

DBT Skills Group

- Goal: Learn DBT skills to help manage strong emotions, unhelpful behavior urges, improving relationships, and navigate stressful situations in your life, and to achieve readiness for trauma exposures
- Daily Format:
 - Brief mindfulness exercise
 - Review of previous day's homework
 - Learn and practice new skills
 - Assign outside practice

Mindfulness Practice

Wise Mind Skills Practice Review

- Practice filling out the “Wise Mind- States of Mind” worksheet (identifying states of mind)
- Select an option from the “Ideas for Practicing Wise Mind” handout, or select your own meditation practice
- Practice pausing and asking yourself “Is this Wise Mind?” (set timers to remind yourself!)

DBT Skills Categories

- **Mindfulness**
- Distress Tolerance
- Emotion Regulation
- Interpersonal Effectiveness

What is Mindfulness?

- Paying attention on purpose
- To the present moment
- Without judgment

Mindfulness helps us with:

- Reducing “autopilot,” increasing sense of control
- Reducing worry/rumination, increasing focus & attention
- Reducing numbing & emotion extremes, increasing awareness of emotions

Mindfulness and PTSD

- Being mindful can be especially challenging after trauma
 - Mind gets pulled to past trauma memories or worries about the future
 - Normal for our mind to avoid connection with present moment during trauma; may continue to avoid present moment after trauma in several ways, including:
 - Dissociation
 - Excessive distraction (avoiding being “alone with my thoughts”)
 - Using attention to scan for threats in safe environments (hypervigilance)
- Mindfulness skills help reduce emotional suffering & increase readiness for in vivo & imaginal exposure

Mindfulness “What” Skills

Observe

Describe

Participate

“What” Skill: Observe

- Intentionally noticing current experience without words, to bring ourselves in contact with the real, factual, present moment
- Bring our attention to rest on one thing at a time; no multitasking
 - Guide your attention to where we want it to be, like shining a flashlight
 - Notice when your attention wanders off and guide it back- again and again (and again)



“What” Skill: Observe

- We can observe:
 - Anything that we can notice with our 5 senses (sight, smell, hear, taste, touch)
 - Internal experiences (thoughts, emotions, urges, sensations)
- We can't directly observe anything else! (Including others' thoughts & intentions)



“What” Skill: Observe

- We do this using a particular type of attention:
 - **“Beginners mind”** – having curiosity, as if seeing for the first time
 - **“Teflon mind”** – allowing what we notice to come and go without pushing away or holding on tight

Why Practice Observing?

- We observe to see what is really happening around and inside of us, so that we can use this information to respond effectively in the moment
- “Observe” is useful in many other DBT skills!
 - Grounding with 5 senses
 - “Observe” in STOP skill
 - Mindfulness of Emotions- learning tomorrow
- Difficult skill to use when observing information that is painful
 - Hence, **practice**

Let's Practice 😊

- Ideas for home practice:
 - Try completing one chore just focusing on 5 senses (washing dishes, brushing teeth, folding clothes, etc.)
 - Try completing 1 enjoyable activity just focusing on 5 senses (taking a shower/bath, taking a walk, drawing/knitting/etc.)
 - Try eating 1 meal/snack or drinking 1 beverage just focusing on 5 senses
 - Pause and mentally scan body to notice any internal sensations
 - See handout in email attachment for additional ideas
- **In-group practice!**

“What” Skill: Describe

- Adding factual, descriptive words to an observation
- Describing reality as “what is” without adding labels of “good” or “bad.”
- Why practice this?
 - Being careful about keeping descriptions factual often helps us feel less overwhelmed and more in control, reduces “all or nothing” thinking
 - E.g. “I have to clean my whole house” vs. “I would like to put away items on the table, wash dishes, and vacuum”
 - E.g., “I’m freaking out” vs. “My heart is racing, I’m nauseous, I’m breathing really rapidly; this usually means I’m having a panic attack”

What can we describe?

- Can only describe things we can observe! (5 senses, internal thoughts & feelings)
 - This means we need to know the difference between **facts & judgments/assumptions** so we don't accidentally treat assumptions as facts while we're in Emotion Mind
 - **Facts are what is observable; assumptions are conclusions we draw**
 - Ex) “I’m stupid” vs “I spelled a word incorrectly in my important work email”
 - Ex) “Crowds are dangerous” vs. “I typically feel anxious in crowds”
- **Can’t** describe someone else’s thoughts, intentions, emotions
 - **Can** describe your own thoughts & feelings
 - **Can** describe others’ observable behavior

Why describe without judgment?

- Judgments exacerbate emotions
 - Notice sadness -> “Feeling sad is weak” -> now feeling MORE sadness, + shame
 - This keeps us stuck in Emotion Mind
- Using judgmental language towards others or assuming what they are thinking and feeling creates conflict & miscommunication
- Focusing on addressing the cause of an issue works better than judging

How to be “Nonjudgmental”

- Let go of **Good and Bad**
 - Replace evaluations with statements of “it is” or descriptions of what is
- Let go of **Should**
 - Replace should with descriptions of feelings or desires
 - e.g., instead of “He should already know why I’m upset” vs. “I wish he understood why I am upset”
- Don’t judge your judgment thoughts!
- Re-phrase judgments into preferences, desires, or emotional responses
 - e.g., “I dislike olives” vs “Olives are disgusting”
 - e.g. “I wish I didn’t have to feel on edge all of the time” vs “anxiety is horrible”



Let's practice!

- Ideas for home practice:
 - Repeat any of the Observe skill practices, adding descriptions of your 5 senses
 - Label emotions when you notice them
 - See additional examples in attached handout
- In-group practice

“What Skill” Participating

- Entering wholly and with awareness into what you are doing in this moment, nonjudgmentally, in the present moment.
- Getting out of your head and into the present moment, fully participating in what is happening **right now**
- The ultimate goal of mindfulness
- **In-group practice!**

Home Skills Practice

- Practice Observe, Describe, & Participate (remember, no multi-tasking!) using 1 of the following options
 - While eating a meal or snack
 - While washing dishes or completing some other chore
 - While doing something fun/pleasant
- Practice all 3 during moment of strong emotion, and notice the outcome