Adding a dose of the opposite emotion helps reduce the intensity of the negative emotion.

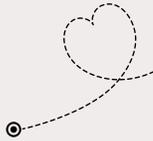
PUSH AWAY - When you can't deal with something just yet, it's okay to push the problem out of your mind temporarily. You can push away by distracting yourself with other activities, thoughts, or mindfulness. You can even set a time to come back to the issue. You know that it will be addressed, and you can relax in the interim.

THOUGHTS - Replace negative, anxious thoughts with activities that busy your mind, such as saying the alphabet backward or doing a Sudoku puzzle. These distractions can help you avoid self-destructive behavior until you're able to achieve emotion regulation.

SENSATIONS - Use your five senses to self-soothe during times of distress. A self-soothing behavior could be taking a warm bath with a lavender bath bomb and relaxing music, eating a comforting snack, or watching your favorite show. Anything that appeals to your senses can help you cope with the present situation.



YOU CAN
DO IT!



DISTRESS TOLERANCE

IMPROVE



Whether the circumstance is small (you just broke your shoe) or big (you just broke your foot), there will be many times that you don't have control over an unpleasant event. During these times, you'll need distress tolerance to make it through the situation without engaging in unhealthy behaviors. Intense emotions don't last forever. You can use the dialectical behavior skill **IMPROVE** to tolerate emotions until the intensity subsides.

IMPROVE stands for **Imagery**, **Meaning**, **Prayer**, **Relaxation**, **One thing in the moment**, **Vacation**, and **Encouragement**.

IMAGERY - Imagine yourself dealing successfully with the problem, being in wise mind, and feeling accomplished when the situation is over. By doing so, you may actually be able to change the outcome of the problem in your favor.



YOU CAN
DO IT!



IMPROVE



DISTRESS TOLERANCE



MEANING - Try to find meaning in painful situations. What can you learn from this experience? Maybe you'll be more empathetic. Maybe you'll build new relationships. Maybe this will launch you on a healing journey. Find a reason, or a possible reason, to assign your present suffering.

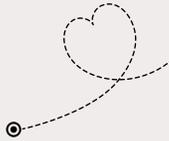
PRAYER - Prayer can come in any form that works for you. The prayer can be to any higher power, including God or the universe. Surrender your problems and ask to tolerate the situation a little longer.

RELAXATION - We tense up during stressful situations thanks to our fight or flight instinct. Engage in relaxing activities to calm the psychological distress you're experiencing. These activities can include deep breathing, yoga, a hot bath, and a relaxing walk.

ONE THING IN THE MOMENT - Stay in the moment by letting go of the past and future. Adding old issues to the situation, or future tripping about potential consequences of the situation, will not be helpful in solving the problem. Find one thing to do and focus your entire self to that task. A one-track mind helps emotions feel less overwhelming.



YOU CAN
DO IT!



DISTRESS TOLERANCE

IMPROVE



VACATION - On the ideal vacation, you're able to take a break from all your stressors and return home ready to take on the challenges you left behind. Unfortunately, most of us aren't able to take a real vacation during a moment of crisis. Instead, you can take a vacation in your mind. Imagine yourself somewhere else, like taking an evening stroll around the lake or driving on the Pacific Coast Highway. Stay on your "vacation" as long as necessary, and revisit as often as needed. Hopefully, you'll "return" better able to tolerate your circumstances.

ENCOURAGEMENT - Encouragement doesn't have to come from an external source to be effective. Give yourself encouragement by repeating phrases that are meaningful to you, such as "I got this", "I can improve this moment", or "¡sí se puede!". Say it loud, say it proud! You'll be amazed at your ability to motivate yourself to make it through a challenging time.

The distress tolerance techniques found in IMPROVE can be used anywhere, and anytime you need to tolerate a situation that you can't change. Practice these techniques during minor situations and they'll come to you naturally when bigger problems arise.

DISTRESS TOLERANCE

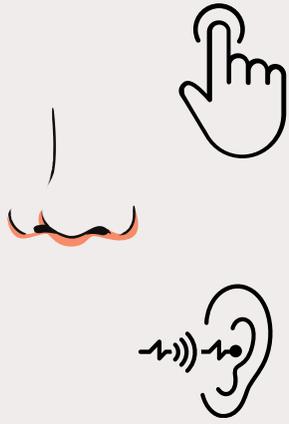
PROS & CONS

Making sensible decisions can be difficult, especially when you're not in Wise Mind. Dialectical behavior therapy suggests using a pro and con list to weigh out the consequences of your decision.

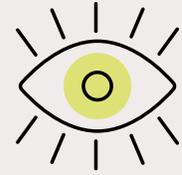
It's common to have urges to engage in self-harm behavior or other self-destructive behavior while in emotional crisis. Make a pro and con list to decide if you should act on an urge, or tolerate an urge. It can be as simple as a few bullet points in your mind or you can dig deep and make a lengthy list on paper.

In this moment, which behavior is best for you? This skill can be useful in fighting impulsive urges and their negative outcomes.





DISTRESS TOLERANCE



SELF SOOTHE

Another simple way to increase your distress tolerance in a crisis situation is to use your body's senses. Self-soothing through senses can quickly reduce the intensity of negative emotions.

SIGHT - Focus on identifying 5 things you can see in your immediate environment.

TOUCH - Identify 4 things you can touch. This could be the texture of your clothes. The texture of the chair you're sitting on etc.

HEARING - Identify 3 things you can hear. People talking, traffic outside, birds chirping etc.

SMELL - Identify 2 smells. Maybe food, a beverage, your hair, a flower.

TASTE - 1 Thing you can taste. A sweet, a beverage etc.

MOVEMENT - While you technically only have five senses, DBT introduces a sixth sense of movement. Your emotional state can be altered by your body's movements, so take a walk around the block or dance to your favorite song!

DISTRESS TOLERANCE

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

Sometimes you will have an undesirable situation that won't change. You may not like it or approve of it, but acceptance will allow you to feel peace and provide you with the space to move on.

Radical acceptance acknowledges that we all have choices, and it sometimes comes down to choosing whether or not we are going to accept the reality of our situation. You can choose to stay miserable about the situation, or you can choose to accept it and move forward. Imagine that you are terrified of the dentist. You tried to ignore it. You tried to deny it. But you know you have a cavity. You had a good relationship with your previous dentist, but he just retired. Your new dentist isn't warm with his patients and seems a little too eager to wield around that sharp, spinning drill.

In an attempt to avoid the dentist and manage the pain you'll probably start cutting out some of your favorite foods that irritate the cavity, such as sugars and cold food. But that's fine, right? You've been thinking you should eat more fish and veggies, anyway. That works out okay, except when you eat an unknown cavity irritant, or the cavity pain just flares up for no good reason.

DISTRESS TOLERANCE

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

By practicing radical acceptance, you choose to accept that you are scared of the dentist, it will be a miserable experience, and the cavity needs to be filled regardless. You can't leave it or else you'll eventually need a root canal, and no one has time for that. (Read: That's like, the scariest dental procedure there is.)

So you go to the appointment, embrace for the worst, and 45 minutes later you walk out with a full set of teeth and a renewed commitment to floss.

And let's not forget—when you're in that dentist chair with a suction tube hanging from your lip and the hygienist misting your entire face with water, you can use the IMPROVE skill set to successfully make it out the other side.



DISTRESS TOLERANCE

STOPP

Another very useful skill that DBT introduces us to is the STOPP skill. This skill comes in handy in moments where you feel especially distressed or overwhelmed.

How it works:

Stop

Take a break/ take a breath

Observe the situation - inside and outside. What are your thoughts and feelings? What are other people doing?

Pull back/ Plan - How best to move forward

Proceed Mindfully



Happy Clients Say:



Marianka said....

We all need a little help sometimes. I myself had a really bad moment of anxiety and Jo absolutely calmed me down, assessed the situation, and recommended coping techniques that are easy and seriously helpful. Trust me this woman has some serious knowledge and if she can calm me down and get me out a spiral - better believe I'm going to share her services not once, not twice... Many!



Salvador said....

I've had tonnes of therapy and coaching, this feels different. Just one session with Jo has helped me more than years in different chairs with different therapists and coaches. She is someone who is truly kind, passionate and caring. I highly recommend her as a mental health coach.



THANK YOU

Thank you for downloading this ebook. I sincerely hope you have found it to be informative and useful.

I am an online mental health coach with clients based all over the world. My approach is to really listen to what it is you find yourself struggling with in life, then equip you with practical tools, techniques, and resources you can implement on a daily basis to help you better cope with mental health difficulties.

For online coaching bookings, please visit my website below or get in touch via [EMAIL](#).

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