

# P.S COUNSELLING

Supervision and Training

---

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

Preface : *Dialectical Behaviour Therapy*

Section 1 : *Basic Distress Tolerance skills*

Section 2 : *Advanced Distress Tolerance skills*

Section 3 : *Basic Mindfulness Skills*

Section 4 : *Advanced Mindfulness Skills*

Section 5 : *Further Mindfulness Skills*

Section 6 : *Basic Emotion Regulation Skills*

Section 7 : *Advanced Emotion Regulation Skills*

Section 8 : *Basic Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills*

Section 9 : *Advanced Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills*

# Contents

# Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

**DIALECTIC :** To balance and compare two things that appear very different or contradictory – in DBT, the balance is between change and acceptance (to change the behaviours that are creating more suffering for you and others, while simultaneously accepting and loving yourself the way you are). DBT is based on CBT but is adapted for people who feel emotions intensely.

---

**HISTORY :** DBT was originally founded in the late 1970s by Marsha Linehan who was a suicide researcher at the time. She very much wanted to help this population having had her own struggles with mental illness. Linehan came out in the New York Times and acknowledged that she had severe mental illness when she was in her late teens and had a personal interest in helping all of the patients that she saw. She was dedicated to, as she would say, "getting them out of hell," and felt like the population she was working with was in hell and she wanted to be able to get them out any way that she could. DBT was the first psychotherapy to formally incorporate mindfulness. DBT combines strategies from CBT and Humanism.



There is also a Zen influence, in fact Marsha Linehan is now a Zen Master.

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

These techniques work well for issues such as Borderline Personality Disorder (DBT originally used to treat BPD), self-harm, suicide attempts, depression, anxiety, addictions, disordered eating, OCD, PTSD – or anyone who becomes overwhelmed by emotion.

The main goals of DBT are to teach clients how to:

- Live in the moment
  - Develop healthy ways to manage stress
  - Regulate emotions
  - Improve relationships with others
- 

## **SELF-AFFIRMING STATEMENTS TO HELP WITH SELF-ACCEPTANCE**

Carry these with you as a reminder and read them regularly:

- I may have faults, but I am still a good person
- I care about myself and others
- I accept who I am and love myself
- Today I take responsibility for everything I say and do
- I'm a sensitive person who experiences the world differently
- Even though bad things happened to me / I've made mistakes in the past,  
I am still a good person
- Each day I do the best I can

To reduce emotionally overwhelming feelings, helpful for treating BPD, anxiety, depression, shame, PTSD, substance abuse relapse prevention, anger, interpersonal problems. DBT was developed by Marsha Linehan, it has been shown to strengthen a person's ability to handle distress without losing control.

# Section 1

## Distress Tolerance Skills

*There are cognitive / behavioural and physiological strategies*

For overwhelming emotions (where distress comes on quickly and feels like an overwhelming tidal wave, often it feels like the situation will never end). Often people struggling with overwhelming emotions deal with the pain in unhealthy ways eg, isolating self - avoidance, ruminate on past mistakes, numb with alcohol/drugs, self-harming, eating disorders, risk taking behaviours, become aggressive with others etc. These coping strategies may give temporary relief but there are costs.

### REST

**RELAX :** Stop what you are doing, take some slow breaths and pause. Step away from the situation to get a different perspective. Don't do what you normally do (the automatic behaviour), don't act impulsively. Remind yourself you can behave differently, maybe say out loud "Stop", "Relax," "Rest."

**EVALUATE :** Ask yourself what is happening in this situation, what are the facts? Observe what is happening for you physically, emotionally, cognitively. Observe what others around you are doing.

**SET AN INTENTION :** A target/goal/plan about what you are going to do. Pick a coping/ self- soothing/problem-solving/ communication skill (see below).

**TAKE ACTION :** Put your plan into motion, proceed mindfully (move ahead slowly and with awareness of what you are doing).

Use this REST strategy to reflect on a problematic situation you had recently when you felt emotionally overwhelmed. What did you do, then imagine how you could have used the REST strategy and what the outcome might have been. Assess the advantages.

Or

- STOP :** Do not just react. Stop! Freeze! Do not move a muscle! Your emotions may try to make you act without thinking. Stay in control!
- TAKE A STEP BACK :** Take a step back from the situation. Take a break. Let go. Take a deep breath. Do not let your feelings make you act impulsively.
- OBSERVE :** Notice what is going on inside and outside you. What is the situation? What are your thoughts and feelings? What are others saying or doing?
- PROCEED MINDFULLY :** Act with awareness. In deciding what to do, consider your thoughts and feelings, the situation, and other people's thoughts and feelings. Think about your goals.
- Ask Wise Mind: Which actions will make it better or worse?

## RADICAL ACCEPTANCE (RA)

Change of attitude – often when a person is in pain their first reaction is to get angry, upset or to blame/criticise someone else/yourself for causing the pain – but the pain still exists. Being over judgemental of a situation stops you seeing everything as it really is and prevents you from taking steps to change the situation. This leads to more pain/paralysis.

The other option is to acknowledge and tolerate your present situation without judging the events/ criticising yourself/others/trying to change it. See your situation as it really is and try to recognise that it exists because of a chain of events. Radical Acceptance does not mean that you condone/agree with bad behaviour in others or stay in an abusive relationship/situation.

To radically accept the present moment means that you don't fight it, get angry with it, or try to change it into something that it is not. This links to the "Serenity Prayer," – "Grant me the serenity (being calm and peaceful) to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Think of a distressing situation and answer the questions below to help you radically accept the situation in a new way:

- What happened?
- What past events happened that led up to this situation?
- What role did you and other people play in creating this situation?
- What do you / don't you have control of in this situation?
- What was your response?
- How did this response affect your / other people's thoughts and feelings?
- How could you have changed your response to this situation so that it led to less suffering for you and others? Remember not to criticize and judge yourself.
- How could this situation have occurred differently if you had decided to radically accept the situation?

## RA COPING STATEMENTS:

- This is the way it has to be
- It is what it is
- All the events have led up to now
- I can't change what has already happened
- It's no use fighting the past, it only blinds me to the present
- The present is the only moment I have control over
- This moment is exactly as it should be, given what has happened before it
- This moment is the result of multiple other decisions

## **PRACTISE RA**

Review an unpleasant event in your life – use RA to remember the event without judging it. Next time you are in heavy traffic, wait without being critical. Listen to a news story without being judgemental.

## **TURNING THE MIND**

The main objective of "Turn the Mind" is to help clients develop a more adaptive, accepting mindset in the face of emotional distress or challenging circumstances. This shift in perspective can benefit individuals who struggle with emotional dysregulation, as it encourages them to approach difficult emotions and situations with curiosity and openness rather than avoidance or resistance.

Turning the mind is a skill you can use to facilitate radical acceptance. You must choose to radically accept your situation and you must make that choice over and over again. Turning the mind is what you do when you start to stray from that choice. Imagine you are riding a horse. The reins are in your hands but sometimes the horse wanders off the path you've chosen. Do not judge the horse for straying. Perhaps the path is new to the horse and it's just doing what is most natural. Accept that it strayed and use the reins to guide it back onto the chosen path. In this metaphor, the horse is your mind and the path is that of acceptance.

When you notice your mind resisting or straying from the openness of acceptance, gently guide it back. You will have to do this again and again. EG - Consider a relatively minor situation. Try to accept it as is without judgment. Open your hands and turn them upward (Willing Hands). Turn the mind when you find yourself straying from the path of acceptance. One practical application of "turn the mind" is the "willingness versus wilfulness" exercise, which encourages clients to examine their responses to challenging situations, identifying whether they are approaching the situation with a sense of willingness (openness and acceptance) or wilfulness (resistance and avoidance).



Willingness is DOING JUST WHAT IS NEEDED: In each situation. Wholeheartedly, without dragging your feet. Willingness is listening very carefully to your WISE MIND, and then acting from your WISE MIND. Willingness is ACTING WITH AWARENESS that you are connected to the universe (to the stars, people you like and don't like, the floor etc.

Replace WILLFULNESS with WILLINGNESS. Wilfulness is REFUSING TO TOLERATE the moment. Wilfulness is refusing to make changes that are needed. Wilfulness is GIVING UP. Wilfulness is the OPPOSITE OF "DOING WHAT WORKS." Wilfulness is trying to FIX EVERY SITUATION. Wilfulness is insisting on BEING IN CONTROL. Wilfulness is ATTACHMENT TO "ME, ME, ME" and "what I want right now!"

## WILLINGNESS, STEP BY STEP :

- 1:
- 2:      OBSERVE the wilfulness. Label it. Experience it.  
            RADICALLY ACCEPT that at this moment you feel (and may be acting) wilful.
- 3:      You cannot fight wilfulness with wilfulness.
- 4:      TURN YOUR MIND toward acceptance and willingness.
- 5:      Try HALF- SMILING and a WILLING POSTURE.  
            When wilfulness is immovable, ASK, "WHAT'S THE THREAT?"

## Distract Yourself from Self-destructive Behaviour (overwhelming & painful emotions):

Try some alternatives (harm-reduction) that have fewer/lower costs:

- Instead of hurting yourself, hold an ice cube and squeeze it – numbing sensation
- Snap a rubber band on your wrist – gives temporary pain
- Instead of cutting, draw where you would cut with a red marker. Use red paint/nail polish to make it look like bleeding.
- Draw face of people you hate on balloons and pop them
- Write letters to people who have hurt you / you hate (what they have done, how you feel about them) - dispose of the letters.

- Throw foam balls, rolled up socks against the wall as hard as you can
- Scream into a pillow / somewhere where you won't draw attention to yourself eg football match, loud concert, alone in your car.
- Stick pins in a doll
- Cry – it releases stress hormones
- Do some exercise, HIT training is good – releases endorphins
- Do a pleasurable activity
- Pay attention to someone else: do something for someone else, go out and "people watch," think about someone care about / admire
- Mindful activity eg 54321 technique / a guided meditation eg "Urge Surfing."
- Visualisation techniques (guided ones online)
- Do some self-care, home-care, gardening

## Relaxation and self-soothing using senses (at home or when out):

<b><i>SENSE OF SMELL :</i></b>	Candles / incense / perfume / scented oils / environments (bakery, restaurants, coffee shop) / baking/ flowers etc outdoors
<b><i>VISION:</i></b>	Collage making from magazines / go to (or get a picture) a place that is soothing to look at / photos / paintings / photo of someone you love
<b><i>HEARING :</i></b>	Soothing music / audio books / podcasts / radio / open your window – sounds outside / wildlife sounds (real or recorded) / white-noise machine / running water machine or fountain / guided meditation recording
<b><i>TASTE :</i></b>	Favourite meal (mindful eating) / any soothing foods / hot drinks / ice cube or ice lolly / fresh fruit
<b><i>TOUCH :</i></b>	Soft/velvety material / warm or cold shower or bath / massage / stroke a pet / wear comfortable clothes

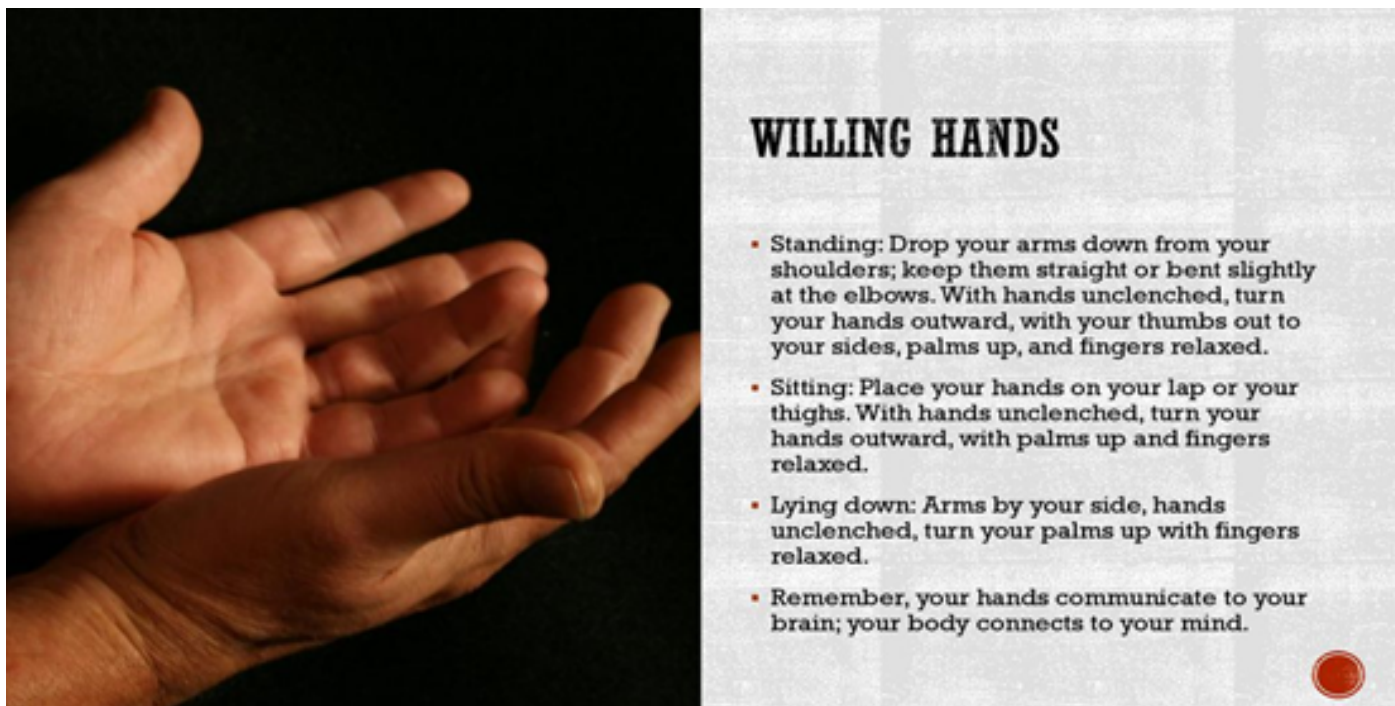
## HALF SMILING AND WILLING HANDS

Research shows that our bodies can impact our minds and how we can experience events. In other words, the relationship between mind and body goes both ways. As such, we can make use of our bodies to help ourselves feel better in stressful situations. Half-smile and willing hands are two DBT skills that focus on using our bodies to communicate with our brains that we are okay. They can help us regulate our systems, accept situations, and feel better in the moment.

**Half-Smile**, often referred to as the "Mona Lisa smile," involves upturning our lips just a bit. It is not a big, fake, or "joker" smile, rather moving the corners of our mouth upward ever so slightly. Softening and relaxing our jaw helps us get to a Half-Smile. Another way that may be helpful to accomplish this is to put a straw or maybe a piece of liquorice across the mouth held by our teeth.



**Willing Hands** is about opening up our body posture. Even something as simple as uncrossing our arms or unclasp our hands can communicate to our brain that we are in a safe place, since an open posture is the opposite of a "defensive" stance. To take it a step further we can flip our palms open. This may look like resting our hands on our legs or knees and having the palms face up while sitting, resting our arms on the ground or a bed with our palms up while lying down, or having our arms at our side with palms facing front while standing up. Marsha Linehan, creator of DBT, has noted how impactful Willing Hands can be in reducing anger and frustration.



## WILLING HANDS

- Standing: Drop your arms down from your shoulders; keep them straight or bent slightly at the elbows. With hands unclenched, turn your hands outward, with your thumbs out to your sides, palms up, and fingers relaxed.
- Sitting: Place your hands on your lap or your thighs. With hands unclenched, turn your hands outward, with palms up and fingers relaxed.
- Lying down: Arms by your side, hands unclenched, turn your palms up with fingers relaxed.
- Remember, your hands communicate to your brain; your body connects to your mind.

### HALF-SMILE WHEN YOU FIRST WAKE UP IN THE MORNING.

Hang a branch, any other sign, or even the word "smile" on the ceiling or wall, so that you see it right away when you open your eyes. This sign will serve as your reminder. Use these seconds before you get out of bed to take hold of your breath. Inhale and exhale three breaths gently while maintaining a half-smile. Follow your breaths. Add willing hands to your half-smile, or practice willing hands alone.

### HALF-SMILE DURING YOUR FREE MOMENTS.

Anywhere you find yourself sitting or standing, half-smile. Look at a child, a leaf, a painting on a wall, or anything that is relatively still, and smile. Inhale and exhale quietly three times.

### HALF-SMILE WITH WILLING HANDS WHILE YOU ARE LISTENING TO MUSIC.

Listen to a piece of music for 2 or 3 minutes. Pay attention to the words, music, rhythm, and sentiments of the music you are listening to (not your daydreams of other times). Half-smile while watching your inhalations and exhalations. Adopt a willing-hands posture.

### HALF-SMILE WITH WILLING HANDS WHEN YOU ARE IRRITATED.

When you realize "I'm irritated," half-smile or adopt a willing-hands posture at once. Inhale and exhale quietly, maintaining a half-smile or willing hands for three breaths.

### **HALF-SMILE IN A LYING-DOWN POSITION.**

Lie on your back on a flat surface, without the support of mattress or pillow. Keep your two arms loosely by your sides, and keep your two legs slightly apart, stretched out before you. Maintain willing hands and a half-smile. Breathe in and out gently, keeping your attention focused on your breath. Let go of every muscle in your body. Relax each muscle as though it were sinking down through the floor, or as though it were as soft and yielding as a piece of silk hanging in the breeze to dry. Let go entirely, keeping your attention only on your breath and half-smile. Think of yourself as a cat, completely relaxed before a warm fire, whose muscles yield without resistance to anyone's touch. Continue for 15 breaths.

### **HALF-SMILE IN A SITTING POSITION.**

Sit on the floor with your back straight, or on a chair with your two feet touching the floor. Halfsmile. Inhale and exhale while maintaining the half-smile. Let go.

# Section 2

## Advanced Distress Tolerance Skills

*To use in a crisis*

Use the **REST** strategy in conjunction with these skills:

### SAFE-PLACE VISUALISATION

Start in a quiet room with no distractions, think of a real or imaginary place that makes you feel safe and relaxed.

Close your eyes and take a long slow breath in, hold for 5 seconds and release it slowly. Repeat 3 or 4 times. Then continue to breath slowly (without holding the breath).

Imagine you enter your safe place and use all your senses to ground yourself. Look around and notice what the safe place looks like (the weather, time of day, anyone else there? Notice the details). Focus on something soothing.

Listen and notice any sounds – focus on soothing sounds.

Notice any smells – focus on any soothing smells.

Notice anything you can feel (what are you sitting on? Can you feel the weather on your skin? Any textures?) – focus on soothing textures.

Can you taste anything (food/drink) – focus on soothing tastes.

Recognise how relaxed and safe you feel here and remember you can return here whenever you are feeling sad, angry, restless, in pain etc.

## CUE-CONTROLLED RELAXATION

Choose a cue word that will help you relax eg relax, calm, peace etc.

Start in a quiet room with no distractions. Close your eyes and take a long slow breath in, hold for 5 seconds and release it slowly. Repeat 3 or 4 times. Then continue to breath slowly (without holding the breath).

Imagine that a white beam of light shines down from the sky like a bright laser and lands on the top of your head. Notice how warm this feels. The light begins to spread over the top of your head like soothing water and it loosens any muscle tension you are feeling on top of your head. Imagine the white light gradually covering the rest of your body and relaxing all your muscles.

Focus on your breath now and when you exhale think of your cue word – repeat this for a few minutes.

Practice cue-controlled relaxation twice a day and time how long it takes you to relax. The more you practise the quicker you will be able to relax. Eventually your body will relax simply when you think you're your cue word.

Use this technique in any future distressing situations.

## VALUED LIVING

Rate each of the following areas for importance – 0 (least important) – 10 (most important)

Rate each one on how much time & effort you put into it 0 (no effort) – 10 (significant effort)

- Family
- Romantic relationships
- Parenting
- Friends and social life

- Work
- Education and training
- Recreation, hobbies, interests
- Spirituality / religion
- Citizenship / community life
- Self care – exercise, nutrition, relaxation

Reflect – are you giving too much time and effort to components that are not that important to you? In which case can you free up time to spend on components that are of higher importance? Identify which areas of your life need more attention at the moment. Identify specific goals and make a plan of action.

### ***IDENTIFY AND CONNECT TO YOUR HIGHER POWER – SEE THE “BIG PICTURE”***

Having faith in something bigger and more powerful than yourself can make you feel empowered, safe and calm. Journaling / discussion questions:

1. What are some of your beliefs about a higher power / big picture that give you strength and comfort?
2. Why are these beliefs important to you?
3. How do these beliefs make you feel?
4. How do these beliefs make you think about others / life in general?
5. How do you acknowledge your beliefs throughout the day? Eg pray, discuss beliefs, help others, read books etc
6. What else would you be willing to do to strengthen your beliefs?
7. What can you do to remind yourself of your beliefs next time you are distressed?

### ***IDEAS TO HELP YOU FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO YOUR HIGHER POWER:***

- Attend church, synagogue, temple
- Think of someone you admire – someone who makes you feel stronger and more



confident. Next time you are distressed, act as that person would – notice how you handle things differently:

- Look up at the stars and connect to the universe.
- Think about planet earth – be grateful for all the elements that enable life to exist.
- Go to the beach – stand with your feet in the sand and imagine feeling connected to the earth.
- Go to a park / field / into the countryside and observe the trees, grass, animals and connect with nature.
- Be grateful for your own body and what it does for you.

## **TAKE A TIME-OUT**

We all need to relax and refresh our minds, bodies and spirits. Many people struggle with the constant need to please others and as a result neglect themselves. Many people ignore their own needs because they feel guilty/selfish for doing anything for themselves – this leads to an unbalanced life. Ideas:

- Do one nice thing for yourself that you have been putting off
- Devote time to yourself each week eg go walking, make your favourite meal etc
- Take time off work and go to somewhere you enjoy eg park, beach, museum, shopping, theatre
- Do things to get your own life in order eg errands, de-cluttering, medical appointments, self care.

## **LIVE IN THE PRESENT MOMENT – MINDFULNESS**

Living in the past/future - thinking about all the things that have gone wrong in the past, all the things you should have done yesterday and all the things you need to do in the future can cause stress and pain which can be experienced as physical sensations and overwhelming emotions. Also, this can be made worse by trying to multi-task and rush.

*"Where are you now?" – the next time you are in a distressing situation, ask yourself:*

- Where am I right now?
- Am I time travelling in the future, worrying about something that might happen, or planning something that might happen?
- Am I time travelling in the past, reviewing mistakes, reliving bad experiences or thinking about how my life could have been different under different circumstances?
- Or am I in the present, really paying attention to what I am doing, thinking and feeling?

*If you are not in the present moment, refocus your attention on what's happening to you now by using the following steps and other techniques below:*

- Notice what you are thinking about and recognise if you're time travelling. Bring your focus to the present moment.
- Notice how you are breathing. Take slow, long breaths to help you focus on the present.
- Notice how your body feels and observe any tension or pain you might be feeling. Recognise how your thoughts might be contributing to how you are feeling. Use cue-controlled relaxation to release any tension.
- Notice any painful emotions you might be feeling as a result of time travelling and use one of the distress tolerance skills to help you relieve immediate pain.

## **ACTIVE NOTICING**

Practise regularly staying in the present by noticing things in your environment eg focus on 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can feel/touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste.

## MINDFUL BREATHING

"7/11 breathing", breath in for 7 seconds through your nose, then breath out for 11 seconds through your mouth – repeat 10 times. "Box breathing" - breath in through nose for 4 seconds, hold it for 4 seconds, breath out through mouth for 4 seconds, hold it for 4 seconds, imagine drawing a square/box as you do it. Coloured breathing – imagine yourself breathing in white light as you inhale and breathing out dark clouds as you exhale. Balloon breathing – imagine a balloon inside your abdomen that gradually expands as you breath in and deflates as you breathe out.

- Self-encouraging Coping Thoughts

Useful for when you are alone and need some encouraging words:

- This situation won't last forever
- I've been through other painful experiences and survived
- My feelings are uncomfortable right now but I can accept them
- I can be anxious but still deal with the situation
- These are just my feelings and they will go away
- It's ok to feel sad/anxious/angry/afraid sometimes
- My thoughts don't control my life, I do
- I'm not in danger right now
- The situation sucks, but it is only temporary

*Make a list of coping thoughts you can use in future distressing situations and keep this with you – think of situations that often trigger your overwhelming emotions:*

DISTRESSING SITUATION	NEW COPING THOUGHT

## Feelings-Threat Balance (FTB-COPE)

Whenever you feel an intense emotion and have a strong urge to do something, rather than acting on that impulse, do the following:

- Calculate the intensity of the feeling (0 – 10 – low to high)
- Calculate the actual threat (0 – 10 – little, moderate, excessive) .

Eg – For anger, How much actual damage has the offending person/situation done to your wellbeing / self-worth? For anxiety, How potentially harmful is this situation? For guilt/shame, How much harm have I caused? How much did my behaviour deviate from my values and beliefs?

***if*** - The feeling and the threat are in balance (numbers close) you may wish to take action – in a controlled way.  
- The intensity of the feeling is significantly higher than the threat, then don't act on the emotion. Choose a coping skill to soothe your emotions.

### ***New Coping strategies for distressing situations – when alone / when with others***

Use the table below for planning, based on past / re-occurring situations that distress you. Experiment with new coping strategies to see what works better for you, carry your plan with you so you remember what to do:

DISTRESSING SITUATIONS	OLD COPING STRATERGIES	UNHEALTHY CONSEQUENCES	NEW COPING STRATEGIES, PLAN SEVERAL...	HEALTHIER POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES
			FIRST I WILL... NEXT I WILL... THEN I WILL... FINALLY I WILL...	

## ***Physiological Coping Skills for Distress Tolerance***

These skills can quickly reduce the intensity of your overwhelming emotions, especially when you are unable to think clearly. The following turn on the relaxation response of our nervous systems (parasympathetic nervous system) as oppose to the stress/survival response (sympathetic nervous system). If you have any health issues or are pregnant, check with you doctor before trying these. All the following coping skills require practice, they will not necessarily be effective if you try the technique for the first time when you are overwhelmed.

Think about past distressing situations and imagine trying the following techniques and imagine how you would have felt. Apply them also to any future situations and think about which ones would be most effective for you. Experiment with them and track the outcome.

### **SIDE TO SIDE EYE MOVEMENTS**

Types of therapy include EMDR , IEMT, Brain-spotting, Blink therapy. Eye movement can have a relaxing effect and has been show to reduce the emotional distress related to painful memories – making the memories less vivid.

*(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1YVvndNyqM> - self-administered eye movement video)*

- Recall a mildly disturbing memory, rate the emotional distress 0-10 (low to high distress) and notice any feelings this memory causes in your body. Now move your eyes from side to side for 30 seconds. As you move your eyes, don't try to hold onto the memory, but let whatever memory or feeling comes up next to just appear naturally. After 30 seconds note any changes in how you feel emotionally (0-10) or physically.
- If you noticed any improvements with this technique, try it next time you experience a heightened emotional response. Identify what was the most bothersome part of the event, what emotion was most painful, what triggered this. You can do the eye movement with your eyes closed as well as open. You can repeat the 30 second procedure 3 or 4 times if necessary. Then note any emotional and physical changes.
- This technique can be good for insomnia – imagine erasing the thoughts that are bothering you as your eyes move from side to side.

## COLD TEMPERATURES TO TURN ON RELAXATION RESPONSE

- Cold water swimming, cold showers/baths, holding ice cubes wrapped in a tea towel, running hands under cold water for 2-4 mins, submerging hands (up to wrists) in ice water. Research has shown this can reduce strong emotions considerably. This should cause mild-moderate discomfort but if a high level of pain – stop immediately
- Diving Response – Place a very cold (colder than 21 degrees Celsius), wet towel/semi melted ice packed wrapped in a towel on your forehead or cheeks. At the same time hold your breath for several seconds (as long as is comfortable) – but not too long as this can be dangerous.

## HIGH-INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING (HIIT) EXERCISE

Aerobic exercise increases brain chemicals similar to anti-depressant and anti-anxiety medications. Ideas can be found online eg <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mvo2snJGhtM>  
Track the intensity of your mood before and after the HIIT exercise (0-10)

## SLOW BREATHING

ideas mentioned earlier. Wim Hof method:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQnZcXLAMdg&t=46s>

## PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

When you are ready to begin, tense the muscle group described. Make sure you can feel the tension, but not so much that you feel a great deal of pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds. Relax the muscles and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say something like "Relax" as you relax the muscle. 1. Right hand and forearm. Make a fist with your right hand. 2. Right upper arm. Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to "make a muscle". 3. Left hand and forearm. 4. Left upper arm. 5. Forehead. Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something. 6. Eyes and cheeks. Squeeze your eyes tight shut. 7. Mouth and jaw. Open your mouth as wide as you can, as you might when you're yawning. 8. Neck. **!!! Be careful as you tense these muscles.** Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling. 9. Shoulders. Tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your

shoulders up towards your ears. 10. Shoulder blades/Back. Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward. 11. Chest and stomach. Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air. 12. Hips and buttocks. Squeeze your buttock muscles 13. Right upper leg. Tighten your right thigh. 14. Right lower leg. **!!! Do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps.** Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle. 15. Right foot. Curl your toes downwards. 16. Left upper leg. Repeat as for right upper leg. 17. Left lower leg. Repeat as for right lower leg. 18. Left foot. Repeat as for right foot.

# Section 3

## Basic Mindfulness Skills

The ability to be aware of your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and actions – in the present moment – without judging or criticizing (Radical Acceptance) yourself, others or your experience. The more mindful you learn to be, the more control you will gain over your life. Mindfulness has been shown to be effective for reducing the symptoms of depression, anxiety, chronic pain, binge eating.

It is a skill that requires practice as most of us get distracted, "zone out," or run on autopilot. Mindfulness skills will help you focus on one thing at a time in the present moment, to identify and separate judgemental thoughts and by doing this you can better control and soothe your overwhelming emotions. Mindfulness helps to develop a DBT skill called the "Wise Mind - "the ability to make healthy decisions based on rational thoughts and emotions.

### FOCUS ON A SINGLE OBJECT

The purpose is to train your "mental muscle" to improve your ability to focus. Set a timer for this exercise of 5 mins in a quiet room: Without touching the object look and explore it with your eyes; what does the surface of the object look like? Is it shiny/dull? Does it look soft/hard? Does it have multiple colours / one colour? What else is unique about how it looks? Then hold the object and notice the way it feels: smooth/rough? Ridges/flat? Soft/hard? Bendy/rigid? What does the temperature feel like? How heavy is it? What else does it feel like?

### BAND OF LIGHT

To become more mindful of your physical sensations. Set a timer for 10 mins in a quiet room: Visualise a band of white light circling the top of your head like a halo – become aware of any sensations you there. The band of light will slowly move down your body and as it does notice any sensations you have in each area of your body eg muscle tension, tingling, itching, heat.



## **INNER-OUTER EXPERIENCE - 5**

Acknowledge FIVE things you see around you. It could be a pen, a spot on the ceiling, anything in your surroundings. 4: Acknowledge FOUR things you can touch around you. It could be your hair, a pillow, or the ground under your feet. 3: Acknowledge THREE things you hear. This could be any external sound. If you can hear your belly rumbling that counts! Focus on things you can hear outside of your body. 2: Acknowledge TWO things you can smell. Maybe you are in your office and smell pencil, or maybe you are in your bedroom and smell a pillow. If you need to take a brief walk to find a scent you could smell soap in your bathroom, or nature outside. 1: Acknowledge ONE thing you can taste. What does the inside of your mouth taste like—gum, coffee, or the sandwich from lunch?

## **3 MINUTES OF THOUGHTS**

Set a timer for 3 mins and begin writing every thought you have on a piece of paper – just write a word or two that represents the thought. See how many thoughts you can capture in 3 mins and then count the number of thoughts you have had in 3 mins and multiply that number by 20 to get an idea of how many you have in an hour.

## **THOUGHT DIFFUSION**

When distressing thoughts keep repeating it's often easy to get "hooked" on them. Thought diffusion will help you mindfully observe your thoughts without getting stuck on them.

Suggestions – set a timer for 5 mins, practice making this a bit longer each time: Imagine sitting in a field watching your thoughts float away on clouds. Picture yourself sitting near a stream watching your thoughts float past on leaves. See your thoughts written in the sand and then watch the waves wash them away. See your thoughts leave your head and watch them sizzle in the flame of a candle. Let your thoughts be whatever they are and don't fight them or criticize yourself for having them.

## **DESCRIBE YOUR EMOTION**

Write down the name of the emotion you are feeling, draw a picture of what the emotion might look like, think of a sound that describes/links to your emotion and add it to the drawing. Then describe an action that "fits" your emotion, describe (using metaphor) or

quantify (1-10) the intensity of the emotion, add any thoughts that arise due to the emotion eg "My emotion makes me think..." Emotions come as a wave, they escalate, then reach a crest and finally they diminish. You can observe this – describing to yourself each point in the wave as the feeling grows and passes.

## **FOCUS SHIFTING**

We all get caught up in emotions from time-to-time eg feeling upset/angry all day, but for someone struggling with overwhelming emotions, these experiences happen more frequently and intensely. Mindfulness skills help you separate your present-moment experience from what's happening to you emotionally – then you can choose with one to focus on. Using all the mindfulness techniques so far, practise shifting your focus between feelings, sights, sounds, smells, touch.

## **MINDFUL BREATHING**

When distracted by thoughts and other stimuli, one of the easiest and most effective things you can do is focus your attention on the rising and falling of your stomach and chest as you inhale and exhale. This will focus your attention and help calm your mind and body. See earlier instructions / look up Wim Hof breathing technique.

# Section 4

## Advanced Mindfulness Skills

### WISE MIND

The ability to make decisions based both on your rational thoughts and your emotions. For people with overwhelming emotions, balancing feelings and rational thought is often hard to do. Wise mind is similar to intuition – feelings that come from the gut/stomach area. Wise mind meditation – start with 5 mins and gradually build up to 15 mins in a quiet room. Locate the bottom of your sternum on your rib-cage and place one hand on your abdomen, between the bottom of your sternum and your belly button.

This is the centre of your wise mind. Take a few long deep breaths in and out and let your attention focus on the centre of the wise mind – notice what appears. If you have had any troubling thoughts, problems or decisions that you have to make in your life, think about them for a few seconds. Then ask for guidance and notice what thoughts/solutions arise out of the centre of your wise mind. Does the decision feel like a good one? If so, perhaps try it out and see if it leads to a beneficial result for your life.

### RADICAL ACCEPTANCE & JUDGMENT

Judgment is the royal road to suffering because when you judge others, you get angry and when you judge yourself, you get depressed. To be fully centred in the wise mind you must practice being non-judgmental.

### JUDGMENTS (POSITIVE & NEGATIVE) EXERCISE

Keep a journal of negative judgments and criticisms you make in a week, this includes judgments about yourself, other people, things you hear in the news, on TV etc. Eg: when? Where? What? Remember that Radical Acceptance means to observe situations without judging/criticising yourself or others. Nobody is 100% good/bad and putting such labels on people can lead to disappointment and suffering– so try to let go of judgements because obsessing on single judgements can be triggering.

## **JUDGEMENT DIFFUSION**

Visually watch your judgements come and go without holding onto them and without analysing them. In a quiet room (you may want to set a timer) without distractions take some slow long breaths, relax and close your eyes. Picture yourself in an environment you are comfortable with (sitting in a field, beside a stream, in a room etc).

Start to become aware of the judgements you have been experiencing (maybe from your judgement journal), try not to be critical of yourself or get hooked on the judgements, just watch them as they arise and use a technique to let them disappear – eg floating away on clouds/balloons, on leaves that float past you on a stream, entering through one door and leaving through another door. Use pictures or words to represent the judgements. When finished, take more slow, deep breaths and then open your eyes. Practise this over the next few weeks and eventually you may be able to let go of judgement as soon as it arises.

## **GROUNDING**

Regularly grounding yourself by focusing on your physical senses (your sense of touch, hearing, sight, sense of smell, taste) can help you to become mindful of what is happening in the present moment and this can stop you obsessing over your own judgements.

## **SELF-COMPASSION**

You need self-compassion to make lasting improvements in your life. This is the belief that you are deserving of kindness, forgiveness and help – just like everyone else. Self-compassion requires the use of Radical Acceptance; it is time to accept that you are the person that you are, with a history of unchangeable events (eg: mistakes, pain, losses, rejection, abandonment, illness, disappointment etc) and you deserve peace, safety, health and happiness.

## **SELF-COMPASSION MEDITATION**

Start with the usual deep breathing to relax yourself. As you are breathing and relaxing slowly repeat the following phrases (silently or aloud): "May I be peaceful," "May I be safe," "May I be healthy," "May I be free from suffering." Repeat the phrases two or three more times, allowing

their meaning to deepen each time. Allow yourself to feel and accept your own sense of compassion.

## **MINDFUL/ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS**

This is often the key to a successful relationship. Judgemental statements to others stop any form of effective communication eg: *"You make me so angry" "I know you did that on purpose to hurt me" "You're a \*\*\*\*\*"*

A solution is to turn *"You"* statements into *"I"* statements as they are a more accurate description of how you feel and you can let the other person know about this in a non-judgemental/accusatory way. For example: *"I am feeling angry" "I felt hurt/insulted/belittled when you did that."*

## **DOING WHAT IS EFFECTIVE**

Doing what is necessary and appropriate in the present moment to solve a problem/cope with a situation/reach a goal – even if it feels unnatural, uncomfortable or goes against what you are experiencing emotionally. Sometimes to get what you want you have to modify what you feel like doing. Doing what is effective is not *"selling out," "giving up,"* or *"caving in."* It is a skill – just like acting, and acting as if you are competent, skilled etc is necessary – even if you don't feel that way. To do what is effective you need to: be mindful of your thoughts and feelings, avoid judging the situation/your actions, choose actions that are necessary and appropriate to reach your goals.

# Section 5

## Further Mindfulness Skills

In mindfulness-based stress reduction developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn et al there are seven attitudes that are considered to be crucial: nonjudging, patience, beginners mind (not bringing old judgments to situations), trust, non-striving, acceptance, letting go. Health psychologists Shauna Shapiro and Gary Schwartz suggest the following qualities are important dimensions of Mindfulness – "5 Heart Qualities": gratitude, gentleness, generosity, empathy, loving-kindness. Loving-Kindness is described as deep friendliness, welcoming, compassion, cherishing, forgiveness and unconditional love.

### LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Take a comfortable position and focus mindfully on your breathing. Allow yourself to connect with your natural inner feelings of kindness and compassion for others. Now shift your attention to yourself, it could be a sense of your whole self or some part that needs care and attention eg physical injury / illness / emotional pain. Imagine speaking gently to yourself as a parent might speak to a frightened child. Use phrases like "May I be safe and protected," "May I be happy," "May I be healthy and well," "May I live with ease/joy/safety/health/love" etc. Put all of your heart into it each time you speak to yourself. Let kindness and compassion come through you.

Practise by repeating your phrase to yourself silently as if singing a lullaby to a baby. You could also shift your focus to someone you know who is troubled / or groups of people and do something similar. By doing this for difficult people in your life you can release yourself from resentment you might be holding. You might feel various emotions when doing a Loving-kindness meditation, just honour each emotion.

# Section 6

## Basic Emotion Regulation Skills

Emotions are signals (electrical and chemical) from your body that tell you what is happening. Your initial reaction to what is happening is a **primary emotion**, it is possible that your primary emotional reaction to a situation can set off a limitless chain reaction of **secondary emotions** (emotional reaction to your primary emotion) that can cause more pain than the original emotion. For this reason, it is important to try and identify what your primary emotion is in a distressing situation.

This is where emotion regulation skills can be helpful – they help you cope with distressing primary and secondary feelings in a healthier way. You may find it difficult to control your primary emotional reaction, but it may be easier to learn to control and choose how you deal with your secondary emotional responses. Emotion regulation skills are important in dealing with ambivalence (which occurs when you have more than one emotional reaction to the same event – and each emotion pulls you in a different direction). You cannot always control how you feel but you can control how you react to the feelings. There are 9 skills in DBT:

### RECOGNIZING YOUR EMOTIONS

Very often people who struggle with overwhelming emotions recognize the tidal wave of distressing emotions that overcomes them, but by the time they do, it is too late to do anything about it. To control overwhelming emotional reactions, it is first necessary to slow the process down so it can be examined – then healthier decisions can be made.

For the next 2 weeks, pick a situation that happens to you each day and examine it using the following worksheet:

QUESTIONS	YOUR RESPONSES
WHEN DID THE SITUATION HAPPEN?	
WHAT HAPPENED (DESCRIBE THE EVENT)?	
WHY DO YOU THINK THE SITUATION HAPPENED? (IDENTIFY THE CAUSES)	
HOW DID THAT SITUATION MAKE YOU FEEL, EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY? (IDENTIFY THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EMOTIONS)	
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO DO AS A RESULT OF HOW YOU FELT? (WHAT WERE YOUR URGES?)	
WHAT DID YOU DO AND SAY? (ACTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS)	
HOW DID YOUR EMOTIONS AFFECT YOU LATER? (SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS)	

Naming/labelling emotions aloud is helpful in getting used to recognising your emotions – this can help to deflate distressing feelings. The more you talk about an emotion the less urge you will have to do something about it, eg "Right now I feel..." and remember to pay attention to joyful emotions too.

## OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO HEALTHY EMOTIONS

Emotions can influence your behaviours and thoughts. Sometimes overwhelming emotions can lead to out of control behaviour and can do destructive things eg self harm, damage relationships, manipulate/control others, get into fights, over/under eat, drink excessive alcohol etc. If these behaviours are rewarded in some way (in the short term), the behaviour will be repeated – causing long term damage.

Reflect on, without judging/criticising yourself:

- The destructive/manipulative behaviours
- The temporary rewards of these behaviours
- The long term costs and dangers of these behaviours



## REDUCING YOUR PHYSICAL VULNERABILITY TO OVERWHELMING EMOTIONS

Health related issues can also influence how you feel, eg:

- **Food** – affects us emotionally and physically – a balanced diet is important to healthy functioning eg including a wide variety of fruit, veg, grains and proteins. Sometimes people with overwhelming emotions overeat because it makes them feel emotionally calm/numb in the short term. Drastic undereating can serve as a form of control (when the person feels their life is out of control and this can give them a sense of power) – long term damaging consequences.

### *REFLECT ON:*

- My eating habits affect how I feel because...
- I can improve my eating habits by...
- The over/undereating behaviours I engage in are...
- The temporary rewards are...
- The long term costs and dangers are...
- Drugs & Alcohol – may make the person feel temporarily happy/numb/excited/different. This is often repeated when the temporary effects wear off. Long term consequences = health problems, addiction, financial problems, breaking the law, relationship issues, mental and physical health problems. Alcohol – depressant (causes tiredness, sluggishness, sadness – especially when the alcohol breaks down in the system). Drugs – depression, anxiety, paranoia, jittery, shakiness. Speak to a medical professional for help with addiction – sudden withdrawal from some substances can be dangerous.

### *REFLECT ON:*

- The alcohol/drug using behaviours I engage in are...
- The temporary rewards are...
- The long term costs and dangers are...
- My alcohol/drug use affects how I feel because...

- I can improve my alcohol/drug habits by...
- Physical Exercise – Lack of exercise can lead to sluggishness, putting on weight and mild depression.

*Approx 30mins of moderate exercise most days of the week is recommended, check with a medical professional about what type of exercise is safe for you.*

#### *REFLECT ON:*

- My exercise habits affect how I feel because...
- I can improve my exercise habits by ...
- Sleep - getting enough sleep is one of the most important things you can do to feel healthy. If you wake up several times a night, if you snore excessively, or wake up gasping for breath, these can be signs of a sleep disorder – speak to a medical professional. Sleep hygiene (no caffeine for at least 6 hrs, avoid alcohol, drugs, nicotine before going to sleep, avoid bright lights and screen lights, avoid exercise/heavy meals near to bed time, avoid napping during day, have a comfortable bedroom – tidy, the right temp, no noise, use bed only to sleep – no work, have routine – same bedtime each day and rituals, use relaxation/meditation at bedtime, if you wake in the night get up and do something until you feel tired rather than lie in bed thinking).
- Illness & Physical Pain – directly affects emotions, seek and follow medical help and advice.

#### *REFLECT ON:*

- My illness/pain affects how I feel because...
- I can treat my illness/pain by...
- Stress – Identify your stressors eg long working hours, a job you don't like, commuting, difficult relationships, demanding family schedule, world affairs, politics. Good coping skills for stress are mindful meditation, mindful breathing, exercise, distress tolerance techniques (see earlier).

## REFLECT ON:

- My stress affects how I feel because...
- I can treat my stress by...

## REDUCING YOUR COGNITIVE VULNERABILITY

Thoughts influence how we feel and negative/self-critical thoughts can trigger emotional pain and suffering ("Trigger Thoughts"). If you dwell on Trigger Thoughts you will probably experience overwhelming emotions. The goal of developing emotion regulation skills is to learn what to do with Trigger Thoughts when they pop up. Examples of Trigger Thoughts – add your own:

- I am an idiot
- I can't do anything right
- I am a failure / flawed / broken
- No one is ever going to love me
- There is something wrong with me
- No one cares about me
- People always leave me
- Everyone always leaves me
- I cannot trust anyone
- I will be alone forever
- I don't deserve to be happy / loved / successful
- Thought and Emotion Diffusion – to "unhook" from your thoughts. Look back at the techniques of thoughts on clouds, leaves, 2 doors, in the sand (waves wash away) – floating past you. Remember Radical Acceptance, just let the thoughts and associated emotions / memories come and go without judgement/criticism. If any of the thoughts are Trigger Thoughts, just note to yourself that you're having a Trigger Thought and observe any emotion that it brings up, then let the thought and emotion go past, without getting stuck or analysing them.

## USING COPING THOUGHTS

To soothe emotions and remind yourself of your strengths and past successes. Write some coping thoughts on a card or note app and keep it with you, ready for when you feel distressed. *Examples:*

- Mistakes happen, nobody is perfect
- This situation won't last forever
- I've survived difficult situations before
- My feelings are like a wave that comes and goes
- My feelings are uncomfortable at the moment, but I can accept them
- My feelings won't kill me, it just doesn't feel good right now
- It's ok to feel sad/fear/anxiety sometimes
- My thoughts don't control my life, I do
- I can think different thoughts if I want to

## SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE

By examining the evidence that goes against your distressing thoughts and feelings. These facts, which are often ignored fill out the rest of the big picture and often change how you feel about a situation. To do this ask yourself the following questions:

- What happened?

WHEN?	WHAT DID YOU DO?	WHAT DID YOU FEEL?	WHAT DID YOU THINK?

# Section 7

## Advanced Emotion Regulation Skills

### BEING MINDFUL OF YOUR EMOTIONS WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

Being mindful of your emotions without judging them decreases the chance that they will grow in intensity and become even more overwhelming and painful. Focus on the feeling of air moving in through your nose, your chest and abdomen rising and falling. After 4 or 5 long breaths, observe whatever current emotions you are feeling, or if you cannot feel any emotion. Observe where in your body you can feel the emotion, be aware of the strength of the feeling, is it growing/diminishing? Is the emotion pleasant/painful?

Try to name the emotion/s. Now notice your thoughts – do you have thoughts about the emotions? Does the emotion trigger judgments about others or yourself? Imagine each judgment is (choose the image best for you) a leaf floating down a stream / a computer pop up ad that briefly flashes on and off the screen / a cloud cutting across the sky. Place the judgment in the chosen image. Remind yourself of your right to feel what ever you feel, whatever you feel is legitimate and necessary. Accept the emotion as something that lives in you for a little while and then passes.

### EMOTION EXPOSURE

It is important not to avoid emotions and to gain the capacity to accept them and be less afraid of them. Keep an Emotion Log:

DATE	EVENT	EMOTION	COPING/BLOCKING RESPONSE

Reflect on this log and notice the emotions that seem to be common, then notice what coping or blocking mechanisms you typically use and their outcome. Do they work, do you feel better/worse after? Emotions with ineffective/destructive blocking strategies require exposure because you need practice feeling and facing them – without your traditional methods of avoidance. Technique: Focus on your breathing, notice how you feel inside your body, notice and describe your emotion, notice whether the feeling is growing or diminishing, see it like a wave. Then describe any new emotions/changes in quality, notice any need to block the emotion, but keep watching, notice impulses to act on your emotion, but keep watching without acting. Notice judgments (about self, others or the emotions) and let them go, keep watching until the emotion changes/diminishes. Finish with a few deep breaths.

## DOING THE OPPOSITE OF YOUR EMOTIONS

Your emotions are legitimate and valid. Start by acknowledging the emotion and describe it in words. Is the emotion overpowering you? Does it drive you to do dangerous/destructive things? The larger problem is emotion led behaviour, because acting on emotions often creates destructive outcomes. This can also intensify the original feeling and instead of getting relief you may get even more consumed with the emotions. This is where the opposite action comes in – rather than fuelling your emotion, opposite action helps to regulate and change it. Notice your body language, facial expression, posture and behaviour (what are you saying and doing?) Then identify what the opposite action would be to each of these.

*Examples:*

EMOTION	EMOTION-DRIVEN BEHAVIOUR	OPPOSITE ACTION
SADNESS	SHUT DOWN, AVOID, SLUMP, BE PASSIVE	BE ACTIVE, STAND STRAIGHT, SET GOALS, GET INVOLVED
ANGER	ATTACK, CRITICISE, HURT, SHOUT	VALIDATE, AVOID OR DISTRACT, USE SOFT VOICE, BE KIND TO SELF
FEAR	AVOID, HUNCH SHOULDERS	APPROACH WHAT YOU FEAR, DO WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN AVOIDING, STAND STRAIGHT

Opposite action changes behaviour, facial expression, posture, body language. Opposite action is not about denying/pretending an emotion isn't happening. Rather it is about regulation. Monitor your emotions as you do the opposite action and notice how the original emotion changes. Opposite action sends a message to the brain that the old emotion is no longer appropriate.

EMOTION	EMOTION-DRIVEN BEHAVIOUR	OPPOSITE ACTION	TIME PERIOD	OUTCOMES

## PROBLEM SOLVING AND BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS

Sometimes emotion regulation has to start before the overwhelming feelings begin. Problem solving focuses on identifying the triggering event and finding new, effective ways to respond in the future. The first step is behaviour analysis – involving tracing the sequence of events that lead to the problematic emotion. You will see how emotions are built, there is always a trigger – sometimes it is internal (thoughts/feelings), sometimes there are multiple causes.

## BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

1. Problematic emotion: name it/them
2. Precipitating event (what happened before the emotion). External event (Did something happen over which you had no control eg losing a job, becoming ill etc)? Thoughts (what thoughts, prior to the emotion might have triggered/intensified your reaction)? Emotion (Was there a prior/different emotion that triggered your reaction)? Behaviour (was something you or someone else did a trigger for your reaction)?
3. Secondary events (Identify what happened immediately after the precipitating event – but before the problematic emotion? Thoughts... Emotions... Behaviours...

## ABC PROBLEM SOLVING

The next step is to identify:

**A. Alternatives** (brainstorm alternative responses, how could you change precipitating thoughts/behaviours)?

**B. Best ideas** (evaluate your list and choose one or two of your best ideas to implement)

**C. Commitment** to implementation (Identify a time and place that you will try your new responses – write out the new thoughts/behaviours you will use).

## WEEKLY REGULATOR SHEET

*Keep brief notes each day.*

	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
COMMITTED TO HEALTHY EATING							
DIDN'T USE DRUGS/ALCOHOL							
GOT ENOUGH SLEEP							
EXERCISED							
USED RELAXATION/ MINDFULNESS							
TOOK STEPS TO DEAL WITH ILLNESS/PAIN							

Managing Cognitive Vulnerability:

	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
OBSERVED TRIGGER THOUGHTS							
USED COPING THOUGHTS							
NOTICED AT LEAST ONE POSITIVE EVENT							



# Section 8

## Basic Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

(Social Skills, Assertiveness,  
Negotiation and Listening skills)



*Keeping your relationships healthy and alive requires interpersonal skills that can be learnt/improved.*

### MINDFUL ATTENTION

Maintaining a good relationship depends on noticing the other persons feelings, reactions and the communication process between you both. It is important to remain present and pay full attention to what you see, hear and sense (emotionally). When you do this you can notice trouble coming before it overwhelms you, it also gives you time to ask clarifying questions that can help you correct misconceptions. Not paying full attention can lead to missing vital cues about the other persons needs/reactions, as well as projecting, inaccurately, your fears and feelings onto others. Also "blowing up" or running away when surprised by a negative response you could have seen coming. This is a vital skill as it helps you read important signals about the state of the relationship. Exercise – next time you have a conversation, practice observing the other persons physical and verbal behaviour. If you notice anything hard to read, as a clarifying question eg *"How are you feeling? Are we ok?" "How are things between us?" "I notice..... Is this accurate?"*

Also notice your own needs and feelings in the interaction – do any of these need communication? Eg – Do you something from the other person (help/attention etc)? Do you need to change the process between you (critical comments/demands)?

### COMPASSION FOR OTHERS

This means recognising a person's pain and offering help without judgement. We often judge others for not performing the way we think they should be, or we criticize others for behaving in a way with which we don't agree.' How often do we stop and think about what the other person might be struggling with? We rarely find out about the pain that other people are experiencing. By extending your compassionate attitude toward all people; you learn to let

go of judgement and related negative emotions, as well as potentially developing stronger connections with others. Each time you meet someone, or are affected by someone else, say to yourself: "Just like me, they want to be happy and free of suffering."

## PASSIVE V AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Being passive in a relationship may seem safe because you go along with what the other person wants/expects. But in the long term, if you frequently give in to others and abandon your own needs, it creates frustration and resentment that builds inside you – leading to depression, exploding, running away.

*Eg - I go along with something, even if I don't like it, I try to be pleasant and easy going no matter what other people do/say, when there is a conflict, I give in.*

In comparison, aggressive behaviour also destroys relationships because it pushes people away. Aggression often originates from having a strong sense of the way things should be (needing to control what happens), according to your opinion, this can be "black and white" thinking. When other people violate this, there can be a strong need to punish others. EG, I give people a piece of my mind when they deserve it, I know what I want and I insist on it, even if it means having to get angry, You can't let people continue being stupid, you have to shake them until they see what they are doing.

## "I WANT – THEY WANT" RATIO

This happens in relationships when 2 people try to get their needs met, this needs to be balanced to keep the relationship stable. If the balance is not equal, resentment will occur.

Choose one relationship in your life to evaluate:

I WANT	OUTCOME	THEY WANT	OUTCOME
<p>FILL IN THE THINGS YOU WANT/NEED IN THE RELATIONSHIP.</p> <p>DO YOU COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS/WANTS?</p>	<p>ASSESS HOW WELL THESE NEEDS ARE MET.</p> <p>DO YOU NEGOTIATE/ COMPROMISE?</p>	<p>FILL IN THE THINGS THE OTHER PERSON WANTS/ NEEDS.</p> <p>ARE YOU AWARE OF THE OTHER PERSONS NEEDS/ WANTS?</p>	<p>ASSESS HOW WELL THESE NEEDS ARE MET.</p> <p>DO YOU GIVE WHAT YOU CAN?</p>

Now look at the outcomes for both people, are more of one person's needs being met? How does the relationship deal with unmet needs, eg ignored/negotiated? Are they sources of blame/ withdrawal?

## **"I WANT – I SHOULD" RATIO**

Every relationship requires a delicate balance between seeking what you want to do and doing what you think you should do for the good of the relationship/other person. If you are overbalanced on the side of "shoulds" – the relationship will feel like a burden, or a controlling situation where you feel forced to ignore your own needs. This can lead to depression / conflict. Examples of problematic "should" – *"I should try to give everything that's asked of me in a relationship, even when it means putting my own needs aside."*

## **KEY INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

1. Know what you want – you may experience a yearning or be aware of discomfort. Pay attention and look for a way to describe what you are feeling.
2. Ask for what you want – this will protect the relationship. Put your needs into words that are clear, not attacking and specific.
3. Negotiate conflicting wants – this starts with a clear commitment that there won't be winners/losers. It assumes that each person's needs are valid and draws on a willingness to compromise, so each person gets some of what they want.
4. Get information – find out what the other person needs, hopes for, fears etc. Blocks to this are falsely assuming you know what the other person wants, projecting your own needs/feelings/fears onto the other person, not wanting to pry, fear of hearing the worst possible answer.
5. Say No – in a way that protects the relationship. Doing this in a passive or aggressive way is damaging. This needs to be done in an assertive way that validates the others needs while setting boundaries around what you will/won't do.
6. Acting according to your own values – Ask yourself what kind of relationship you want with other people (eg loving, respectful, fair, trustworthy, committed etc). Try setting positive intentions and values for each of your relationships, then act according to what you are trying to achieve.

## BLOCKS TO USING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

### AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOURS/ AVERSIVE STRATEGIES

Discounting other's needs, threats to withdraw some kind of support/abandon the other, threatening harm to self/others, blaming, belittling – making the other person feel foolish, guilt tripping, derailing – switching the attention from the other persons feelings and talking about yourself.

### PASSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Surrendering/shut down when there is conflict, give in to the other persons demands, not believing you have the right to express your own opinion/needs/wants/feelings etc.

**Conflict log** – *keep a journal of the following:*

- What kinds of needs/situations trigger your use of passive/aggressive strategies?
- What strategies do you most frequently rely on?
- Are you getting what you want using passive/aggressive strategies?
- What are the most frequent emotional consequences for using these strategies?

### OVERWHELMING EMOTION

For some people, getting angry can cause a dissociative fugue state, and in that state of mind they may say/do things that on later reflection, seem to have been said/done by someone else. These dissociative states can be responsible for emotional/physical violence. It is important to pay attention to the "red flags/early warning signs" eg feeling hot, pounding heart, short of breath, tension in body eg hands, talking rapidly and loudly, feeling a strong need to win/make someone feel bad. Once you have noticed these signs use a breathing technique.

## **FAILURE TO IDENTIFY YOUR OWN NEEDS**

If you cannot articulate your own needs you will become frustrated.

## **FEAR**

Catastrophising thoughts – these scare you into aversive/passive behaviours/avoidance.

Wise Mind meditation, breathing techniques, challenging the thoughts (thought records) are good strategies for this.

## **TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS**

The best solution is to get away from these types of relationship. However, if this is not possible, Assertiveness can be helpful.

## **MYTHS**

Eg - *"If I need something, it means there is something wrong or bad about me," "It is selfish to ask for something/say No," "I won't be able to cope if the other person gets mad or says No," "I have no control over anything."* Remember your assertive rights.

# Section 9

## Advanced Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills



*These skills will lead to far less conflict and far more rewards in relationships.*

### KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT IN RELATIONSHIPS

- Identify your emotions through a decision-making process called a “*decision tree*.” Is the feeling good/bad – painful/pleasurable? Eg:

GOOD	BAD
SATISFACTION	ANXIETY (FOR THE FUTURE)
EXCITEMENT	FEAR
SEXUAL ATTRACTION	ANGER
LOVE/AFFECTION	RESENTMENT
CONTENTMENT	SADNESS
JOY	GRIEF/LOSS
PLEASANT ANTICIPATION	HURT
INTEREST	DISGUST
SATIETY	EMBARASSMENT/SHAME
	GUILT
	LONELINESS/EMPTINESS

- Put the feeling into words.
- What do you want the other person to change? Eg more of, less of, stop doing, start doing, when, where, frequency.
- Put this information into a clear sentence, in a clear, polite and calm way (assertive).

## YOUR LEGITIMATE RIGHTS

Remember, you are entitled to be heard and to ask for your needs to be respected and met.

Regularly read these. We all have the right to:

- Need things from others
- Put yourself first sometimes
- Feel and express your emotions
- Be the final judge of your beliefs and accept them as legitimate
- Your opinions and convictions
- Your experience – even if it is different from that of other people
- Pretest any treatment/criticism that feels bad to you
- Negotiate for change
- Ask for help, emotional support, or anything else you need (even though you might not always get it)
- Say no, saying no doesn't make you bad/selfish
- Not justify yourself to others
- Take responsibility for someone else's problem
- Choose not to respond to a situation
- Sometimes to inconvenience/disappoint others

## MAKING A SIMPLE REQUEST

If you have trouble making the necessary requests in order to take care of yourself, you can easily end up feeling helpless or resentful. Four components to a brief request:

1. Brief justification (optional) – explain in one sentence what the problem is – keep it simple eg It's hot in here...It's a long way to walk...
2. A softening statement – this establishes you as a reasonable/polite person eg. *"Would you mind it..." "It would be helpful if you could..." "I'd appreciate it if you would..." "I was wondering if ..."* *"Could I have..."*
3. A direct, specific question – say what you want clearly and exactly – in one sentence if you can. Say what you want in a calm, flat tone. Don't blame or imply that anything is wrong with the other person.

4. An appreciation statement – this makes it clear to the other person that you value what they do for you eg. *"This will really help me"* *"Thanks for your effort with this"* *"This will make a real difference"* *"This is much appreciated"* *"Thanks for indulging me on this"*

## **ASSERTIVENESS SCRIPTS**

See other assertiveness handout and assertiveness language (*I feel...*). Use I not you statements. I want statements – ask for behaviour not attitude change (you can't expect someone to change what they believe). Ask for one change at a time, not an overwhelming list that makes the person feel pressured. Ask for something that can be changed now/in the near future. Be specific and concrete, not vague. The self-care solution is an optional statement, this is not a threat, it is a solution that you will take if they are unable to comply with your request. This shows that you are not helpless and have a plan to solve the problem.

### ***EG:***

- I think – "It's been 3 years since we have had a pay rise and costs have increased"
- I feel – "I feel left out because the company is doing well and I'm not being included in that"
- I want – "I'd like a 10% cost of living pay increase so my income can keep up with inflation"
- Self-care – "If we can't work this out, I'm going to have to look for something else so I can better support my family"

### ***Develop your own Assertiveness scripts:***

1. The problem.....
2. What I want changed.....
3. "I think..."
4. "I feel ..."
5. "I want.."
6. "How I will take care of myself..."



## ASSERTIVE LISTENING

Good communication is a two-way street. Listening is an active rather than passive process. The same three things you're learning to express assertively, you'll also need to listen for and elicit with questions. If, while you are listening, you have uncertainty about the other person's feelings/wishes, ask a direct question. The more active your questions, the more you learn and the better equipped you will be to find solutions and compromises that serve both peoples needs.

EG:       *"What's the central problem as you see it?"*  
              *"How do you make sense of the situation?"*  
              *"When you're struggling with (name the problem), how do you feel?"*  
              *"What do you think needs to change?"*  
              *"What would you like me to do to help with this?"*

Remember, just because you have found out what someone needs, it doesn't mean you have to give it to them. Your needs and opinions matter too.

- Blocks to Listening
- Mind Reading, assuming you know what the other person feels/thinks
- Rehearsing, planning what you want to say next and missing what's being said now.
- Filtering, listening only to things that are important or relevant to you and ignoring the rest.
- Judging, evaluating the other person and what they say rather than really trying to understand how they see the world.
- Daydreaming, getting caught in memories/fantasies while someone is talking to you.
- Advising, looking for suggestions and solutions instead of listening and understanding.
- Sparring, invalidating the other person by arguing and debating.
- Being right, resisting or ignoring any communication that suggests you are wrong or should change.
- De-railing, flat out changing the subject as soon as you hear anything that bothers or threatens you.

- Placating, agreeing too quickly (You're right...I'm sorry...) without listening the other person's feelings or concerns.

SITUATION	BLOCKS TO LISTENING

In the left-hand column, describe situations where communication has broken down between you and someone else. In the right-hand column, see if you can identify at least one block. Be mindful of the listening blocks and commit to replacing them with assertive listening.

## SAYING NO

The ability to say no is a vital part of healthy communication – without this you have no control over what people do to you. However, the words are simple, but often it takes courage to say them. There are 2 steps in how to say no:

1. Validate the other persons needs/desires
2. State a clear preference not to do it – nobody can really argue with your preferences/feelings.

**Eg:** *"Action movies are a lot of fun, but I'd prefer something calmer tonight"*

*"I can see why you want to confront Ian (our son), but I don't feel comfortable with an approach that risks him turning his back on us."*

## BUILDING AN ASSERTIVE HIERARCHY

Make a list of situations where you want to make a change, say no, or set limits. Include problems with family, friends, work colleagues, authorities etc. Rank the list from 1 to 10 in terms of risk/difficulty (1- least challenging and 10 most challenging situation). Start with the lowest-ranked situations and do 4 things:

1. Write your script (*"I think... I feel... I want..."*)
2. Rehearse your script
3. Identify the time and place you want to use it
4. Commit yourself to making your assertive statement on a specific date, keep moving up the hierarchy and as you do you will find your confidence and skill growing.

## **COPING WITH RESISTANCE AND CONFLICT**

When someone else isn't listening to you, here is what to do:

### **MUTUAL VALIDATION**

when people are not listening to you, one of the reasons is because they feel invalidated and not heard, so they keep arguing. You can stop this by showing you understand their needs, feelings and motivations. You acknowledge and appreciate their experience and understand where they are coming from – and then you validate your own experience too. EG:

"I understand that my saying you are not pulling your weight hurt you. That would be hard for anyone – me included – to hear. From my point of view, I'm scared this project is in danger of going over budget and I will have to answer for that. I need everyone to pull together."

### **BROKEN RECORD**

Use this technique when someone is not getting the message. Formulate a short, specific, easy to understand statement about what you want. Keep it to one sentence ideally. Offer no excuses or explanations. Stand/sit straight and talk in a calm and firm voice. Then just keep repeating the statement as many times as necessary. Don't argue or get angry, don't try to debate or refute anything the other person says. Don't answer any "why" questions (that gives the other person ammunition for their arguments). Do not offer any additional information/evidence for your point of view.

### **PROBING**

*"What is it about..... (name the situation) that bothers you?"*

Keep repeating this until you find something useful.

## CLOUDING

Allows you to partially agree with someone, without accepting everything they say is true. This often calms people and stops the win/lose arguing game. The key is to find some part of what is being said that you can accept and acknowledge the other person is right about that. Ignore the rest of the argument. Modify exaggerated words such as "always" and "never."

**Eg:** *"You always get pissed off over little things" "It's true, there are times I find myself getting irritated."*

Clouding steals your critic's thunder and neutralises their argument. Now the door is open to real negotiation.

## ASSERTIVE DELAY

To use when people are trying to pressure you to make a decision or agree with a plan right away. During the interval you can calm down, think carefully and prepare a good response.

EG: *"You have told me a lot, and I need time to sift through and see what I think." "Give me an hour. This is important, and I want to think carefully before I say anything."*

## NEGOTIATING USING RAVEN GUIDELINES

- R** Relax accept conflict calmly, take deep breaths before responding
- A** Avoid the aversive strategies you may feel tempted to use, monitor what you say to avoid them
- V** Validate the other person's need or concern. Focus on a fair outcome, where both parties get some of their needs met.
- E** Examine your values. How do you want to be treated in a relationship and how do you want to treat others?
- N** Neutral voice. Keep anger and contempt out of your voice.

Recall some recent conflicts where you had different needs from someone else. For each conflict, work out 2 possible compromises (maintaining flexibility) – describe specifically how you would implement them:

CONFLICT	COMPROMISES

# Section 10

## Exposure Based Cognitive Rehearsal

Identify a recent emotionally upsetting situation, where one of the DBT coping skills would have helped. Visualise the situation (as much detail as possible) and stay with this until you can feel a moderate amount of emotion (between 4-6 out of 10), then shut off the scene. Now begin to use one or more of the coping skills you have learnt, focus on the coping skill until your emotion has dropped noticeably (between 2-3 out of 10).

Repeat the whole sequence a few times for practice. The more you practice a skill, the more accessible and memorable it will become. This same strategy can also be used to plan ahead to hypothetical future situations. Imagine a future event and practise using some of the coping skills – visualise yourself handling things in this way.

### DAILY PRACTICES FOR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

This is essentially a 15 min exercise regime and has 5 parts:

#### 1

##### **Mindfulness**

*3-5 mins*, choose to do one of the following:

- Mindful breathing
- Wise-mind meditation

#### 2

##### **Deep Relaxation**

*3 mins*, choose to do one of the following:

- Cue-controlled relaxation
- Band of Light
- Safe-Place Visualisation

# 3

## **Self-Observation**

*3 mins*, choose to do one of the following:

- Thought defusion
- Be mindful of your emotions without judgement

# 4

## **Affirmation**

*Repeat affirmations 5 times* while taking slow, long breaths.

Choose any affirmations each day.

# 5

## **Committed Action**

*3 mins*, choose to do one of the following:

- Plan to implement today's (or tomorrow's) committed action
- Plan for what you can do today (or tomorrow) to connect to your higher power

McKay, Wood, Brantley: The Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Skills Workbook, 2nd edition, New Harbinher Publications Inc.

**2019**

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/-/media/CCI/Mental-Health-Professionals/Panic/Panic---Information-Sheets/Panic-Information-Sheet---05---Progressive-Muscle-Relaxation.pdf>

**3/4/23**

[https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/talking-therapy-and-counselling/dialectical-behaviour-therapy-dbt/#:~:text=Dialectical%20behaviour%20therapy%20\(DBT\)%20is,and%20accept%20your%20difficult%20feelings](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/talking-therapy-and-counselling/dialectical-behaviour-therapy-dbt/#:~:text=Dialectical%20behaviour%20therapy%20(DBT)%20is,and%20accept%20your%20difficult%20feelings)

**9/4/24**

<https://openmindscenter.com/dialectical-behavior-therapy/>

**9/4/24**

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/14757554/>

**13/5/24**

<https://www.grouporttherapy.com/blog/mastering-the-art-of-turn-the-mind-in-dialectical-behavior-therapy>

**13/5/24**

<https://psychotherapyacademy.org/courses/dbt-training-online/modules/fundamentals-of-dialectical-behavior-therapy-dbt/section/history-of-dbt-origins-and-foundations/#:~:text=DBT%20was%20originally%20founded%20in,for%20treating%20borderline%20personality%20disorder>

**14/5/24**

# Sources