

*Updated and Revised with
New Tips, Exercises, and Worksheets*

DBT WORKBOOK FOR ADULTS

Develop
Emotional Wellbeing
with Practical Exercises
for Managing Fear,
Stress, Worry, Anxiety,
Panic Attacks,
and Intrusive
Thoughts

STRESS

ADHD

ANXIETY

Includes
12-Week Plan
for Anxiety
Relief

PTSD

BARRETT HUANG

DBT Workbook for Adults

Develop Emotional Wellbeing with Practical
Exercises for Managing Fear, Stress, Worry,
Anxiety, Panic Attacks, Intrusive Thoughts &
More

(Includes 12-Week Plan for Anxiety Relief)

By Barrett Huang

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WORKBOOK: WEEK 1 - DBT Basics

As mentioned, dialectic behavior therapy (DBT) is about the coming together of two seemingly opposite (dialectic) strategies: Acceptance AND Change. This exercise will help you start practicing these core DBT concepts.

Exercise: Self-Acceptance and Change

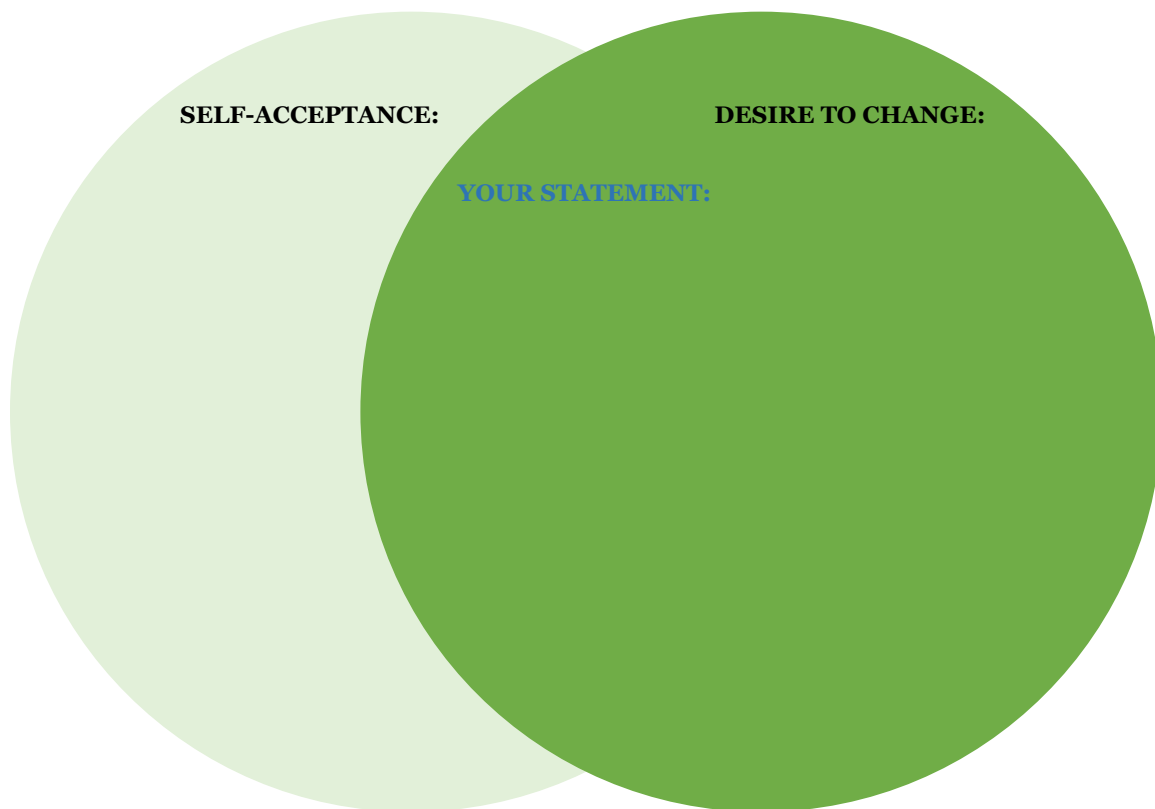
I've put some sample statements here for you as a guide.



Now, it's your turn...

Fill out the following diagram with your own Acceptance and Change statements.

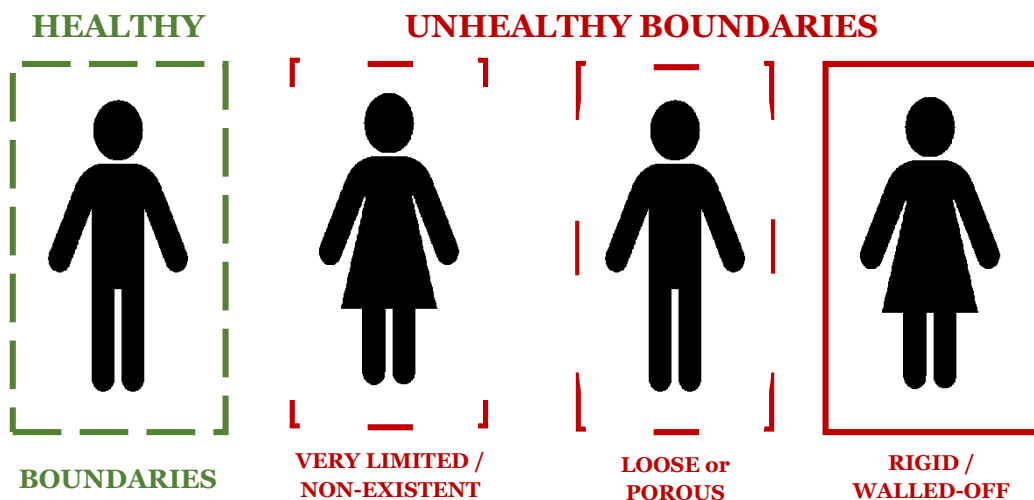
Important: Don't put any pressure on yourself, ok? Just write whatever you feel. If nothing's coming to you today, that's ok too. You can always return to this exercise whenever it suits you.



WORKBOOK: WEEK 2 - Setting Boundaries

Boundaries are personal ‘No Trespassing’ signs you raise to promote your well-being and help ensure that we are not affected by others’ actions and behaviors.

Although boundaries aim to protect you, you should ensure that you set **HEALTHY BOUNDARIES** and not unhealthy ones.



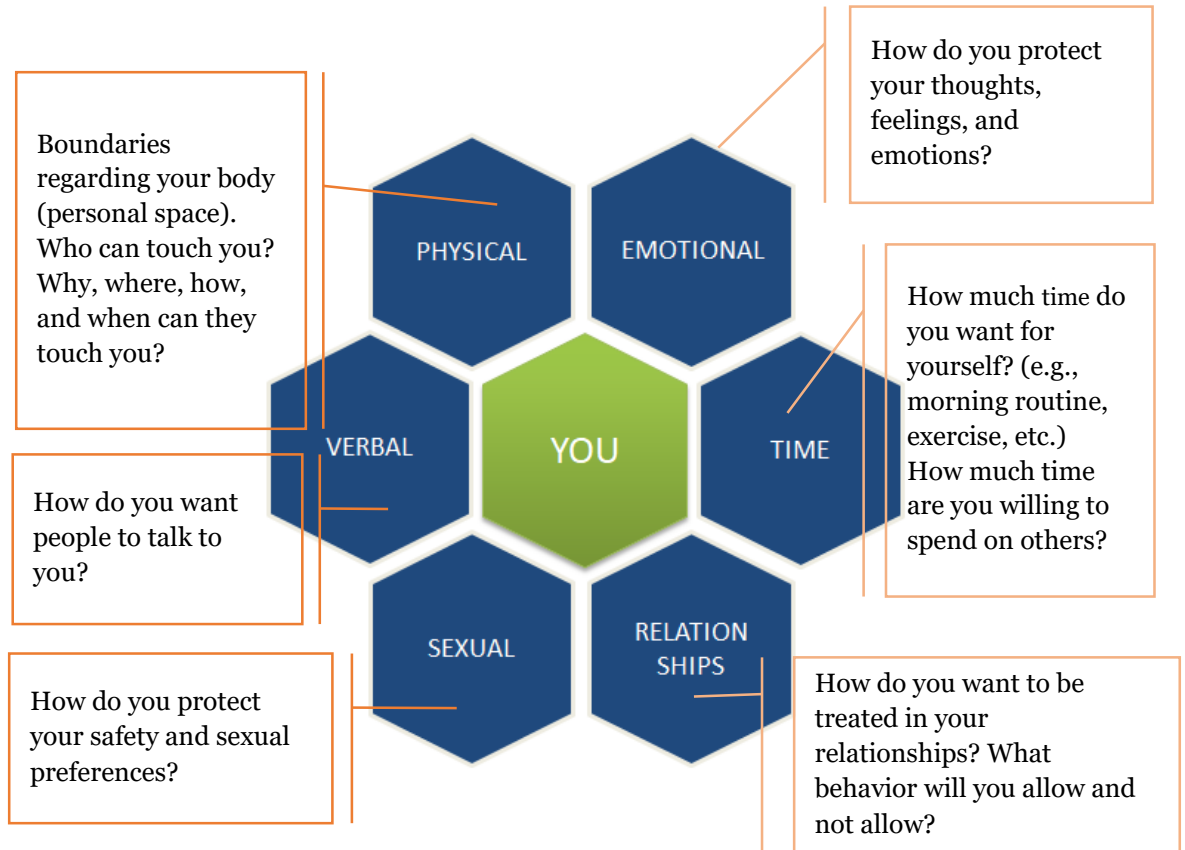
With the above in mind, please do the following exercise.

It indicates different types of boundaries and what they mean. Note there may be other boundaries you want to set that are not covered in the diagram (e.g., financial, internal spiritual, etc.) If so, then please feel free to add them to below or to a separate **My Personal Boundaries** sheet.

Remember, there are no right or wrong statements here.

All you need to do is consider what **YOU** want.

Exercise: Setting YOUR Boundaries



Write your personal boundaries below. If necessary, get another piece of paper, label it your **My Personal Boundaries** and lay it all out there.

Physical Boundaries:

- 1.)
- 2.)
- 3.)

Verbal Boundaries:

- 1.)
- 2.)
- 3.)

Sexual Boundaries:

- 1.)
- 2.)
- 3.)

Emotional Boundaries:

- 1.)
- 2.)
- 3.)

Time Boundaries:

- 1.)
- 2.)
- 3.)

Relationship Boundaries:

- 1.)
- 2.)
- 3.)

Exercise: Boundary Journaling

If you're struggling to set and maintain boundaries, then you may want to sit down and make some notes about why and with whom you're having trouble setting boundaries with.

Take note of your feelings. Is someone or something triggering these emotions? Write everything down.

Next, answer this question: *what else is true?* This will give you a new perspective on the situation, and you may begin to see the person or circumstance differently as a result. If you feel a boundary has been crossed, develop a game plan on how to address the person or issue causing your distress.

STEP 1. Pick an area in your life making you anxious now.

| | | |
|---------|---------------|---------|
| FAMILY | WORK | PARTNER |
| FRIENDS | DIGITAL WORLD | MYSELF |
| OTHER | | |

STEP 2. What are you feeling? (You can choose more than one.)

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------|--------------|
| AFRAID | ANXIOUS | HOPELESSNESS |
| STRESSED | TENSE | WORRIED |
| PANIC or IMPENDING DANGER | | OTHER |

STEP 3. Is a specific person or event making you feel this?

Your answer: _____

STEP 4: Which boundary is being violated? (You can choose more than one.)

| | | |
|----------|-----------|--------------|
| PHYSICAL | EMOTIONAL | VERBAL |
| TIME | SEXUAL | RELATIONSHIP |
| OTHER | | |

STEP 5: Describe, in the simplest of words, the current situation.

Example:

Area: Family || **Emotion:** Stressed, Tense|| **Person:** Mom
Statement: Mom called and is demanding I attend Sunday dinner and make up with my brother. My brother has told me – over lunch! – that he doesn’t value me at all and wouldn’t mind no further contact with me.

Your turn:

| |
|-------|
| _____ |
| _____ |
| _____ |
| _____ |

STEP 6. What else is true?

Example: Mom just really wants me to attend Sunday dinner because we haven't seen each other in over a month.

Your turn:

STEP 7: List down how you can re-instate your boundary.

Example: Mom, I love you, but I will not attend Sunday dinner. I need time to process how I feel about [brother] because he really hurt me. I will see you next Sunday.

Your turn:

Option #1.

Option #2.

Option #3.

| SELF-ASSESSMENT STATEMENT | Never | Sometimes | Most of the Time | All the Time |
|--|--------------|------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| I find myself unable to sit still. | | | | |
| I worry about several things at once. | | | | |
| I am restless, agitated, skittish, or irritable. | | | | |
| I am unable to feel calm or relaxed. | | | | |
| I am unable to let go of feelings of fear or anxiety. | | | | |
| I have been feeling moody and upset. | | | | |
| I feel dread or feel that something terrible may happen to me or others. | | | | |
| I have difficulty concentrating. | | | | |
| I have difficulty getting to sleep and/or staying asleep. | | | | |
| I have muscle tension. | | | | |

WORKBOOK: WEEK 3 – Learned Optimism

Exercise: The ABCDE Model

The **ABCDE Model** was developed by Martin Seligman[**Error! Bookmark not defined.**] to gauge your current mindset and to help you become more optimistic.

Adversity: What difficult situation have you experienced recently?

Example: I'm on a new diet, and it's frustrating me.

Belief: What are the thoughts running through your mind about this adversity?

Example: I just don't have willpower. I'm never going to reach my goals. It's too hard.

Consequence: What consequences and behaviors resulted from your beliefs in step 2?

Example: The thought that I don't have willpower prevented me from meal planning and prepping. (What's the point?)

Disputation: Argue or dispute your beliefs in step 2.

Example: Willpower... I don't have it, or I'm not using/cultivating it? Maybe I just do this one meal at a time. Then it won't be too hard.

Energization: How do you feel now that you've challenged your initial (automatic?) beliefs?

Example: I feel a bit pumped up again. I'll check out IG and Pinterest and look at some simple healthy recipes for inspiration. I'll make a 3-day meal plan and see how I go about that.

Now, it's your turn! Please fill out the following.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <div>A Adversity</div> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| <div>B Belief</div> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| <div>C Consequence</div> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| <div>D Disputation</div> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| <div>E Energization</div> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |

IMPORTANT: Please remember that becoming more optimistic in life is an ongoing process. Each time you face a challenge, I encourage you to go through this exercise. Repetition is vital if you want to shift away from one learned mindset to a new one.

You'll find it easier to identify your pessimistic (negative) beliefs and challenge them with continued practice. And in doing so, become more optimistic (positive) about yourself and life.

You've got this!

Exercise: The Happiness Habit

In my journey, I came across a book by *Shawn Achor* called *The Happiness Advantage*. In it is an exercise that has helped me develop the habit of thinking and building happy memories. And in doing so, I was able to adjust my way of thinking from looking at the negative to looking for the positive things in life. I hope this exercise helps you too.

Write down three (3) things that you are grateful for today.

1.)

2.)

3.)

–OR–

Write down one (1) positive event that has happened in the last 24 hours.

NEXT...

Select a positive event from either of your lists above and then do this for 30 consecutive days.

I will _____ for 30 days.

WORKBOOK: WEEK 4 – Mindfulness

Exercise: 4-7-8 Breathing Technique

This advanced breathing technique will help you slow down your mind, and it will help you bring balance to your mind and body and help reduce stress and anxiety.

Find a comfortable position.

INHALE for 4 counts through your nose.



HOLD YOUR BREATH for 7 counts...



EXHALE for 8 counts through your mouth.



Do this for 4 times.

Remember, consistency is important! So please do breathing practice 2x daily for 4 weeks.

Exercise: 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

5-4-3-2-1

Grounding technique

A calming technique that connects you with the present
by exploring the five senses.

Instructions: Sitting or standing, take a deep breath in, and complete the
following questions.

5

5 things you can see



4

4 things you can touch



3

3 things you can hear



2

2 things you can smell



1

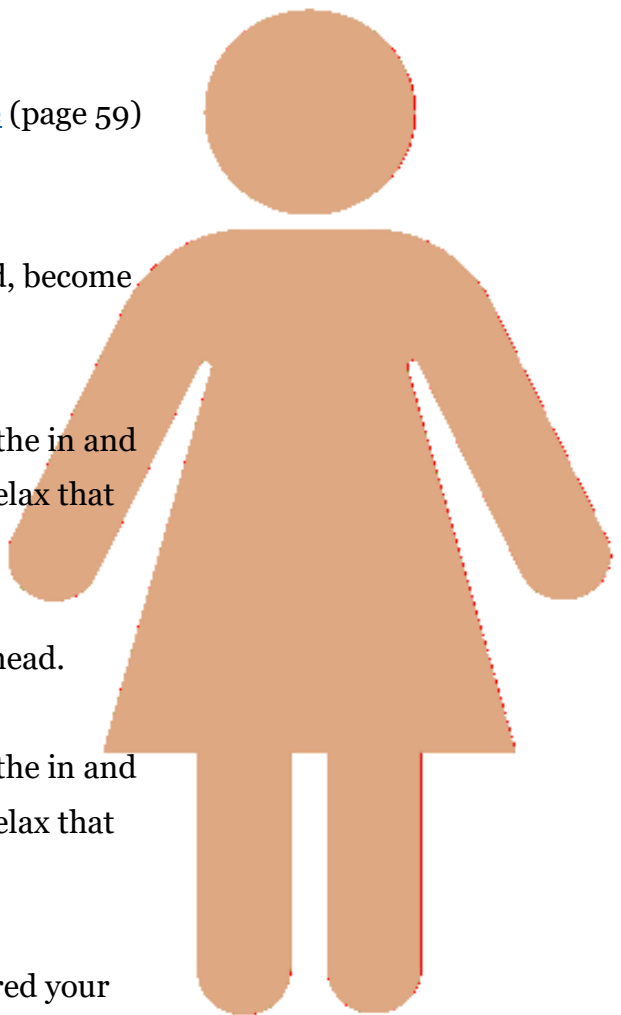
1 thing you can taste



Exercise: Mindfulness Body Scan

This mindfulness exercise will help calm your nerves, focus your thoughts, and center your being.

1. Sit or lie down, whatever is most comfortable for you.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Do the [Square Breathing exercise](#) (page 59) for 4 cycles.
4. Starting with the top of your head, become aware of your scalp.
5. Notice any areas of tension. Breathe in and as you breathe out... soften and relax that part.
6. Next, become aware of your forehead.
7. Notice any areas of tension. Breathe in and as you breathe out... soften and relax that part.
8. Continue down until you've covered your whole body.



WORKBOOK: WEEK 5 – WISE MIND

Exercise: WISE MIND

The Wise Mind will come naturally to you as you develop mindfulness. This exercise makes use of a Breathing technique to arrive at Wise Mind.

1. Find a comfortable position.
2. Using the [Square Breathing](#) technique:
 - a. Breathe in while saying the word “Wise” to yourself. Focus all your attention on that word.
 - b. Hold your breath.
 - c. Exhale while saying the word “Mind” to yourself. Focus all your attention on that word.
3. Continue until you sense that you’ve successfully arrived at Wise Mind.



WORKBOOK: Week 6 – Interpersonal Effectiveness

Exercise: D.E.A.R.M.A.N.

The D.E.A.R.M.A.N. exercise helps you develop the skill of asking for something respectfully and effectively, which builds and maintains relationships, regardless of the outcome of your request.

Describe the situation simply. Stick to the facts. Say exactly what you're reacting to.

Example: You said you would be home for dinner by 7 PM.

Your turn: _____

Express your thoughts or feelings about the situation. Use "I" statements.

Example: I feel taken for granted when you don't tell me you'll be late.

Your turn: _____

Assert your position respectfully but not in an aggressive manner.

Example: I would really like it if you call me when you're going to be late for dinner.

Your turn: _____

Reinforce (reward) when you get what you want or need.

Example: Thank you, babe. I would really feel so much better if you did that.

Your turn: _____

Mindful. Stay focused. Don't worry about the past or the future. Just stay on topic.

Example: I would like to hear that you understand where I'm coming from.

Your turn: _____

Appear confident. Show confident verbal and non-verbal cues. Do not apologize.

Example: (Sit or stand up straight. Maintain eye contact. Use a confident tone of voice.) I hope I'm getting across to you because my feelings won't change.

Your turn: _____

Negotiate - If the outcome you want doesn't appear to be within reach, negotiate.

Example: How about you just text me if you're running late?

Your turn: _____

Exercise: G.I.V.E.

Relationships aren't only about getting what we need. They're also about considering the needs and wants of the other person. The G.I.V.E exercise will help you achieve relationship effectiveness by fostering positive interactions.

Gentle. Approach with gentleness. Don't attack, threaten or express judgment during your interactions. The best communication happens when neither party feels defensive.

What's your request?

Interested. Listen to the other person without interrupting. Expressions of interest can be verbal (e.g., ok, uh-huh, etc.) or non-verbal (e.g., keeping eye contact, not fidgeting or looking at your phone, etc.)

What's YOUR way of showing interest?

Validate. Confirm you hear the other person by echoing their thoughts and emotions back to them. You might say, *"I understand this is frustrating for you too. I'm not happy you feel that way at all."*

What do you want to say back?

Easy Manner. Throughout the conversation, present yourself as relaxed and comfortable. Act light-hearted and have an easy attitude. (Message to the other person: you're not difficult to deal with.)

How do you convey friendliness to others?

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Exercise: F.A.S.T.

Sometimes, in relationships, you might betray your own values and beliefs to receive approval or get what you want. The F.A.S.T. exercise below will help you achieve self-respect effectiveness.

Fair. Be reasonable. Respect your rights and that of others. Avoid being emotional and dramatic outbursts. Stick to the facts.

What's a better way of saying, "You're not hearing me!"

(No) **A**pologies. Don't apologize for making a request, voicing an opinion, or disagreeing. The only time to apologize is if you've done something wrong.

What's a better way of saying, "I'm sorry I feel this way."

Stick to your values. Stand up for what you believe in. Don't compromise your values just to be liked or to get what you want.

List down 3 things you will not compromise on.

1.)

2.)

3.)

Be **T**ruthful. Be honest and don't lie, exaggerate or act helpless to get what you want.

Think about an incident in the past where you may not have been truthful.

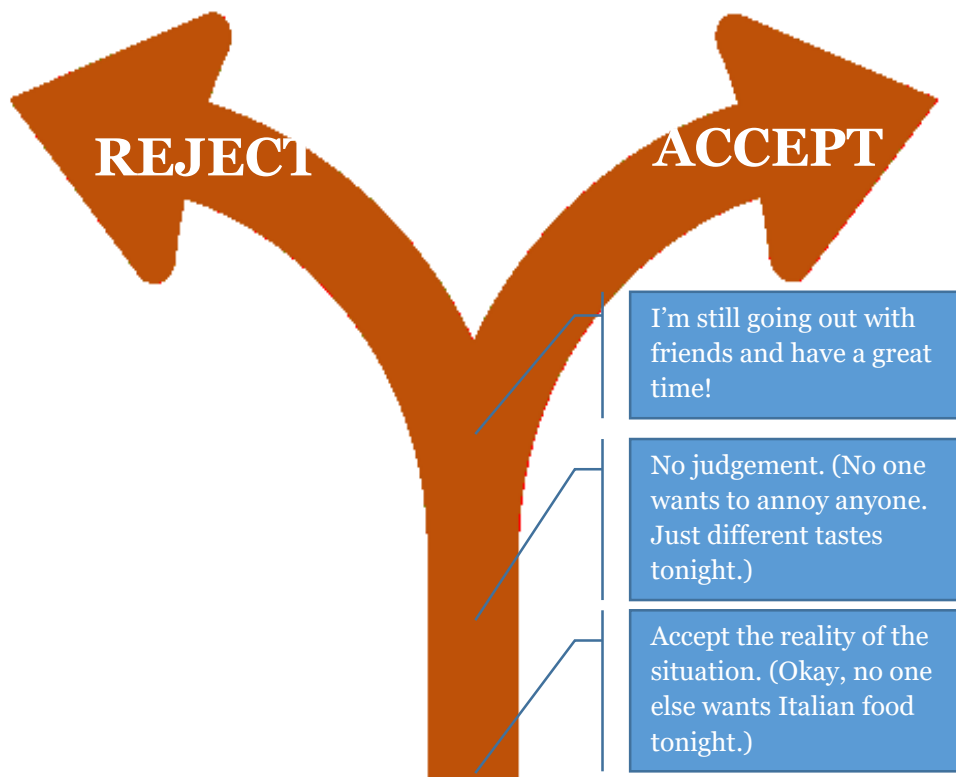
What you said/did....

What you should have said/done...

WORKBOOK: Week 7 – Distress Tolerance

Exercise: Turning the Mind

Turning the Mind to acceptance needs constant practice. When we don't get our way, we tend to reject the situation instead of trying to accept it. This exercise is all about trying, over and over and over again, to go in the direction of acceptance.



UPSETTING SITUATION

What situation or event is stressing you out right now?

Example: First time to eat out in weeks and my friends want to go to a Chinese restaurant while I want Italian food.

Your turn:

Exercise: Radical Acceptance Worksheet

Sometimes you run into a problem that is simply out of your control. It can be easy to think, *'this isn't fair'*, even though that way does not help. Radical acceptance refers to a healthier way of thinking. Instead of focusing on what you want to be different, you will recognize and accept the problem or situation AS IS.

Radical acceptance is not the same as accepting or condoning something. Accepting problems out of your control will lead to less anxiety, anger, and sadness when dealing with them.

SITUATION - Describe a stressful or negative situation.

Example: I wasn't selected for a job I feel I was the best candidate for.

TYPICAL THINKING - Write down your thoughts and feelings.

Example: This isn't fair! I did and said everything right. They can't do this to me.

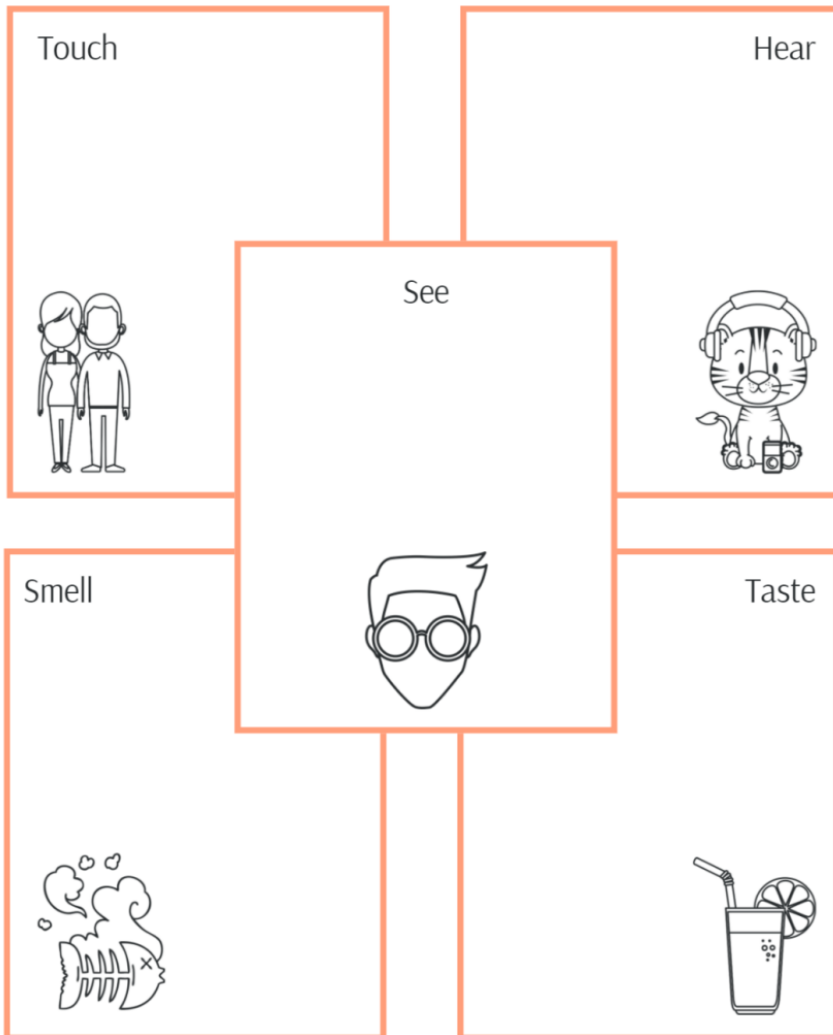
RADICAL ACCEPTANCE - Write down a statement of acceptance.

Example: This is frustrating, but I ACCEPT they felt someone else would be a good fit.

Exercise: Self-Sooth with 5 Senses

Self-Sooth with 5 Senses

Find a pleasurable way to engage each of your five senses. Doing so will distract you from what is making you feel anxious.
(i.e., Go for a walk somewhere and pay attention to what you see)



Exercise: A.C.C.E.P.T.S.

Negative emotions will usually pass or at least lessen in intensity over time. To help speed up this process, it can help if you can DISTRACT YOURSELF until the emotions subside. This is what the following exercise is all about.

ACTIVITIES: Engage in activities that require thought and concentration.

Example: gardening, baking, exercising, talking to my best friend

Your list:

CONTRIBUTING: Focus on someone other than yourself. Volunteer or do a good deed.

Example: create a care package for someone, call mom

Your list:

COMPARISONS: Look at your situation compared to something worse.

Remember a time when you were in (more) pain.

Example: when my father died

Your list:

EMOTIONS: Do something that will create the opposite emotion you feel right now.

Example: swimming, dancing, watching funny YouTube videos

Your list:

PUSHING AWAY: Push negative thoughts out of your mind. Refuse to think about a situation until a better time.

Example: [square breathing](#), watch a romantic-comedy film

Your list:

THOUGHTS: Replace negative, worrying thoughts with activities that keep your mind occupied.

Example: say a prayer, solve a Sudoku puzzle

Your list:

SENSATIONS: Find safe physical sensations to distract you from negative emotions.

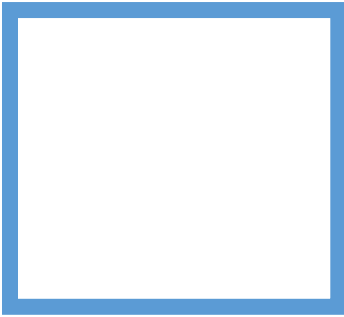
Example: [Five Senses exercise \(page 79\)](#)

Your list:

WORKBOOK: Week 8 – Emotion Regulation


Exercise: Opposite Action for Overwhelming Emotions

EVENT



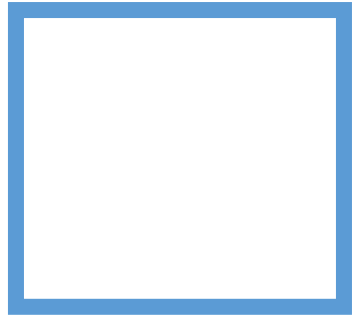
Example: I have a job interview.

EMOTION



Example: I'm afraid I'll make a fool of myself during the interview.

NATURAL



Example: Not show up for interview.



YES



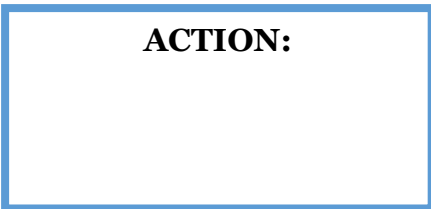
FOLLOWED



NO

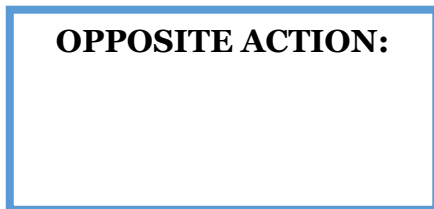


ACTION:



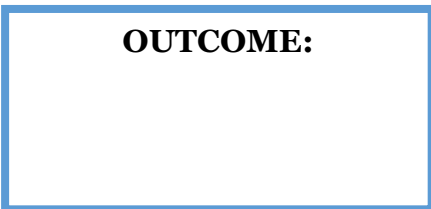
Example: I don't show up.

OPPOSITE ACTION:



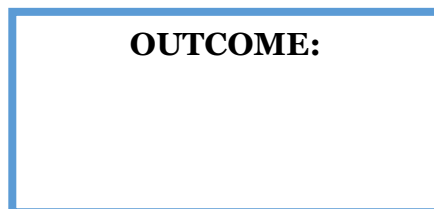
Example: I show up.

OUTCOME:



Example: I don't get the job.

OUTCOME:



Example: I show up; get the job I like and a better salary too!

Exercise: Check the Facts

Check The Facts

Emotion Regulation Skill

Helping me make sense of a situation where I may have overreacted

Maybe you can look back on your life and think of a few situations where you overreacted. Or you might notice that something once felt like a big deal when it was really unimportant. You can *check the facts* in the moment to reduce the intensity of these extreme emotions. Ask yourself the following questions to check the facts:

What event triggered my emotion?

What interpretations or assumptions am I making about the event?

Does my emotion and its intensity match the *facts* of the situation?
Or does it just match my assumptions of the situation?



Your body and mind are closely linked, and the health of one directly affects the other. An unhealthy body will make it difficult to manage your emotions. The acronym P.L.E.A.S.E. can be used to help you remember important aspects of this connection.

Ways I Can Treat **Physical** Illness (hunger, fatigue)

Ways I can Eat Healthy

Ways I can Avoid Mood-Altering Drugs (Caffeine, Alcohol)

Ways I Can Make Sure I Sleep Well

Ways I Can Make Sure I Exercise

WORKBOOK: WEEK 9-12 - DBT for Your Healing

WEEK 9 – Mindfulness

To recap, please go back to the **Mindfulness** exercises on page **16**. On this page is another exercise to help you cultivate mindfulness in your life: **The Spiral Staircase**.

1. Find a comfortable position.
Stand up, sit down or lie down.
2. Imagine a spiral staircase within you.
3. Now, starting at the top, slowly descend the staircase, going deeper and deeper within yourself with each step.
4. Take note of what you're feeling with each step.
5. There is no rush. Do not push yourself any further than you want to go.
6. Take note of the silence.
7. Concentrate your attention on the center of your being as you reach it.



WEEK 10 – Interpersonal Effectiveness

To recap, please go back to the **Interpersonal Effectiveness** exercises on page 21.

One of the important Interpersonal Effectiveness skills to develop is **Objective Effectiveness**, which is **your ability to ask and get what you want from others or in any given situation.**

Often, we get in our own way and don't dare to ask for what we want because of certain 'myths' or ideas in our heads. For example, you don't want to go against your friends because you think they won't like you anymore if you say 'no'. This is a myth. True friends will still like you even if you say 'no' to them every now and then.

So the following exercise is called **Challenging Myths**. For each myth, write a challenging statement that makes sense to you.

Example:

Myth: *I don't deserve to have what I want or require.*

Challenge:

Everyone deserves to be happy. I deserve to be happy. And to be happy means, I get my way or get to do what I want to do.

Your Turn...

Myth: I don't deserve to have what I want or require.

Challenge:

Myth: If I ask for something, I'm a needy person.

Challenge:

Myth: Before I make a request, I need to know whether or not the person will say yes.

Challenge:

Myth: People will get angry with me if I say 'no'.

Challenge:

Myth: If someone tells me 'no', they don't like me.

Challenge:

Myth: Asking for something is selfish.

Challenge:

Myth: If I can't solve something or need help, I must be incompetent.

Challenge:

Myth: It's not important if I don't have what I want or need; I don't really care.

Challenge:

Myth: No one cares about what I want or need.

Challenge:

WEEK 11 – Distress Tolerance

To recap, please go back to the Distress Tolerance exercises on page 27. Another exercise to help you when overcome with extreme emotions is this: **TIPP**.



Temperature: Calm down by subjecting your face to cold temperature. You can run the tap and splash your face with cold water, stick your head for a few seconds in the fridge, or simply step outside during cold weather.



Intense Exercise: Calm down your body by engaging in strenuous exercise. Sometimes, just a quick 7-minute routine will do. If not, just go on until you feel your emotions subsiding.



Paced Breathing: Thoughts and emotions racing? Slow down by breathing in slowly, and then exhaling even slower (e.g., breathe in for 4 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds).



Paired Muscle Relaxation: Do this at the same time you do Paced Breathing above. As you breathe in, slowly tense your body muscles (not to the point of cramping!), and then as you breathe out, release all that muscle tension and say to yourself, 'RELAX'.

WEEK 12 – Emotion Regulation

To recap, please go back to the Emotion Regulation exercises on page 33.

One of the ways to cultivate your Emotion Regulation skills is to reduce your vulnerability to negative feelings by increasing your arsenal of positive feelings. The following exercise is called **Building Positive Emotions**, and it will help you define what makes you positive and happy and encourage you to do them more often.

Build Positive Experiences NOW

List 10 things that make you happy. It can be *any* event such as riding your bicycle, taking care of your plants, singing, etc.

1.)
2.)
3.)
4.)
5.)
6.)
7.)
8.)
9.)
- 10.)

Select one (ANY one) from the above list and then commit to doing it each day. It doesn't matter what you choose and how long you want to do it. The goal is to do it EVERY SINGLE DAY.

Example:

I choose: yoga

I will practice yoga every day for 30 minutes in the morning.

Your turn:

I choose: _____

I will _____ every day for _____.

Be Mindful of Positive Experiences

Whenever you do the event you chose above, give it your FULL ATTENTION. No multi-tasking, and don't do anything else. In fact, if possible, STOP what you're doing and just absorb the moment. Just experience the positive event.

Today, I felt happy when I:

(Example: Spent time in the kitchen cooking my favorite childhood dish.)

These are the words that describe that event for me:

(Example: relaxed, grateful, in the zone, happy, nostalgic, carefree)

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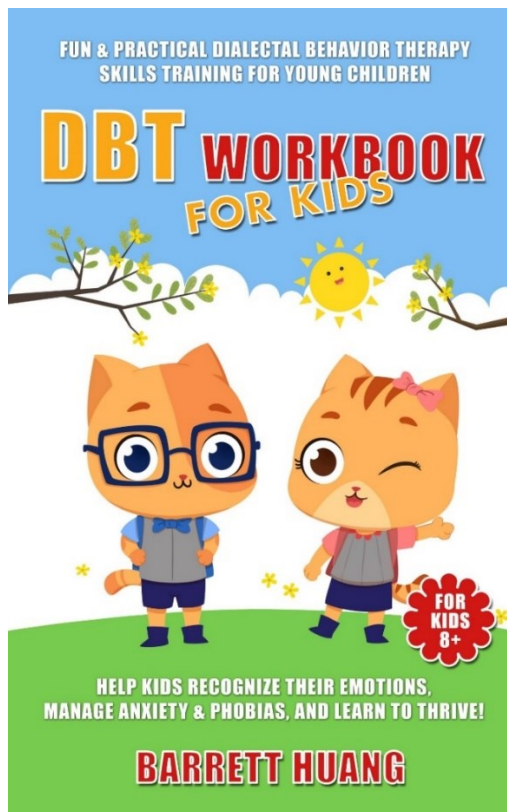
THANK YOU!

Further Reading

DBT Workbook For Kids:

Fun & Practical Dialectal Behavior Therapy Skills Training For Children

Help Kids Recognize Their Emotions, Manage Anxiety & Phobias, and Learn To Thrive!



[Get it here](#)

