

## **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Reflections**

Included in this booklet is a small collection of skills I have introduced in my life to help me achieve my life goals.

Please note this booklet was not written or reviewed by a counsellor or therapist of any sort. It is my personal interpretation of lessons I have experienced, and I will make references where I can to the original authors. Please use at your own risk if you are not receiving therapy from a registered clinician. I advise you to seek profession help if you want to incorporate this material into your daily life. Thank you.

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## Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Reflections

**Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)** is a skillset of using language to express yourself externally. Helping you express your needs, feelings and wants in a constructive and respectful way for all parties involved. Learning to understand what you are truly feeling within your body, and what that is trying to tell you about the environment or interaction you are in. Understanding ourselves is key to be able to express ourselves and this can be a long journey of exploration, be patient with yourself.

There are 4 structured models of DBT:

- **Mindfulness** – This includes paying attention to the present moment without judgement. ('Ride the wave' of emotions), Observe and Describe the present moment ('What are the facts').
- **Distress Tolerance** – Techniques to survive crisis situations without resorting to harmful behaviors or making situations worse. (TIPP, STOP, distraction, radical acceptance).
- **Emotion Regulation** – Self reflection to understand, label, and manage intense emotions. Reducing vulnerability to negative thoughts and increasing positive ones. Taking 'Opposite Action' to emotional urges. ('name it to tame it'. Name the emotion and explore why you are feeling it. Journal the thoughts and feelings that come up non-judgmentally.) (participating in activities that bring joy to your life, going for a walk)
- **Interpersonal Effectiveness** – Tools for navigating conflict, setting boundaries and maintaining self-respect.

(DBT was developed by Dr. Marsha Linehan)

## **Using DBT in the 4 categories**

### ***Mindfulness Exercise***

These skills work for people living with anxiety, to help ground them and stay in the present moment.

*In a safe space, prepare by sitting down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and take three slow, deep breaths. Once calm, continue below*

### **RAIN**

**Recognize:**

Slowly take in your surroundings, let yourself feel at ease. Recognize your thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations. Name your feelings out loud or silently to yourself. How does your body feel?

**Allow:**

Observe your experience as if you're watching a movie. Let your thoughts, feelings and sensations come and go like waves. Let go of judgement, however it is okay to feel however you feel. You may tell yourself 'This is temporary' or 'This is how it is right now'.

**Investigate:**

In this space start to identify and name your experience. What words are you going through in your mind? What emotions are you feeling and where are they coming from? What sensations are you feeling in your body? Give space to allow yourself to experience vulnerability, what is it telling you? What do you need? Acceptance, forgiveness, love, belonging?

**Nurture:**

Be kind toward your experience. Give yourself a comforting hug (place your hands on your chest in the butterfly position), and say 'I love you. We are okay, I am here'. Imagine love flowing towards you through important figures in your life, spiritual figure, family, pet, or friends. Let in healing and compassion until you feel calm and centered. Write some positive things about yourself below.

*Take 3 slow deep breaths, continue to be mindful and kind to yourself throughout your day.*

(Developed by Michele McDonald)

## **Five Senses**

These skills work for people living with anxiety, to help ground them and stay in the present moment.

*In moments where you cannot leave the surrounds while experiencing anxiety and need to ground to stay in the present moment. The goal of the five senses experience is to notice something in all your senses to bring you back to the present moment.*

*(You can also do controlled breathing while focusing on the five senses. Try doing controlled breathes with a 4 second breath in, hold for 3 seconds, exhale for 7 seconds, hold for 4 seconds and repeat if necessary.)*

**See:** What are five things you can see around you? Look for a detail you missed before, maybe it's the colour of the wall, the pattern on fabric, or a reflection on an object.

**Feel:** What are four things you can feel around you? Can you feel the ground beneath you, the stability. Can you feel the clothing on your skin, the temperature of the air or the air entering your lungs.

**Hear:** What are three things you can hear around you? What are the sounds around you? Can you identify a specific sound, someone laughing or talking, typing of a keyboard, a bird chirping, a motor running.

**Smell:** What are two things you can smell around you? Focus on two things you can smell, either good or bad, is it car exhaust, cut grass, lilacs, food.

**Taste:** What is one thing you can taste around you? Keep something close to you on a regular basis. Have a drink of water, or chew a piece of gum, or hard candy. If nothing is available, take a breath in through your mouth and see if you can taste the air around you.

You can do these in any order that works better for you or your surroundings. If you are capable, try going for a walk, or doing house chores while you do this.

## *Distress Tolerance Skills*

### **T.I.P.P.**

#### **TEMPURATURE:**

Using cold water to drop your temperature and calm you down fast. Using a bowl of ice water, hold your breath, and place your face in the bowl for 10-30 seconds. Or place an ice pack (or frozen water bottle) on your eyes or forehead. It helps to bend forward as you do this.

#### **INTENSE EXERCISE:**

Burning off the excess, build up energy from your emotions or being activated is a great way to calm down. There are many activities you can do to release the stores up energy you feel. Try going for a walk at a fast paced, or running. Try swimming, or lifting weights or even jumping up and down until you are tired and you feel calmer.

#### **PACED BREATHING:**

Focus on your breathing and recognize if you are breathing from your rib cage or into your belly. Try to slow down your breathing with focus and control. Breath a deep inhale for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds, and release for 7 seconds. Repeat this until you feel calmer.

#### **PAIRED MUSCLE RELAXATION:**

While sitting or standing in one place. Focus on tightening all your toes, hold for 5 seconds and then release. Work your way up your body doing both sides at the same time. (Calf muscles, thighs, hands, arms, and eyes). Continue until you feel calmer.

## **STOP**

### **STOP:**

Freeze. Don't move, don't react to the situation. Emotions make you feel like you need to act, or speak up. Resist the urge and focus inward becoming aware of your physical sensations and mental thought patterns.

### **TAKE A STEP BACK:**

Physically and mentally remove yourself from the environment. Step outside, or go for a walk, take a deep breath and slowly let it out. If you need to, tell the other person you need to take a break and step back from the moment, but do not avoid the situation. You need to return to it at some point.

### **OBSERVE:**

Be mindful using your wise mind and self agency skills. What are the facts? What are the emotions? Do the emotions fit the facts, and if not, question if you are projecting past hurts into this moment escalating feeling beyond the facts. Maybe you have been triggered from a past trauma or fear. Imagine yourself from a birds eye view and try to see the bigger picture of the situation. What is your end goal you want to achieve through this interaction? What is the other person's end goal? (if you need to do some journaling to organize your thoughts, or speak to a counselor to help you understand some of the feelings that arose).

### **PROCEED MINDFULLY:**

Considering all the facts and what you have observed in the previous steps. Decide how you want to proceed with this interaction and how you can act in a way that makes this better, not worse. Maintaining self-respect along with dignity and respect for all.

***Emotion Regulation skills***

Opposite Action:

Just as it sounds. Do the opposite action you feel you want to do in a triggered, reactive, or highly emotional state. Below are the most common feelings we struggle with and the opposite action you could consider using.

<u>Anger</u> : Wants us to attack or defend ourselves.	<u>Opposite Anger</u> : Show kindness or acknowledge you heard them and walk away.
<u>Shame</u> : Wants us to hide, avoid or isolate.	<u>Opposite Shame</u> : Keep your head high, shoulders back and make eye contact.
<u>Fear</u> : Wants us to run or hide to escape danger.	<u>Opposite Fear</u> : Go towards, be engaged and build courage to face the challenge.
<u>Depression</u> : Wants isolation, self-pity, avoid contact and interactions.	<u>Opposite Depression</u> : Get active. Challenge the feeling and engage in your environment.
<u>Disgust</u> : Wants us to reject and distance from person/situation.	<u>Opposite Disgust</u> : Approach and interact with the situation.
<u>Guilt</u> : Wants to repair wrongs and seek forgiveness from others	<u>Opposite Guilt</u> : Follow through with courage, apologize and mean what we say.

## Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Reflections

### **ABC & PLEASE Skills**

Helps to increase positive emotions, while building new habits through repetition, to reduce the risk of falling into emotion mind. Below we will explain each of these.

#### **ABC Skill**

Changing your habits

##### **A: Accumulate Positive Emotions**

Say 'Yes' to activities that bring pleasant feelings. Challenge negative self talk with positive opposites that bring you up.

##### **B: Build Mastery**

Do things that make you feel competent and accomplished each day. Try learning something new, and gradually increase difficulty.

##### **C: Cope Ahead**

Plan ahead of time so you are prepared to cope skillfully when emotional situations arise. If you know you are going into a situation, or an event is coming that you will have a negative reaction to. Breath deep and prepare how you want to show up and be present in that moment.

#### **PLEASE**

skill is taking care of our body

Treat **P**hysical **I**llness and take medications as prescribed

Balance **E**ating in order to avoid mood swings

**A**void mood-altering substances and have mood control

Maintain good **S**leep so you can enjoy your life

Get **E**xercise to maintain high spirits.

## **Building Mastery**

Since infants we naturally challenge ourselves and our environment to grow and learn new things. We seek to explore and understand the world around us. It takes practice, failure, and practice again, like learning to walk, ride a bike, or not miss our mouth with a fork. Through trials we eventually learn what works for us. The skills described in this booklet can help bring awareness to yourself or the world around you.

Building mastering is building mastery of yourself and who you are, what you want in your life and where your values, boundaries or limits are. Learning these things about ourselves takes time and doesn't happen quickly, try not to feel discouraged and keep practicing. When practicing these skills, start small and pick something you can complete within the day. Decide to tackle a project from a different perspective and see if it evolves into something else. Journal afterwards about what you experienced, what you hoped for as results, and what could have been better for next time.

The more opportunities you create to learn about yourself, the more self-confident and capable you will feel in your life. Remember you're building mastery of yourself and who you are, what you want, your values, boundaries and limits. You will start to feel stronger and more confident in speaking up for what you need.

### **How to Build Mastery!?**

1. Plan to do one thing each day that is small enough to be completed in a day, but also gives you a sense of accomplishment once completed. Those two things are important. Examples could be a small walk after dinner, going to bed 30 minutes earlier, planning and cooking a nice meal, or finally donating that bag that's been sitting in the corner of the room.
2. Gradually increase the difficulty over time. Something you have always wanted to do that feels overwhelming or 'too big' can be started small. One day you are cooking pasta from a box and in a month you could be cooking a chicken breast! Start with a 10 minute walk after dinner and gradually increase it to 30 minutes or longer. Donating that one bag of clothes could gradually increase into decluttering a room and then the house over time.
3. Look for challenge. It takes effort, and that's a good thing! That's when the confidence and accomplishment feelings come in. You should be enjoying what you are doing while also looking to challenge yourself a little bit more every time you do it.

**Cope Ahead**

Coping ahead is understanding which situations could cause you to experience troubling thoughts or feelings and planning ahead of time how you will handle the experience. Understand which skills work best for you and then planning and practicing when you will use them in certain events can help change the outcome.

This skill applies to many difficult life events, planning ahead and practicing what you might say in the environment/situation that brings you strong emotional urges where you have a high chance of forgetting these skills in the moment. Week 4, page 19

## **Increasing Positive Emotions**

This is an important subject, and I personally found to be one of the hardest. It has taken me 8 years from when I was first proposed this idea to stand in front of the mirror, look into your eyes and say ‘I love you. I am here for you.’ I try to do that every morning.

Positive emotions can be accumulated through positive experiences that increase your inner confidence. Creating and recognizing positive experiences in your life can have an impact on our Self-Confidence, Self-Esteem, Self-Respect, and Self-Worth. We hear those words but what do they really mean? The Cambridge.org dictionary states:

Self-Confidence: The belief that you can do things well and that other people respect you.

Self-Esteem: Respect for yourself, belief and confidence in your own ability and value.

Self-Respect: A feeling of respect for yourself that shows that you value yourself.

Self-Worth: The value you give to your life and achievements.

These are some pretty big things to look at and reflect on in our lives. Do you live your life with these words in mind? Start small with building up your positive self talk as it takes time and practice. I highly suggest reaching out to a therapist or counselor as everyone has a different need and starting point.

Just like building mastery, we are doing small daily activities that increase our sense of accomplishment and bring some joy and happiness into our daily life. Over time these smaller goals accumulate and create a new pattern of happiness in our lives and this creates a life worth living.

Combining tools in this workbook is a great way to Accumulate positive emotions through Building mastery of ourselves and Coping ahead of emotional dysregulation. (ABC tool Page 9).

Two steps forward. Then the one step back we have all experienced. Below is a personal example of my failures and applying these skills to overcome obstacles.

## Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Reflections

A personal example of my failures and applying these skills to overcome obstacles.

I made a big mistake that affected my life for years, a decade actually. Accumulated over years of smaller decisions that I felt brought comfort, a sense of safety or happiness to my life. I got into credit card debt. By the end I could barely pay the minimum balance and make rent, it left me feeling more scared for my future as now I needed the credit cards to live on. Suddenly the happiness those items and trips brought me were completely gone when I realized I could lose my home. I felt all the negative feelings self hate, guilt, shame, embarrassment, frustration and any combination of hurtful words that are not supportive of my growth forward.

*This is an opportunity to recognize those unwanted thoughts and feelings coming up. Acknowledge they are there and then speak kindly to yourself. Stop what you are doing, place a hand on your heart or chest and take a slow deep breath in. Slowly exhale and provide compassion and love to yourself.*

I sought financial counselling and worked with the banks to decrease the interest rates and combined some loans into one. Making that phone call and admitting I needed outside help was so scary and it took me a few tries to do it. I had a goal and a set payment every month that I could afford. Then the car broke and I needed money, I felt I failed the plan, I was a loser and I was not smart enough to do this big idea to pay off the debt.

*This is an opportunity to recognize those unwanted thoughts and feelings coming up. Acknowledge they are there and then speak kindly to yourself. Stop what you are doing, place a hand on your heart or chest and take a slow deep breath in. Slowly exhale and provide compassion and love to yourself.*

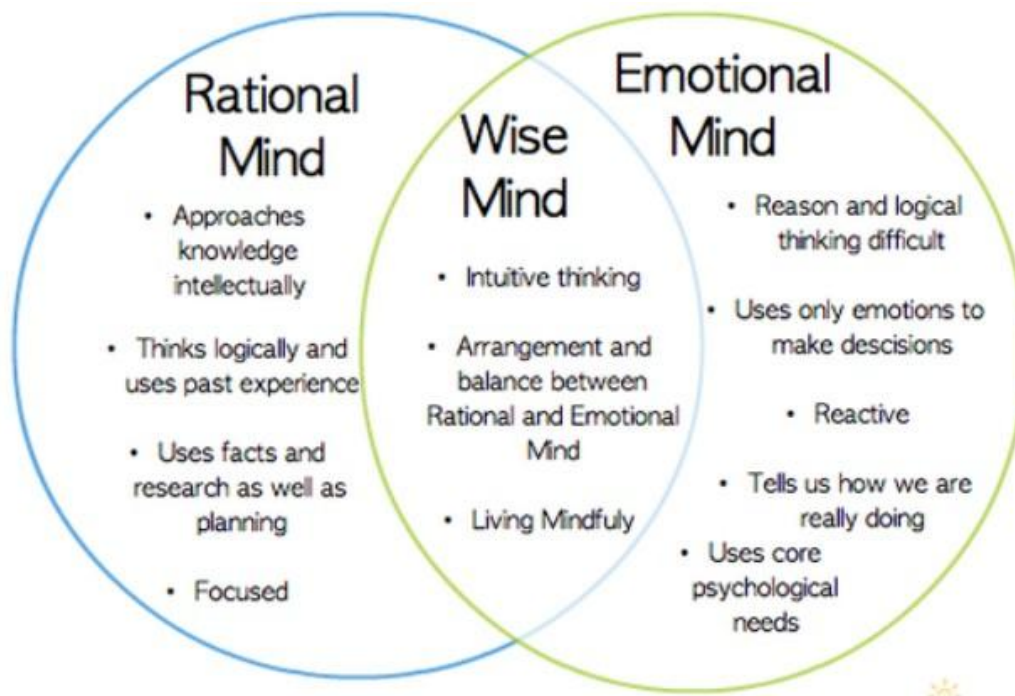
I journalled all my thoughts and feelings, had a good cry and went to bed. In the morning I coped ahead and planned how I would try to correct this set back. I prepared mentally for future set backs and what I would do when they came up. Over years of two steps forward and one step back, I finally got to a place where I can manage my debt and I can see a light at the end of the tunnel. No one could fix my finances for me except me, so I showed up for myself in my life every day. I focused on accumulating small achievements by making decisions of what kind of future I wanted to have. I spoke to myself with respect and kindness, I gave myself the love and support my inner child craved. I used the opposite action skill when wanting to spend money to sooth the emotional moments. I used the PLEASE skill by taking responsibility for my life, learning how to cook and eat healthy, going outside for walks with fresh air. I used the RAIN and 5 Senses to journal instead of spending money when I felt the emotions rising. I also took some classes on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to look at how my thoughts, body and emotions are all related. (Check out that booklet).

We all make mistakes, this does not make you a bad person. Every day is a new day to start again, be gently with yourself.

### Three States of Mind

When we experience long term trauma our mind goes into a survival state and it will try to understand the suffering or shut it out to avoid more pain. This can lead us to live in one of two mindsets that can distort our views of the world and our life experiences. One mindset is a rational mindset, looking at everything as logical, intellectually focused and void of emotional relation. The second is the emotional mindset, looking at everything through our own lenses of emotional reactivity, making decisions based on emotion instead of facts, and using our psychological needs to make decisions instead of reason and logical thinking. Both of these mindsets can create troubles for our lives, sometimes resulting in unstable relationships, difficulties with finances, or maintaining a place of employment.

Focusing on practicing 'Wise mind' skills is living and making decisions considering both rational and emotional minds together. Finding the balance in combining emotional psychological needs and looking at facts and logic of the current situation or environment to make decisions. This can help us think about our values, boundaries and needs while also acknowledging the facts of the situation, needs of others, and focus on completing tasks mindfully. Using DBT skills to vocalize our wise mind can take confidence and courage to speak up for our needs while acknowledging others. Working with the 8 C's can help us articulate how we want to express ourselves through the wise mind. (Find the 8 C's on the Mental Health page of our website.)



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### Interpersonal Effectiveness

Interpersonal Effective is using communication with others to express your needs and boundaries and listening to others by making space for them to express themselves. Successfully using effective communication skills can create a relationship built on trust and honesty. Consistency is important so people know what to expect.

Please remember it takes both people to build a relationship; you can't change someone or make them feel a certain way or do a certain thing. If you are using these skills in your relationships, it does not guarantee the outcome you may desire from the other person. These skills are for you to build mastery of yourself and proceed mindfully in your life that lines with your needs. I highly suggest you get help from a counselor or therapist to integrate these into your life. I can give a small description of the tools, but a therapist would be the best person to assist you in how to apply them to situations.

Theres 3 main skills you can use in relationships and conversations are listed below. First you will want to reflect internally about what you want and have a clear idea of your priorities before approaching the person.

#### **GIVE:**

For keeping relationships

<b>Gentle</b>	Be gentle in approaching the conversation, be nice and respectful. This means no use of verbal threats, interrupting, no judgements, or dismissive body language like eye rolls, sighing, or walking out and ignoring.
<b>Act Interested</b>	Listen to the other persons point of view. Appear interested by leaning in, making eye contact and facing the person. Be patient.
<b>Validate</b>	Acknowledge the other persons feelings and thoughts. Try to see things from their point of view and acknowledge them.
<b>Use an Easy manner</b>	Smile, be light hearted, use humour, sweet talk and ease the person in the conversation.

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### **DEARMAN:**

For getting what you want in difficult situations to state your needs and reach compromise without losing respect or confidence.

<b>Describe</b>	Stick to the facts and describe exactly what you are reacting to in the situation.
<b>Express</b>	Don't assume the other person knows how you feel, express your feelings and thoughts.
<b>Assert</b>	Don't assume the other person knows what you want, ask for what you want or say no clearly.
<b>Reinforce</b>	Reinforce your words by explaining the positive outcomes or negative consequences if your wants are not achieved.
<b>Mindful</b>	Be mindful to focus on your goals, don't get distracted or lead off topic. Repeat yourself if necessary and ignore any attacks (which is hard but doable).
<b>Appear Confident</b>	Use a confident body posture, sit up straight with shoulders relaxed. Use a confident tone of voice. (Try not to be shaky, whispering or avoiding eye contact.)
<b>Negotiate</b>	Ask for solutions and compromise. Be willing to reduce your asks if they won't work, or say no and offer to do something else if their asks won't work.

### **FAST:**

A skill for maintaining your self respect and intensity of saying no when necessary, You can use this in all interactions. don't apologize, stick to your values and keep things honest.

<b>Fair</b>	Be fair to the other person, remember to validate your feelings and the other persons. You are both allowed to have your own thoughts and feelings.
<b>Apologize</b>	Do not over apologize, this includes not apologizing for being alive, having opinions, for disagreeing or making a request for yourself.

## Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Reflections

**Stick to Values**                      Sticking to your own values is important. Don't disregard your own values or morals, be clear expressing them to the other person and why you think what you do.

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**Truthful**                                Don't exaggerate or make up excuses, be truthful and honest, don't play a victim or pretend you don't understand.

Now there are different levels of intensity that you would apply these skills depending on the conditions of the situation. Multiple varying facts outside of your control can affect the situation and this is why I highly suggest a therapist to help you explore these skills.

I hope you found this information as helpful as I did and Thank You for reading.

## Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Reflections

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