

DBT SKILLS WORKBOOK



Neurodivergent Friendly **Practical Tools & Strategies** **For Nervous System Regulation**

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INTRODUCTION

What is DBT (Dialectical Behavioural Therapy?)

In 1993, a therapy called **Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT)** was created by Marsha Linehan. It was made to help people who, like Marsha, were told they had 'borderline personality disorder'. Over time, studies have shown that DBT can also help with other emotional challenges. Emotional ups and downs are connected to different mental health issues."

DBT is a proven therapy for those who find emotions overwhelming. In DBT, there's a concept called 'dialectic', where two opposing things can both be true.

It's like having a conversation to find a common truth. In DBT, this means **accepting and changing:**

- Accepting yourself as you are, knowing you're trying your best, while also working on positive changes.
- Accepting your difficult emotions as valid, understanding they have a reason, and finding ways to make them better.

The four sets of skills taught in DBT reflect this key dialectic of acceptance and change:-

Acceptance skills

- 1: Mindfulness
- 2: Distress Tolerance

Change skills

- 3: Emotion Regulation
- 4: Interpersonal Effectiveness

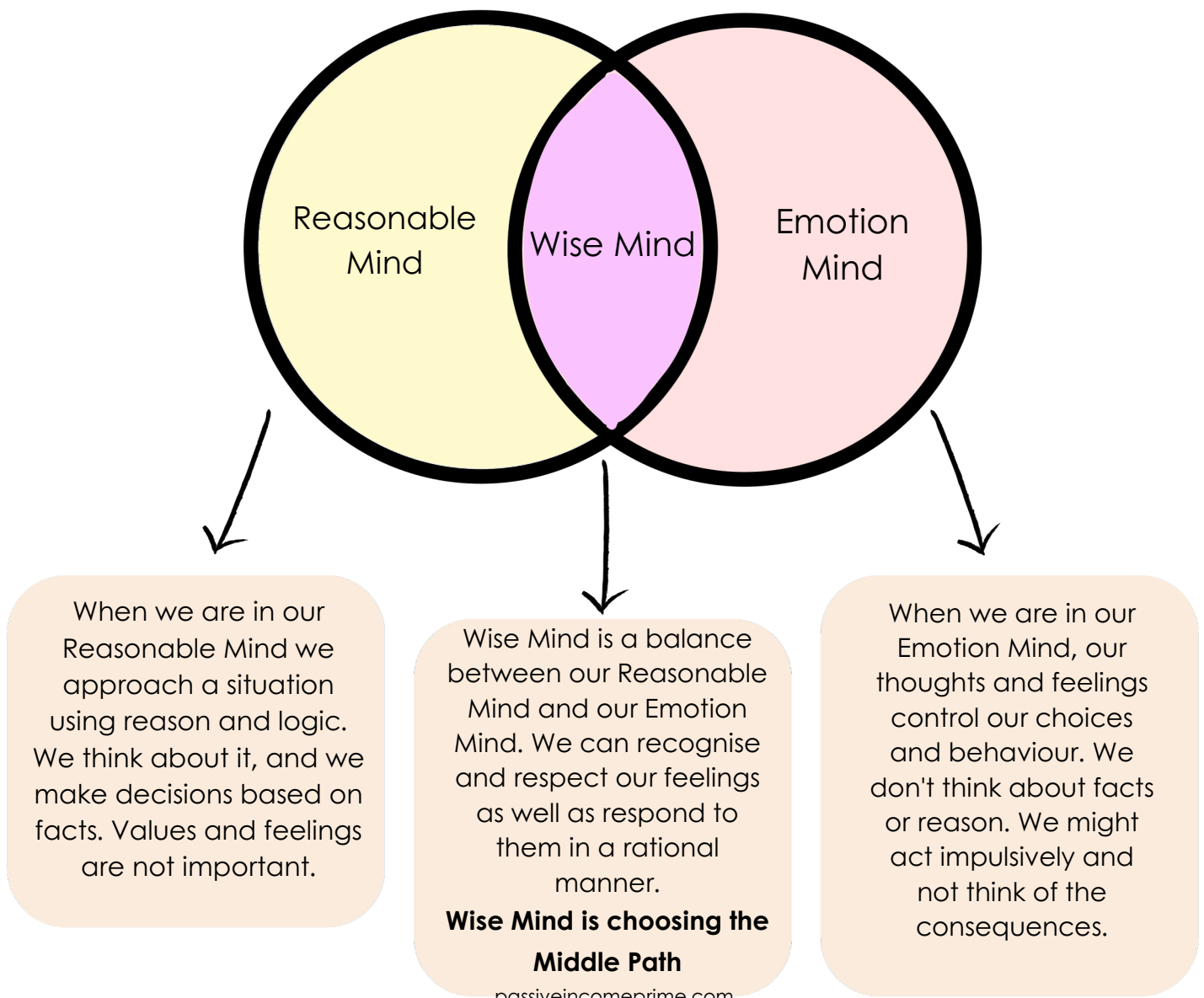
Each of these modules teaches you skills to cope with intense emotional lability and its damaging consequences, with the goal of "building a life worth living".

MODULE 1 - Understanding DBT

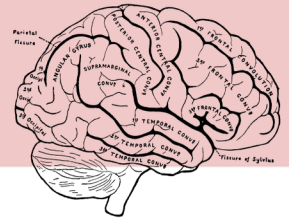
DBT starts with the understanding that YOU ARE DOING THE BEST YOU CAN. Risky, impulsive and damaging behaviours are an understandable response to unbearable emotional suffering.



The aim of DBT is to practice using our '**Wise Mind**'. When people struggle with intense emotional distress, they often get stuck in what we call an 'Emotion Mind'.



MODULE 1 - Understanding DBT



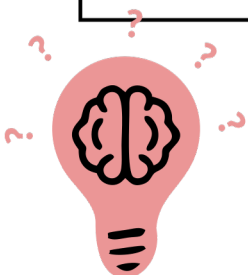
Describe an experience you have had with each of these states of mind:

Reasonable Mind

Wise Mind

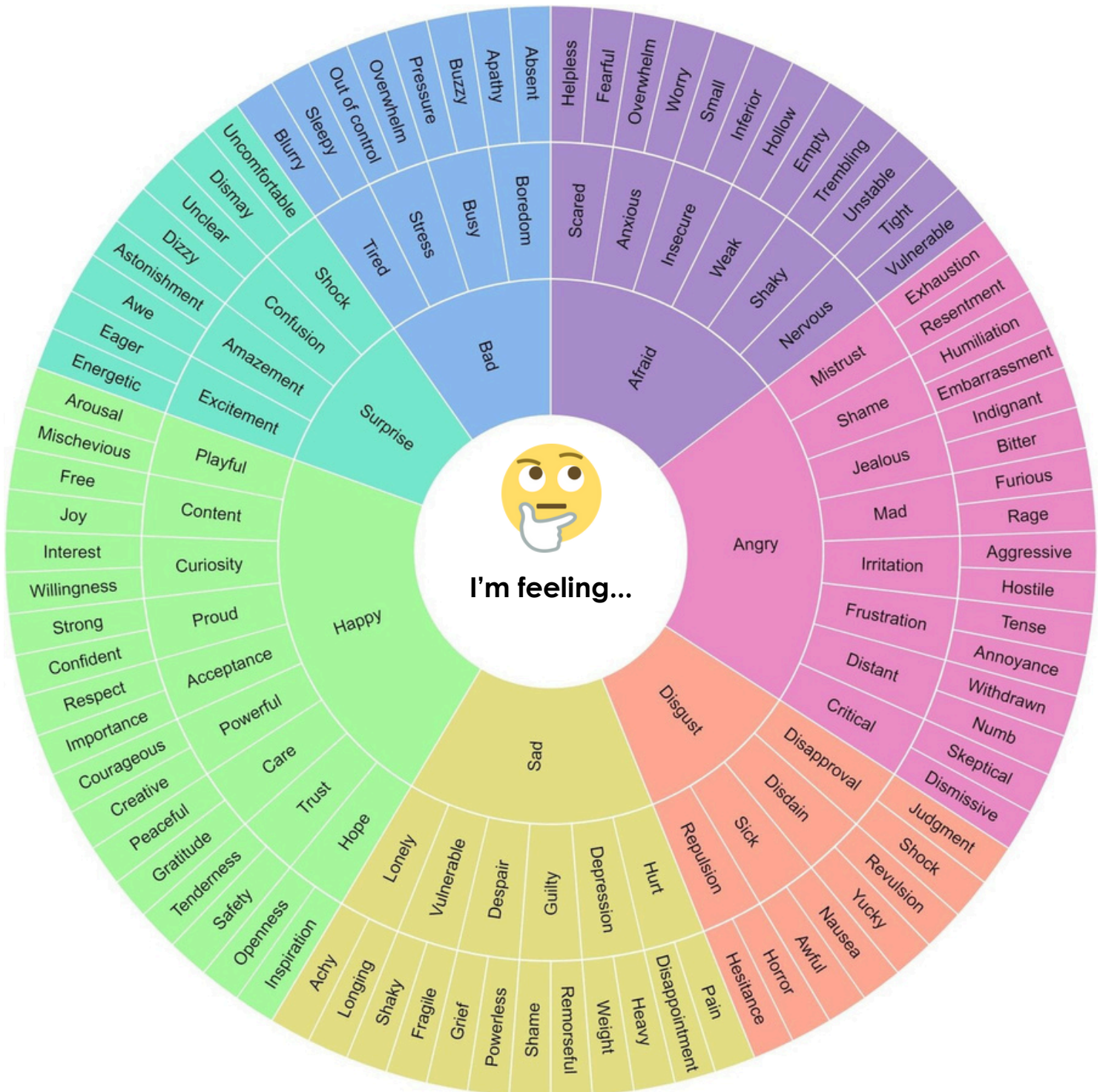
Emotion Mind

Think about some of the difficulties you experience as a result of struggling with intense emotions...



MODULE 1 - Understanding DBT

The Feelings Wheel below can help with trying to identify your emotions when you struggle to name what you're feeling.



MODULE 1 - Understanding DBT

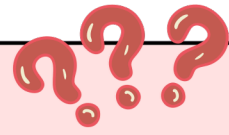
The function of emotions

Have a look at some 'basic' emotions below. Try to think about how they make us feel and how they make you want to react. This exercise can help you better understand what emotions you might be experiencing and notice how you feel in your body.

Emotion Family Name	Function	Typical Body Presentation: (temperature, facial expression, breathing, muscle tone, voice tone, body posture)	What do you want to do when you feel this way?
Anger	To give you an energy boost to either burst through the obstacle or repel the threat		
Joy	To maximise benefits, to increase achievements		
Sadness	To inhibit further loss, making sure we conserve the resources we have. To elicit help from others and to find or replace what has been lost		
Fear Anxiety	To keep us safe from danger.		
Guilt	To ensure the person stays connected to the tribe in order to benefit from resources and protection.		
Shame	To lower the risk of being cast out from the tribe, to allow time for the issue to blow over		
Disgust	To protect from toxins or infection		

MODULE 1 - Understanding DBT

What would you like to change?



Try to brainstorm a few ideas that would be helpful as a small first step towards your goals.

MODULE 2 - Mindfulness

Being fully present in the moment

Thinking too much can make us feel stressed. There are always things to worry about and thoughts that bother us. Research shows that when we focus on the present moment, being aware of what's around us, we tend to feel happier and less stressed. With practice, we can get better at controlling our thoughts and feelings.

Mindfulness skills teach us to be fully here and now, instead of being here but lost in upsetting thoughts. These skills help us slow down and pay attention without being critical.

Mindfulness helps us balance our 'Reasonable Mind' and 'Emotion Mind' that we talked about earlier. It helps us live life in between, without going to extremes.



All of the skills learnt in DBT require the application of mindfulness skills

How can Mindfulness skills help us to cope with intense emotional distress?

- 🌿 To experience unpleasant thoughts and feelings safely
- 🌿 To become less distressed by and less reactive to unpleasant experiences
- 🌿 To increase self-awareness, and to improve relationships
- 🌿 To learn the distinction between yourself and your thoughts
- 🌿 To have more direct contact with the world rather than living through your thoughts/in your head
- 🌿 To learn that thoughts and feelings are not permanent; they change and they come and go
- 🌿 To have more balance and less emotional volatility
- 🌿 To experience more calm and peacefulness
- 🌿 To develop self-acceptance and self-compassion
- 🌿 To be able to regulate your emotions more effectively
- 🌿 To slow down your responses

MODULE 2 - Mindfulness

CORE Mindfulness Skills

1: WHAT skills - Observe, Describe, Participate

These skills help us understand ourselves better. Acting without thinking is impulsive and mood-driven.

By noticing and talking about our actions, we can learn better ways to behave. Watching ourselves with curiosity helps us understand and change behaviors that trouble us.

Observing means noticing what's happening, even if it's painful, without trying to make it go away. It's about letting ourselves feel the moment.

Describing means using words to talk about what's going on. This helps us understand that our feelings and thoughts might not always show the full picture. For example, feeling scared doesn't always mean we're in real danger.

Participating means fully engaging in what we're doing right now. It's about giving our full attention to the task at hand.

2: HOW skills- Non judgementally, Mindfully, Effectively

These are about how we observe, describe and participate. This includes taking a non-judgemental stance, focusing on one thing in the moment, and doing what works.

Non-judgementally - Not judging means not deciding if something is good or bad. This can be hard, especially for people who have trouble controlling their emotions. It's not about finding a middle ground in our judgments; it's about not judging at all. Instead of saying something is good or bad, DBT encourages us to think about what happens because of our actions or events. A non-judgmental approach notices these outcomes and might lead to changing behaviors, but without calling them good or bad.

MODULE 2 - Mindfulness

Mindfully - Being mindful means concentrating on one thing at a time. It's about paying full attention to what we're doing right now, without getting distracted by other thoughts or activities. This can be tough because our minds tend to wander to the past, future worries, or things that upset us.

To be mindful, we need to practice focusing only on the task we're doing, putting aside other thoughts and distractions.

Effectively - This is about focusing on what works, not just being 'right'. Sometimes, we care too much about being correct instead of doing what's best for the situation.

This difficulty in letting go of the need to be 'right' often comes from situations where our feelings and thoughts were not taken seriously. People who have faced this might find it hard to trust their own judgments and decisions.

The following exercises will help you to learn and practice your WHAT and HOW core mindfulness skills. The more you practice, the easier it will become.

Mindful Meditation



When we go about our lives it is normal for thoughts, feelings and experiences to come and go quickly. Often we're not aware of them. We might say or do something because of how we feel without noticing the processes that influenced us. During mindfulness meditation we create awareness of these processes by mentally stepping back from ourselves and identifying our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations.

MODULE 2 - Mindfulness



- ✦ Find a place free of noise and distraction to practice.
- ✦ Sit down on a cushion, the floor, or in a chair.
Sit up straight to allow easy breathing, but make sure you're comfortable.
- ✦ Turn your focus towards your breathing. Notice the feeling of the breath entering your body and making its way to your lungs.
Pay attention to how your body feels and what it's like as your breath exits your lungs. Continue to focus on the feeling of breathing.
- ✦ As you practice, your mind will wander.
Try not to judge your thoughts, simply notice and accept them. Try to notice as an outside observer "I'm having a thought".
The same goes for feelings. If you detect sadness, worry, happiness or excitement notice how they feel in your body. Acknowledge what you are feeling even if it's an uncomfortable sensation. Simply notice "I am feeling this way"
- ✦ Allow the thought or feeling to pass, then return your focus to your breathing and your body.
- ✦ Notice any urges, e.g. to scratch an itch, or to shift position.
But don't act on them!
- ✦ Allow the urge to pass, then return your focus to your breathing and your body.
- ✦ Try to practice for 10 to 15 minutes. When you get better at it, aim for 30 minutes.

For each skill, practice using it as much as you can for next session. Think about how it felt during the exercise and afterwards. Think about how difficult or easy it was for you, and discuss next session.

MODULE 2 - Mindfulness

Mindful Activity



The goal of a mindful activity is to bring our thoughts into the present moment.

To practice, first choose any activity where your mind always wanders, e.g. driving to work, doing the washing up. Next time you do your chosen activity; attend to each of your senses. (It is best to choose an activity that you do regularly so you can practice it every day)

Use the boxes on the right to record your own practice.

	Activity E.g. Going for a walk	My Activity
Vision 	As you leave your home, notice the colour of the sky, the leaves on the trees and the people in the streets. Pay closer attention - notice flowers at the side of the road, and how the wind moves them.	
Hearing 	Each time the wind blows, you can hear the leaves rustling. You can hear the sound of cars going by. There is the sound of birds in the trees, and of people talking.	
Touch 	Notice the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the breeze. With each step you take feel your foot landing and then pushing off from the pavement.	
Taste 	You stop to pick up a coffee. You hold the drink in your mouth for a moment to fully notice the flavour.	
Smell 	When the breeze blows you can smell the flowers. What else can you smell as you walk?	

MODULE 3 - Distress Tolerance

Learning to tolerate painful emotions

Feeling really upset can be hard for some people. They might be really scared of these feelings and try really hard to avoid them. Sometimes, this fear leads them to do things that aren't safe, which can make things even more difficult.

If we have grown up in an invalidating environment we may believe that it is wrong to experience negative emotions. We may be very afraid of feeling distressing emotions and experience a deep sense of shame or guilt for our experience. This makes our distress even worse.

Write down some examples of invalidating environments

Which distressing emotions do you find most difficult to cope with?

What risky or damaging things do you do to try to escape from distress?

Pain and distress are part of life; they can't be entirely avoided or removed. The inability to accept this leads to increased pain and suffering. Experiencing, tolerating, and accepting emotional pain are the ways to reduce pain. DBT teaches us that we can "learn to bear pain skilfully".

Distress Tolerance Skills

There are two types of distress tolerance skills that are taught in DBT :

1

Crisis Survival Skills - getting through crises

These are strategies for coping with overwhelming negative emotions and intolerable situations, without impulsive actions that make things worse.

2

Acceptance Skills - accepting life as it is in the moment

These are strategies for accepting yourself and your current situation, in a non-evaluative and non-judgemental way.

MODULE 3 - Distress Tolerance

1 Crisis Survival Skills - Distraction

Feeling bad doesn't last forever. Sometimes, it can help to do something else until the bad feelings go away. Distracting ourselves can make the strong feelings less intense and change how we feel.

"Wise Mind A.C.C.E.P.T.S."

This acronym can help us remember what to do.
Use the boxes on the right to record your practice. What works for you?

A Activities	Engage in activities that require thought and concentration. Choose activities that are MEANINGFUL to you e.g. a hobby, work, project	
C Contributions	Focus on someone or something other than yourself. Do a good deed, help someone else out, volunteer for something.	
C Comparisons	Try to look at your situation in comparison to something worse. Remember a time when you were in more pain, or when someone else was going through something more difficult.	
E Emotions	Do something that will create a different emotion eg Feeling sad? Watch a funny movie. Feeling nervous? Listen to calming music.	
P Pushing Away	Get rid of negative thoughts by pushing them out of your mind. Imagine writing them on a piece of paper, screwing it up and throwing it away. Decide to think about your situation at a better time.	
T Thoughts	When your emotions take over, try to focus on your thoughts. Count to 10, recite a poem in your head, or read a book.	
S Sensations	Find safe physical sensations to distract you from intense negative emotions e.g. snap a rubber band on your wrist, hold an ice cube in your hand, eat something sour or spicy.	

MODULE 3 - Distress Tolerance

2 Crisis Survival Skills - Self Soothe

Self-soothing means doing things that involve your senses, like touch, taste, or smell. These activities help calm your bad feelings, keep you focused on the present, and make you feel less upset. This can prevent impulsive actions. Self-soothing is about **being gentle and kind to yourself.**

Use the boxes below to record your practice. **What works for you?**

Vision	Go for a walk somewhere nice and pay attention to what you see.	
Hearing	Listen to some music you love, or go to the beach and listen to the sound of the sea.	
Touch	Take a warm bath, wrap yourself in a soft blanket. Stroke your pet.	
Taste	Have a small treat, something you love like chocolate. Eat it slowly. Describe its taste.	
Smell	Find a flower, or a perfume that you like. Smell it slowly. Describe its scent.	

For each skill, practice using it as much as you can for your next session. Think about how it felt during the exercise and afterwards. Think about how difficult or easy it was for you, and discuss next session.

MODULE 3 - Distress Tolerance

3 Crisis Survival Skills - IMPROVE

You can improve the moment by replacing immediate negative events with more positive ones, changing appraisals of oneself or the situation.

The acronym "I.M.P.R.O.V.E" helps you to remember what you can do.

I.M.P.R.O.V.E.

I Imagery	Imagine being somewhere calm and relaxing, like on a beautiful beach. Imagine a safe place where no-one can hurt you. Imagine coping well, what would it be like?	
M Meaning	Find some meaning or purpose in the pain you are feeling. Focus on the positive aspects, however small.	
P Prayer	Pray to God, or whoever you believe in. Pray to your own Wise Mind. Ask for strength to bear the pain in this moment.	
R Relaxation	Try a muscle relaxation exercise. Listen to a podcast. Do some hard physical exercise and then have a hot bath. Try breathing, use a 'half smile'	
O One thing in the moment	Focus your entire attention on what you are doing right now. Focus your entire attention on the physical sensations of what you are doing eg walking, washing up.	
V Vacation	Give yourself a brief holiday. Get in bed and hide under the duvet for 20 mins. Wrap yourself in a blanket and drink hot chocolate. Turn off your phone for the day.	
E Encouragement	Cheerlead yourself. Repeat over and over "I can stand it" "This won't last forever" "I'm doing the best I can right now"	

MODULE 3 - Distress Tolerance

4 Crisis Survival Skills - Thinking of Pros and Cons

Imagine the good things that can happen if you stay calm even when you're upset. Think about your big dreams. Picture how proud you'll be if you achieve those dreams without rushing into things.

Also, remember the bad stuff that happened when you acted without thinking in the past. Think about how things went wrong. This can help you see why it's important to stay patient and not act impulsively.

Tolerating the Distress - Using your Distracting or Self-Soothing Skills	
Pros	Cons

Not Tolerating the Distress - using alcohol or drugs/doing something risky or impulsive	
Pros	Cons

MODULE 3 - Distress Tolerance

5

Crisis Survival Skills - T.I.P.P.

Sometimes, we feel really upset and it's hard to think clearly. These skills are like tools to help us calm down fast and stop ourselves from doing something impulsive. They're meant to help us when our emotions are too strong and we feel overwhelmed.

The acronym **"T.I.P.P."** helps us to remember what we can do.

T.I.P.P.

Use the boxes below to record your practice. What works for you?

T Temperature	• Change the temperature to make yourself calm down quickly • Put your face in a bowl of cold water - this will trigger a reflex to cause your body chemistry to change. • The heart rate drops and the parasympathetic nervous system activates a relaxation response.	
I Intense Exercise	• A burst of intense exercise will release the negative energy caused by strong emotions. • Intense exercise will release endorphins which will help to combat negative emotions. • Run up and down the stairs, do star jumps.	
P Paced Breathing	• Another way to cue your parasympathetic nervous system. Breathe deeply into your stomach to a count of 5 • Hold it then breathe slowly out to a count of 7	
P Paired Muscle Relaxation	• Tense your muscles when breathing in • Relax your muscles when breathing out	

The next section will look at the second type of Distress Tolerance skills - Acceptance Skills

MODULE 4 - Distress Tolerance Pt. 2

Distress **Tolerance Acceptance Skills** are about tolerating something without judging it or trying to change it.

Acceptance skills mean being okay with something even if it's hard, without saying it's good or bad. Accepting ourselves and our situation without being critical is tough. Sometimes, we face problems we can't change, and it's natural to feel it's unfair. But getting upset about it makes the pain worse.

Radical acceptance is a healthier way to think. Instead of wishing things were different, you accept the situation as it is, even if you don't like it. It's about accepting reality, not saying it's right. Learning this helps reduce anxiety, anger, and sadness when dealing with tough situations.

Radical Acceptance means letting go of fighting reality. The term 'radical' implies that the acceptance has to come from deep within and has to be complete. Acceptance is the only way to turn suffering that cannot be tolerated into pain that can be tolerated.

1 Acceptance Skills - Observing your breath

Many spiritual practices involve focusing on breathing during meditation. This helps people accept themselves and the world as they are. It's also used to relax and manage panic attacks.

Pay attention to your breath, in and out. It helps you find your calm and **wise mind**. Focusing on your breath helps you stay calm and accept reality, instead of fighting against it.

Some breathing exercises you can practice, and record how you get on:-

Deep Breathing

Lie on your back. Breathe evenly and gently, focusing your attention on the movement of your stomach. As you breathe in, feel your stomach rise to bring the air into your lungs. As your lungs fill with air your chest begins to rise and your stomach begins to lower. Continue for 10 breaths. Your exhalation should be longer than the inhalation.

How did you find it?

MODULE 4 - Distress Tolerance Pt. 2

Measuring your breath by your footsteps

1. Walk slowly, breathe normally. Count your steps as you breathe in and out. Do this for a few minutes.
2. Lengthen your exhale by one step. Do this for 10 breaths. Don't force it, let it be natural.
3. Lengthen your exhale by one more step. If your inhale feels comfortable, make it longer too. Do this for 10 breaths.
4. Return your breath to normal.

Remember, don't make yourself breathless while practicing this technique.

How did you find it?



Follow your breath by listening to music

1. Listen to calm music. Choose something relaxing.
2. Breathe slowly and gently. Feel your breath going in and out.
3. Pay attention to your breath and the music. Don't get too lost in the music. Stay in control of your breathing and yourself.

This practice helps you stay calm and in control.

How did you find it?

MODULE 4 - Distress Tolerance Pt. 2



2 Acceptance Skills - Half-Smiling

Our emotions are connected to how our face looks.

When we make a 'half smile' or a calm, accepting face, we can have some control over our emotions. When our face looks accepting, we can start feeling more accepting too.

To do a half smile, first, relax your face, neck, and shoulders. Then, make a small, relaxed smile with your lips. Try to look peaceful. It's important to keep your face relaxed, not tense. A tense smile is more like a grin and might tell your brain you're hiding something. A half smile is a gentle, relaxed smile. Remember, your body talks to your mind.

Half smiling exercises you can practice, and record how you get on:

Half Smile when you wake up in the morning

Put a note with the word 'smile' on your ceiling or wall where you can see it when you wake up. Before getting out of bed, pay attention to your breath. Tighten and then relax your neck, shoulders, and face muscles. Breathe in and out gently for 3 breaths while keeping a gentle smile. Focus on your breathing.

How did you find it?



MODULE 4 - Distress Tolerance Pt. 2

Half Smile while listening to music

Listen to a track you like. Pay attention to the words, the music, the lyrics and the rhythm. Half smile while watching your inhalations and exhalations.

How did you find it?

Half Smile when irritated

When you realise that you are irritated, half smile at once. Inhale and exhale slowly and quietly, maintaining a half smile for 3 breaths.

How did you find it?

Half Smile while thinking about someone who has upset you

Find a quiet spot. Take deep breaths and make a small, gentle smile. Imagine the person who upset you. Think about their features. Then, consider what makes them happy and what makes them sad. Think about their thoughts, motivations, and the challenges they face. Also, think if there's hate or anger influencing them. Keep breathing and smiling gently until your anger fades. You might need to do this exercise several times.

How did you find it?

MODULE 4 - Distress Tolerance Pt. 2



3 Acceptance Skills - Awareness

Awareness exercises can be very helpful in the middle of a crisis. If you practice them every day they can help develop a more accepting state of mind.

Awareness exercises you can practice, and record how you get on:-

Awareness of the position of the body

You can do this anywhere, anytime. Start by noticing your breath. Breathe in and out slowly. Pay attention to how your body is positioned, whether you're standing, walking, or sitting. Be aware of where you are and why you're there, like working at your desk. Feel how your body is connected to the ground.

How did you find it?

Awareness while making a cup of tea

Make a cup of tea, either for yourself or someone else. Do every movement slowly and carefully, paying full attention. Notice your hand holding the cup, pouring the hot water, and the smell of the tea. Stay aware of each step. Breathe gently and deeply. If your mind wanders, focus on your breath and bring your attention back to the task.

How did you find it?

MODULE 4 - Distress Tolerance Pt. 2

Awareness while washing up

When washing dishes, think of each plate or cup as something special. Notice its shape, how it feels, and what it's used for. Stay focused on your breathing to keep your mind from wandering. Don't rush; wash each dish like it's the most important task in the world.

How did you find it?

Try to practice these exercises as much as possible, ideally every day.



MODULE 5 - Emotional Regulation

Learn to understand your emotions and how to manage them.

Some people are naturally more sensitive to emotions, and our surroundings affect how we feel and deal with emotions. If it's hard to control our feelings, it can affect our lives a lot. In DBT, we learn Emotion Regulation skills to help with this.

Our goals are:

- **Understanding the emotions we experience** - identifying emotions, Understanding what emotions do for us and the effect they have on us.
- **Reducing our emotional vulnerability** - decreasing the likelihood of being too emotionally sensitive, and increasing positive emotions.
- **Decreasing our emotional suffering** - letting go of painful emotions, changing painful emotions, and having less unwanted emotions.

What good are emotions?



Emotions communicate to others -

- Facial expressions are a hard-wired part of emotions, they communicate faster than words.
- Our body language automatically communicates to others.

Whether we intend it or not, the communication of emotions influences others.

Emotions organise and motivate actions -

- Emotions motivate our behaviour. The action urge connected to specific emotions is often 'hard-wired'. Emotions prepare us for action.
- Emotions save time in getting us to act in important situations. We don't have to think everything through.
- Strong emotions help us overcome obstacles; in our mind and in our environment.

Emotions can be self-validating -

- Our emotional reactions to other people and to events can give us information about the situation.
- Emotions can be signals that something is happening, they prompt us to take a closer look at the situation.

When this is carried to an extreme, emotions are treated as facts: "If I feel incompetent, I am", "If I get depressed when left alone I shouldn't be left alone", "I love him so he must be ok".

MODULE 5 - Emotional Regulation

We feel emotions in response to things around us, like getting mad if someone criticizes us or being happy when a friend visits. Sometimes, our feelings come from our thoughts or actions, like feeling frustrated if we forget something or proud after finishing a project.

Emotions can be both helpful or harmful, depending on how we respond to them.



Think about some examples of when your emotions have been useful and when they have been destructive

Which emotions give you the most trouble?



MODULE 5 - Emotional Regulation

Some of us think our strong feelings are the main problem. We've been told these emotions are wrong, so we react to them with guilt, shame, or anger. This reaction makes it hard to understand our real feelings.

We call this the **'secondary emotional response,'** and it can create more issues. But our initial feelings are often normal reactions to what's happening.

Examples

Primary emotion	Secondary emotion
Joy	Hopeful, proud, excited, delighted
Fear	Anxious, insecure, inferior, panic
Anger	Resentment, hate, envy, jealous, annoyed
Sadness	Shame, neglectful, depression, guilty, isolated
Surprise	Shocked, dismayed, confused, perplexed

Think about some examples where you have had a secondary emotional reaction to a primary emotion (e.g. feeling ashamed for getting angry)

MODULE 5 - Emotional Regulation

Emotional Regulation Skills

1

Identifying and labeling emotions

The first step in managing feelings is to recognize and name them. To do this, pay attention to how you're feeling and what's happening around you. Then, describe the situation where the feeling comes up.

Select a current or recent emotional reaction and fill out as much of this sheet as you can. (Use the Feelings Wheel on page 4, if you struggle to name an emotion)

Observing and Describing Emotions

Emotion Names

Intensity (0-100)

Prompting Event (who, what, where, when). What started the emotion?

Interpretations of the situation? (beliefs, assumptions, appraisals)

Body Changes What am I feeling in my body?

Action Urges What do I feel like doing? What do I want to say?

What I said or did in the situation:

What After Effect did the emotion have on me?

What was the Function of the emotion?

MODULE 5 - Emotional Regulation

2 Reducing Vulnerability to Emotion Mind

In DBT, '**Emotion Mind**' is when we're sensitive to bad feelings. During these times, we might react strongly, act quickly, or struggle to handle it all.

Our body and mind are connected.

If our body isn't well, managing emotions can be harder.

We use the acronym "**P.L.E.A.S.E Master**" to remember these skills.

P.L.E.A.S.E. MASTER

Use the boxes on the right to fill in your own examples.

PL	Treat Physical illness	Take care of your Body	
E	Eat Healthy	Eat a balanced diet	
A	Avoid mood altering drugs	Stay away from drugs and alcohol	
S	Sleep Well	Practice good sleep hygiene	
E	Exercise	Try to do some kind of exercise every day, for 20mins, that gets you out of breath.	
	Build MASTERY	Try to do one thing each day to make yourself feel competent and in control.	



3 Increasing Positive Emotional Events

DBT understands that feeling bad often has valid reasons. When we're very emotional, our view of things can get fuzzy, but that doesn't mean our emotions are wrong. So, a key way to manage emotions is to handle the situations that trigger them.

- In the short term this means increasing daily positive experiences.
- In the long term this means making life changes so pleasurable events will occur more often.
- It is also useful to work on being mindful of pleasurable experiences when they do happen.

Use the table below to identify positive experiences this week, however small they seem. Identify the positive emotions that they generate.

	Daily Positive Experiences	Positive Emotions
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Which positive experiences would you like to have more of?

MODULE 6 - Emotional Regulation Pt. 2

What changes can you make in order to have more of these positive experiences?

4

Increasing Mindfulness to current emotions

This means feeling bad emotions without thinking they're wrong or trying to push them away. The idea is, if we let ourselves feel these emotions without thinking they're bad, it won't lead to more negative feelings.

In the Distress Tolerance module, we learned that if we label our bad emotions as 'bad,' we feel guilty, angry, or anxious whenever we're upset. This makes us even more upset. If we didn't feel so guilty or anxious about feeling bad, we could handle it better.

The following script can help you to remember what to do when you start to feel a negative emotion or become distressed:

Observe your emotion

- Note its presence
- Step back
- Get unstuck from the emotion

Name your emotion

- What is the emotion?
- Describe how it feels in your body

Experience your emotion

- As a wave, coming and going
- Try not to block the emotion
- Don't push it away
- Don't try to keep it around
- Don't amplify it

Remember: You are not your emotion

- Do not necessarily act on your emotion
- Remember times when you have felt different

Practice loving your emotion

- Don't judge your emotion
- Radically accept your emotion

MODULE 6 - Emotional Regulation Pt. 2



Taking Opposite Action

When we feel something, we usually act in a certain way because of that feeling. Our body reacts to emotions in specific ways. For example, if we're mad, we might shout. If we're sad, we might avoid people.

Doing the Opposite Action can help change how you feel. For instance, if you normally yell when you're mad, try speaking quietly and kindly instead. If you usually avoid people when you're sad, make an effort to spend time with a friend next time you feel down. Opposite Action means doing the opposite of what you usually do or changing your body language, like using the 'Half Smile' technique we learned before.

It's important to remember that Opposite Action is not about blocking the emotion; it's about expressing a different emotion!

Use the boxes below to identify what the Opposite Action for each emotion might be. Then record some examples of when you have tried it.

Opposite Action		
Emotion	Action Urge	Opposite Action
Sad	Sleep, ignore phone calls	Call friend, arrange to go out
Angry	Shout and argue	Talk quietly and calmly
Frightened	Hide away	
Nervous	Avoid situations, cancel events	
Lonely		

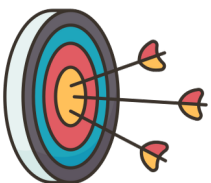
MODULE 6 - Emotional Regulation Pt. 2

Opposite Action		
Emotion What I felt	Action Urge What I wanted to do	Opposite Action What I tried
Sad		
Angry		
Frightened		
Nervous		
Lonely		

Some Opposite Actions tips for changing your emotion:

★ Fear

- Face your fears, even if it's scary. Keep doing it, repeatedly!
- Approach things, places, tasks, or people that scare you.
- Take small steps and make a list of things you can control.
- When you feel overwhelmed, list small tasks and start with the first one.



MODULE 6 - Emotional Regulation Pt. 2



Guilt or Shame

When guilt or shame is justified

- Repair the transgression
- Say you're sorry
- Make things better - do something nice for the person you offended (or for someone else if that's not possible)
- Commit to avoiding that mistake in the future
- Accept the consequences as gracefully as you can
- Then LET IT GO

When guilt or shame is unjustified

- Do what makes you feel guilt or ashamed over and over again
- Approach, don't avoid!



Sadness or Depression

- Get active, approach don't avoid
- Do things that make you feel competent and self-confident



Anger

- Gently avoid the person you are angry with rather than attacking (avoid thinking about them rather than ruminating)
- Do something nice rather than mean or attacking
- Imagine sympathy and empathy for the other person rather than blame.



MODULE 7 - Interpersonal Effectiveness

Building and maintaining meaningful relationships and communication

Sometimes, people who feel very strong emotions find it hard to get along with others. We might know how to handle social situations in general, but when it comes to specific moments, it's challenging. This happens because dealing with strong feelings and handling conflicts becomes tough for us, making it hard to work through problems in relationships.

What kind of interpersonal situations do you find difficult?



What would you like to change?



Interpersonal effectiveness skills are very important for effective communication and meaningful relationships, as well as healthy functioning within families.

MODULE 7 - Interpersonal Effectiveness

Mindful Attention

Good relationships need effort. Whether it's with a partner, friend, or coworker, it's important to pay attention.

We can use the WHAT and HOW skills we learned in earlier sessions to understand how others feel.

By watching their face, body, tone, and words, we can figure out their mood and how our relationship is.

Listening means being fully in the moment. It's not about planning what to say next or getting lost in memories. We need to focus on what we see, hear, and feel right now. Just like how we learned to breathe and walk mindfully in previous sessions, we also need to relate to others with full attention in the present moment.

Mindful Attention Exercise

In the next interaction that you have with someone, practice being an observer of the moment.

Do this by attending to the other person's physical and verbal behaviour.

What did you notice?

If you find anything difficult to read, ask questions to clarify. For example:-

- How are you feeling? Are you okay?
- How are we doing? Are we okay?
- How are things between us?
- I notice, is that accurate?

Also notice your own feelings and needs in the interaction.

Do any of these need to be communicated?

How could you say it in a way that doesn't damage the relationship?

What did you notice?

MODULE 7 - Interpersonal Effectiveness



What are the goals of Interpersonal Effectiveness?



Objective Effectiveness - Getting your objectives or Goals in a situation

- Obtaining your legitimate rights
- Getting someone else to do something
- Refusing an unwanted or unreasonable request
- Resolving an interpersonal conflict
- Getting your opinion or point of view taken seriously

Questions

- 1: What specific results or changes do I want from this interaction?
- 2: What do I have to do to get the results? What will work?

Relationship Effectiveness - Getting or Keeping a good relationship

- Acting in such a way that the other person keeps liking and respecting you
- Balancing immediate goals with the good of the long term relationship

Questions

- 1: How do I want the other person to feel about me after the interaction is over?
- 2: What do I have to do to get (or keep) this relationship?

Self-Respect Effectiveness - Keeping or Improving self-respect and liking for yourself

- Respecting your own values and beliefs; acting in a way that makes you feel moral
- Acting in a way that makes you feels capable and effective.

Questions

- 1: How do I want to feel about myself after the interaction is over?
- 2: What do I have to do to feel that way about myself? What will work?

MODULE 7 - Interpersonal Effectiveness

DBT teaches us some specific skills to help negotiate our needs in situations, to help us maintain healthy relationships and our own self-respect.

Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

1 Objective Effectiveness - D.E.A.R.M.A.N.

In DBT we use the acronym "D.E.A.R.M.A.N". The 'DEAR' in this skill is WHAT we do, and the 'MAN' is HOW we do it.

D.E.A.R.M.A.N.

D Describe	Describe the situation objectively. Stick to the facts! Avoid opinion or interpretation. The goal is to get everyone on the same page.	
E Express	Let others know how a situation makes you feel by expressing your feelings clearly. Don't expect others to read your mind. Try saying "I feel because"	
A Assert	Don't beat around the bush. Say what you need to say. e.g. don't say "Oh I don't know if I can cook tonight or not", say "I won't be able to cook tonight because I'm working late"	
R Reinforce	Reward people who respond well, and reinforce why your desired outcome is positive. This can be as simple as a smile and a "thank you".	
M Mindful	Don't forget the objective of the interaction. It can be easy to get side-tracked into harmful arguments and lose focus.	
A Appear	Appear confident. Consider your posture, tone, eye contact and body language. This communicates to the other person (and to you) that you are effective, deserve respect and know what you want.	
N Negotiate	No-one can have everything they want out of an interaction all the time. Be open to negotiation, e.g. say "If you wash the dishes, I'll put them away".	

MODULE 8 - Interpersonal Effectiveness Pt. 2



2 Relationship Effectiveness - G.I.V.E.

"this is about maintaining healthy and positive relationships"

In DBT we use the acronym G.I.V.E to learn skills to help create positive interactions.

G.I.V.E.

Use the boxes on the right to fill in your practice examples. Does it make a difference when you use these skills with people?

G Gentle	• Don't attack, threaten or express judgement during your interactions. • Accept the occasional 'No' for your requests	
I Interested	• Show interest by listening to the other person without interrupting. • Make eye contact, be patient.	
V Validate	• Validate the other person's thoughts and feelings. • Acknowledge their feelings, recognise when your requests are demanding, and respect their opinions. • Use validating statements e.g. "I hear what you're saying", "I can see that this is important to you", "I can see that you feel..." • Validating is not about agreeing with the other person, it's just about saying you can see where they're coming from.	
E Easy	• Have an easy attitude. • Try to smile and act light hearted.	

Note: If you are unable to use GIVE skills in a situation because of distress, use a distress tolerance skill before attempting effective communication.

MODULE 8 - Interpersonal Effectiveness Pt. 2

3 Self-Respect Effectiveness - F.A.S.T.

"this is about maintaining your own self-respect"

In DBT we use the acronym F.A.S.T to learn skills to help us meet our needs without losing our self- respect.

F.A.S.T.

Use the boxes on the right to fill in your practice examples

F Fair	• Be fair • Not only to others, but also to yourself	
A Apology	• Don't apologise unless it's warranted. • Don't apologise for making a request, having an opinion or disagreeing.	
S Stick to Values	• Don't compromise your values just to be liked or to get what you want. • Stand up for what you believe in.	
T Truthful	• Avoid dishonesty • Don't exaggerate, act helpless as a form of manipulation, or lie outright.	

When we're upset, our thoughts and feelings can be very strong. This might make us act in extreme ways. It's crucial to find a balance between reacting too much and not reacting at all.

The Middle Ground

When dealing with others, it's like a puzzle. We use dialectical thinking, which means finding the truth in different viewpoints and finding a middle ground. DBT skills help us move away from extreme opinions to find a balanced perspective in relationships.

MODULE 8 - Interpersonal Effectiveness Pt. 2

What gets in the way of Interpersonal Effectiveness?

Lack of Skill

We don't actually know what to say or how to act. We don't know how we should behave to achieve our objectives. We don't know what will work.

Worry Thoughts

Sometimes, our worrying thoughts stop us from doing what we want. We might worry that others won't like us or that we don't deserve what we want. We might even call ourselves names, thinking we won't do things right. These worries can hold us back.

Emotions

Sometimes, our strong feelings like anger or fear stop us from doing what we want. Even though we can do it, our emotions control us, making it hard to act the way we wish.

Indecision

Sometimes, we have trouble making decisions or knowing what we really want. Even though we can decide, our confusion stops us from doing or saying what we wish. We might feel torn between asking for too much or not asking for anything, or between saying no to everything or giving in to everything.

Environment

- Sometimes, even if you're really good at something, the situation might be too difficult to handle. Being skilled doesn't always solve the problem.
- It might feel like others are too strong or that they won't like you if you stand up for yourself.
- Sometimes, people won't understand your needs unless you give up your self-respect, which isn't right.

MODULE 8 - Interpersonal Effectiveness Pt. 2

DBT teaches us how to handle strong feelings, stop hurting ourselves, and improve tricky relationships. It encourages us to take our time, to slow down. We can use these skills to think ahead and plan for situations that might be difficult. We use our **Wise Mind** to figure out the best way to handle them.

Cope Ahead		
1	Notice an upcoming situation that you will find difficult. Describe why it will be difficult.	
2	Plan out what skills you need to cope with the situation.	
3	Mentally rehearse using these skills in this situation.	
4	Apply the skills in the situation.	
5	Review how well you did and what you could do better next time.	

You've reached the end of Introduction to DBT Skills, well done!!
Take some time to think about what your aims were when you started this course.
In Session 1, you thought about what you wanted to change....

What would you like to change?

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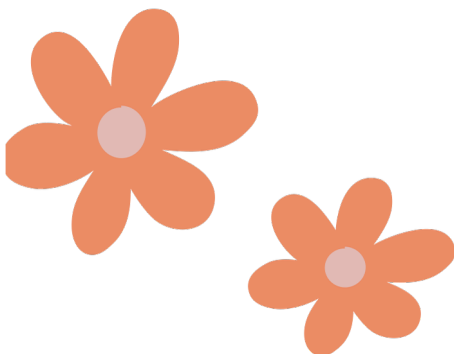
MODULE 8 - Interpersonal Effectiveness Pt. 2

What has been most helpful? What has been difficult?

Remember the advice from Session 1:

"Some skills will work better for you than others, maybe some won't work. That's okay. You just need to give it a go and find out which ones work best for you."
and

"The key to developing your ability to cope with intense emotions is PRACTICE"



Self-Reflective Questions

Mindfulness

How present am I in this moment?

What emotions am I currently experiencing, and how intense are they?

Am I being nonjudgmental and accepting of my thoughts and feelings?

Emotional Regulation

What triggered my current emotional state?

Are my emotions justified by the situation, or are they being influenced by past experiences?

**How am I communicating
my needs and boundaries
to others?**

Interpersonal Effectiveness

**Am I practicing active
listening in my interactions?**

**What could I do differently
to improve my relationships
and interactions with
others?**

Distress Tolerance

**What coping mechanisms
have I used in the past to
manage distress, and how
effective were they?**

**How can I practice self-
soothing techniques in
moments of high stress or
discomfort?**

What are some healthy ways I can distract myself from overwhelming emotions without avoiding them?

Self Validation

Am I practicing active listening in my interactions?

What could I do differently to improve my relationships and interactions with others?

Self Compassion

How do I speak to myself during difficult times? Is it kind and supportive, or critical and harsh?

Can I treat myself with the same kindness and understanding that I offer to others in challenging situations?