

The DBT Homework Assignment

Workbook

50 Worksheets
Based on
Dialectical Behavior Therapy



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DBT Assignment Workbook

50 Dialectical Behavior Therapy Activities

Between Sessions Resources
Norwalk, CT, USA

DBT Assignment Workbook
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Disclaimer: This book is intended to be used as an adjunct to psychotherapy. If you are experiencing serious symptoms or problems in your life, seek the help of an experienced mental health professional.

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About the Series

The *DBT Assignment Workbook* is part of a series of workbooks designed to give therapists and their clients easy access to practical evidence-based psychotherapy tools. Each workbook represents a complete treatment program.

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INTRODUCTION

When Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) was developed in the 1970s, it was created to treat adults who self-harm, including those struggling with chronic suicidal thinking and behavior. Initially, women with borderline personality disorder were treated. Over the years, DBT has proved its effectiveness in treating individuals with anxiety, substance abuse problems, PTSD, and other disorders.

Today, DBT is widely used by therapists to help clients – including those without a diagnosis – who are seeking to manage their overwhelming emotions in healthier ways.

Some Background on DBT

DBT is derived from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which focuses on helping people understand how their thoughts impact their feelings and behaviors. The main diverging principle in DBT is the word “dialectical,” which describes the tension between two opposing forces that are both true. In the case of DBT, “dialectical” refers to the concepts of acceptance and change. Clients focus on changing what is possible, accepting what cannot be changed, and – with therapeutic guidance – determining which of those two options is healthiest.

In DBT, clients learn techniques to accept their intense emotions and thoughts in the present moment, without taking action to avoid or change them. They discover that their harmful behavior is their effort to cope with their overwhelming feelings in that moment. At the same time, clients work on adopting healthier reactions to distressing situations, ultimately making behavioral changes toward building a meaningful life.

DBT uses four basic skills – mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness – to help clients navigate their environment and their relationships.

1. **Mindfulness** – refers to an awareness of thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and behavioral urges. By learning mindfulness, clients are empowered to be in charge of themselves in different ways.
2. **Distress Tolerance** – addresses the tendency of some clients to experience negative emotions as overwhelming and unbearable. People with low tolerance for distress become overwhelmed when faced with even low levels of stress, often reacting in unhealthy ways. Clients learn there will be times when pain is unavoidable, and the healthiest way of coping involves accepting and tolerating distress.

3. **Emotion Regulation** – teaches clients how to manage distressing and overwhelming emotions while increasing their positive experiences through:

- Understanding emotions
- Reducing emotional vulnerability
- Decreasing emotional suffering

Clients learn that distressing emotions are not bad or something to be avoided. All emotions are a normal part of life, and there are ways to acknowledge and let go of emotions without being controlled by them.

4. Interpersonal Effectiveness – refers to how people interact with the people around them and within relationships. Clients learn strategies to ask for what they need, assertively say ‘no,’ and cope with interpersonal conflict.

Using This Workbook in General Practice

DBT techniques are useful in addressing a wide range of concerns and disorders and can complement a variety of therapeutic approaches. Therefore, the *DBT Assignment Workbook* was written to support therapists who work in a general practice, as well as those who specialize. Furthermore, instead of limiting its scope to clients who present with self-injury and suicidality, this DBT workbook can benefit anyone seeking to replace unhealthy behaviors with healthy coping skills.

This workbook offers 50 worksheets that will help clients learn strategies to manage their emotions in constructive ways, instead of turning to overeating, alcohol abuse, practicing unsafe sex, overspending, lashing out in anger, or other harmful behaviors. The worksheets complement the content you and your clients cover during your appointment, by providing homework for them to do between sessions.

This workbook is divided into techniques covering each of the four DBT skills: mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness. Each worksheet is written specifically for clients, in a manner that is practical, user-friendly, and easy to understand. While no single worksheet is effective for everyone, we are confident each client will discover techniques that inspire change.

The Importance of DBT Homework

Evidence-based therapies like DBT teach clients new cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social skills to combat patterns of negative thinking and behavior. For these new skills to be most effective, clients need to practice them regularly – between therapy sessions. Using homework assignments, clients can rehearse new coping strategies and challenge harmful beliefs, strengthening the insights and intentions that surface during a therapy session.

Numerous research studies suggest that homework enhances the effectiveness of therapy sessions, and that clients who complete homework assignments on a consistent basis tend to have better outcomes. In addition to giving the therapy context and focus, homework provides concrete feedback for the therapist about a client’s progress. For instance, when there are issues with homework compliance, therapists can identify obstacles and challenges to the client’s goal achievement.

Guidelines for Using DBT Homework Assignments

As with any therapeutic technique, homework is most effective when used in conjunction with a treatment plan tailored to each client's unique needs and learning style. The following guidelines will help you integrate DBT homework assignments into your practice.

1. Early in the treatment process, introduce the importance of using homework as a tool that can help your client make progress. If you are formulating a treatment plan, therapy assignments should be included as part of that plan. If either of you prefers not to use the term "homework," try "Action Plan," "Wellness Practice Sheet," or another agreed-upon name.
2. Explain the homework assignment process, including how the worksheets will be selected and assigned, and how they relate to a specific goal or problem the client is facing. Explain why each assigned worksheet is beneficial to the client, and how to use it in daily life. It can be helpful to rehearse the exercises together in-session, and to illustrate how the skills learned can improve the client's well-being and relationships.
3. Match the homework assignments to the client's learning style, taking into account how they learn and processes information. Additionally, the client's personality and history can play a role in the assignment selection; for example, a client may balk at using techniques involving mindfulness and visualization. You may find that while one client responds to one type of assignment, another may not benefit at all.
4. Request that clients commit to doing therapy homework and to completing assignments. In some cases, therapists may ask clients to sign a behavior contract where clients agree to complete homework in order to meet their specified goals and objectives. Therapists should also discuss any motivational issues surrounding the homework and discuss ideas to eliminate obstacles to completion. It may be useful to discuss ways people can motivate themselves to change, including giving themselves small rewards and asking for support from friends or family members.
5. Ask clients about anticipated obstacles they may face as they work on therapy assignments. Some might have busy schedules that make it difficult to find time to complete the homework. Others may struggle to face their thoughts, emotions, and urges without their therapist sitting alongside them. Clients struggling with obstacles or motivation may benefit from reminders about their assignments, which can be done by text or email.
6. Be consistent in the way you assign the homework during a session and how you follow up with your client in subsequent sessions. Take time at the beginning of each session to go over the previous week's assignment, and spend a few minutes at the end of each session reviewing the next worksheet.
7. Request feedback on each assignment to determine therapeutic effectiveness: what the client learned, what was helpful and not helpful about the exercise, and what was emotionally difficult or challenging. This feedback is essential when determining future assignments and next steps.

How to Use this Workbook

The worksheets in this book are intended to be used as tools to complement the therapeutic approaches you use with your clients. They are designed to increase clients' awareness of the relationship between their emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations, and their unhealthy urges and behaviors. The assignments provide steps for clients to manage their distress and overwhelming emotions in healthier ways. However, this workbook is ***not*** intended for clients who are in crisis.

You can recommend or purchase this book for your clients, and they can write directly on the pages and bring it to each therapy session for further discussion.

This workbook is divided into sections according to the four skills of DBT: mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness. Each worksheet has four sections: Objective, You Should Know, What to Do, and Reflections on This Exercise. The **Objective** states what the client should expect to have accomplished upon completion of the worksheet. **You Should Know** offers background information about the issue(s) being addressed in the worksheet. **What to Do** features a variety of exercises, including thought-provoking questions to answer, charts to track activities, and questionnaires to complete.

In the **Reflections** section, clients are asked to provide feedback on the worksheet, including rating how much the exercise helped them, and writing what they learned from the exercise. This is perhaps the most important part of the worksheet because it helps you and the client determine any progress or improvement that was made upon completion of the assignment.

SECTION 1.
MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

Mindful Meditation 101

Objective

To quiet your mind and body through practicing formal and informal mindful meditation.

You Should Know

Mindfulness means noticing what is happening right here and now, without judgment and with acceptance. Even a few minutes of quieting the mind and body on a regular basis can reap big benefits – less depression, less anxiety, less stress – and improvements in memory and attention. When you are mindful and aware you train your brain to default to a more relaxed state. This happens only with regular practice. Just as a runner must train to run a marathon without proper training, so you need to train to reap the benefits of meditation. Slow and steady. One step at a time.

Sometimes you might want to meditate with music, sometimes without. Search for meditation, mindfulness, or guided visualization recordings on YouTube. Explore, experiment, and find what works best for you.

There are two categories of mindfulness meditation practices: formal and informal. *Formal practice* requires setting aside a specific time each day or twice a day to be mindful, and it can be done either sitting or walking. *Informal practice* refers to paying mindful, nonjudgmental attention while doing certain routine daily activities such as taking a shower, washing the dishes, making your bed, going for a walk, and so on. Start by choosing one daily activity at a time so you avoid feeling overwhelmed.

What to Do

In this exercise, you will start with the formal practice of sitting meditation. Sitting meditation requires setting aside a specific time each day or twice a day, or as often as you can, to sit quietly with your eyes closed (or open, gazing steadily downward, if you prefer). Experts often recommend twenty minutes per day, but if that does not work for you, try ten. Or five. Or even start with three. You can always build up over time, just like marathon runners in training.

For your sitting meditation, find a time when you can eliminate all distractions and unplug from the world. To start, you might choose to repeat a mantra; that is, a word of your choice, such as “peace,” “calm,” “one,” “love,” or something you can use as your anchor when your mind wanders – which it inevitably will.

Avoid worry and self-judgment. Just watch the thoughts floating past you, like clouds in the sky. *The mindful moment comes when you notice your mind wandering.* Simply bring your attention back to your anchor. You can also use your breath as an anchor, or any mindful self-compassion phrases. By regularly practicing sitting still and simply noticing the flow of thoughts and sensations without judgment and with acceptance, you will get better at noticing when you are

not mindful. Again, that “waking up” moment is a moment of mindfulness, pulling you out of your trance and into the present moment.

For your informal mindfulness practice, pick one of the activities mentioned above (taking a shower, washing the dishes, or going for a walk) and see what it is like to pay full attention to what is happening right here and now. In the shower, do you feel the water on your body? Is it warm enough? Do you feel the soap – can you be present throughout the shower? If your mind wanders, bring it back to the sensory experience of being in the shower.

This week, schedule at least three or four formal sitting meditation sessions, and one or two informal practices. During each activity, practice being mindful, that is, noticing how your body feels; noticing your breath; noticing any sensory experiences such as what you see, hear, smell, or touch. Write down your experiences and your responses.

Date	Formal Practice	Informal Practice	Response
Example: Monday	<i>Sat for 10 mins. on my couch after work - no phone or TV! Focused on breath.</i>	<i>Paid attention while brushing teeth.</i>	<i>Got fidgety but stuck with it, noticed I was fidgeting but I tried not to judge. Tasted the minty toothpaste.</i>

Reflections on This Exercise

What was it like to engage in mindfulness practices each day? Did you experience challenges, or was it easy to fit in the exercises each day? Describe.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Focusing on a Single Moment

Objective

To become more mindful of your experiences by focusing on a single moment in time.

You Should Know

During distressing situations, overwhelming emotions can make it challenging to focus on anything outside of your pain or discomfort. Your intense thoughts and feelings can lead to harmful urges and impulses, making it nearly impossible to make informed decisions or find healthy coping strategies.

By being in the moment, otherwise known as mindfulness, you focus your attention on only one minute at a time. This enables you to notice your feelings without judgment, helping you better manage and soothe those emotions.

What You Should Do

When you focus on a single moment, you become more mindful of your own sense of time. The following exercise will help you become more mindful of your experiences by focusing on a single moment in time. For this exercise, you will need a stopwatch, the timer app on your phone, or a second hand on your watch.

1. Find a quiet, comfortable space to sit where you will not be disturbed or distracted.
2. Begin timing yourself while sitting quietly – without watching the timer.
3. When you think one minute has passed, check your timer to see how much time has actually elapsed.

Name: _____ Date: _____

How many seconds or minutes were displayed on your timer? _____

How many seconds less than, or more than, a minute did you estimate had passed? _____

Were you surprised at the accuracy or inaccuracy of your perception of time? Explain.

How do you think your perception of time impacts how you make a decision or react to a situation? For example, do you rush to make a decision, or spend your time thinking about what might happen next? Or, do you delay taking action or planning for a situation because you believe you have more time? Explain.

Describe a situation where your perception of time impacted how you reacted to a situation.

Reflections on This Exercise

Has your awareness of a single moment changed the way you think about time?

Has your awareness of how you perceive time changed the way you might react to a situation in the future?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

Increasing Your Awareness of Physical Sensations

Objective

To become more aware of your physical sensations as your body reacts to overwhelming emotions.

You Should Know

Overwhelming emotions can cause discomfort in your body, from headaches and digestive issues to muscle tension. When you are mindful of sensations in your body, you begin to notice how your thoughts and emotions impact you physically.

What to Do

The following meditation exercise will help you observe your physical sensations without judgment. Please note that it is normal for your attention to wander as you do the exercise. Do not criticize yourself; instead, simply notice your focus has shifted and gently return your attention to this exercise.

- Find a quiet, comfortable space to sit where you will not be disturbed or distracted for approximately 10 minutes.
- Take several long, slow breaths and close your eyes.
- Imagine you have a narrow band of white light circling your head like a halo.
- As you imagine the band of light moving down your body, pay attention to any physical sensations you experience in that part of the body.
- As the band of light descends slowly around your head, over your ears, and then over your eyes, nose, and mouth, notice any physical sensations, such as scalp tingling, muscle tension, or pain.
- Continue to imagine the band of light moving down to other parts of your upper torso, from your neck and your shoulders, to your upper back, upper arms, elbows, wrists, hands, and fingers.
- Notice any tingling, itching, tightness, or pain.
- Continue to imagine the band of light moving down to your lower torso, from your ribs to your lower back to your stomach.
- Notice any tingling, itching, tightness, or pain.
- Now, imagine the band of light moving down to your lower body, including your pelvic area, buttocks, and thighs.
- Notice any tingling, itching, tightness, or pain.

- Finally, imagine the band of light moving down to your lower legs, shins, feet, and toes.
- Again, notice any tingling, itching, tightness, or pain.
- Imagine the band of light disappearing into the ground as you take several long, slow breaths. Open your eyes when you are ready.

What physical sensations did you notice during this exercise? Describe.

Were there any sensations that surprised you? Explain.

Did it feel comfortable or uncomfortable to focus on your body's sensations? Explain.

What emotions or feelings did you notice during this exercise? Describe.

Reflections on This Exercise

Did your awareness of your physical sensations increase your awareness of distressing or upsetting emotions? Explain.

Now, try this exercise following a particularly upsetting experience. Describe your experience, focusing on your physical sensations.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

Using Visualization to Observe Your Thoughts and Feelings without Judgment

Objective

To use visualization to observe your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations without judgment.

You Should Know

When you experience distressing thoughts repeatedly, you can get stuck in that negative space. In addition to criticizing yourself and your thoughts, you may become judgmental of your overwhelming emotions. When you observe your thoughts and feelings objectively, you are better able to determine which thoughts are useful to you and which can lead to harmful behaviors.

What to Do

The following visualization exercise will help you observe your thoughts and feelings (both physical and emotional), without judgment, analysis, or rumination. The intention of this exercise is not for you to stop thinking – which is impossible to do – but to notice your thoughts as they come and go, without holding on to them.

Find a quiet, comfortable space to sit where you will not be disturbed or distracted and set your timer for five minutes.

- Take several long, slow breaths and close your eyes.
- Imagine yourself in a calm, peaceful setting, such as at the beach or in the forest.
- Picture your thoughts as leaves floating down a stream, as clouds drifting by, or as shells on a beach that get washed away by waves. You can also create your own scenario where you watch your thoughts disappear as new ones arise.
- Observe your thoughts as they come and go, one at a time, without judgment. If your thoughts come very quickly, do your best to notice each one and let them go.
- Do not try to stop your thoughts.
- If you discover you are criticizing yourself for what you are thinking, it might be helpful to say, “This is just a thought. I am not my thoughts.” Or, “Thoughts are not facts.” You can also just state, “I am having a thought about X.”
- Observe any emotions or physical sensations that arise.
- Take several long, slow breaths and open your eyes.

Describe what it was like to notice your thoughts without judging them. Was it easy or difficult?

What emotions did you notice as you observed your thoughts?

What physical sensations did you notice as you observed your thoughts?

Describe any urges or impulses that arose as you observed your thoughts.

Reflections on This Exercise

How did this exercise change the way you acknowledge your thoughts, including any self-judgment or criticism? Explain.

How did this exercise help you understand the connection between your thoughts, your emotions, and your physical sensations? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

Using Beginner’s Mind to Decrease Judgments and Manage Reactions

Objective

To use Beginner’s Mind to observe the present moment as if seeing it for the first time in order to decrease judgments and better manage your reactions.

You Should Know

When encountering a situation, you automatically bring along your own judgments based on your past experiences. This can impact how you react to the situation and the individuals involved, which may result in overwhelming emotions and impulsive behaviors.

Describe a situation where your negative judgments impacted how you reacted.

Beginner’s Mind is the practice of viewing each situation and relationship as if you are seeing it for the first time. Instead of attaching your judgments and criticisms to the situation, you view it objectively. By approaching the situation with a fresh perspective, you are better able to manage your responses and emotions.

What to Do

Before practicing Beginner’s Mind, it is important to recognize your positive and negative judgments about the situations you encounter, including your actions and observations.

During the following exercise, keep track of your judgments for one week, or until you can catch yourself as you make judgments. Include when and where the judgment happened and the situation leading to the judgment. Here are some examples:

When Judgment Happened (day/time)	Where It Happened	Situation That Led to Judgment	Judgment Positive or negative?
<i>Monday, 7 am</i>	<i>At home</i>	<i>I couldn’t get out of bed in time to go to the gym before work.</i>	<i>I’m so lazy, no wonder I can’t lose weight. (negative)</i>
<i>Tuesday, Noon</i>	<i>At work</i>	<i>My supervisor pointed out an error I made on an important report.</i>	<i>My supervisor is very demanding, but he’s good at catching mistakes. (positive)</i>

What did you notice as you tracked your judgments? Were they mostly about yourself or about someone else? Were they more positive or negative? Did they occur more often in a specific location or at a particular time of day?

As you caught yourself making judgments, did it change the way you felt about the situations? Explain.

Next, over the next day or so, use Beginner's Mind to observe situations as if you have never previously encountered them. What do you notice about the person, place, or thing that you had not noticed before? What is new or different? Use additional pages, if necessary.

Describe the situation as if seeing it for the first time – without judgment.

What did you notice or observe that was new or different? For example, you noticed how patiently your spouse spoke to your elderly relative.

Did your judgment of the situation change once you used Beginner's Mind? Explain.

Reflections on This Exercise

Did you notice any changes in your emotions after using Beginner's Mind? Describe.

Did you notice any changes in your reactions or behaviors after using Beginner's Mind? Describe.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

Performing Tasks with Intention

Objective

To engage in your daily tasks with intention, while observing your thoughts and feelings.

You Should Know

When you experience overwhelming thoughts and feelings, you might become distracted from focusing on the task you are performing at that moment. Have you ever driven somewhere on “automatic pilot” – getting to your destination without noticing the ride itself? Or, have you watched television without noticing what you are seeing and hearing? These are just some of the ways people act without intention or awareness.

Describe a time when you performed an important task while distracted by your thoughts or emotions. What was the task? What were you thinking and feeling? How successful were you in completing your task?

When you perform tasks with intention, you are aware of what you are experiencing in that moment. By observing and releasing overwhelming emotions and returning focus to your task, your mind can get quiet. You can then solve problems, make healthier decisions, and accomplish your goals.

What to Do

Perform an everyday task (such as eating, showering, walking, or brushing your teeth) with intention and awareness.

Choose a task: _____

Notice distressing or distracting thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations you experience as you prepare for the task. Write them down.

Next, focus your attention on performing the task and describe what you experience. For example, if your task is brushing your teeth, describe the sensations of the toothbrush in your mouth, the taste of the toothpaste, and the way your back bends as you rinse out your mouth in the sink.

As distracting thoughts, emotions, and judgments arise, observe them and allow them to pass. Describe.

Refocus your attention and awareness on your task and the present moment. Did you observe any change in the intensity of your thoughts, emotions, or judgments when you refocused on the task? Explain.

Complete your task. When you performed your task with intention and awareness, how was it different from previous times you completed that task? How was it the same? Explain.

Reflections on This Exercise

What important tasks and actions – at home, work, in your relationships, etc. – could you perform with intention and awareness using the steps above?

What do you think would improve if you were more intentional while doing those tasks or actions?

How can being more intentional help you manage overwhelming or upsetting thoughts and emotions by simply observing them?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Wise Mind and One-Mindfully

Objective

To quiet your mind and body through practicing Wise Mind and One-Mindfully.

You Should Know

The concept of Wise Mind is about finding the balance between thinking and feeling in your life, combining your rational (or reasonable) mind and your emotional mind. The rational mind is when your logical thinking is in control. You can assess, judge, decide, determine, delay gratification, tolerate frustration, and understand complex ideas and situations without becoming overwhelmed by emotions. You require that part of your mind to function in the world. The emotional mind refers to when your feelings are in control. You might react impulsively, jump to conclusions, act in ways that might hurt yourself or others, or otherwise distort the reality of a situation.

When you have access to your Wise Mind, you find a balance between feeling your true feelings and acting with wisdom in response to them. You can see the “gray” area instead of black and white. You can make healthy, informed decisions about your work, relationships, and all the complexities that life presents.

The term “One-Mindfully” refers to focusing on one thing in the moment. Doing one thing at a time and attending to it fully can help you be more effective in your life. You might celebrate your ability to multitask, but that can have negative effects. With One-Mindfully skills, you eat when you are eating. You listen deeply when someone is talking. You stay present with your body and whatever sensations you are feeling.

What to Do

These two mindfulness skills take practice and repetition. You might not feel any different at first, but keep trying. You are building a new mental muscle, a way to better manage difficulties.

Wise Mind

How would you describe yourself in terms of the balance of rational mind and emotional mind? Which one is more active and available? Which one tends to hide in the background?

One-Mindfully

Make a plan to practice acting One-Mindfully in the next week. You might want to focus completely on one meal. Go for a walk without listening to music or talking on the phone. Do a chore or task such as dishwashing or laundry with your full attention on what is happening from moment to moment. Just do one thing at a time.

What are three activities you will commit to doing in the next week or so?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

After you have completed your activities, write down what you noticed while you tried to do just one thing at a time. Were you able to focus? For how long? What distracted you? What did you like about it? What was challenging about it?

Activity 1:

Activity 2:

Activity 3:

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you discover about yourself from reflecting on the relationship of your rational mind to your emotional mind?

What area would you like to work on specifically in helping you to access and utilize your Wise Mind more often?

What did you notice from doing the One-Mindfully exercise? What practice(s) would you like to continue doing to improve that skill?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Dealing with Upsetting Memories Through Mindfulness

Objective

To deal with upsetting memories using mindful meditation.

You Should Know

You might have recurring memories that are upsetting or disturbing. One of the most useful ways to handle upsetting memories is to practice mindfulness. The concept of mindfulness allows you to focus on accepting rather than fighting the thoughts and feelings that upset you. When you have an upsetting memory, you are encouraged to pay attention to it without judging that it is good or bad. Be aware of your thoughts and feelings as well as your body and your senses. Observe what is happening in your mind, as if you are observing something outside of yourself.

What to Do

Regular practice of mindfulness (also called mindful meditation) is extremely valuable for dealing with a wide range of emotional problems. This worksheet will help you to learn and practice this technique.

Write down the upsetting or overwhelming memory.

Rate how upsetting this memory is to you, where 1 = not very upsetting, to 10 = very upsetting:

Next, practice mindfulness to decrease the intensity of the memory.

1. Consciously think about this memory for about a minute, without judging it as good or bad.
2. Sit comfortably and relax your body, breathing slowly and deeply.
3. Now stop consciously thinking about the memory and just “observe” your thoughts, feelings, and your body. Observe and accept what is happening, without being the least bit judgmental.

Write down your thoughts without censoring them in any way.

Rate how you feel following this exercise, where 1 = completely calm, to 10 = very upset:

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you notice about using mindful meditation to deal with the upsetting memory?

Was this exercise easy or challenging? Describe.

What can you do to make mindfulness a daily habit? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Giving Up Judging People Negatively

Objective

To understand the negative effects of judgmental thoughts and their associated behaviors and reduce judgment of other people.

You Should Know

You might have a difficult time relating to others without being highly judgmental. Sometimes it is easier to simply divide the world into “good” and “bad,” where there is no room to see that the people around you have many different qualities. Or, you might find you constantly criticize others. You might focus most of your energy on the things people do that you think is wrong and so you are often angry, unhappy, and lonely.

Examples of Negative Judgments

Do any of these thoughts sound like ones you have?

- My _____ is so mean, I can't stand to be with her.
- _____ is not a good friend, because I keep inviting her out, and she never invites me to go with her.
- My boss is incompetent and my job is miserable.
- My _____ thinks about everyone but me.
- My _____ is really a loser. No wonder they are having problems.

Write down three negative judgments you have had recently.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If you are prone to negatively judging others, it is probably detracting from your own happiness and life satisfaction. This worksheet can help. You do not have to “change” the way you think or feel, but rather just observe and acknowledge your negative and critical thoughts as if they are clouds floating by in the sky. In other words, avoid reacting to these thoughts with any particular emotion. Just let them come and go.

What to Do

Use the chart on the next page to keep track of your negative judgments about the people in your life. As soon as you have each thought, take a deep breath and let the thought float away.

What can you do to turn your judgments into positive statements? Choose four negative judgments and re-write them as positive statements. For example, instead of saying, "My sister is such a loser, no wonder she can't find a job," switch it to, "My sister is going through a rough time. What can I do to support her in her job search?"

1.

Negative Judgment: _____

Positive Statement: _____

2.

Negative Judgment: _____

Positive Statement: _____

3.

Negative Judgment: _____

Positive Statement: _____

4.

Negative Judgment: _____

Positive Statement: _____

Reflections on This Exercise

Was it challenging for you to stop yourself from judging and criticizing others? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Developing Self-Compassion

Objective

To help you become more self-compassionate.

You Should Know

You might have something about yourself you do not like; something that causes you to feel shame, to feel insecure, or to feel not “good enough.” Everyone does – even people who seem to have everything – beauty, wealth, intelligence, and more – are often living with a sense of great inadequacy.

Do you think you are self-critical? Do you often feel you are not as good as the people around you or that there is something really wrong with you? Ask yourself if you really need to suffer from your sense of not being “good enough.” Suffering is part of the human experience, and we all will have times of pain, failure, and loss. But do you really have to add to your suffering? Do you have to make yourself suffer more?

Kristin Neff, a psychologist who has dedicated her life to teaching the importance of self-compassion, notes that self-compassion is not self-pity. She explains:

When individuals feel self-pity, they become immersed in their own problems and forget that others have similar problems. They ignore their interconnections with others and instead feel they are the only ones in the world who are suffering.

Self-compassion is also very different from self-indulgence. Self-indulgence is merely giving yourself short-term pleasure, which may actually get in the way of your happiness and well-being. You may indulge yourself with eating a big bowl of ice cream, or buying something special, or binge-watching your favorite show. These indulgences are fine once in a while, but as you can see, they have little to do with self-compassion.

This worksheet is designed to help you bring self-compassion into your life. It will help you show the same compassion to yourself that you would show to someone you care about very much.

What to Do

Begin by writing something about yourself you do not like. Write down one issue or thought that often makes you feel inadequate or bad about yourself, such as your physical appearance, your work, a relationship issue, a mistake you made, and so on. Describe that issue below by completing the sentence.

I feel bad about myself because:

What emotions come up for you when you think about this aspect of yourself? Write down as many emotions as you can.

Now take a moment to sit with these emotions even though they may make you uncomfortable. Just feel them without judging them. You might have some images or words come to mind. Avoid judging them or trying to get rid of them. Just observe them. They are not you, but rather only thoughts and images you have in your mind.

Write down any images or words that come to mind.

Now imagine an incredibly caring friend who understands and accepts you. Now that you are in touch with your self-critical thoughts and feelings, think about an imaginary friend who is unconditionally loving, accepting, kind, and compassionate. Imagine this friend can see all your strengths and all your weaknesses, including the aspects of yourself you wish you could hide from others.

Reflect on what this friend feels toward you and how they love and accept you exactly as you are, with all your very human imperfections. This friend has a profound understanding of what it means to be human. This friend is kind and forgiving toward you. This friend loves you unconditionally in spite of what you think of as your problems and faults.

In their great wisdom, this friend understands your life history and the millions of things that have happened in your life to create you as you are in this moment.

Write down what this friend would say to help you feel you are only human, that all people have both strengths and weaknesses.

If you think this friend would suggest changes you can make, write them down. Make sure these suggestions would embody feelings of unconditional understanding and compassion.

What else would your friend say to you to express acceptance, kindness, and caring for you?

What would this friend say to express desire for your health and happiness?

Take a few minutes to feel this compassion. Feel the compassion from your imaginary friend as it soothes and comforts you. Sit back and close your eyes and feel what it is like to experience unconditional love from someone who accepts you exactly as you are without thinking for a moment even the slightest critical thought.

Hold on to this feeling for another minute or two.

Now, imagine your friend wants to leave you with one important thought to carry with you. Just reading this one thought pours soothing compassion into you and comforts you like a cool breeze on a hot day or a warm blanket on a cold night.

Write down this one thought. _____

Now, write down this thought again very slowly. With each word, see if you can feel the compassion and acceptance behind this thought.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

SECTION 2.
DISTRESS TOLERANCE

Creating a Better Day

Objective

To identify meaningful and enjoyable activities and schedule at least one activity each day for a week.

You Should Know

Activities offer healthy distractions, allowing you to enjoy yourself and create alternatives to ineffective behaviors. Planning your day so that it includes pleasurable and meaningful activities will lift your mood and bring purpose to your life. Begin by writing down activities that will make any day more meaningful.

Make a list of pleasurable activities, including activities you used to enjoy that you have stopped doing.

An activity that expresses my values: _____

An activity that always makes me smile: _____

An activity that relaxes me: _____

An activity that connects me with people I care about: _____

An activity that makes me think: _____

An activity I enjoy but I never have time for: _____

An activity that brings back wonderful memories: _____

A spiritual activity that makes me feel connected to a higher power: _____

An activity that is always fun: _____

Other activities that are meaningful to me:

What to Do

Commit to doing one pleasurable activity each day. Schedule it, including what, where, when, and with whom. Include the level of distress you experience prior to the activity, and then after you engage in the activity, where 1 = little or no distress to 10 = extreme distress or overwhelm.

Day	Distress Level (1–10)	Activity (Include Details)	Distress Level (1–10)	Notes
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Reflections on This Exercise

Describe what it was like for you to practice an enjoyable activity each day.

Did you find this exercise challenging? Explain.

Describe whether or not your distress levels decreased as the week progressed.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Using Distraction as a Distress Tolerance Skill

Objective

To use distraction to distance yourself from overwhelming and distressing situations.

You Should Know

When fear, anxiety, anger, and other distressing emotions are overwhelming, you may act on harmful urges like overeating, abusing alcohol, or otherwise harming yourself. Or, you may redirect your pain to your relationships by provoking arguments, lashing out, or withdrawing from communication.

Distraction is a tool that can be used to create distance from a distressing situation, enabling you to avoid immediately responding in ways that are not healthy, productive, or desirable. Distraction does not suggest you push away or avoid strong feelings and experiences. Instead, it provides the space to soothe yourself so you can deal with the issue at another time, when you are feeling less overwhelmed.

What are the typical ways you respond to distress currently?

What undesirable or unhealthy behaviors do you engage in when you are upset?

What to Do

If you are engaging in undesirable behaviors to cope with distressing situations, here are some suggestions of pleasurable activities you can try instead.

- Call or text a friend or a family member.
- Play with your pet.

- Take a hot bath.
- Go for a walk or take an exercise class.
- Listen to music.
- Read a book or write in a journal.
- Spend time outside in nature or do some gardening.
- Give yourself a manicure.

What other pleasurable activities do you enjoy?

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) uses the acronym ACCEPTS to categorize distracting behavior. It stands for:

Activities - Engage in activities that bring you pleasure. Exercise, watch a funny video, play video games, go to a movie; schedule pleasurable events.

Contributing - Do something kind for yourself or someone else. Volunteer at a food bank or animal shelter, or visit a sick friend.

Choices or Comparisons - Compare yourself to those less fortunate than you. Or, think of a time in the past when you were happy or content.

Emotions - Choose events that create different emotions than the ones you are currently feeling. If you are angry, listen to soothing music. If you are sad, watch a comedy.

Pushing Away - Put some distance between you and the situation. Physically leave (walk away) from the situation, or block the thoughts from your mind for a few minutes.

Thoughts - Keep your mind busy by engaging in activities that require your concentration, such as counting, doing household chores, or completing a crossword puzzle.

Sensations - Engage in activities that make you feel present in your body, such as taking a hot or cold shower, getting a massage, listening to a recording of nature sounds, or watching a video on relaxation techniques.

For the next week, record any distressing situations that you encounter and what you did to distract yourself at the time, using one of the ACCEPTS behaviors.

Situation	Emotions / Thoughts	Behavior I Would Normally Choose	Distraction	Emotions / Thoughts Following Distraction

Reflections on This Exercise

What ways of distracting yourself were the most successful? Explain.

What was difficult about distracting yourself when you were in distress?

Describe a challenging situation where using distraction would have been helpful for you.

Who can support you in identifying and using distracting behaviors?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Visualizing a Safe Place

Objective

To reduce overwhelming emotions by visualizing a place where you feel safe and calm.

You Should Know

During times of distress, you may feel the urge to engage in unhealthy behaviors to cope with your thoughts and feelings. Visualization techniques can be effective in soothing you and reducing stress because your brain cannot distinguish between real or imagined moments of peace and calm. As you become more relaxed, it gets easier to manage your emotions in a healthier, more constructive way.

What You Should Do

During the 'Safe Place Visualization' you will focus on a real or imaginary place where you feel relaxed, safe, and peaceful. The first step is to identify such a place. It can be a beach, forest, house of worship, spa, or an imaginary setting such as a house in the clouds or your own private island. If a safe place does not come to mind, select a soothing color instead and follow the steps below.

What safe place did you choose? _____

How does this safe place make you feel? _____

Find a quiet, comfortable space to sit without being disturbed or distracted. Follow the instructions below.

- Take several long, slow breaths and close your eyes.
- Imagine you have entered your safe place, and use all of your senses to explore it.
- Using your imagined sight, observe what the space looks like. Notice details, including colors, brightness, and the objects around you. Are you alone, or are others with you? Are there other living things there, such as animals or plants? Take a few moments to enjoy your surroundings.
- Next, imagine the soothing sounds around you: a soft breeze, chirping birds, ocean waves, a purring cat, or relaxing music. Focus on one sound that is especially pleasing and continue listening for a few seconds.
- Then, focus on your imagined sense of smell. If your setting is outside, inhale the scent of fresh air or flowers. If your setting is inside, observe the smell of firewood, food cooking, or incense burning. Notice the pleasurable aromas for several seconds.
- Next, touch the imaginary objects around you. If you are outside, notice the calm breeze or warm sun on your skin, grains of beach sand in your hand, or the garden vegetables you are

growing. If you are inside, feel the chair or rug you are sitting on, the warmth of a roaring fireplace, or the soft fur of a dog you are petting. Take a few seconds to enjoy the sensations.

- Lastly, focus your attention on your sense of taste. What comforting food or drink are you enjoying? Is it sweet, spicy, or salty? Hot or cold? Take a moment to savor the flavors in your mouth.
- Take a few moments to relax in your safe place, using all of your senses. Notice how calm and peaceful you feel in this place. Remember that you can return here anytime you experience distress.
- Take a few more deep breaths and open your eyes when you are ready.

Reflections on This Exercise

Describe any changes in your levels of distress during or after this exercise.

What emotions did you notice as you sat quietly and visualized your safe place?

How can you use this exercise to calm yourself when you experience overwhelming emotions?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

Rehearsing Values-Based Behavior

Objective

To identify your values and turn them into action to effectively manage challenging situations.

You Should Know

When you encounter stressful situations, your emotions can take over and make it hard to find solutions. You may keep repeating the same arguments with a spouse or family member because you are too angry or hurt to come to a resolution. Or, you may want to start dating again after a breakup, but worry about the rejection and hurt you might experience.

By reminding yourself what is important to you – your values – it can be easier to manage life’s challenges. Values are the principles, ethics, or standards that make your life meaningful. Your values are what you consider to be important or beneficial, and may include things like being a good parent, practicing a religion, or serving your community. Choosing behavior that is based on values instead of emotions enables you to react to stressful situations in a way that reflects who you are, instead of what you feel.

Review this list of values and rank the top 3 that are most important to you.

- Having a good relationship with a spouse or partner.
- Starting a new romantic relationship.
- Having a close relationship with your parents or siblings.
- Parenting.
- Having good friends.
- Living in a safe and comfortable home.
- Advancing your education or training.
- Having a fulfilling career or advancing your career.
- Experiencing financial security (decreased debt, increased savings).
- Engaging in hobbies and interests that enrich your life.
- Practicing your faith through spirituality or religion.
- Engaging in community service or civic engagement to make a difference.
- Being physically healthy and fit.
- Being emotionally healthy and strong.
- Engaging in self-care, including making time for yourself.
- Other _____

My top three values:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Creating a Life Based on Your Values

Now that you have your top three values, think of one measurable intention or goal for each of them. For instance, if you chose 'Education' as one of your top three, your intention could be "go back to school to complete my bachelor's degree."

Next, list a few realistic action steps to help you reach your goal. For example, if you want to go back to school, your steps might include "request my transcript" and "apply for financial aid."

Value #1 _____

My intention: _____

My action steps: _____

Value #2 _____

My intention: _____

My action steps: _____

Value #3 _____

My intention: _____

My action steps: _____

It is common to feel resistance when you try to turn your values into action. You may second-guess your abilities, worry about being judged by others, or feel shame. By identifying the negative thoughts and rehearsing solutions to overcome them, you will have more confidence to meet your goals.

Here’s an example of Ariana, who rehearsed her values-based behavior to address a stressful situation at her job.

Ariana has been very frustrated with her coworker, Jack, who is a member of her project team. While Jack is a hard worker, he often leaves the office before finishing his tasks so he can pick up his child from daycare. Ariana often stays late to complete Jack’s portion of the project, which includes spreadsheets – a task she hates. She has reacted by either speaking rudely to Jack or ignoring him for hours at a time. Jack has been angry and defensive in return. Their manager has noticed the tension between them and told them to find a workable resolution.

Ariana identified “career” as one of her top values. Her career intentions include “being a problem-solver” and “being dependable.” She thought about how she could use her value and intentions to improve her relationship with Jack, while reducing the stress she felt about her projects and workload. She also realized she often feels uncomfortable confronting others and typically reacts with frustration, anger, and avoidance. She felt disappointed in herself for not acting more professionally.

Ariana rehearsed explaining her feelings of frustration to Jack and apologizing for her behavior. She practiced asking Jack what she could do to alleviate his workload while being equitable with their responsibilities. She thought about suggesting ways to help Jack prioritize his tasks so he could work on the spreadsheets himself – leaving Ariana with some of his tasks that were less demanding. She also thought about small tasks she could delegate to Jack to make her own workload more manageable. She visualized a more collaborative and pleasant office environment for both of them.

What to Do

Now it is your turn to rehearse your values-based behavior. Think of a situation where you want to act and react with your values, not your emotions.

Describe the situation. Where are you? Who you are with? What are you and others doing and saying?

Which value and intentions have you identified to respond to this situation?

What steps will you take to turn those intentions into action through your words or efforts?

Notice the thoughts and feelings that come up for you; for example, you might have a fear of failure or feel anxious. Then, choose to simply accept them. What thoughts and feelings do you feel? Can you accept them? Explain.

Imagine successfully completing your goal while rising above those emotions. How do you feel?

Visualize others reacting positively to your actions. What does that look like?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

Pausing During a Distressing Situation: The REST Technique

Objective

To pause during a distressing situation so that you can identify healthier ways of managing your emotions to avoid reacting impulsively.

You Should Know

When confronted with distressing situations, it can be challenging to remember healthy coping strategies you have learned. It might seem easier and feel more natural to return to unhealthy habits than to identify helpful techniques to manage your emotions. When you take a step back from an emotionally upsetting situation, it gives you the opportunity to examine the situation more objectively. As a result, you are more likely to choose healthier solutions and coping techniques.

Think of a recent situation when you experienced upsetting emotions and responded by acting impulsively or resorted to harmful urges. Then, answer the questions below.

Describe what happened during this situation.

Describe your emotions during this situation.

Describe how you reacted.

How did you feel afterward?

What to Do

The following strategy, which uses the acronym **REST**, lays out the steps to help you pause, clear your head, and then determine a helpful plan of action to address the situation. By encouraging you to briefly shift your attention from emotions and urges to facts and solutions, REST can be used as the first step in changing your unhealthy habits.

Relax: Take a “time out” from the situation to focus on your well-being. Go for a walk, take a hot bath, call a supportive friend, or even just take some deep breaths or count to ten.

Evaluate: Identify the facts within the distressing situation. Notice how you feel physically and emotionally. Observe what other people are doing and how they are reacting. Identify any threats to your safety.

Set an intention: Create a goal or plan to address the situation. This could mean choosing a coping skill, asking someone for help, calling a family meeting, or negotiating with others.

Take action: Put your plan into action with intention and awareness. While you may not necessarily resolve the situation, this action will be more effective than the impulsive behavior you would have otherwise carried out.

You might need to repeat some or all of the REST steps during a particularly overwhelming or upsetting situation. But with practice, it can become a new habit to help you manage your emotions and cope in healthier ways.

Using the distressing situation you described on the previous page, imagine how you could have responded differently using REST.

What could you have done to **Relax** during this situation?

If you had **Evaluated** the facts of this situation, what could you have noticed or learned?

What **Set intention** or plan could you have used?

If you had **Taken action** based on that intention, what could have happened?

How would your response or reaction have been different?

The key to the REST strategy is to identify the moment when you will choose how to react to an upsetting situation: either with harmful habits or with healthier coping skills. Here are some indicators that can help you identify that moment:

- You feel an intense negative emotion that usually results in avoidance or becoming confrontational.
- You are suddenly in physical or emotional pain.
- You notice the urge to act impulsively with a harmful behavior, even if there is no obvious reason.

Now, think of a recurring situation that causes you overwhelming or distressing emotions and harmful urges (for example, a confrontational family member, an unreasonably demanding boss, an overdue mortgage, etc.). Describe the situation below.

How can you use REST to address this situation next time it happens?

R: _____

E: _____

S: _____

T: _____

During what other recurring situations could the REST technique be helpful?

Reflections on This Exercise

How has this exercise increased your ability to identify healthier coping skills and solutions to distressing situations? Explain.

Which of the REST steps did you find easiest to do? Explain.

Which of the REST steps did you find most challenging? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Practicing Radical Acceptance

Objective

To use radical acceptance to tolerate overwhelming emotions in a difficult situation.

You Should Know

No matter how you live your life, there will always be situations and events that cause great sadness, anger, or frustration. You may wish to avoid these painful and sometimes overwhelming emotions, but avoiding them is not helpful.

What would happen if you accept things as they are – without trying to change, escape from, or eliminate them? What would happen if you refocus your attention on what you can do *NOW*? This is called radical acceptance – accepting even the most difficult situations the way they are rather than trying to avoid them.

When you practice radical acceptance, you acknowledge the current or past situation without judgment, and without criticizing yourself or others.

Why should you practice radical acceptance?

You may have heard the saying “The only way out, is through.” This means you must go through the pain in order to get to the other side of it.

Remember:

- Rejecting things that make you uncomfortable does not make them go away.
- Pain is a signal that something is wrong.
- A refusal to accept reality can keep you trapped in sadness, shame, anger, or other painful emotions.
- In order to successfully change something in your life, you need to accept it first.

Here is the example of Kendra, who struggled with the infidelity of her husband for years before she practiced radical acceptance:

Kendra and Jon were married for 16 years when she noticed he seemed to be losing interest in her. Jon was always going away for weekends and even when he was home, his mind seemed to be in another place. He was constantly on the computer and texting people, but Kendra was afraid to ask him what was going on.

Kendra told her sister and her best friend that she thought Jon was having an affair. She wondered if she should try and spy on him or even hire a private detective. She started thinking about Jon and what had happened to their marriage all of the time. She felt guilty, angry, and worried about what would happen to her children if they divorced. The only

thing that would quiet the voices in her head was taking a few drinks and she did this every night.

Using radical acceptance, Kendra learned to acknowledge her feelings rather than giving them power over her or trying to avoid them. She stopped blaming herself and even stopped blaming Jon. Once she could accept that this was a difficult situation (but a common one), she contacted a marriage counselor and asked Jon to go with her to a session.

What You Should Do

There are several steps to practicing radical acceptance:

- Stay in the present moment and pay attention to the emotions you are experiencing.
- Remind yourself the unpleasant reality cannot be changed.
- Remind yourself that the past or present reality is shaped by numerous factors, decisions, and events that took place over time.
- Practice accepting with your mind, heart, and body. This can include relaxation techniques, mindful breathing, prayer, or visualization.
- Listen to your body's sensations (tension, tightness, etc.) as you think about what you need to accept.
- Allow disappointment, sadness, or grief to surface.
- Recognize that life, even when it is painful, can be worth living.

There are also statements you can say to yourself that may be helpful during this practice:

- "I can't change what's already happened."
- "It's impossible to change the past."
- "The present is the only moment I can control."
- "This situation is the result of countless other decisions and actions."

Now, consider radical acceptance as it relates to your own experiences. Think of a recent situation that you found distressing, and answer the following questions.

Describe the situation.

What were the past events that led to this situation?

What role did you play in causing this situation?

What role did others play?

What did you have control of in this situation?

Where did you lack control in this situation?

How did you respond to this situation?

How did this response affect your thoughts and feelings?

Did you avoid dealing with upsetting thoughts and feelings?

How could the events have played out differently if you had practiced radical acceptance?

Now, practice radical acceptance on a current situation that is causing you distress. Describe the situation.

What are your thoughts and feelings about this situation?

What can you do to help you accept this situation?

Did you notice any shift in your thoughts and feelings about the situation after practicing radical acceptance? Describe those changes.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Using Coping Thoughts

Objective

To better manage difficult emotions and challenging situations by using coping thoughts.

You Should Know

Using “Coping Thoughts” will help you soothe yourself and calm your emotions when you are experiencing distress. You might be burdened by a constant stream of mind-generated negative or self-critical thoughts, seemingly on autopilot. You might worry you are stuck with those voices and there is nothing you can do about it. However, you can change negative thought patterns. You can practice making a new inner “recording” through using this technique.

What to Do

First, write down some of the typical negative, self-critical thoughts that arise when you are in distress. Be as honest as you can and try not to hold back. There is nothing wrong with you for having these thoughts – it might hurt to look at them closely, but bringing them into awareness will help you.

Next, review the list of possible coping thoughts you can say to yourself if you are in distress.

- Everyone makes mistakes.
- Nobody’s perfect.
- Nothing bad is happening right now.
- I’m going to be OK.
- This too shall pass.
- I can ride out this uncomfortable feeling. It won’t last forever.
- My feelings come and go.

- I can take care of myself.
- My feelings are not bad. They are just feelings.
- I'm a survivor. I can survive this too.
- I can feel anxious and still get through this.
- I am a good person.
- This situation is only temporary.
- I am a strong person.
- I will be able to figure this out.
- I can take my time to decide what to do next.
- I don't have to know the answer right now.
- I have the courage to face my difficult feelings.
- This doesn't feel good, but it won't kill me.
- I can change my thoughts if I want to.
- I was hurt in the past but I am working on healing now.
- I am worthy of love and respect.
- I am someone who can cope with difficulty.

Add your own coping thoughts here:

Pick a few of these coping thoughts to practice using when you are in distress or dealing with difficult emotions. Make a copy of your list that you can review at any time – on a note card, on your phone or device, and so on.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Measuring the Intensity of Your Emotion Against the Level of Threat

Objective

To measure the intensity of your emotions against the actual level of the threat to react appropriately to distressing situations.

You Should Know

When there are threats of danger or harm, emotions like anger or anxiety can warn you that something is wrong and you need to take action. There are times, however, that your emotional reactions to situations surpass the actual level of the threat. This can make it more difficult to manage your emotions and respond to the situation in healthier ways.

Because emotions are not facts, sometimes there might be little correlation between the intensity of your emotions and the actual threat level. Assessing whether your emotions accurately reflect your level of risk or danger can help you determine the healthiest course of action/reaction.

What You Should Do

First, think of a recent distressing or overwhelming situation. Describe what happened here.

How did you respond to the situation? Describe.

Rank the intensity of the emotions you experienced during the situation, from 1 to 10, with 1 = low distress, to 10 = high distress).

Intensity level: _____

Why did you rate it that number?

Next, rank the situation's *actual* level of threat or harm to your safety, health, or well-being, with 1 = low level of danger or harm, to 10 = high level of danger, harm, or damage.

Intensity level: _____

Why did you rate it that number?

Now, compare the two rankings. Which number is higher: the intensity of your emotions or the actual threat?

If the emotion ranks higher than the threat level, identify a skill you could have used to help you avoid acting on your impulses or urges. This can include distracting yourself through pleasurable activities, self-soothing through meditation, or asking for help from someone you trust.

What actions could you have taken to manage your emotions in healthier ways?

If your emotion is equal to, or lower than, the level of threat, identify an action you could have used to improve or change that situation, including problem solving or negotiating.

What activities could you have chosen to improve or change the situation?

Next time you encounter a situation where you experience overwhelming or distressing emotions, answer the following questions.

Describe the situation. What happened? Who were you with? How did you feel?

Rank the intensity of the emotions you experienced during the situation, from 1 to 10, with 1 = low distress, to 10 = high distress.

Intensity level: _____

Why did you rate it that number?

Next, rank the situation's actual level of threat or harm to your safety, health, or well-being, with 1 = low danger or harm, to 10 = danger, harm, or damage.

Intensity level: _____

Why did you rate it that number?

Now, compare the two rankings. Which number is higher: your emotions or the threat?

If the emotion ranks higher than the threat level, identify a skill to help you avoid acting on your impulses or urges. This can include distracting yourself through pleasurable activities, self-soothing through meditation, or asking for help from someone you trust.

What actions will you take to manage your emotions in healthier ways?

Who can support you with these healthy actions?

If your emotion is equal to, or lower than, the level of threat, take action to improve or change that situation, including problem solving or negotiating.

What activities will you choose to improve or change the situation?

Who can help you with these changes or improvements, or brainstorm ideas for solutions?

Reflections on This Exercise

Does ranking emotions against actual threat change the way you react to a situation? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Using a Pros and Cons List to Identify the Consequences of Your Urges

Introduction to Therapists

“Creating a Pros and Cons List” is a distress tolerance exercise created by Marsha M. Linehan to be used in conjunction with other DBT therapeutic techniques. It can be helpful for clients who are aware of their harmful or self-destructive behaviors and are considering steps to reduce or eliminate them. The Pros and Cons List can be used for behaviors ranging from cutting and burning, to binge eating, to practicing unsafe sex.

The purpose of the Pros and Cons List is for clients to use it as a reminder tool before their next urge strikes, or before they act on that urge. It is geared toward clients **who are not in crisis** and who are able to take a step back to objectively identify the consequence of acting on, or resisting, those urges.

Clients who complete the list are expected to carry it with them, and to rehearse and review it repeatedly. Ultimately, the client should be able to envision the *positive* consequences of *resisting* the urge and the *negative* consequences of *acting* on the urge. They should also be able to remember past experiences when they acted on their urges, and the consequences they encountered.

Used along with distress tolerance techniques that identify healthier coping strategies, the following Pros and Cons worksheet can be an effective tool to increase awareness and begin reducing or eliminating harmful behaviors.

Using a Pros and Cons List to Identify the Consequences of Your Urges

Objective

To use a Pros and Cons List to help you identify the consequences for both acting on and resisting your harmful urges.

You Should Know

When you experience overwhelming emotions, it is easy to keep repeating the same harmful behaviors – even when you are trying to reduce or eliminate them. During times of distress, you might cut yourself, overeat, drink excessively, destroy property, or engage in other dangerous activities. By using a Pros and Cons List to identify the positive and negative consequences of your urges, you can weigh your options and identify better choices.

You should work on the Pros and Cons List when you are feeling safe and out of a crisis. Reading and re-reading a list of consequences in your own words can help you delay turning those urges into action. It can also serve as a reminder of past instances when you acted on those urges.

What You Should Do

You will complete a Pros and Cons List that examines the positive and negative effects of acting on – and of *resisting* – your harmful impulses. For instance, if you cut yourself to feel relief from difficult emotions, you will first compare the pros and cons of acting on your urge to cut. Depending on the situation, acting on the urge can also mean giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.

Then, you will compare the pros and cons of resisting the urge to cut. Depending on the situation, resisting the urge can also mean doing what needs to be done or not giving up.

Use the following chart to complete your Pros and Cons List. You can select any harmful activity to compare the pros and cons (overeating, drinking, etc.). Fill in the boxes on the chart in the following way:

- Pick one box to start. Write down everything you can think of for that category.
- Notice any shame, guilt, self-criticism, or worry that arises, and remind yourself that your feelings are just feelings.
- When you complete that category box, start on the next one.
- You might notice some overlap between category boxes. Keep writing until you feel you are done.
- Quantity does not matter. You might have 2 items in one category, and 20 in another.

- Once you have completed all four boxes, it is recommended that you carry the list with you. You can review it and rehearse it before you *experience* your next urge to engage in harmful behavior, or before you *act on* your next urge. The list can also help you remember the consequences of other times you acted on your urges.

	Pros	Cons
Acting on Harmful Urges To: _____	<i>Pros of acting on my harmful urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.</i>	<i>Cons of acting on my harmful urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.</i>
Resisting Harmful Urges To: _____	<i>Pros of resisting my harmful urges, doing what needs to be done, or not giving up.</i>	<i>Cons of resisting my harmful urges, doing what needs to be done, or not giving up.</i>

Reflections on This Exercise

What thoughts and feelings did you experience as you completed the Pros and Cons List?

Were there any items on your list that surprised you? Explain.

Now, identify which pros and cons have short-term consequences (impact you today), and which have long-term consequences (impact your future).

Short-term pros:

Short-term cons:

Long-term pros:

Long-term cons:

What thoughts and feelings did you experience as you completed the short-term and long-term lists?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Riding the Wave of Your Urges

Objective

To ride out unhealthy urges and impulses using the Ride the Wave visualization technique.

You Should Know

When you experience unhealthy urges during times of distress, you may notice fluctuations in their intensity. Urges are like ocean waves that strengthen, peak, and eventually crash. When you try to eliminate your urges, they can take longer to subside. If you give in to the impulses, they can increase in power. However, when you ride the wave of your urges like a surfer on the ocean, you can observe and accept those urges without taking any action.

What to Do

Try the following Ride the Wave visualization technique next time you have an unhealthy urge or impulse to revisit an undesirable habit. With practice, your urges will become easier to withstand, providing the opportunity for you to identify healthier behaviors to manage your emotions.

Find a quiet, comfortable space to sit where you will not be disturbed or distracted. Focus on your breath and your body's sensations throughout this exercise. Close your eyes if you wish.

- Take a few moments to notice where in your body you experience the urge. You might observe sensations in your stomach, in your mouth, or another area.
- Focus your attention on the part of your body connected to the urge. If you notice the urge in more than one area, start with the section that feels most intense. Do you feel tension, pressure, discomfort, tingling, or warmth? It may be helpful to describe the sensations in an objective and nonjudgmental manner. ("I notice warmth and tingling in my belly.") Go through this exercise with each body part where you notice the urge.
- Pay attention to your breath for the next 1–2 minutes as you inhale and exhale deeply.
- Return your focus to the body part(s) where you feel the urge. Notice any sensations that arise. Imagine sending your breath to the areas where you feel the urge. Observe if, and how, the sensations change as you watch them. Practice this step for at least one minute.
- Imagine your urge's physical sensations are a wave. Watch the wave rise and fall repeatedly as the intensity of the sensations crest and subside. Imagine your breathing is a surfboard riding these waves. No matter how big the wave gets, or how afraid you are of falling off the board, imagine you are a professional surfer who can handle each wave as it comes. Practice this for at least one minute.
- As you ride the wave or notice sensations describe the sensations again, in an objective and nonjudgmental way ("I notice the warmth in my belly is getting cooler").
- Take a few more deep breaths and open your eyes.

Describe how it felt to notice your urges without acting on them.

What physical sensations did you notice as you Rode the Wave?

What thoughts and emotions arose as you Rode the Wave?

Reflections on This Exercise

Did the intensity of your urges change as a result of the exercise? Explain.

Did the intensity of your thoughts and emotions change as a result of the exercise? Explain.

Identify an upcoming situation where using the Ride the Wave exercise will be useful.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Using Your Senses to Get Grounded

Objective

To notice what you see, hear, and sense in your external surroundings to “ground you” when you experience distressing thoughts and feelings.

You Should Know

When you experience difficult situations, your distressing thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations may be the only things you notice. It might be challenging to focus your attention on what others are saying, or to concentrate on a task. However, the physical or mental distress you feel can be quite different from what is taking place externally, in the world around you.

By focusing on what you perceive through your senses, you can become more aware of what is happening outside of your feelings in that moment. This view helps to “ground you,” enabling you to see the situation more fully and become “present.”

The following meditation exercise shows you how to shift your attention between your internal and external experiences to increase your awareness of your senses.

What to Do

Find a quiet, comfortable space to sit where you will not be disturbed or distracted, and set your timer for 10 minutes. Focus on breathing and relaxing throughout this exercise.

- Take several deep breaths and notice how your breath feels in your body.
- Using your sense of sight, focus your attention on one object in your surroundings.
- Notice how the object looks, including size, shape, color, and other visible details. If you find your attention wandering, return your focus to the object without judging yourself.
- Shift your attention to your body, noticing any physical sensations, while you continue taking deep breaths.
- Now focus your attention on your sense of hearing, noticing any sounds you hear. This can be a clock ticking, birds tweeting outside, or a car honking nearby. If you become distracted by your thoughts, return your focus to listening.
- Once again, shift your attention to your body, noticing any physical sensations, while you continue taking deep breaths. Notice the sensation of your body sitting in the chair, of your feet on the floor, and of your chest expanding with each breath.
- Next, focus on your sense of smell. If you do not notice any pleasant or unpleasant smells, focus on the air flowing through your nose and mouth as you inhale and exhale. If you become distracted by your thoughts, return your attention to your nose.
- Return to physical sensations, scanning your body from your head to your toes and notice any tension, tingling, or pain. If you become distracted by your thoughts, return your focus to your body.

- Finally, focus your attention on your sense of touch. Reach out with your hand to touch something in your reach, or the chair you are sitting on, or your arm or leg. Notice if it is hard or soft, smooth or tough, solid or hollow. Notice how your fingertips feel as you touch the object. If you become distracted by your thoughts, return your attention to your fingertips and the object.
- Take three to five long slow breaths, and refocus on yourself and your surroundings.

How easy or difficult was it to sit quietly and focus on your senses? Explain.

Describe any physical sensations you noticed during this exercise.

Describe any changes in your thoughts or emotions you noticed during this exercise.

Reflections on This Exercise

Describe a situation where this exercise might have been helpful in allowing you to see the situation more fully. Had you used this technique would you have reacted differently? Explain.

How could you use this technique to help “ground” you the next time you experience upsetting or overwhelming emotions?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

SECTION 3.
EMOTION REGULATION SKILLS

Observing Your Emotions without Judgment

Objective

To observe your emotions without judgment in order to increase your acceptance of them.

You Should Know

Emotions come and go and serve as a compass for understanding ourselves and the world around us. Judgments, which can be positive or negative, are opinions or evaluations. Judgment can be positive, as it allows you to make comparisons or use discernment in certain situations. But when you judge your emotions and label them as “bad” or “wrong,” or scold yourself for having them, your emotions might intensify. Thoughts you have about your emotions, and the desire to make those feelings go away, may cause more distress than the emotions themselves.

However, if you observe your emotions without judgment, you can allow the intense feelings to pass. Here are some statements that can help you become more accepting of your emotions.

- Feelings are not facts. Label the emotion as “just an emotion.”
- You are not your feelings. Instead of saying “I’m sad,” or “I’m angry,” say, “I feel sad,” or “I feel angry.”
- All emotions come and go. Notice your emotions and visualize them as a wave that ebbs and flows.
- Reflect on how you are feeling throughout the day. It is important to focus on pleasant emotions as well as reflect on painful or overwhelming ones.
- Accept your emotions as part of what makes you uniquely you.
- You are not “bad” for having an emotion that is distressing or uncomfortable.

What other encouraging statements can you make to yourself?

What to Do

The first step to observing your emotions without judgment is to identify how you feel and the judgments that go along with them. The next time you experience distressing emotions, answer the following questions.

Why are you experiencing this particular emotion now? Explore the possible meaning of what you are feeling, including specific triggers, conflict, people, places, or situations.

Describe any judgments you had about your emotions.

How do your judgments affect your emotions and how you feel about yourself?

Now, complete the following chart to track your emotions during distressing situations, and your judgments about your emotions. Then, refer back to the list of encouraging statements, and see if you can accept your emotions and challenge the judgment. Finally, describe any changes in your judgments.

Distressing Situation	Emotion(s)	Judgment of Emotion	Challenging Statement	Change in Judgment (Y / N) Describe

Did you notice any changes in your emotions and judgments after you challenged them? What happened?

Did using encouraging statements change how you felt about yourself? Explain.

Did you find it easy or difficult to challenge your judgments? Describe.

Reflections on This Exercise

Do you think being less judgmental about your emotions might change the way you express your feelings to others? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Observing and Accepting Your Emotions

Objective

To observe and accept overwhelming emotions so you can begin managing them in healthier ways.

You Should Know

When emotions are overwhelming, it can feel impossible to sit with the feelings. You may seek out ways to avoid your emotions, or numb them with unhealthy or harmful behaviors. When you begin to recognize and accept your feelings, you can identify healthier ways of managing your emotions and responding to situations that cause upset, distress, or overwhelm.

What to Do

Before you can accept your overwhelming emotions, it is helpful to understand what is causing them. The following exercise will help you identify the situations that contribute to your distress and overwhelm. You can then identify how you typically react or cope. For the next two weeks, keep track of your emotions using the following chart, noting situations that trigger your emotions; the emotions you experience; and finally, your response or reaction. Make copies of this chart, as necessary. Then, review the completed chart and answer the following questions.

Date	Triggering Situation	My Emotion(s)	My Coping Response
<i>February 12</i>	<i>Today is the first anniversary of my divorce</i>	<i>Sad, rejected, lonely</i>	<i>Called out sick from work and slept most of the day</i>

What emotions did you experience most often?

What coping responses did you use most often?

Did those coping responses improve how you felt about yourself and the situation? Explain.

When difficult emotions show up repeatedly, or your coping responses cause even more distress, it is time to face those feelings. The following visualization exercise will help you observe your emotions, and any accompanying physical sensations, without analyzing them or becoming preoccupied by them. When you stop trying to fight or avoid your emotions, the feelings become less intense, and it is easier to let them go.

Find a quiet, comfortable space to sit where you will not be disturbed or distracted, and set your timer for five minutes. As you become more comfortable sitting with your emotions, you can set the timer for longer periods of time. Focus on your breath and your body's sensations throughout this exercise.

- Take several deep breaths and notice how your breath feels in your body.
- Notice your body's physical sensations, including any tightness in your neck or shoulders.
- Observe your emotion as it arises. Describe the feeling to yourself, as well as the intensity of that emotion.
- Notice whether the emotion is increasing or decreasing as you continue breathing.
- Observe any new emotions that join or replace that feeling.
- If you notice a need to push away the emotion, or to act on a harmful urge, that is normal. Keep observing the emotion a little longer, describing those feelings to yourself.
- Observe how it feels to be aware of your feelings, watching them come and go without acting on them.
- Remind yourself emotions are like waves that ebb and flow, and you have faced other emotional waves before.
- Notice any judgments you have about yourself, other people, or the emotion itself, and let them go.
- Keep watching your emotion until it changes or decreases.
- Finish with a few intentional, deep breaths.

Describe any physical sensations you noticed as you observed your emotions.

Describe any urges or impulses that arose as you observed your emotions.

Describe what it was like to observe your emotions without acting on them.

Reflections on This Exercise

Did this exercise change the way you regard your overwhelming emotions? Explain.

Did this exercise change the way you react to your overwhelming emotions? Explain.

Can you think of ways to cope with overwhelming emotions in the future?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Identifying Barriers to Healthy Emotions and Behaviors

Objective

To understand the connection between your upsetting emotions and destructive behaviors in order to replace them with positive alternatives.

You Should Know

Your emotions can be both the cause and the effect of your thoughts and behaviors. When you experience overwhelming emotions, your thoughts and behaviors may become self-destructive. You may self-injure, overeat, abuse drugs or alcohol, lash out at other people, or become physically aggressive. Consequently, you may feel depressed, ashamed, or guilty – which, if unmanaged, can lead to additional self-destructive behaviors.

Did you know you receive reinforcement or benefits for your thoughts and behaviors, even when they are self-destructive? That is why it might be difficult to break out of a cycle of harmful reactions, and the longer the negative behaviors continue, the more temporary the relief can become, and the more destructive the consequences of that behavior

Consider Jane's situation. Jane's sister was seriously injured in a car accident. Jane was supposed to have been a passenger in the car, but she decided to stay home. Following the accident, Jane felt guilty about not getting hurt or being with her sister when it happened. She started drinking to cope with her painful emotions. In the short term, Jane got positive reinforcement from her actions – she was able to tune out her feelings of guilt and self-loathing. But in the long term, her actions had dangerous consequences because she became dependent on alcohol and was fired after missing too many days of work due to hangovers.

The good news is that the opposite about behaviors and emotions is also true. When you engage in healthy behaviors and self-affirming thoughts, your emotions become more positive and fulfilling. As you receive positive reinforcement for healthy choices, it becomes easier to repeat those behaviors or identify additional positive ones.

Consider Tom's situation. Tom's office announced a Steps Challenge to encourage staff to get active. Tom wanted to lose some weight but he disliked exercising at the gym. He joined the competition and started walking a few miles a day. Although he did not win the challenge, Tom still received positive benefits that reinforced his behavior. In the short term, he could walk upstairs without getting winded and he had more energy. He decided to continue his daily walking routine. Over the long term, he noticed his stress level was lower, he was sleeping better, and he was losing weight.

What to Do

In order to increase your healthy behaviors and emotions, first identify harmful behaviors that impact your thoughts and feelings.

The unhealthy or self-destructive behaviors I engage in are:

The temporary emotional benefits I receive from my unhealthy behaviors are:

The long-term risks and consequences of my unhealthy behaviors are:

Describe how harmful behaviors negatively affect your thoughts and feelings.

The next step is to identify healthy behaviors to help you manage upsetting emotions during times of distress. Here are some suggestions.

- Calling a friend or visiting an online support community.
- Working out or taking a walk.
- Journaling or writing poetry.
- Having a good cry.
- Screaming or yelling in a location where others won't hear you.
- Playing with a pet.
- Doing deep breathing exercises or meditating.

Describe other ways you can manage upsetting emotions.

Have you ever experienced overwhelming emotions but chose behaviors that were helpful instead of harmful? What happened? What behaviors did you choose instead?

Now, over the next week, keep track of situations that lead to unhealthy behaviors and distressing emotions. Using the chart below, identify the unhealthy behavior you chose (or wanted to use) to manage those emotions, and the short-term benefits you experienced. Then, write down a healthier alternative that you used (or could have used) instead to help manage your emotions and develop healthier ones.

Situation	Emotions I Experienced	Unhealthy or Destructive Behavior	Short-Term Benefits	What I Did/Could Have Done Instead

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Improving Your Emotions by Improving Your Health

Objective

To understand how your physical health can influence your emotions and identify ways to take better care of your body.

You Should Know

Your body and mind are intimately connected. Your body reacts physically to the way you think, how you feel, and the choices you make. Additionally, your health can influence your emotions in positive or negative ways, depending on your habits and choices. The foods you eat, the amount of sleep you get, and even your level of physical pain can further impact the intensity of your emotions and your ability to cope with them. When you are not physically at your best, it can negatively affect your concentration and decision-making skills and make it harder to resist unhealthy urges.

What to Do

Here are some suggestions for improving your physical habits and overall health.

Eating: Eat regularly throughout the day. Limit the amount of foods high in fat to avoid feeling heavy and sluggish. Limit the amount of sugary foods, which can cause bursts of energy before you “crash.” If you tend to eat too little, make sure you are eating enough nutrients and calories to keep you nourished to avoid physical weakness, drowsiness, headaches, or irritability.

Alcohol and recreational drugs: While you may feel happy, numb, or uninhibited at first, both alcohol and drugs can leave you feeling depressed, anxious, combative, or even paranoid. Excessive use can cause addiction, health issues, and other serious consequences. Limit your use of these substances, or eliminate them, if possible. If you have a history of alcohol and drug abuse and want to stop, contact a medical professional or someone you trust.

Caffeine and cigarettes: Caffeine is a stimulant that can leave you feeling jittery and irritated, intensifying feelings of anxiety you may already have. Products like sports drinks and energy drinks have large amounts of caffeine. While cigarettes can make you feel more relaxed, the physical dangers of smoking, including vaping, are well documented. If possible, cut back on these substances.

Exercise: Physical activity keeps your body healthy and strong. It is also proven to help reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, while improving your memory and the quality of your sleep. Try to get 20 minutes of exercise a day. Walking is an excellent low-impact activity for beginners. If you have physical limitations, consult your doctor about the best activities for you.

Sleep: The average adult needs 7–9 hours of sleep a night. A lack of sleep can cause issues with memory, concentration, and reflexes. It can also worsen depression. Avoid caffeine and alcohol at least 3 hours before bedtime. Eliminate the use of cell phones and other electronic devices in

bed. Try to go to bed and wake at the same time each day. Avoid exercising or having a big meal shortly before bedtime.

Illness and Physical Pain: Experiencing pain and illness, especially long term, can intensify depression and anxiety. Seek a doctor's care as needed, and take medications as prescribed. Follow the advice of your health care providers, including changes to your diet and levels of physical activity.

Have you identified physical habits you engage in that you feel are unhelpful or harmful to your emotions and physical health? Explain.

Which habits would you most like to improve or reduce?

What steps can you take to improve or reduce them?

Who can support you and hold you accountable in taking these steps (friends, family, doctor)?

The following chart can help you track your habits and the steps you are taking to improve them. If it does not apply, put an “x” in the box. Rate your pain and/or illness on a scale, where 1 = No pain/illness to 10 = My pain/illness severely limits me and negatively affects my quality of life. Track your progress for one week.

Day of the Week	Eating Habits and Food Choices	Drug, Alcohol, Caffeine, or Cigarette Use	Sleep (hours, quality)	Exercise (activity and time spent)	Physical Pain or Illness (Rate 1–10)
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

Now, review your week of habits and activity. Are there any patterns that stand out? Is there anything that surprised you? Explain.

Reflections on This Exercise

Describe people, resources, or other supports that can help you and motivate you in setting goals for positive change.

What steps have you taken to make improvements in your physical health?

Describe any improvements you have observed in your emotions or moods.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Improving Your Healthy Sleeping Habits

Objective

To improve your healthy sleeping habits to feel better physically and emotionally.

You Should Know

When you have a bad night's sleep, it can negatively impact your body and brain. Your energy level, memory, and ability to focus and concentrate can all be affected. Lack of sleep may make it harder to control your emotions and urges or make productive decisions. It can even worsen feelings of depression and negatively affect your immune system.

The average adult needs 7–9 hours of sleep each night. When you are experiencing worry, fear, stress, and other intense emotions, that target can seem impossible.

How does your lack of sleep affect how you feel physically and emotionally?

What to Do

Note: If you have sleeping problems three or more times a week for at least three months, you may want to ask your doctor about medications, herbs, or supplements that might be helpful. Additionally, if you wake up multiple times a night or wake yourself up gasping for breath, these may be signs of a sleep disorder. Discuss your symptoms with your doctor.

Here are some strategies that can help you feel more physically and emotionally relaxed at bedtime and improve your healthy sleeping habits.

- Listen to soft music, read, or take a warm shower before bed.
- Avoid using your phone, tablet, TV, or other electronic devices in bed. Shut your phone off at bedtime to avoid waking up from notification pings.
- Exercise regularly, but not right before bed.
- Create a to-do list for the following day to clear your head.
- Process your thoughts in a journal, sketchbook, or notebook.
- Practice deep breathing, meditation, or prayer before bedtime.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine in the evening.
- Keep your bedroom at a cool temperature (65–68 degrees).

- If you are sensitive to light and sound while sleeping, wear earplugs and a sleep mask.
- A white noise machine may also help; if you use a white noise app on your phone, remember to turn off your notifications.
- If you have trouble falling asleep or falling back to sleep, get out of bed and do some soothing activity (like reading or listening to classical music) in another room. Return to bed when you feel drowsy.
- Try to go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- Avoid eating heavy meals at least two to three hours before bed.
- Make sure your mattress and pillows are comfortable.
- If you take a nap during the day, limit it to 15–20 minutes.

Write down your own ideas here:

Which of the suggested strategies are you most likely to try?

What steps do you need to take, or what supplies do you need to get?

Next, keep track of your sleeping habits using the chart below. Indicate when you have trouble sleeping, the strategy you used to fall asleep or get back to sleep, and whether not it worked. Then, describe how you felt the next day. Track your progress for at least two weeks, making copies of the chart as necessary.

Date	Hours Slept	Strategy Used to Fall Asleep/ Return to Sleep	Successful? (Y/N)	How You Felt Next Day (groggy, alert, cranky)

Reflections on This Exercise

Did you experience any changes after taking steps to improve your sleeping habits? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Seeing the Big Picture

Objective

To manage your emotions by making sure you are seeing the “big picture” and not just paying attention to the negative aspects of a situation.

You Should Know

When a situation triggers overwhelming emotions, it is common to only pay attention to the upsetting or painful parts of your experience. As a result, you may overreact to the situation and jump to conclusions that are not based in reality. By focusing on the negative things you experience – a type of thinking called “negative filtering” – you limit your ability to experience the realities of that situation.

Here are some examples of negative filtering thoughts:

Amy accidentally deleted one page of notes before her class presentation. As she spoke, she tried to remember those missing points but became increasingly self-conscious, stammering through the rest of the presentation.

Negative filtering thought: “I can’t do anything right.”

Mike broke his ankle after slipping on an icy sidewalk and it prevented him from going on an important business trip.

Negative filtering thought: “This is just my luck. Why does this stuff always happen to me?”

Cassie’s boyfriend broke up with her after dating for five months. This was her second breakup in less than a year.

Negative filtering thought: “Why can’t I find the right guy? What’s wrong with me?”

What You Should Do

Seeing the “big picture” means evaluating a situation from all sides, not just the negative aspects. Seeing the big picture enables you to take a step back from a difficult situation and observe things in a more objective way. This helps you better manage the thoughts and emotions that arise.

There are several questions that can guide you to see the big picture. In this example, Amy will answer the questions.

What happened during this situation?

“I deleted a page from my presentation and got so distracted that I had a hard time focusing.”

How did you think and feel as a result of this situation?

Thoughts: *“I can’t do anything right.”*

Feelings: *“Embarrassed and mad at myself.”*

What evidence supports your thoughts and feelings?

“In spite of the hours I spent preparing, I still screwed up.”

What evidence opposes your thoughts and feelings?

“I’m doing well in this class and my other classes, too.”

What would be a more accurate and objective way to think and feel about this situation?

“I’m disappointed in myself. I moved too fast and deleted an important page. I’ll be more careful next time.”

How could you react to that situation in a healthier way (e.g., calling a friend, using positive statements)?

“I’m human, and mistakes happen to everyone.”

Now, think of a recent situation when you were only seeing the negative aspects. Use the following chart to help you see the big picture.

Questions About the Situation	Your Answers
What happened during this situation?	
How did you think and feel as a result of this situation?	Thoughts: Feelings:
What evidence supports your thoughts and feelings?	
What evidence opposes your thoughts and feelings?	
What would be a more accurate and objective way to think and feel about this situation?	
How could you react to that situation in a healthier way?	

Do you often only see the negative aspects of a situation? Give another example of when you have done this.

What is an area of life where it will help you most to see the “big picture” (e.g., work, school, relationships, family, and so on)?

Do you know of anyone else who has difficulty in seeing the “big picture?” How does negative filtering affect them?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Problem Solving for Healthier Emotional Responses

Objective

To use problem solving to respond to challenging situations with healthier emotions and behaviors.

You Should Know

It can be difficult to respond to difficult situations objectively when they cause you painful emotions. When these situations are recurring, you may find yourself in a cycle of undesirable reactions and overreactions, which can damage your relationships and the way you see yourself.

While it is difficult to control challenging situations in your life, it is possible to improve your reactions to them. By using problem solving, you can strategize ways to respond to challenging situations with healthier thoughts and behaviors.

What to Do

The ABC Problem-Solving technique involves three steps to help you identify healthier ways of reacting to events or situations that trigger you.

A: Alternatives – Brainstorm alternative responses to your undesirable thoughts and feelings. How could you react differently to the situation?

B: Best Ideas – Select one or two of the best responses you have identified.

C: Commitment – Determine a situation where you use your alternative behaviors. Try to be as specific as possible, including time and location, so you can follow through and establish a new pattern of behavior. It also may be helpful to identify a person who can support you in changing your undesirable reaction.

Here is how this technique works, using Sam as an example.

Sam, a single father, noticed he was often rude and disrespectful to his coworkers on the mornings his daughter had temper tantrums before childcare drop-off. The frustration and impatience he experienced at home turned into anger and annoyance at the office. He then felt ashamed about lashing out at his colleagues.

A: Alternatives: Sam created two brainstorming lists of alternatives to the thoughts and behaviors he most wanted to change: his feelings of frustration at home, and his rude behavior at work.

Alternatives to Feelings of Frustration	Alternatives to Rude Behavior
Take deep breaths	Go to gym at lunchtime to work off stress
Focus on making it fun for my daughter to get ready for daycare in the morning	Avoid speaking to coworkers until I've cooled off – usually after my first few sips of coffee
Set alarm earlier in the morning so tantrums won't make me late	Talk to other single parents at work for support and suggestions
Listen to stress relieving music or podcasts on my drive to work	Listen to stress relieving music on my computer

B: Best Ideas – Sam decided to focus on making it fun for his daughter to get ready for daycare, and to talk to other single parents at work. Both of these plans would enable him to refocus his energy from anger to relationship building, and to replace stress with constructive activities.

C: Commitment – Sam found ideas on the internet for ways to use games and rewards while getting his daughter ready for daycare, which turned out to be enjoyable for both of them. He also decided to invite some of his single parent coworkers to coffee, to get their support and advice, with a goal of at least one meeting a month.

Now, describe a recurring situation that causes you repeated emotional distress or undesirable reactions.

What thoughts and behaviors would you like to change in reaction to this situation? Why?

Next, use the ABC technique and describe each step.

Alternatives – Brainstorm responses to the thoughts and feelings you would like to change.

Best Ideas – Select one or two of the best responses you have identified.

Commitment – Determine a situation where you can try using your alternative behaviors. Be as specific as possible, including time and location, so you can follow through on this.

Name at least one friend or family member who can support you in putting this plan into practice.

Reflections on This Exercise

Did you notice any improvement in your emotions and behaviors after using the problem-solving technique? Explain.

During what other challenging situations could you use this exercise?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Building Positive Emotions

Objective

To practice building positive emotions to balance out the unhealthy or destructive emotions.

You Should Know

All day long you are confronted with situations where you must manage your emotions. You might encounter an unexpected setback and need to manage stress, or you might need to manage your anger when a coworker snaps at you. Fortunately, there are many strategies that allow you to manage your reactions and feelings, including building positive emotions.

This might sound intimidating at first if your feelings and moods are negatively impacted by what is happening around you. This might create drama and stress in your life. Fortunately, you can focus on pleasant activities and experiences in order to build positive emotions. Positive emotions allow you to be more resilient through creating social, mental, and emotional resources. You effectively develop a positive emotional reserve to pull from when you experience stressful or upsetting experiences. You will also develop problem-solving skills. There are two main strategies when it comes to building positive emotions, including maintaining or prolonging and increasing or enhancing positive emotional experiences.

What to Do

Identifying pleasant activities will start you on your way to feeling more positive emotions.

Positive emotions include:

Happiness	Gratitude	Pleasure	Admiration
Enthusiasm	Excitement	Euphoria	Contentment
Amusement	Silliness	Love	Pride
Curiosity	Joy	Passion	Ease

Add your own ideas for activities here:

Now, list up to ten activities you are currently doing or would consider doing. Then name at least four people you would like to contact to join you – family, friends, or acquaintances.

Part of learning Emotion Regulation through building positive emotions is by being around other people and learning to be in balance in your relationships – remaining in the present moment, listening and sharing compassionately, and being with people who understand you.

Refer to the list of activities below if you need some help identifying what you would like to participate in.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

People I could contact to do activities together:

1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____ 4. _____

Here is a list of activities. When you get up each morning, make a plan to do at least one social activity that day and keep a record of what you do.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| attending a prayer group | entertaining | horseback riding |
| camping | exercising | dating |
| canoeing | fishing | picnicking |
| dancing | lying kites | taking a vacation |
| discussing books | gardening | eating at a restaurant |
| doing arts and crafts | bowling | sailing |
| skating | jogging | skiing |
| swimming | kayaking | watching spectator sports |
| going to a Meet Up group | surfing | attending a meditation class |
| seeing a movie | painting | registering for a college class |

- going to church
- visiting a museum
- going to a play or concert
- going to the beach or mountains
- golfing
- hang gliding
- playing softball, soccer, volleyball, or tennis
- practicing karate or martial arts
- photography
- teaching
- playing cards
- volunteering
- dancing
- sightseeing
- walking or hiking
- traveling abroad or in the United States
- taking children places
- practicing yoga or Pilates
- singing with groups
- shooting pool
- lunch with a friend
- having a political discussion
- organizing a family get-together

Your own ideas: _____

Now list the activities you would like to schedule. Record over the next week or two which activities you actually did and what it was like for you. Refer back to this list, delete and add as needed. Remember to have fun!

Activity	Date Scheduled	With Whom?	Completed?	Reflections

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you notice about yourself and your feelings while doing pleasant activities?

Describe what happened when you engaged in activities with other people. Did you have fun? Was it challenging? Both? Describe below or on a separate piece of paper.

How would you like to continue building positive emotions? Elaborate below or on a separate piece of paper.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Managing Catastrophic Thinking

Objective

To manage your catastrophic thinking by assessing the risk of your feared situation, and identifying resources in the unlikely instance the situation happens.

You Should Know

Catastrophic thinking refers to ruminating about irrational, worst-case outcomes. It can increase anxiety, prevent you from taking action, or cause you to avoid situations entirely. When you fear the worst possible outcome, your choices, behaviors, emotions, and relationships can be negatively affected. You might constantly worry that something terrible will happen, and you might frequently experience “what if” thinking: “What if I catch a disease from visiting a sick friend in the hospital?” or “What if my teenage son becomes a drug addict?”

Fear can be a helpful reaction to situations where there are proven threats or dangers. It is important to know the difference between fear that is justified and based on evidence, and fear that is based on catastrophic thinking or unjustified worries.

When fears are justified:

- There is evidence of a threat or danger to your life, or to someone you care about.
- There is evidence of a threat or danger to your health, or to someone you care about.
- There is evidence of a threat or danger to your safety and well-being, or to someone you care about.

Can you describe some examples of justified fears from your own life?

Examples of catastrophic thinking and unproven fears:

- My house is going to get struck by lightning because I just replaced the roof.
- My spouse isn't answering his cell phone – he must have been in a car accident.
- I can't go on a cruise because the ship will sink.

Can you think of other examples from your own life?

Catastrophic thinking often causes people to avoid situations out of fear. Unfortunately, avoidance tends to reinforce this type of thinking; the more you avoid the fearful situations, the more power you give them. The best way to conquer your feelings of anxiety and worry is to examine the situations and determine the likelihood of that scenario happening.

Describe a recent situation you avoided because you were afraid something terrible would happen.

What were you afraid would happen?

Has that feared situation ever actually happened to you before? Describe.

Describe a time your fears stopped you from taking action regarding your relationships, work, health, and so forth.

Describe a time your fears negatively impacted your choices, emotions, or relationships. What happened?

Catastrophic thinking may relate to old beliefs and core values that produce overwhelming emotional reactions. You can examine your thoughts to determine how meaningful, accurate, and useful they are in the present situation. Challenging and changing those beliefs and values is often the key to managing persistent unhealthy or self-sabotaging thoughts.

What to Do

In order to overcome catastrophic thinking, it is important to dispute the thoughts. You can:

1. Identify it for what it is – an irrational, worst-case scenario.
2. Identify best-case possibilities – the best possible outcomes you wish to see.
3. Look at these best-case possibilities and identify whether or not they are the most likely outcomes.
4. Weigh the evidence and facts available to you, so that you can develop a realistic contingency plan for coping with the situation.

Using the chart below, identify your feared situations and rank your level of fear from 1 to 10, where 1 = no distress or discomfort, to 10 = extreme upset or anxiety. Next, list the evidence that the situation will happen and evidence that it will not happen. Then, describe a best-case possibility. Finally, estimate the odds of that situation actually happening.

Feared Situation	Level of Fear (1–10)	Evidence That It Will Happen	Evidence That It Won't Happen	Best-Case Possibility	Estimated Odds of Fear Happening (%)

Did you notice any changes in your level of fear as a result of this exercise? Explain.

Next, in the *unlikely event* that the feared situation actually does happen, you will develop a contingency plan that includes resources so you feel safe and prepared. After you compile the following lists, make copies and keep them with you.

Write down the names and phone numbers of people who can help and support you – your personal “Response Team.”

The people on my Response Team are:

Now, think of local agencies and groups you can reach out to for help and support, such as the American Red Cross, your local police or fire departments, or your local FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).

Write down a list of organizations, websites, and phone numbers that will be most helpful.

Finally, write down a list of your own skills and strengths you can use to get through this situation (for example, you are good with tools, you know CPR, or you think fast under pressure).

Reflections on This Exercise

Has this exercise changed the way you see your feared situations? If so, how?

What other steps can you take to cope with feared situations in the future?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Increasing Your Sense of Control

Objective

To increase the sense of control you have in your life by identifying things you can control.

You Should Know

You might feel you have little or no control over what happens to you, no matter how hard you work or how careful you are. Sometimes things go wrong in spite of your best efforts. However, if you believe all of your experiences, both good and bad, are caused by luck or fate, it can lead to feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, anxiety, or depression.

What to Do

Rate the following statements, where 1 = this does not apply to me at all, to 10 = this always applies to me.

___ I feel I have very little control over my life and what happens to me.

___ I rarely get what I deserve.

___ I avoid setting goals or making plans because there are too many bad things that can happen along the way.

___ I am often pressured into doing things or making decisions I later regret.

___ Bad luck has caused many of the disappointments in my life.

___ In spite of my hard work and effort, my accomplishments go unnoticed.

___ Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.

___ I often feel hopeless and powerless about situations in my life.

___ I just make my decisions by flipping a coin.

Review the statements you checked off and add up your total score: _____

If your score is above 50, you probably feel you have little control in your life and you might experience depression, anxiety or feelings of hopelessness or helplessness.

Can you think of situations where those beliefs about control impacted your decision to change or improve your life? Describe.

Next, you will focus on things you *can* control.

Describe a situation when you accomplished a task you set out to complete. For example, completing a home improvement or creative project. Describe what you accomplished. What skills and strengths did you use to accomplish it? How did you feel about yourself afterward?

Describe an accomplishment you are proud of that required your planning, motivation, and/or problem-solving skills. For example, raising a child, quitting smoking, or planting a garden.

Describe what you accomplished. What skills and strengths did you use to accomplish this task? What goals and intentions did you set for yourself? How much effort did it require? How did you feel about yourself afterward?

Describe a time when your efforts made you feel valuable, effective, and successful. For example, volunteering at a food pantry or running a 5K race. What did you do? How did you feel during the activity? How did you feel afterward?

Next, identify three small, achievable goals that are important or interesting to you. Include your desired date of completion. Then, answer the questions that follow each goal.

For this example, Jim wants to improve his photography skills while meeting new people.

Goal #1 _____

(Jim: To take an adult education class in photography by next spring.)

Steps I need to take to make this happen:

(Jim: 1) Search online for local photography classes; 2) Visit my local camera shop for suggestions; 3) Determine how much tuition I want to pay; 4) Register for the class.)

The things I can control within those steps are:

(Jim: All of these things are under my control, except for the pricing of the classes and the availability of the classes. But I will select which class I register for based on those factors.)

The strengths and skills I can use to address those steps are:

(Jim: I will use my research skills to find a class that meets my needs. I will also use my organization skills by creating a list to track my class options and narrow down my choices.)

People and resources that can support me in achieving this goal are:

(Jim: In addition to asking my camera shop for recommendations, I can reach out to my social media connections for suggestions.)

Goal #2 _____

Steps I need to take to make this happen:

The things I can control within those steps are:

The strengths and skills I can use to address those steps are:

People and resources that can support me in achieving this goal are:

Goal #3

Steps I need to take to make this happen:

The things I can control within those steps are:

The strengths and skills I can use to address those steps are:

People and resources that can support me in achieving this goal are:

Of course, even with planning, things do not always go according to the plan. It is important to use self-compassion instead of beating yourself up or blaming other people/circumstances.

Using the photography class example, it turned out the class was full, so Jim was unable attend. Instead of saying, "I'm so stupid for waiting too long to register," he can say, "I'm disappointed I'm not able to attend the class by the spring, but I will register early for the summer class and add a reminder in my calendar."

Who can you count on for support and help if you are unable to meet a goal, in spite of your best efforts?

Reflections on This Exercise

Has this exercise increased the sense of control you have in your life? Explain.

Has this exercise changed the way you see the role of luck and chance in your past successes or lack of success? Explain?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Identifying the Physical Signs of Your Emotions

Objective

To identify the physical signs of emotion in order to manage your feelings more effectively.

You Should Know

You may have heard the phrase “body-mind connection,” which refers to the relationship between your emotions and physical sensations. As you experience overwhelming emotions, you may feel uncomfortable changes in your body. These can include an increase in your heart rate or changes in your breathing, body temperature, digestion, and perspiration. Your emotions can also alter your energy level, resulting in sluggishness. Sometimes these physical reactions can intensify your already-distressing moods or lead to anxiety.

When you are aware of your physical reactions, you can begin to identify healthy ways to manage them and the emotions that cause them.

What to Do

The first step to increase your awareness is to track the physical signs of your emotions. For example, if you recently experienced acute anger, you might have noticed physical sensations such as throbbing temples or tightly clenched fists.

Use the following chart to identify the physical responses you experience when you have distressing or overwhelming emotions.

- Under ‘Emotion and Intensity’ label your emotion and rank its intensity from 0 – 10, where 0 = no emotion and 10 = the most uncomfortable level of intensity.
- Under ‘Heart Rate’ describe any increase or decrease, or the feeling of pounding in your chest.
- Under ‘Body Temperature’ describe any increase or decrease, and the areas affected (for example, cold hands or flushed face and neck).
- Under ‘Muscles’ describe tension, tingling, or shaking, and where this occurred.
- Under ‘Energy’ describe your level of stamina, strength, or level of calmness (for example, you are unable to sit still or you feel anxious).
- Under ‘Other’ name any other body sensations you noticed, such as sweating, loss of appetite, headache, and so forth.

Emotion and Intensity	Heart Rate	Body Temperature	Muscles	Energy	Other
<i>Anger: intensity 8</i>	<i>Pounding heart</i>	<i>Face feels hot</i>	<i>Pain in neck</i>	<i>Can't sit still</i>	<i>Queasy</i>

Which of the emotions you listed cause you the most physical distress?

Did you notice changes in your emotions or physical sensations while completing the chart? Describe.

What have you tried in the past to reduce or eliminate the physical discomfort?

Next, you will identify physical movements that can decrease the level of uncomfortable sensations. Research has found that as you change your body movements and posture, you can improve how you feel. Believe it or not, even a small change in your facial expression can help; for example, when you smile, it releases “feel-good” chemicals in your brain like dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin that fight stress and elevate mood.

Here are some physical movements and activities that can help you reconnect to your body while reducing uncomfortable sensations. Place a check mark next to the activities you would be most likely to do the next time you feel physical discomfort.

Engage in intense exercise, such as running, weight lifting, basketball, or CrossFit to burn off energy and stress.

Take a walk.

Stretch or practice yoga, Pilates, tai chi, or karate.

Do deep breathing exercises.

Splash cold water on your face or take a hot shower.

Get a massage.

Other activity: _____

Which of the above activities can you commit to doing when you experience uncomfortable physical reactions to your emotions? _____

Explain why you chose those activities.

Name a person you trust who can support you in regular engagement in those activities.

Reflections on This Exercise

Has this exercise changed the way you view your physical reactions to emotions? Explain.

Has this exercise changed the way you respond to overwhelming emotions

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Managing Urges by Burning Bridges and Building New Ones

Objective

To manage urges and decrease access to the means to act on unhealthy habits.

You Should Know

You are probably familiar with the expression “burning bridges,” which refers to destroying your path, connections, reputation, opportunities, and so forth – often intentionally. If you have self-destructive or harmful urges, burning bridges is a productive activity where you eliminate the means to act on unhealthy urges like overeating, abusing drugs or alcohol, or engaging in self-injury. Without the means, it becomes difficult (if not impossible) to engage in unhealthy habits and act on your urges. You can then “build new bridges” to manage your urges in healthier ways.

What to Do

To burn bridges to your urges, first identify the tools, resources, and temptations that enable you to engage in harmful or self-destructive habits. Describe the actions you will take.

Describe the unhealthy urge or habit you would like to manage.

Make a list of the tools, items, resources, or temptations that make it possible to act on your urges. For example, this might include people who encourage unhealthy habits or access to websites that trigger or reinforce urges.

Write down the steps you will take to discard, eliminate, or disconnect from those resources and temptations. For example, if you compulsively overeat you might throw away unhealthy foods, delete the food delivery app from your phone, and find alternatives to the local bakery where you hold your breakfast meetings.

Next, you will begin building new bridges – identifying resources and tools to help manage your urges and emotions in healthy ways.

Identify trustworthy and supportive people who can provide encouragement and accountability as you work to reduce your harmful habits. Share your goals and intentions with them. Write down their names and contact information.

Identify enjoyable activities that can provide distraction from your urges.

Identify calming and pleasant scents or images you can use to distract yourself.

What other strategies could you use to build new bridges to manage your urges?

Consider some of the ways your life will improve when you are no longer acting on your harmful urges. For example, if you overeat, you might feel healthier, fit into your clothes better, and have more energy. Write down your thoughts here. Make copies to post on your mirror or carry with you.

Reflections on This Exercise

Has this exercise changed the way you understand your urges and unhealthy habits? Explain.

How can you use this exercise to better manage your urges?

Did you find it challenging to “burn bridges,” or was the process easier than you expected? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Using Opposite Action to Deal with Difficult Emotions

Objective

To take action in response to difficult emotions contrary to what you might naturally do, using a technique called “Opposite Action.”

You Should Know

When you experience a strong emotion, such as fear, anger, or sadness, your tendency might be to take action in response. It is a natural instinct to do something to make it go away.

Sometimes that is a good strategy. For instance, if you see a poisonous snake slithering on the sidewalk and you experience fear, it is a good strategy to run in the other direction as a response to potential danger. But sometimes you experience fear when there is no actual danger, and running away from the situation does not solve the problem.

There is a tool called “Opposite Action” to help you identify and regulate your emotions. So, while the snake example makes sense, what about a person who has to give a speech and feels fear? That fear may be very real but dashing out of the room might not make sense – in reality, there is no actual danger, just a worry about something bad happening. The person might choose to face into it, take deep breaths, tell themselves they are going to be all right.

The skill of Opposite Action is not the same as suppressing our emotions. Instead, you take charge of the emotion and, with repeated practice, master it. You remain present and notice the emotion, then consciously use it to take a different action. With practice, this action can actually *change the emotion* over time. With sadness or depression, for example, the habitual action is to stay in bed or hide away. An Opposite Action would be to visit a friend, go to the gym, or cook a nice meal. You are not denying the emotion. You are working with it, challenging it by acting opposite to it, and, eventually, turning it around.

What to Do

In this worksheet, you will notice when and in what situations you experience distressing emotions, then keep track of what you typically do in response. Then you will have a chance to try out various ways of taking “Opposite Action” in response.

Typical responses to difficult emotions include:

Fear – running away or avoiding the perceived danger.

Anger – fighting back or becoming defensive.

Sadness – isolate, withdraw, or retreat.

In the chart below, write down your experience of fear, anger, or sadness, and your typical response.

Date/Situation	Emotion Experienced	Typical Action Taken	Reflections/Notes

To practice Opposite Action, try the following.

Fear – stay in the situation; take deep breaths; tell yourself “I can do this”; stand up straight; keep your eyes up.

Anger – step away from the situation or person you feel anger toward; take deep breaths; count to ten; consider the other person’s side; practice compassion; write down your feelings.

Sadness – face the situation; let yourself cry if you feel sad; avoid “numbing” distractions such as substances or entertainment; choose an activity that is engaging and productive, with other people; do not isolate or retreat.

Opposite Action is most effective when your emotions *do not fit* the actual reality of the situation, as in the public speaking example above where there is no actual danger. So your experience of “terror” ends up not being effective in helping you overcome your fear. Doing the opposite, and doing it with all of your energy and commitment, is important to this skill. You can change your thoughts, your words, even your facial expressions and physical stance.

Start with emotions that are not too intense so you can practice experiencing the change from “habitual/typical” to “effective.” Repeat this as often as necessary before moving on to tackling, and mastering, stronger or more intense emotional situations. Think of the process as learning and practicing a new language – it might feel awkward at first, but it will get easier over time.

Date/Situation	Emotion Experienced	Opposite Action Taken	Reflections/Notes

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you notice about your typical or habitual ways of dealing with difficult emotions?

Are your typical ways of handling emotions effective or ineffective? Explain.

Describe what happened when you tried to do "Opposite Action." Was it easy? Challenging? What can you do to continue practicing this skill? Elaborate below or on a separate piece of paper.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

SECTION 4.
INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS SKILLS

Interpreting Body Language

Objective

To increase your understanding of body language in order to improve your communication with others.

You Should Know

You might think strong communication skills involve expressing yourself clearly and listening attentively to others. This is true, but sometimes what you say does not always indicate what you actually mean or feel. It is the non-verbal communication, through body language, that provides the most accurate information about thoughts and emotions.

Facial expressions, posture, and tone of voice offer important clues. The signals you send with your own body language can help others understand your mood and intentions. When you pay attention to physical signals, you are less likely to project your own emotions onto another person, or to misinterpret the other person's feelings. This is especially helpful during conflict or challenging interactions when you might experience overwhelming thoughts and emotions.

What to Do

By understanding body language – both your own and the other person's – you will be able to communicate more clearly and respond appropriately to difficult conversations and interactions. Here are some common physical cues and the emotions they convey.

BODY LANGUAGE	EMOTIONS
Eye contact or gazing into the eyes.	Attention, caring, affection
Smiling, talkative, clapping hands, singing, jumping up and down or dancing, laughing.	Joy, excitement, happiness
Red flushed face and neck, clenched hands, pursed lips, crossed arms, hands on hips, looking down or away, clenched teeth, frowning, staring.	Anger, dislike, annoyance, aggression
Frowning, looking down or away, slumped posture; low, quiet, or monotone voice.	sadness, hurt
Talking quickly and nervously, inability to sit still, shaking, pacing, speechlessness, crossed arms, frozen in place, sweating.	Anxiety, nervousness, fear
Covering face, hiding, slumping, looking down or away.	Shame, embarrassment, guilt

Can you think of others? Describe.

Think of a time when you realized someone was angry, sad, happy, or anxious, based on their facial expressions, posture, or gestures. Describe the physical signals you noticed.

Think of a time when you realized someone was not paying attention as you spoke to them, based on their facial expressions, posture, or gestures. Describe the physical signals you noticed.

When a person's non-verbal communication seems confusing or is difficult to interpret, there are some questions you can ask to get more clarity:

- "You look upset. Is everything all right?"
- "I notice that you seem nervous. Am I correct?"
- "How are you feeling?"
- "Are things okay between us?"

List other clarifying questions here.

Now, focus on your own body language and what it conveys to others about your moods and feelings. Have you ever been told your words did not match your body language? Explain.

Has a person ever understood you were mad, sad, anxious, etc., in spite of what you said or did not say? Explain.

Next, think of a recent challenging interaction you had with someone.

Describe the interaction. What happened? Who were you with? What was said?

Describe your emotions.

Describe the physical sensations you experienced.

Describe facial expressions, posture, and movements you remember expressing.

Describe the other person's facial expressions, posture, and movements.

Try this exercise again with someone you trust, using a recent or imaginary scenario of a difficult conversation. Take turns observing each other's body language as you role play.

Describe the interaction. What happened? Who were you with? What was said?

Describe how you interpreted the other person's emotions.

Describe the person's body language.

Did the person's body language make it easier to understand what they were thinking and feeling? Explain.

Did the person's body language impact the way you responded? Explain.

Ask the other person to describe your facial expressions, posture, and movements, and to interpret your emotions.

Did the person correctly interpret your emotions? If not, what was incorrect? How could you increase your awareness of your body language in the future?

Reflections on This Exercise

Think of an upcoming situation where increasing your awareness of body language – your own and others’ – will be helpful in communicating effectively. Describe.

What body language would you most like to increase or improve, for future interactions? Why?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Identifying Relationships That Reflect Your Values

Objective

To identify relationships that reflect your values so you can make healthy changes and meet your goals.

You Should Know

Your values – your morals and beliefs – shape your actions and decisions, including how you interact in your relationships. They determine how you treat, and are treated by, others, as well as how you view and respect yourself. There are times you may compromise your values in order to be loved, accepted, or get your needs met. Such conflicts between your values and relationships can negatively impact the actions and choices you make in your life, including intentions to change or improve your behavior.

When your relationships reflect your values, you can make healthier decisions and receive support around your goals for change. You also may experience increases in self-esteem and self-respect.

What to Do

First, identify and circle the values most important to you in your relationships, including how you wish to be treated and how you wish to treat others.

Authenticity	Determination	Kindness	Respect
Adventure	Fairness	Knowledge	Responsibility
Balance	Freedom	Leadership	Security
Bravery	Friendships	Learning	Self-Respect
Compassion	Fun	Love	Social
Community	Generosity	Loyalty	Spirituality
Creativity	Growth	Openness	Stability
Curiosity	Honesty	Optimism	Wealth
			Wisdom

Write down other values you would like to add:

Next, of the values you circled, write down five you feel are most essential in relationships that are caring, supportive, or inspiring.

Value #1 _____

Value #2 _____

Value #3 _____

Value #4 _____

Value #5 _____

Have you experienced any relationships (family, romantic, friendships, work-related) in which you compromised your values? Describe.

Name one or more decisions or choices you have made that did not reflect your values.

What did you experience in that relationship which led you to act against your values?

Did your feelings about yourself and/or your relationship change after you acted against your values? Explain.

Can you engage in that relationship differently in order to better support your values and intentions? For example, setting boundaries, expressing your feelings, asking for what you need, or spending less time with that person.

Next, think about one of your relationships in which you practiced or strengthened those five values. Describe the relationship and include how the other person's actions or beliefs upheld your values.

Name one or more values-based decisions or actions you have taken as a result of this relationship.

Did your feelings about yourself and your relationship change when you embraced your values? Explain.

Reflections on This Exercise

What goals and intentions would you like to set within your relationships that will allow you to embrace your values?

Name a relationship in your life that can support you around your goals and intentions, including making healthy changes.

Has this exercise changed the way you express your needs and values within your relationships? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Exercising Your Rights to Your Needs and Feelings

Objective

To exercise your rights to your needs and feelings, and identify others who will validate them.

You Should Know

As human beings, we all need to communicate our feelings, desires, and opinions, and we all deserve to be heard, respected, and validated. Unfortunately, this does not always happen. You may have been told your feelings are unimportant or undeserving of others' time or attention. You may avoid asking for help or expressing your emotions, so that you do not upset, disappoint, or challenge other people.

Check off the statements that best describe you:

- Others have told me my feelings are weird, wrong, or bad.
- When I have an emotional reaction, I have been told to "get over it" or "stop being so dramatic," or I am overreacting.
- I am afraid to ask for help from others because I am fearful I will be judged.
- I am afraid to ask for help from others because I am sure I will be rejected.
- I annoy other people when I share my needs and feelings.
- I am often ignored or disrespected when I express my needs and feelings.
- I am constantly misunderstood.
- I don't deserve to ask for, or receive, what I need.
- I would rather not get my needs met than "push back" or assert myself, out of fear of being mistreated.

Add your own statements here:

Regardless of the number of statements you checked off, one thing is true: your needs and feelings are worthy of acknowledgment and validation by others.

What to Do

First, recognize that you have a right to your own feelings, needs, and opinions, even if they differ from others' beliefs, feelings, and needs. Here are some statements you can post on a mirror or carry with you as a reminder:

- I have a right to put myself first sometimes.
- I have a right to inconvenience or disappoint others sometimes.
- I have a right to need things from others.
- I have a right to express my emotions in ways that are not harmful to myself or others.
- I have a right to my beliefs and opinions.
- I have a right to experience things differently than others.
- I have a right to ask for help or support.
- I have a right to say “no” without being a selfish or bad person.
- I have a right to speak out against mistreatment from others.

Circle the statements you find most challenging to believe. Explain.

Next, answer the following questions to identify people in your life who can help remind you of those rights – and can support you in receiving acknowledgment and validation.

Name at least one trustworthy and nonjudgmental person with whom you can share your experiences and emotions, and from whom you can receive validation and support.

Why did you select this person?

How does this person make you feel about yourself?

Name at least one trustworthy and nonjudgmental person who can help you practice asking for help, expressing yourself, or communicating your needs to others.

Why did you select this person?

Name at least one trustworthy and nonjudgmental person who can help you practice disagreeing with others, or saying “no.”

Why did you select this person?

Where can you meet other trustworthy, supportive people (work, church, volunteer group, etc.)?

Reflections on This Exercise

Has this exercise changed how you regard your own feelings, needs, and opinions? Explain.

Has this exercise improved your ability to express your feelings, needs, and opinions? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Communicating Your Wants and Needs to Others

Objective

To become more effective in communicating your wants and needs to others.

You Should Know

When your emotions are overwhelming, it can be challenging to express yourself calmly and clearly, or to convey your needs to others. There are tools you can use to resolve conflicts and make requests to others in a respectful and effective way.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) uses the acronym DEAR MAN to explain the steps for improving communication and expressing what you want. This skill can be used to make nearly any difficult conversation a little easier. You will find that implementing this tool can help improve communication in your relationships, including reducing conflict and increasing your understanding of the other person.

DEAR MAN stands for:

DESCRIBE the situation.

EXPRESS your feelings.

ASSERT yourself by asking.

REINFORCE through reward.

(Stay) **M**INDFUL.

APPEAR Confident.

NEGOTIATE.

What to Do

Each letter of the DEAR MAN acronym is explained in more detail below. Think of a recent situation where you had difficulty communicating your thoughts and needs to another person. After each brief description, write down your ideas about how, and with whom, you could have used the skill.

DESCRIBE refers to stating the facts (not the feelings) in a situation. (*"I'm working late tonight and I won't be home for dinner."*)

EXPRESS refers to talking about your feelings and opinions directly and openly. (*"I'm under a lot of pressure at work. I'm stressed out that I need to work late again to meet my deadlines."*)

ASSERT means to say precisely what you want, rather than hinting around or hoping the person will figure it out. Asserting might involve saying "no." (*"Could you please leave work a little earlier so you can make dinner or grab some takeout on the way home?"*)

REINFORCE means telling the other person how they will benefit when you get what you want. (*"It would really help me out so I can get this project done. I might even be able to leave the office early on Friday if I am productive enough."*)

MINDFUL refers to being present and focused in the moment. Try to avoid getting distracted with old arguments or personal attacks. Being clear and calm will enable you to be heard better and accepted more openly. (*"I know I've been working late a lot this week, but it can't be helped."*)

APPEAR CONFIDENT even when you might not feel sure of yourself. Be aware of your tone of voice – is it calm or agitated? Make eye contact. Hold your body erect and be aware of your breath. Repeat your request, if necessary.

NEGOTIATE refers to being flexible and open-minded. Talk about what options are possible. Listen without judging or interrupting. Think of mutually beneficial ways to compromise if necessary. You have to give to get. (*"I'll make your favorite dinner and dessert next week as a thank you."*)

In the next week or so, keep track of situations when you used DEAR MAN to help improve your communication skills to get your wants and needs met.

Situation	With whom?	What you wanted/ needed	What DEAR MAN skills did you use?

Reflections on This Exercise

Which DEAR MAN skills did you find the most effective? Explain.

Which DEAR MAN skills did you find challenging? Explain.

Did anything surprise you about how others responded to your requests using DEAR MAN? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Improving Your Listening Skills

Objective

To improve your listening skills to better understand another person's needs and feelings.

You Should Know

Sometimes it is easy to be distracted by your thoughts, feelings, and opinions while someone else is talking. When you are not fully engaged in listening, you may miss important elements being expressed by that person, including their needs, emotions, and opinions. Your understanding of what is being said, as well as your ability to respond effectively and appropriately, is negatively impacted.

Review the list below and check off any of the following you have noticed yourself doing during conversations:

- Mind Reading** - Assuming you know what the other person is thinking and feeling.
- Preparing** - Planning how you will respond while the other person is still talking, so you miss what is being said.
- Filtering** - Listening only to the things you find important or that directly affect you.
- Judging** - Forming opinions of the other person and what they say, instead of trying to understand their point of view.
- Daydreaming** - Getting distracted by memories, worries, or your imagination while the other person is talking.
- Advising** - Offering suggestions and answers instead of listening and showing support.
- Arguing** - Disputing, challenging, or debating what the other person says.
- Being Right** - Denying or rejecting anything the other person says that implies you are wrong or need to change.
- Derailing** - Changing the subject when the other person says something that threatens or upsets you.
- Placating** - Agreeing with the other person before hearing their feelings or concerns, in an attempt to avoid confrontation or discussion.

Think of a recent situation when you used one of those listening devices in a conversation. Describe the situation, your relationship to the speaker, and which device you used.

What was the outcome of that conversation? What was your level of understanding of what the speaker said and implied? Did you respond or react the way the speaker expected? What feedback, if any, did you receive from the speaker?

What to Do

When you actively listen to someone, you are fully engaged in the conversation. You are able to process what is being said and validate that person's needs and feelings. Here are some suggested techniques for improving your listening skills that can be used in any relationship.

- **Pay attention.** Shut off your cell phone, television, or other form of distraction. Look the speaker in the eye. Avoid multitasking.
- **Observe.** Pay attention to the speaker's body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice, especially if it contradicts what is being said.
- **Reflect back.** Repeat what the speaker said to make sure you understand. Avoid using judgmental language or tone.
- **Get clarification.** If you are not sure what the speaker wants and needs after you reflect back, ask for more information: "I'm not sure I understand your standpoint about this situation. Could you say more about it?"
- **Empathize.** Try to understand the other person's perspective. Imagine what it might feel like for them to have these concerns, thoughts, and emotions.
- **Acknowledge.** Acknowledge that you have heard and understood the other person's perspective and emotions. Validate the speaker's experience without trying to "fix" anything: "I heard you say that you are feeling really overwhelmed at work."

- **Ask questions.** Gather more information so you can offer solutions, compromises, or support to the other person. This is also helpful to determine whether the speaker is looking for suggestions, or if they just want someone to listen to them.

Some examples:

- What is your main concern about this issue?
- How does this situation make you feel?
- What do you think needs to change?
- What solutions have you tried?
- What can I do that will be helpful?
- Would it be helpful for me to offer a suggestion or resource?

Think back to the situation you described previously. Which of the above listening techniques would have been helpful in that situation? What could you have said or done differently? In what way could that have changed the outcome?

Think of an important conversation you plan to have over the next week. Which listening techniques will be most effective for you during that conversation?

Practice your selected listening techniques by role playing that conversation with a friend or family member you trust. Then describe what the experience was like for you. What was easy? What was difficult? How did you feel afterward?

Ask your role play partner to describe how they experienced your listening techniques. Did they feel heard or understood? Did they notice how much attention you were paying to them?

Reflections on This Exercise

Describe how this exercise has improved your listening skills? Explain.

Has this exercise improved how you communicate in your relationships? Describe.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Improving Your Ability to Say No

Objective

To improve your ability and confidence to say “no” to others in order to reflect your own needs and values.

You Should Know

Saying “no” is a necessary component in asserting yourself, setting limits, and respecting your own opinions and emotions. Although saying “no” is essential in all kinds of relationships, you may feel uncomfortable asserting yourself, or worry about making the other person angry or upset.

There are physical consequences when you submit to others’ demands while ignoring your own needs and feelings. It can reduce your body’s immune system, increasing your chance of infection, of developing ulcers, or placing you at greater risk for heart disease. Saying “yes” when you mean “no” can also make you feel helpless, which can contribute to depression and anxiety.

The exercise below can help you develop the skills and confidence to say “no” in order to reflect and honor your needs and values.

What to Do

When you consider saying “no” to a request from another person, first examine how the request affects you: your emotions, values, needs, and desires. Think of a current situation where you are being asked to do something you prefer not to do, or do not feel comfortable doing. Answer the following questions by circling “yes” or “no,” and provide explanations.

Am I emotionally and physically able to give the person what they want? Yes or No

Am I willing to give the person what they want? Yes or No

Will I feel bad about myself for saying “no”? Yes or No

Am I saying “yes” because I am afraid to say “no”? Yes or No

Am I being asked to do something that opposes my rights or values? Yes or No

Will I regret saying “no” in the long term? Yes or No

Do I fully understand what I am being asked? Yes or No

Do I need more time to think about it before making a decision? Yes or No

How to Say “No”

There are two simple steps for saying “no.” You will notice they are respectful both to your feelings and to the person making the request.

1. Validate the other person's request. Show you are paying attention to what they are saying, and repeat back what you heard. This helps you focus on the substance of the request, instead of making assumptions about its context.

2. State your preference for *not* doing what the person has asked, or state your discomfort in doing what was asked. For example: "I agree that the neighbor's dog barks too much, but I don't feel comfortable confronting them in a way that would hurt our friendship." Or, "I know you'd like us to go out together with your friends tonight, but I'm tired. I'd prefer that you join them while I stay home and rest."

Can you think of a recent situation where it would have been helpful to use these two steps to say "no"? Describe the situation.

What do you think would have been different in that situation if you had used those steps?

Next, think of some recent situations where you wanted to say "no" but felt unable to do so. Consider the statements you would have used to say "no" if you had used the two steps. Complete the following chart.

Request That Was Made	How You Felt About the Request (<i>uncomfortable, disrespected, unwilling, angry</i>)	The Statement You Would Have Used to Say “No”

Now, return to the *current* situation you identified at the beginning of this exercise. Practice using the two steps in your response to this person.

What can you say to validate the person’s request?

What can you say to explain your preference for *not* doing what the person has asked, or to describe your discomfort in doing what was asked?

Reflections on This Exercise

Can you think of any upcoming situations at home, work, or with friends or partners, where using the two steps will be helpful? Describe.

List people who can help you practice the two steps to prepare for those situations.

After you have practiced using the two steps to say “no,” describe your experience. Include information such as how you felt, the other person’s response, and the outcome.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Identifying People Who Are Trustworthy to Give You Support

Objective

To identify the characteristics of trustworthy people and explore resources when you need support.

You Should Know

It is important to have people in your life you can trust when you have to work through difficult problems, or when you need support in stressful situations.

Do you have people in your life you trust with your personal problems? The following checklist can help you identify people in your life you can trust to give you support.

What to Do

Below is a list of the characteristics of a trustworthy person. Make a copy of this list for each person you think might be trustworthy. As you consider the people in your life you feel you can trust, check off the statements you agree with. You should be able to check off all these statements when evaluating whether or not a person is trustworthy.

Name of the person you think you can trust: _____

I believe this person is caring and concerned about me.

I believe this person won't gossip or share what I have told them with others.

I believe this person is honest and tells me the truth.

I believe this person treats me and my feelings with respect.

I believe this person won't intentionally hurt me, either emotionally or physically.

I believe this person considers my best interests.

I believe this person is reliable and dependable.

I believe this person is consistent and predictable in their actions and reactions.

Other people I know trust and respect this person.

What other traits does this person have that make them trustworthy? _____

Are there other people in your life you don't know that well who may be people who can give you support, such as a clergy member or health care professional? Write their names down below.

Are you having trouble thinking of anyone you can trust to give you support? There are still ways to find help.

Here is a list of hotlines, for both emergencies and non-emergency support. <https://www.healthyplace.com/other-info/resources/mental-health-hotline-numbers-and-referral-resources#Clearinghouse>

After reviewing this list, write down a list of organizations, websites, and phone numbers you might want to contact.

Reflections on This Exercise

What is the first step you need to take to find people in your life you can trust?

What are some ways you can determine if a person is trustworthy?

Can you be specific about what kind of support you need from a person? For example, do you need someone to talk to on a regular basis? Do you need someone to help you with specific situations? Are you looking for specific advice? Write down what kind of support you need below. The more specific you are about the support you need, the more likely you are to get it.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Seeing Someone Else's Perspective

Objective

To improve your relationships through seeing other peoples' perspectives.

You Should Know

You might find it especially challenging to see someone else's perspective during a situation that is emotionally overwhelming for you. In the heat of the moment, you might act out or say things you will regret later, without considering the other person's point of view. Even if you are able to express your own wants and needs, you might not be aware of how your expectations affect others, and how those wants and needs might be in opposition to their own.

To see another's perspective means letting go of "black and white" thinking, where one side is right, good, or fair, while the other side is wrong, bad, or unfair.

In healthy relationships, both parties clearly express themselves, listen, and respect the other's point of view – even if they don't necessarily agree with each other. Here are a few more suggestions:

- Regard the other person as a human being like you: with their own strengths, weaknesses, fears, and worries. Notice what you have in common, as well as shared experiences.
- Avoid assuming what the other person may be thinking or feeling, or what they are thinking or feeling *about you*.
- Instead of focusing on yourself and your feelings, try to shift your attention to the other person. Listen and watch with curiosity instead of judgment. Be open to new thoughts and ideas you might discover about that person – or yourself.
- Try shifting from "always" and "never" statements to "sometimes" ones.
- Before you act or react to a situation, consider: "How do I want the other person to feel about me after our interaction?"

Now, put these ideas into practice. Think about a time when someone shared a perspective you did not agree with. For example, maybe you have a coworker whose political views are the opposite of yours, or a family member whose ideas about parenting contradict yours.

Next, think about the thoughts, feelings, or motivations that might be behind that person's point of view. For example, the parenting ideas might be based on their own experiences as overwhelmed new parents, or based on their own negative childhood memories.

Lastly, identify a fact or statement in that person's perspective which might be true or helpful, regardless of your own point of view.

What to Do

Describe the conflicting point of view you have with someone.

How does this perspective differ from yours?

What might be true or helpful within this point of view?

Does this change the way you think or feel about either the person or their perspective?
Explain.

Now, take a moment to think about a recent stressful situation involving another person. This can be a person from any relationship: partner, friend, family member, or coworker. Answer the following questions as objectively as you can.

Describe the situation, including your thoughts and feelings.

Did you make any assumptions about the other person during this situation? Describe.

Now, examine the situation from the other person's point of view. How did they act and react to the situation? How did those actions and reactions differ from yours? How were they similar?

If possible, describe the other person's emotions during that situation. How were those feelings similar to yours? How were they different?

Consider the possible reasons for the other person's actions and reactions. What were they trying to accomplish? What might this person have done differently during that situation?

Consider how your own actions and reactions to the situation might have affected the other person. What might you have done differently during that situation?

Next, use the following chart when stressful or uncomfortable situations arise to see the other person's perspective. Being as objective as possible, consider the other person's thoughts and feelings about each situation.

Situation	Your Thoughts and Feelings	How the Other Person Might Have Felt	What the Other Person Might Have Thought

Reflections on This Exercise

Do you think seeing others’ perspectives might change the way you act and react to distressing situations? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Using “I” Statements to Communicate Effectively

Objective

To use “I” statements to express your wants, needs, and feelings in your relationships.

You Should Know

You might have trouble communicating what you want and need to those who are important to you. If you are not communicating clearly, you may blame the person you are talking to for the problem, saying things like:

“You never pay attention to me when I talk.”

“You just don’t understand me.”

These “you” statements blame the communication problem on the other person. Unfortunately, “you” statements probably make the listener feel defensive and your communication breaks down further. What if you take responsibility for your communication by making “I” statements? This exercise is designed to show you how to do this.

What to Do

It is possible to express yourself, resolve conflicts, and get what you want in your relationships by using “I” statements. When you use “I” statements, you are speaking assertively from your own experience and taking responsibility for your own thoughts and feelings.

When you revise your “you” statements into “I” statements, you can accurately describe what you want, or how the other person’s behavior affects you.

For example:

Instead of: “You’re always yelling at me!”

You could say: “I feel upset when you yell at me. Can we talk calmly, please?”

Instead of: “You’re always spending time with your friends – don’t you care about me?”

You could say: “I’m concerned that we don’t spend any time together anymore. I miss you.”

Instead of: “You make me so mad!”

You could say: “I’m frustrated that you won’t take the doctor’s advice. I want you to be healthy.”

Write down some “you” statements that you frequently make when talking to others.

Now, change these into "I" statements.

Next, keep track of situations or conflicts where you normally use a "you" statement to express yourself or ask for what you need. Instead, use an "I" statement, and then record the outcomes. Pay particular attention to how the other person responded.

Situation/ With whom?	What were your thoughts and feelings?	What "I" statement did you use?	What was the outcome? (How did the other person respond?)

Reflections on This Exercise

Did you find your communication improved when you shifted from “you” statements to “I” statements? Give an example.

Did anyone notice you were communicating in a different way? What did they say or do?

What can you do to remind yourself to use “I” statements instead of “you” statements?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Are You Difficult to Get Along With?

Objective

To identify ways to respect others and improve your relationships.

You Should Know

Relationships can be hard work, and ideally each person is capable of compromising, communicating clearly, listening attentively, trusting fully, and being kind. Unfortunately, not everyone is capable of healthy, balanced relating. You may find it difficult to trust others, or you might withdraw when you find yourself getting too emotionally involved. Maybe you have a hard time understanding and listening to the needs and feelings of others.

Which of the following statements describes you? Check all that apply.

- People use what I say against me.
- I have difficulty considering other peoples' points of view.
- People have told me I am self-absorbed or selfish.
- Most people are untrustworthy.
- I never feel like I am good enough.
- I often consider revenge when I have been treated unfairly.
- People have told me I am argumentative and confrontational.
- I am much more interesting and important than other people.
- I sometimes use passive-aggressive behavior to get my needs met (for example, I use "the silent treatment" or frequently blame others for my mistakes).
- I sometimes use attention-seeking behavior to get my needs met (for example, threatening to harm or kill myself or exaggerating stories to gain sympathy).
- I feel threatened when my partner/friend/family member spends time with others and gives them attention.
- I have a difficult time listening when other people talk unless it somehow affects me.

Review the statements you checked off, and describe how these behaviors might negatively impact your relationships.

Are there any behaviors you might consider changing? If yes, which ones? If no, why not?

What to Do

In healthy relationships, your feelings – and those of others – are equally respected. You are comfortable saying “no” to each other, and you are able to ask for what you want and need. You treat each other with respect and dignity. You are able to see other peoples’ points of view and to understand their feelings.

The letters G – I – V – E are an easy way to remember steps you can take to improve your relationships:

G: Be **Gentle** in your interactions with others. Avoid critical comments, attacks, and threats when you are angry or uncomfortable.

I: Show **Interest** in others. Be attentive and listen to others. Do not interrupt or change the subject.

V: Validation. Show a nonjudgmental understanding of what the other person is feeling, thinking, or experiencing. You might say, “I understand how you must feel,” or “I can see this is very important to you.”

E: Use an **Easy** manner with others. Try to be easy-going and use humor. Avoid bullying others or making them feel guilty.

Now, try incorporating one or more of the GIVE techniques next time you are with someone who frustrates, upsets, or annoys you. Use the chart below to track what happens.

Situation	The GIVE Technique You Used	How You Used the Technique (what you said/did)	How the Person Reacted	How it Made You Feel

Which of the GIVE techniques was most difficult for you? Explain.

What can you do the next time you are faced with a challenging situation? Which GIVE technique(s) will you most likely use?

Describe other situations where the GIVE method could be useful (for example, the workplace, a family gathering, or a phone conversation with a friend)?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Rely on Your Problem-Solving Ability Even When You Feel Hopeless

Objective

To identify one or more strategies to solve specific problems in your life and to develop a “problem-solving attitude” as a way to cope with life’s difficulties.

You Should Know

You might feel so hopeless about your current problems that you feel there is nothing you can do about them. But is that really true? In fact, there are very few problems that cannot be made better. You simply have to be creative about finding solutions. Solutions may not always be simple, nor do they always address the whole problem that is causing you distress. However, even small changes can make a big difference in your life. Having a problem-solving *attitude* is the most important part of getting over your depression and hopelessness. This assignment is intended to help you develop a problem-solving attitude toward your life, rather than just dwelling on your problems and feeling hopeless.

Finding solutions to the problems weighing you down requires a different way of thinking. Albert Einstein once said, “We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them.” In other words, to solve your problems, you need to change the way you think.

There are many different approaches to solving problems. Cognitive psychologists tell us there are at least 60 different problem-solving strategies. This worksheet reviews five popular ones.

To understand how you can take different approaches to the same problem, consider an example, John, who described himself as being “hopelessly stuck” in his life. John was depressed because his wife had just left him, taking their two small children. He had a low-paying job and was deep in debt. He could barely afford to pay his rent and buy food. He could not see any way to make his life better, until he decided to try some new problem-solving strategies. Here are the different strategies John used to get “unstuck.” These may help you, too.

Break your problem into small solvable steps.

John knew there are two ways to get out of debt – make more money and spend less money. He decided to look for small ways to do both. He was able to save over \$100/month by getting rid of his cable TV and just watching shows on Netflix. He also found he could make money by selling things on eBay. This seemed too easy, so he began to look at other simple ways to change his finances.

Can you think of two or three small things you can do that might impact your problem? Write them below.

Ask for help.

When people are depressed, they tend to isolate themselves, forgetting that there are many people who can help with their problems. John was a veteran and found free counseling advice as well as free financial advice at veteranscrisisline.net, a service of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Other free advice and support can be found through places of worship or community service organizations — and remember your network of friends and relatives. Write down several people or organizations that could give you help.

Try a brainstorming session.

Sometimes you have to be really creative to solve a problem. Brainstorming is best done in a group of four people or more, but it can be done with just one other person. The idea of brainstorming is to come up with as many possible solutions to a problem as possible without worrying about whether they are realistic solutions or not. Make a list of all the possible solutions, no matter how far-fetched they may be. Then, review the list and find a solution that is most practical and most likely to succeed.

John had a brainstorming session with his brother Matt. They came up with a list of more than 100 ways to make extra money. Eventually, John decided to borrow Matt’s lawn mower and he began cutting his neighbors lawns for \$25 a lawn.

Write down a problem you can brainstorm solutions for.

Write down the names of people who can help you brainstorm.

Try brainstorming solutions to this problem for at least 30 minutes *without censoring any solutions*. The purpose of brainstorming is to come up with as many possible solutions as possible, and then choose the ones that seem the most likely to succeed.

Write down all your brainstorming ideas on a separate piece of paper and then write down the two or three best solutions here.

Challenge the assumptions about the nature of your problems.

Often it is hard to see new solutions when you are viewing your problems through false assumptions. Try making a list of all the reasons your problems are unsolvable, and then sit down with a trusted friend or a professional and determine which of your reasons are not based in fact.

John assumed he could not get a better job because he barely finished high school and had no real skills. Over time, he realized neither of these assumptions was true. Through a friend, he found a job salvaging automobile parts, where he was making twice what he made at his previous job. John enrolled in a school to learn to be an auto mechanic, which he felt would be a permanent solution to his money problems.

Write down any assumptions you have about your problem and then ask someone you trust to help decide if they are true or false.

Root Cause Analysis.

You might only view a problem as it exists in the present. However, serious problems usually go far back in your life. Identifying the root causes means going back to where the problem might have originated. Understanding the root cause can give you deeper insight into what is the underlying cause of a problem.

During therapy, John talked about when he started to feel hopeless and powerless. It was not when his wife left him. It was not when he left the military. He remembered having these feelings when he was just nine years old, and his parents were getting a divorce. He remembered that his mother was very depressed, and his father was distant and always drinking. John felt perhaps his own divorce triggered memories about this time and made him identify with his parents. He eventually realized he did not have to relive his parents' mistakes, but instead could make his own choices and certainly be a more active parent with his own children.

Write down your thoughts on what could be some of the root causes of your current problems.

Secret of Success: When you practice problem solving, you are working your survival muscle and getting mentally stronger, much like working out in the gym makes you stronger. Try focusing on solutions throughout the day. Even when faced with small problems, be aware that you are always finding solutions.

What to Do

What are the problem-solving strategies you think could be most helpful to you?

On the chart below, see how often you can use problem-solving strategies, noting the situation and the outcome.

Situation	Problem to Solve	Strategy	Outcome

Reflections on This Exercise

What obstacles did you encounter in trying to solve problems?

Are there any problems in your life you think are unsolvable? What are other ways to cope with these issues? Describe.

Do you know anyone who could be a mentor in helping you develop better coping skills? Is there anything preventing you from talking to this person on a regular basis?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, to 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Developing Healthy Personal Boundaries

Objective

To identify ways to establish and maintain healthy boundaries.

You Should Know

Personal boundaries are defined by the physical and emotional limits you establish with other people. They are the unspoken rules you have about personal closeness in every relationship, whether it is with your boss, your friends, or your loved ones. Boundaries exist to define how you are separate from others so you can be in healthy contact with other people without becoming enmeshed or disconnected. You can have meaningful relationships without taking on others' distress and problems – and without being isolated and alone.

Boundaries vary based on family, culture, personality, situation, values, and priorities – among other factors. When you do not have *clear* personal boundaries, you may feel you are controlled by another person. When your personal boundaries are too *rigid*, you may feel isolated, lonely, and misunderstood. When you have healthy personal boundaries, you recognize each individual is unique, with distinct emotions, needs, and values. You are able to communicate what you need from other people, while respecting their own point of view.

As you develop insight about your personal boundaries, you will develop healthy and mutually rewarding relationships. Use this worksheet to help you think about your personal boundaries and the things you can do differently in your relationships to maintain healthy boundaries.

What to Do

The following are statements that reflect healthy approaches to personal boundaries. Rate each statement from 1 to 3, where 1 = never, 2 = sometimes, and 3 = always.

_____ My behavior appropriately fits situations and my relationships with others.

_____ I look to myself first to fulfill my personal needs.

_____ I reveal my personal thoughts and feelings to people I trust.

_____ I seek physical and/or emotional intimacy with people who care about me.

_____ Others share with me in healthy and respectful ways.

_____ I make my own decisions.

_____ I focus on my needs and goals without being influenced by others.

_____ I consider the consequences of my decisions and how they affect others.

- _____ I do not allow people to take advantage of me.
- _____ I maintain my integrity no matter what other people say or believe.
- _____ I am able to take care of myself when I feel emotionally vulnerable.
- _____ I am aware when someone infringes on my rights.
- _____ I am able to say 'no' if I feel someone is asking for something I do not wish to give.
- _____ I am aware of the personal boundaries of others and respect them.
- _____ I avoid taking advantage of others.
- _____ When appropriate I am flexible with my limits.
- _____ My boundaries are grounded in my priorities, goals, and values.
- _____ I avoid situations that can harm me emotionally, physically, psychologically, or in other ways.
- _____ I don't change my opinions or do something against my values in order to get someone to like me.
- _____ I don't allow people to take advantage of my time or money.
- _____ I trust myself and the decisions I make about my relationships.
- _____ When in doubt, I seek advice from people I trust, but I still make up my own mind.
- _____ I have a clear idea about who I am and what I want from life.
- _____ I recognize that people are not "mind readers" and I clearly communicate my needs, desires, and feelings.
- _____ I am assertive and still consider the rights and needs of others.

Total Score: _____

If you scored 25 – 40 points, you have established clear healthy personal boundaries.

If you scored 41 – 58 points, you might have to address some issues with personal boundaries.

If you scored 59 or more points, you have significant challenges around establishing healthy personal boundaries.

Review your answers and choose an area where you experience challenges. Describe an incident that illustrates a problem you have experienced.

How will your life be different if you establish and maintain healthy boundaries?

Describe what boundaries may be flexible or negotiable in some situations.

Describe what boundaries are non-negotiable.

Describe how establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries can build your self-respect.

Reflection on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

I Feel Disrespected in My Relationships

Objective

To identify ways to increase your self-respect and improve your relationships.

You Should Know

Sometimes relationships feel one-sided, like you are doing all the work, or you are the only one who cares. You may hang on too tightly to your partner, afraid you will be abandoned. People in your life might criticize or humiliate you. You might frequently reach out to friends for validation, reassurance, or praise. Or you might stop talking to a family member after your feelings are hurt.

Which of the following statements describes you? Check all that apply.

- Other people often take me for granted.
- I worry constantly that my partner/friend/family member doesn't care about me.
- I feel threatened when my partner/friend/family member spends time with other people.
- It is difficult for me to express myself.
- I am afraid to make other people angry at me.
- People I care about do not listen to me; I rarely feel "heard."
- I will do almost anything to avoid a confrontation.
- It is very important for me to get approval from others.
- I sometimes act "fake" so other people will like me.
- People describe me as overly sensitive or dramatic, or as taking things out of context.
- When I am alone, I feel empty and worthless.
- I never think I am good enough.
- I would rather be in a bad relationship than be alone.
- I tend to push people away when they get too close.
- I am terrified of being hurt.

Review the statements you have checked off and write down your thoughts about the ones that concern you the most.

What to Do

In order to have healthy relationships, you first need to respect yourself. This means that you value your own feelings and opinions. You ask for what you want, need, and deserve. You are honest with yourself and others, and you are comfortable being authentic. You treat yourself with respect and dignity. You make yourself heard and understood.

The letters F – A – S – T are an easy way to remember the rules for respecting yourself:

F: Be **f**air in your interactions with others to get your needs met. Avoid taking advantage of other people.

A: **A**pologize when necessary, but avoid apologizing for the way you feel. No need to say sorry when there is nothing to apologize for!

S: **S**tick to your values. Do not compromise your morals and values in order to be accepted by other people, or to gain affection.

T: Be **T**ruthful. Avoid lying, acting helpless, or exaggerating.

Now, ask someone you trust to role play with you. Think of situations when you felt uncomfortable or disrespected, and then incorporate one or more of the **FAST** techniques. Use the following chart to track what happens.

Which of the FAST techniques was most difficult for you? Explain.

What can you do the next time you are faced with a challenging situation? Which FAST technique(s) will you most likely use?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Asking for something from someone else can be hard, especially if you fear rejection or anger in response. Or, you might feel unworthy of attention or assistance. Self-respect is knowing you have the right to make requests of others. Simple requests are just that – asking someone else to do something or provide you with something simple in response to a problem you might be having, or to fulfill something you need.

Do you have difficulty asking for directions if you are lost? Do you have trouble requesting an appointment change at work? Do you struggle to ask for a favor, a ride, or assistance with a task? You can learn to make simple requests using a few steps, making it more likely you will experience a positive outcome.

For example, imagine your neighbors play loud music at night when you are trying to sleep. You are tired of it but you are unclear how to ask them to stop. Here is a three-step approach to solving the problem:

- 1. Identify the problem:** “I can hear your music and it is keeping me up at night.”
- 2. Use a kind statement:** “Would you mind lowering the volume after 11 PM, please?” (Other options: “I would appreciate it if you would . . .” or “It would be helpful if you could . . .” or “I was wondering if you would . . .”)
- 3. Use a grateful statement:** “I would be so grateful,” “It would really mean a lot to me,” “Thank you for listening to me,” “I really appreciate your help,” and so on.

Now, list interpersonal problems you are having and write down how you would like to make simple requests in the coming week or so to resolve or minimize the problem. Be specific about what you would say, using the three-step model above.

1. Problem statement: _____

Kind statement: _____

Grateful statement: _____

2. Problem statement: _____

Kind statement: _____

Grateful statement: _____

3. Problem statement: _____

Kind statement: _____

Grateful statement: _____

In the next week or so, keep track of any situations when you used the Simple Request skill to help you improve your interpersonal effectiveness.

Situation/ With whom?	What was the conflict about?	What was your simple request?	What was the outcome?

Reflections on This Exercise

What parts of using the Simple Request skill worked well for you?

How did it feel when you used this skill?

Did you experience challenges using a Simple Request skill? If you struggled, whom can you talk with to review what went well and what did not go so well? How would you like to go about asking them for help? Describe.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Using the Repeat Technique to Make Communication More Effective

Objective

To help you lower your reactivity and assert yourself calmly with the Repeat Technique.

What to Do

Do you find it difficult to get what you want and need from other people? Do you expend a lot of energy blaming others or trying to get them to change? Do you frequently get into arguments and feel frustrated when you are not being heard?

The Repeat Technique is a simple strategy you can use when another person is not responding to what you are saying. You can use this technique to lower your “reactivity,” or tendency to argue or debate. Instead of engaging in the conversation, you simply pick a short phrase that makes your point, then repeat that phrase over and over in response to the other person.

Instead of getting pulled into an argument or becoming angry or accusatory, you can use this technique to acknowledge the other person’s needs and wants and then state what you want in a calm, strong, clear voice.

Example #1: *Your mother insists you attend a holiday dinner with the family. But you need emotional space from them right now and have made other plans. Your Repeat Technique phrase might go something like this:*

“Thanks, Mom, for the invitation. I know you’d like me to attend but I have made other plans this year.”

Then, when Mom attempts to argue or make you feel guilty or ashamed, you just calmly return to that phrase and repeat it. There is no benefit to getting into an argument or discussion. Just say the same phrase over and over again.

Example #2: *Your child is whining and about to throw a tantrum because you have told him to stop playing a video game and start his homework. Rather than getting engaged in a battle, try the Repeat Technique with a statement like this:*

“I know you want to keep playing your game, but playtime is over for today. Turn off the game now and get out your homework.” No matter what your child says or does, just repeat this phrase until your child performs the requested behavior.

Now, write down five examples of conflicts you have had where the Repeat Technique might have been appropriate.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

In the next week or so, keep track of any situations when you used the Repeat Technique.

Situation/ With whom?	What was the conflict about?	What Repeat Technique phrase(s) did you use?	What was the outcome?

Reflections on This Exercise

What parts of the Repeat Technique worked well for you?

What was the main obstacle you encountered practicing this exercise?

If you struggled with a certain aspect of the Repeat Technique, whom can you talk with to review what went well and what did not go well? How would you like to go about asking them for help?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do differently to make progress in this area?

Loving Kindness Meditation

Objective

To practice the Loving Kindness Meditation to increase your compassion for yourself and other people.

You Should Know

The Loving Kindness Meditation is a simple exercise where you recite positive statements about yourself and others. Practicing this meditation can immediately improve your mood because it allows you to focus on the positive things in your life and your sense of purpose. The effects of this practice can be surprisingly long-lasting. Studies show that the regular practice of this meditation can increase your resiliency and bring you a sense of fulfillment you may have never thought possible.

This meditation has five simple steps. You begin by expressing positive statements for yourself followed by positive statements for someone you care about. Then, you send out positive wishes toward someone you feel neutral about, followed by positive statements toward someone you dislike. Finally, you direct your positive wishes out to the universe.

This meditation takes just a few minutes, but it goes a long way in opening up your positive emotions and letting go of your negative judgments.

What to Do

1. Close your eyes. Sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor and your spine straight. Relax your whole body. Keep your eyes closed throughout the whole visualization and bring your awareness inward. Without straining or concentrating, relax. Take a deep breath in, then breathe out.

2. Imagine yourself in a place where you feel complete satisfaction and have an all-encompassing sense of well-being. Perhaps you are sitting on a beach at sunset with the warm glow of the sun on your skin. Perhaps you are in your own living room, surrounded by people who love you. Think of a place that makes you very happy.

3. Say the following phrases out loud:

I wish for happiness, calm, and peace for myself.

Now visualize someone you care about and say: **I wish for happiness, calm, and peace for you.**

Now visualize someone you feel neutral about – someone you neither like nor dislike, and say: **I wish for happiness, calm, and peace for you.**

Now think of someone you dislike, and say: **I wish you happiness, calm, and peace.**

Finally, direct your loving kindness to the universe, and say: **May all beings everywhere find happiness, calm, and peace.**

Now, practice this meditation daily for the next week. Record on the following chart.

Day	Did You Practice the Meditation? (Y / N)	How Did You Feel Before Meditating?	How Did You Feel After?	Notes
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you find challenging about practicing this exercise? Describe.

Has this exercise changed how you feel about yourself? Explain.

Has this exercise improved your ability to extend loving kindness to others, particularly people you dislike? Explain.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

The DBT Homework Assignment

Workbook

When Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) was developed in the 1970s, it was created to treat adults who self-harm, including those struggling with chronic suicidal thinking and behavior. Over the years, DBT has proved its effectiveness in treating individuals with anxiety, substance abuse problems, PTSD, and other mental health issues. Today, DBT is widely used by therapists to help clients – including those without a diagnosis – who are seeking to manage their overwhelming emotions in healthier ways.

The DBT Assignment Workbook was written to support therapists who work in a general practice, as well as those who specialize. Instead of limiting its scope to clients who present with self-injury and suicidality, this DBT workbook can benefit anyone seeking to replace unhealthy behaviors with healthy coping skills.

This workbook offers 50 therapeutic assignment worksheets that will help clients learn strategies to manage their emotions in constructive ways, instead of turning to overeating, alcohol abuse, practicing unsafe sex, overspending, lashing out in anger, or other self-destructive behaviors. The worksheets complement the content covered during counseling sessions by providing homework for clients to complete between sessions.

This workbook is divided into sections covering each of the four DBT skills: mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness. Each worksheet is written specifically for clients, in a manner that is practical, user-friendly, and easy to understand. While no single worksheet is effective for everyone, we are confident each client will discover techniques that inspire change.

About the Authors

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About the Company

Between Sessions Resources provides practical evidenced-based tools designed to accelerate client growth.



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