

Self-Guided DBT

Practical Skills for Balance and Emotional Freedom.

This guide introduces you to each of the 4 primary DBT modules, offering skills that can help you better manage emotions, handle stress, and improve relationships. Try these exercises at your own pace and notice what works best for you.

Step 1: Mindfulness – Grounding Yourself in the Present

Mindfulness is about being fully present in the moment without judgment. It helps reduce stress and emotional reactivity. To practice mindfulness, try this exercise:

1. Find a quiet place to sit comfortably.
2. Take a deep breath and focus on the feeling of air moving in and out of your body.
3. Notice five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.
4. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the present moment.
5. Do this exercise for as long as feels helpful to you, with the goal of gradually increasing the amount of time you are able to do it.

Step 2: Distress Tolerance – Managing Difficult Moments

DBT teaches strategies to help you cope with intense emotions without making things worse through impulsive or harmful reactions. Try This “STOP” Skill:

1. Stop: Pause before reacting to a stressful situation; take a deep, slow breath.
2. Take a step back: Physically or mentally remove yourself for a moment.
3. Observe: Notice what you’re feeling and thinking without judgment.
4. Proceed mindfully: Choose a response that aligns with your values; it may take some time before you feel ready for this step.

Bonus Tip: Hold an ice cube in your hand or splash cold water on your face to quickly shift your focus when overwhelmed.

Continue to next page.



Self-Guided DBT

Practical Skills for Balance and Emotional Freedom.

This guide introduces you to each of the 4 primary DBT modules, offering skills that can help you better manage emotions, handle stress, and improve relationships. Try these exercises at your own pace and notice what works best for you.

Step 3: Emotional Regulation ~ Understanding & Shifting Emotions

Learning to manage emotions starts with recognizing them and finding healthy ways to cope. Use these journal prompts to better understand your emotions:

1. What emotions do you struggle with the most? What situations trigger them?
2. How do you usually react to strong emotions? Does this response help or hurt you?
3. What is one small change you can make to respond differently next time?

Step 4: Interpersonal Effectiveness – Building Healthier Relationships

DBT teaches skills for setting boundaries and communicating clearly while maintaining relationships. Try this “DEAR MAN” technique for organizing and communicating your thoughts, feelings, and needs, in a clear and assertive way:

1. Describe: Clearly state the situation.
2. Express: Share how you feel.
3. Assert: Ask for what you need.
4. Reinforce: Explain why it benefits both parties.
5. Mindful: Stay focused on the goal.
6. Appear confident: Use a calm and steady voice.
7. Negotiate: Be open to compromise if needed.

Example: Instead of saying, “You never listen to me!” try, “When I share my feelings, I feel unheard. I’d appreciate it if you could acknowledge what I’m saying before responding. This would help me stay calm and open to what you’re saying.”

Practicing these skills consistently can help you build emotional balance and stronger relationships. If you’d like support in applying DBT techniques to your life, our seasoned clinician, Jennifer Denkers, LPC, can work with you one-on-one to learn and apply the full spectrum of DBT skills to your life.

Full recovery happens. Contact us today to get started!

