

Beating Psychological Distress Workbook



Designed and produced by the Involvement, Recovery and Wellness Centre

Please contact 01625 505647 for further information

Helping people to be **the best they can be**



References

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Welcome

We're glad you're here

This workbook can be used on its own, within our workshops, or to refresh your skills after completing our Psychological Distress workshop. It can be completed on your own or with someone you trust such as a healthcare professional, friend or family member.

If you feel things are getting worse when you are using this workbook, please get in touch with your mental health team or your GP. If you feel you are in crisis, please call the CWP crisis line number which is 0800 145 6485 (for residents of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Wirral, of all ages).



This workbook is advanced and requires more focus and concentration than others. It will also take longer than other workbooks to understand and complete. Please talk to a member of the team if you are not sure about what this means for you.

Please note it is only intended as an introduction to healthy coping techniques used in Dialectical Behavioural Therapy from a psycho-educational perspective.



This workbook's objectives are to gain an overview of:

- What psychological distress is
- How it can affect overall well-being
- Introduction to Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) coping strategies
- Practice of DBT coping skills to help manage mental distress

What is Psychological Distress?

Psychological distress is a general term used to describe unpleasant feelings or emotions that impact upon our level of functioning. Psychological distress can result in negative views of the environment, others, and the self.

When we feel upset or distressed we can react automatically without thinking about the consequences and often we end up using unhealthy or unhelpful coping strategies. We can then feel bad after using them and think it makes us bad that we are using them. In this workbook we will work towards learning new and more healthy or beneficial techniques to aid in our recovery and to help prevent relapse.



Signs of Psychological Distress

Psychological distress looks different for everyone. Below and on the next page are some ideas of what some signs are when people are distressed.

- Anger Management Problems
- Feelings of Desperation and Hopelessness
- Weight loss/gain
- Physical Pain
- Self Harming Behaviours
- Obsessive Thoughts or Compulsions
- Alcohol / Drug Use



Signs of Psychological Distress

- Hallucinations and/or Delusions
- Reckless Behaviour—Spending too much money
- Strange or unusual sensations or behaviour
- Decreased pleasure in sexual activity
- Heart Palpitations / Rapid breathing

Can you think of any of your own?

Causes of Psychological Distress

Psychological distress happens when you are faced with stressors that you are unable to cope with. See if you can identify any of your own stressors in any of the categories below.

- Traumatic experiences e.g. domestic violence, rape, abuse

- Major life events, e.g. divorce, moving home, having a baby

- Everyday stressors i.e. family conflict, relationship issues, work stress

- Health problems e.g. Fibromyalgia, COPD, chronic pain

- Negative thinking styles e.g. catastrophising, black and white thinking, see further examples on page 35

- Genetics or family history of mental ill health

Coping with Psychological Distress

When we are faced with extreme distress, it can be natural to want to get rid of it as quickly as possible. So sometimes what we can end up doing is using a strategy that is really quick and effective, but that might not help us in the long run. Have a look at the table below at some examples of different strategies.

Adaptive (helpful)	Maladaptive (unhelpful)
Healthy or beneficial Coping Techniques: Hobbies, Exercise, Mindfulness, WRAP Screaming into a pillow etc.	Unhealthy or Harmful Coping Techniques: Tantrums, Over-eating, Self-harm, Exercising too much, Alcohol, Smoking etc.

They are called maladaptive **not because you are bad for using them**, but because generally they cause you more harm in the long run than they cause benefit in the short term. For example if you are very distressed and drink to cope with that, you will end up with a hangover the next morning, maybe with feelings of shame, maybe you will have acted in uninhibited or aggressive ways, depending on your reaction to alcohol and you will have harmed your body in the process. It is completely understandable however that you would want to use that strategy, considering the level of distress you would have been facing. We are here to learn strategies that can replace those and help you to cope with considerable distress in a healthier way.

Can you add any of your own coping techniques to the table above?

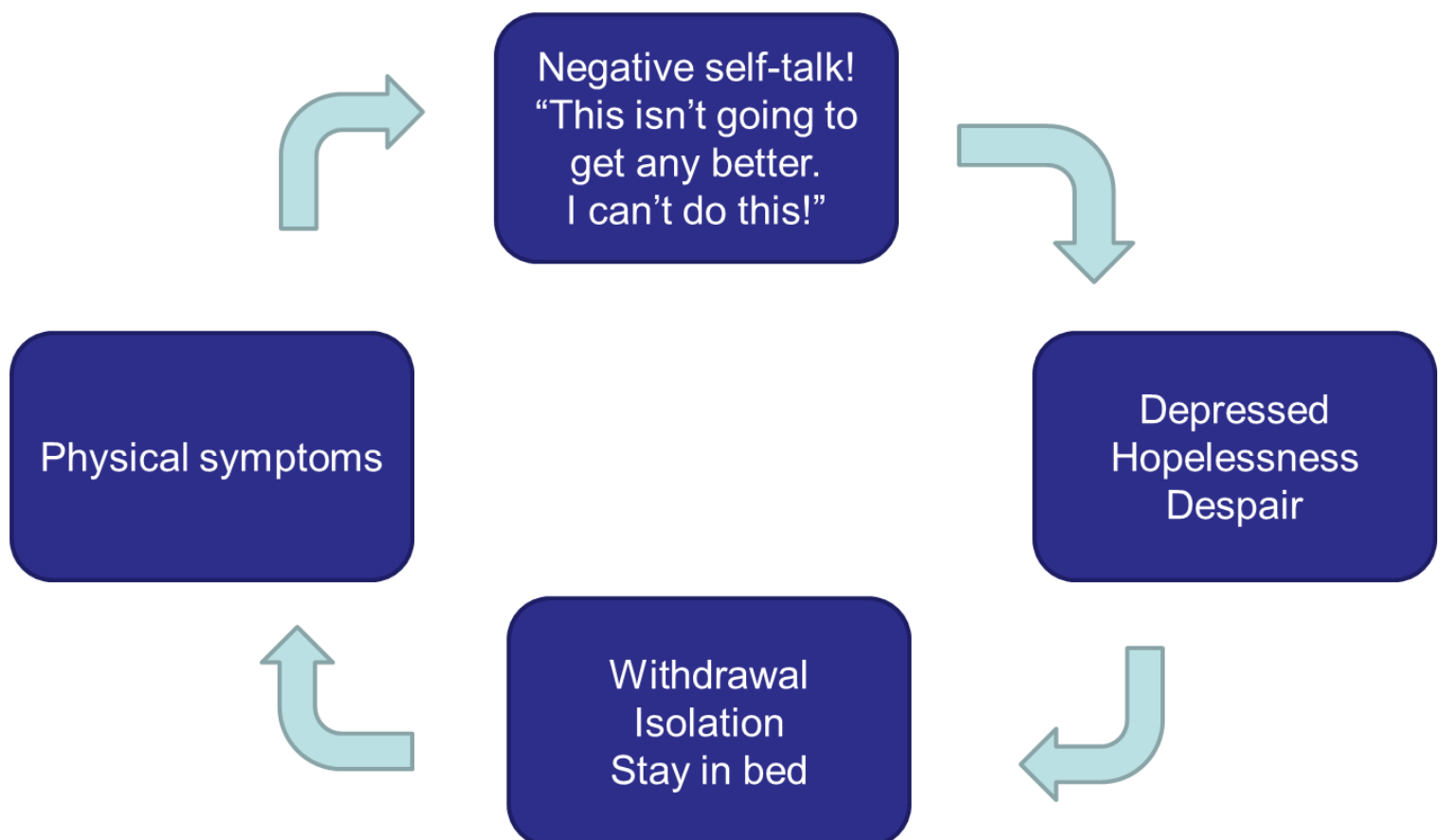
Negative Feedback Loop

When the brain gets used to feeling a certain way, it starts going there more and more, because it's familiar and easy to get to. This is what's called a "negative feedback loop".

In order to cope with their distress, most people avoid the trigger. Though avoidance helps in the immediate moment, it makes anxiety worse in the long term. Why?

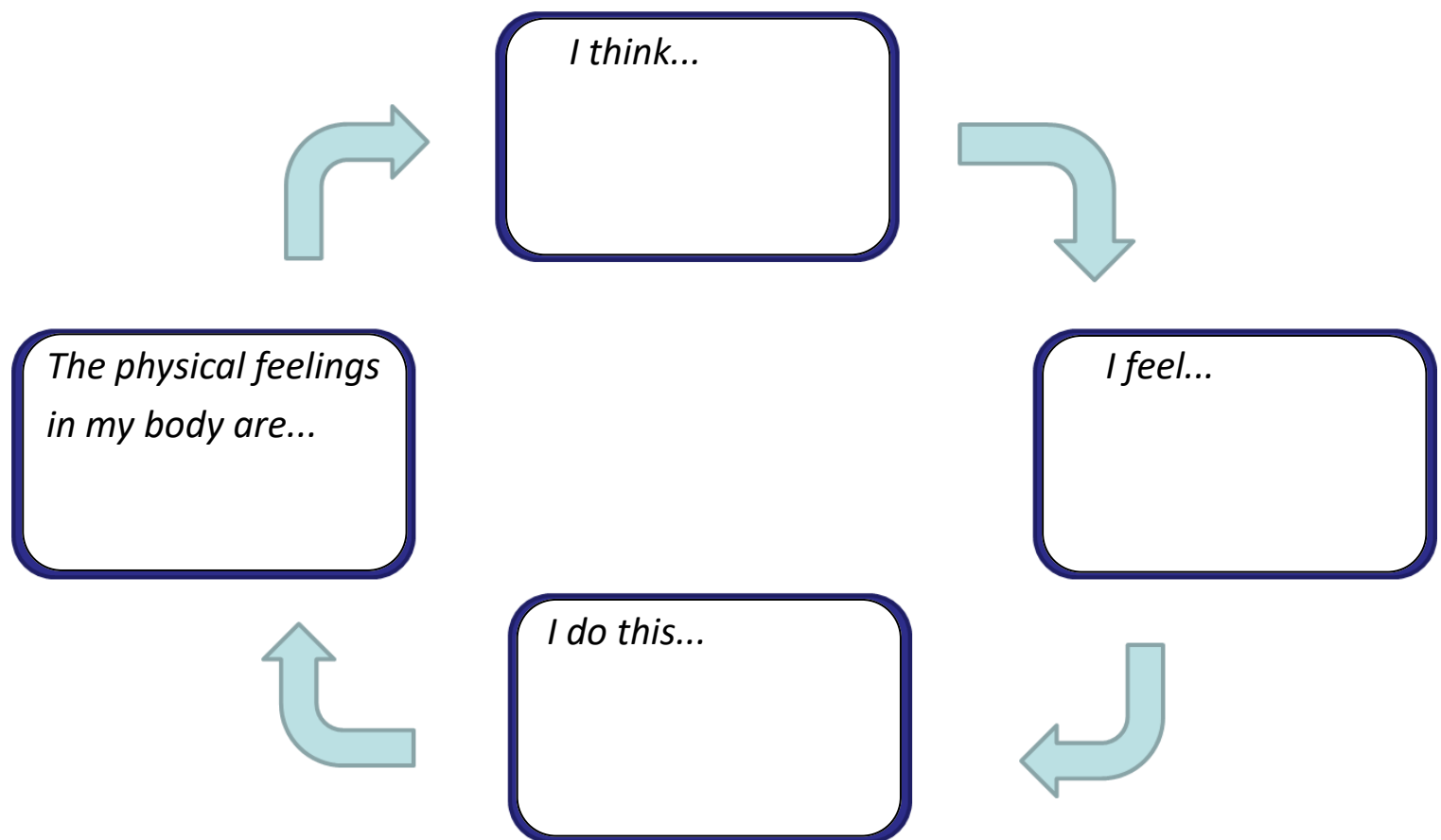
Two reasons:

- 1) It reinforces your belief that you're helpless to deal with it
- 2) you don't get positive experiences as basis for further success



Negative Feedback Loop

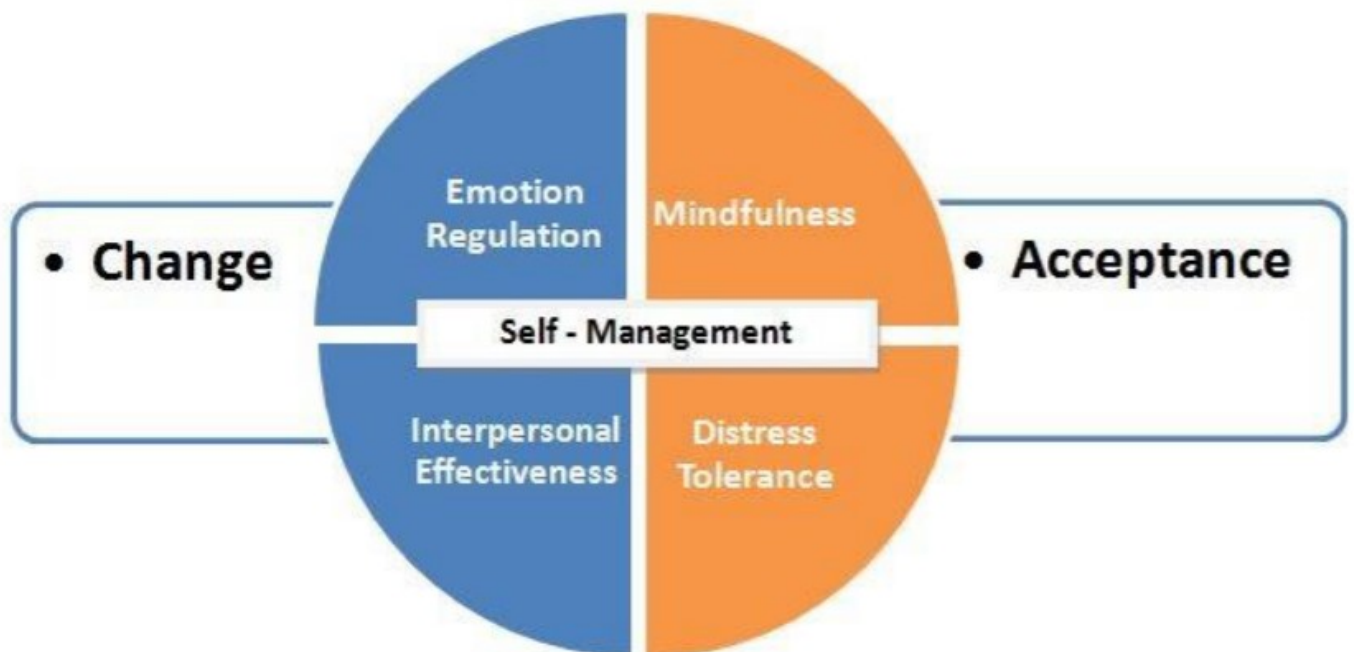
Can you think of your own negative feedback loop for when you are feeling distressed? Don't worry if you can't complete all of the boxes yet. You can visit this page again later.



What is DBT?

Dialectical Behavioural Therapy was developed by Marsha Linehan for people who struggle with Borderline Personality Disorder, but it can also be used for other mental health conditions in which people struggle with difficult emotions and cope with this by harming themselves, for example through self-harm, eating disorders or substance abuse.

The diagram below can be a way of explaining what DBT covers. At the core of it is self-management, or learning what you can do to help yourself with your condition. This doesn't mean doing everything on your own—it also means knowing when to ask for more help.



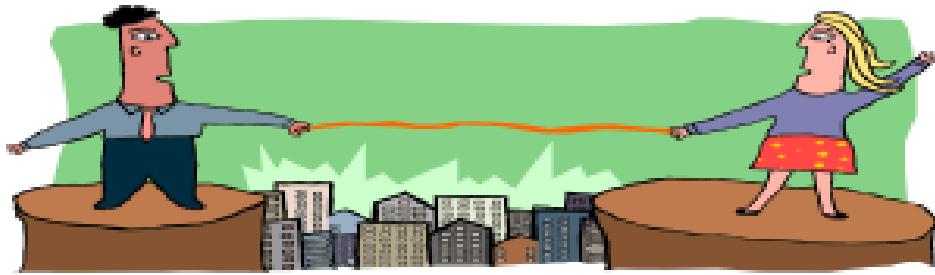
What is DBT?

The 4 core themes of DBT are emotion regulation (managing emotions), interpersonal effectiveness (otherwise known as communication skills), distress tolerance and mindfulness. This booklet contains some techniques from each of these areas that you can try for yourself and choose which work for you.

On either side of the diagram, you can see “acceptance” and “change”. In DBT there is a term called dialectics, which means that two things that seem the opposite of the other can be true. One of the most important dialectics of DBT is that you can accept yourself and change yourself at the same time. So you can accept that you are human and that you are doing your best, but that you can also change and learn how to do things even better in the future.

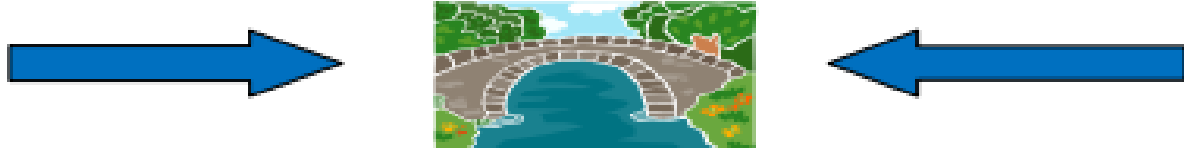


How to think dialectically



Creating the Bridge to Middle Ground

How to think and act dialectically



- Move away from "either – or" thinking to "both – and" thinking. Avoid extreme words: "always", "shoulds", "never", "you make me..."
- Practice looking at different sides of a situation and alternative points of view. Find that kernel of truth in each view.
- Remember, there is often no absolute truth. Truth can be found in both sides.
- Other views can be valid even if you don't like or agree with them.
- Don't stand on one side or the other, try to find a middle way between the tension or conflict.
- Practice balancing **acceptance** with **change** by saying things like "This is really hard for me, and I am going to keep trying." "I am doing the best I can, and I am going to try harder".
- Practice sitting with feelings and notice feeling more than one emotion. An example might be: Loving someone and being angry at them at the same time.

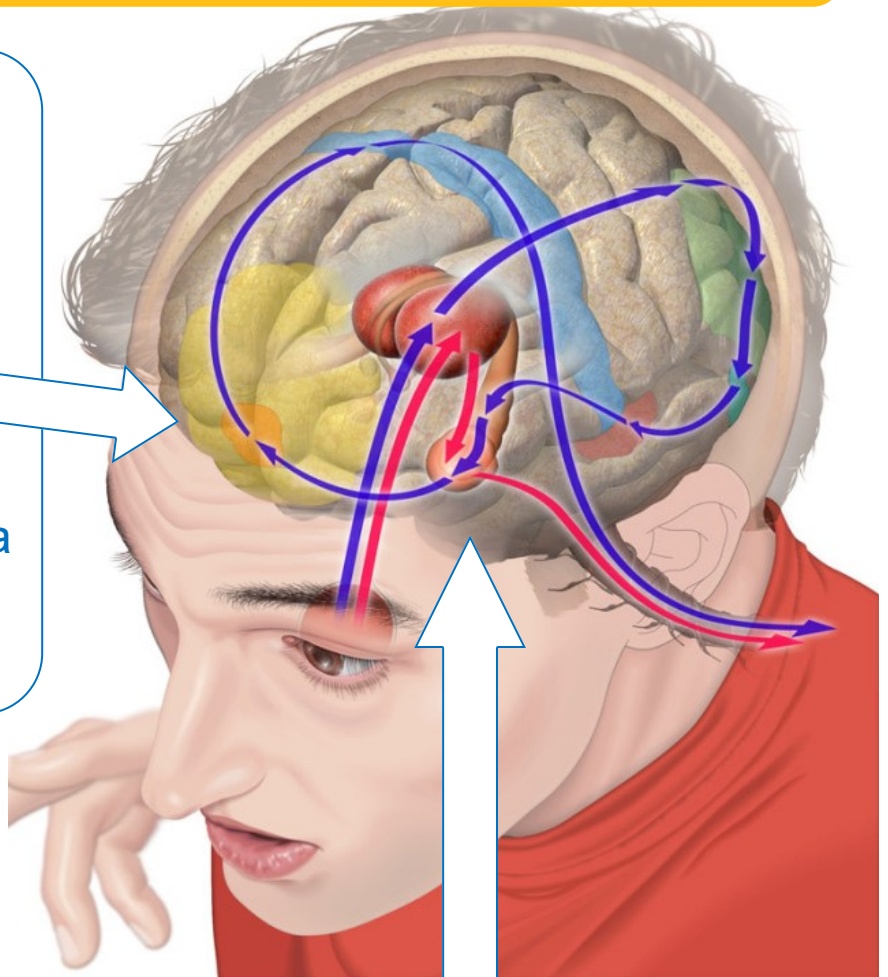
What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the skill that anyone can learn of gently training your attention and brain on the present moment, without judgment, to things just as they are

Why do it?

Regular repeated mindfulness, attention and brain training can:

Improve your mood, concentration and decision making and your ability to control emotions and behaviour by improving your brain's prefrontal cortex, insula and hippocampus involved in this



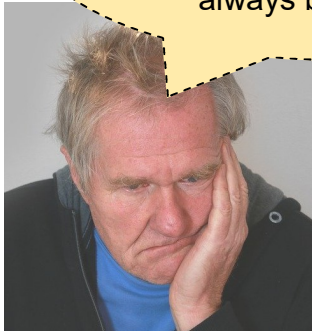
Paying attention to how you are feeling, what you are thinking and how you are behaving is a key part of DBT.

Reduce stress, panic, distress, anger, urges to attack or run away – our **'fight and flight'** response, due to shrinking the part of your brain involved in this; the amygdala

Ways you can see your thoughts differently

'It is enormously liberating to realise that thoughts are just thoughts that come and go and not facts, even the ones that say they are because they come with strong feelings ! ' ^{2,24}

"What I think is true, I am a bad, angry, or anxious person, it doesn't matter what you say or what I do I will always be like this"



"At the moment I have an angry or anxious mind, so I need to do something to calm myself, things will look different tomorrow."



Stop and take a breathing space when you notice your thoughts keep repeating themselves, keep going round and round in your mind, are constantly negative, difficult, or upsetting then try looking at your thoughts in the following ways:

1. **Thoughts are not facts** - they may feel like the 'truth' because they feel so powerful and overwhelming at times and are accompanied by strong feelings but they are a representation of your way of looking at things at any one moment of time.
2. **Watch the thought**, without feeling you have to follow it, avoid it, suppress it, get involved in it, react to it you may find that they move on eventually in their own time.
3. **Write it down or do some drawings that reflect how you feel**
4. **Label the thoughts**, e.g. this is the voice of grief talking, or the voice of depression, stress, anger, anxiety, and distress.
5. **Ask yourself with a non judgmental mind :**
 - Is this a natural reaction to a challenging situation or event?
 - Is this confusing thoughts with fact ? Or jumping to conclusions?
 - Is this getting caught up in harsh judgment or myself or others?
 - Is this expecting things to be other than they are?
 - Is this treating myself harder than I would if a friend was troubled by the same thoughts and had gone through what I have gone through?

10 minute sitting relaxation mediation

Try this meditation regularly and often for at least 2 weeks to reduce mind and body states of stress and anxiety

1. Settle into a comfortable sitting position, sit with your back as straight as possible in a dignified and comfortable posture, with an intention to be present and awake. If on a chair, place your feet flat on the floor, with your legs uncrossed and gently close your eyes.
2. Bring your awareness to any physical sensations you may be having right now in your body, this might be focussing your attention on the sensations of touch and pressure in your body where it is making contact with the floor, seat or cushion. Spend a minute noticing what you feel in this part of your body.
3. Now bring your awareness to the changing physical sensations in your lower tummy as the breath moves in and out of your body.
4. Focus your awareness on the sensations of the slight stretching as your tummy wall rises with each in breath and of the gentle release as your tummy wall falls with each outbreath. As best you can, keep your attention on the changing sensations in your tummy all the way through as the breath enters your body on the in breath and all the way through as the breath leaves your body with the outbreath. Perhaps try imagining that your tummy is a balloon that keeps getting blown up with each breath you take and then goes down with time you breathe out.
5. There is no need to try to control your breathing in any way—simply let the breath breathe itself naturally as your body knows how to do this on its own as it has been breathing all by itself for every day of your life without you ever having to think about it. Trust in your body as it can breathe for itself.
6. As best you can, simply sit with what you are experiencing right now and allow it, do not try to resist it, just sit with it. There is no particular state you are supposed to be achieving, whatever you are feeling right now in this moment is right as it is what you are experiencing. As best you can, simply allow your

10 minute sitting relaxation mediation

7. Sooner or later, your mind will wander away from the focus of your breath going in and out of your tummy to perhaps thinking about other things, replaying images and conversations, remembering things from the past or perhaps thinking of things that may happen in the future. This is perfectly okay — as this is what minds do. When you notice that your attention is no longer on the breath, gently congratulate yourself — as you have noticed that you are no longer in the present moment and that your mind has wandered away. You may want to take note briefly of where your mind has been, and think ah that's what my mind keeps thinking about. Then gently return your attention back to focusing on your breath and on the changing physical sensations in your tummy. Starting afresh a new intention to keep your attention for as long as you can on the your tummy as and how it changes as you breathe in and as you breathe out.
8. No matter how often you notice that your mind has wandered, as best you can, congratulate yourself each time on noticing that it has wandered and then gently bring your attention back to the breath and again focus your attention on the changing physical sensations that come with each in breath and outbreath.
9. As best you can, bring a quality of kindness to yourself, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of the mind as opportunities to be able to see your thoughts more clearly and understand what travels through your mind a bit better. And also practise being patient with yourself, as your mind will repeatedly wander and by trying to patiently sit, as best you can, and keep trying to bring your attention back to your body you are training yourself in the skill of mindfulness and being in the moment.
10. Continue with the practice for 10 minutes or longer if you wish, perhaps reminding yourself from time to time that the intention is simply to be aware of your experience in each moment, and to try to keep bringing your mind back

You may find on some days your mind might be very busy and hard to train, often called a 'wild mind' , do not give up just keep trying, you may find your mind is easier to work with on other days.

When overwhelmed with emotions & thoughts use these grounding mindfulness strategies to bring your attention back to the present moment

Practise these regularly when you are calmer, so when you next get overwhelmed with powerful emotions and thoughts your brain will have been well trained and will more easily be brought back into the here and now.

Mindfulness

Can be used when you feel anxious, angry, uneasy, sad, content, happy, joyful, grateful...

- 5 Things you can see
- 4 Things you can hear
- 3 Things you can feel
- 2 Things you can smell
- 1 DEEP BREATH



- S - Stop**
- T - Take a moment**
- O - Observe**
- P - Pull Back - Put in Some Perspective**
- P - Practice What Works**
- Proceed**

Mindfulness I Spy

Something that is:

- | | |
|----------|--------------|
| 1. Heavy | 7. Light |
| 2. White | 8. Colourful |
| 3. Old | 9. New |
| 4. Noisy | 10. Quiet |
| 5. Cold | 11. Hot |
| 6. Big | 12. Tiny |

Mindfulness Treasure Hunt

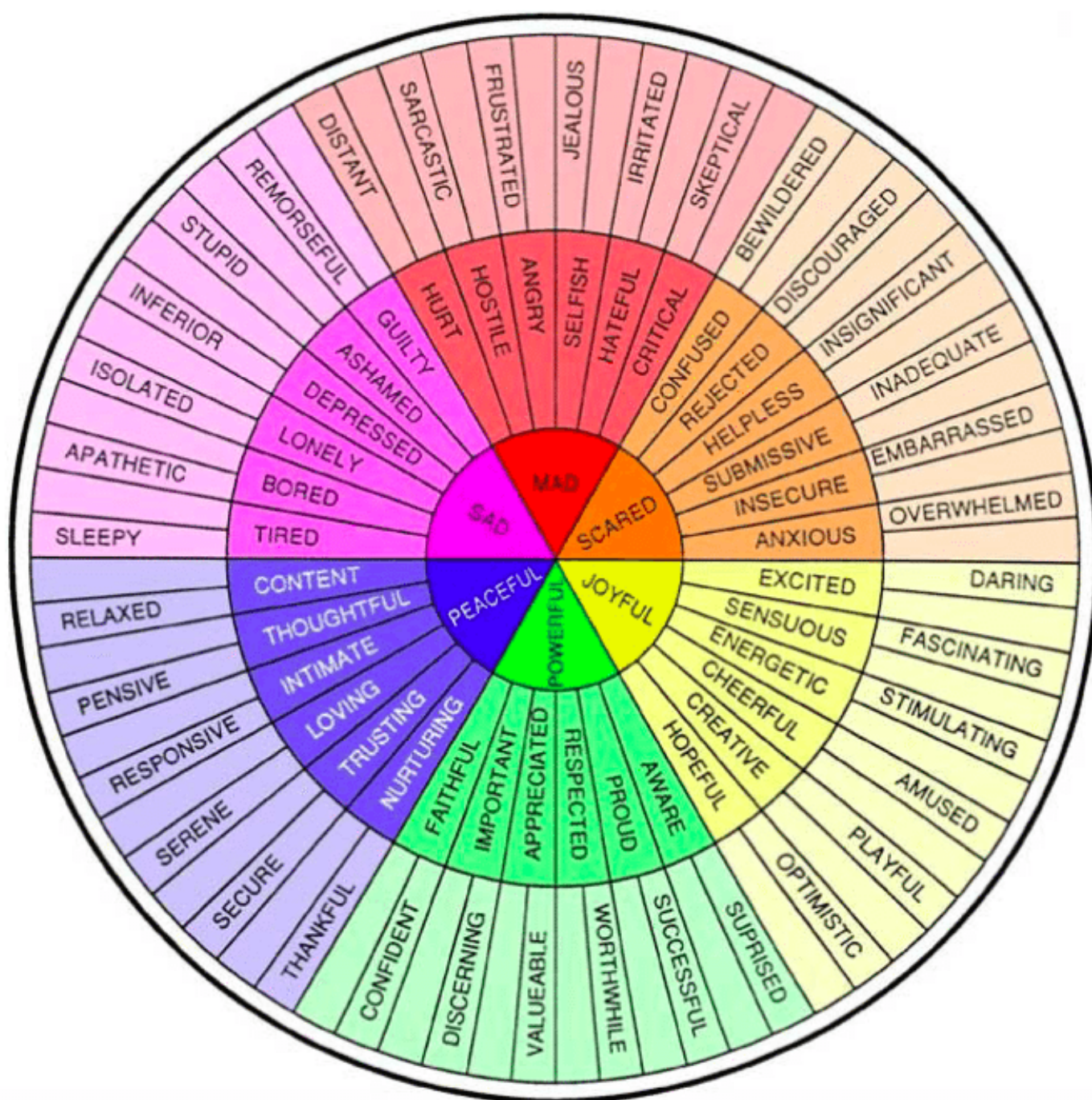
Look for something that:

- ⇒ is useful or helpful
- ⇒ is special or pretty
- ⇒ makes someone smile
- ⇒ you are grateful for
- ⇒ You think is treasure

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space lies our freedom to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom". Viktor Frankl.

Managing Emotions

Now that you have tried some mindfulness, try to pay attention to your emotions. This can be really difficult and sometimes a tool like the emotions wheel below can help. Being able to identify how you feel is an important skill.



Managing Emotions

It is important to understand when looking at emotions that there are no emotions that are good or bad. You might feel lots of emotions at once, or you might feel very little. They might change quickly or slowly. The trick here is to observe them and allow them to be as they are. What do you notice about your emotions? Are there any that you experience regularly?

Let's try a Managing Emotion Exercise

1. First think of a situation that makes you feel an emotion you find difficult to tolerate
2. Now, observe the emotion. Acknowledge that it exists, stand back from it and let yourself become unstuck from it.
3. Sometimes imagining that your thoughts/emotions are carriages on a train that is going by can help, or you can use another image like leaves floating on a stream.
4. Now recognise that you are not the emotion, that it is only a part of you, and not all of you.
5. Sit with the emotion—don't act on it
6. Try and accept the emotion and allow it to exist.
7. Congratulate yourself for any time you have managed to sit with the emotion. This is like training a muscle and gets better with practice.

Managing Emotions



What did you notice when you tried that exercise?

Opposite action

Managing emotions will...

1. Help us to be more aware of our emotions
2. Help us to tolerate destructive urges
3. Lower the intensity of the emotion
4. Help give a sense of calmness
5. Help us to label our emotions and understand them
6. Help us to let go of distressing or painful emotions
7. Support us to increase our level of positive thinking
8. Help us to be kinder to ourselves

Another way of managing emotions is by using the opposite action skill. This is by understanding that emotions have urges attached to them and by acting in the opposite way, the emotion can be managed.

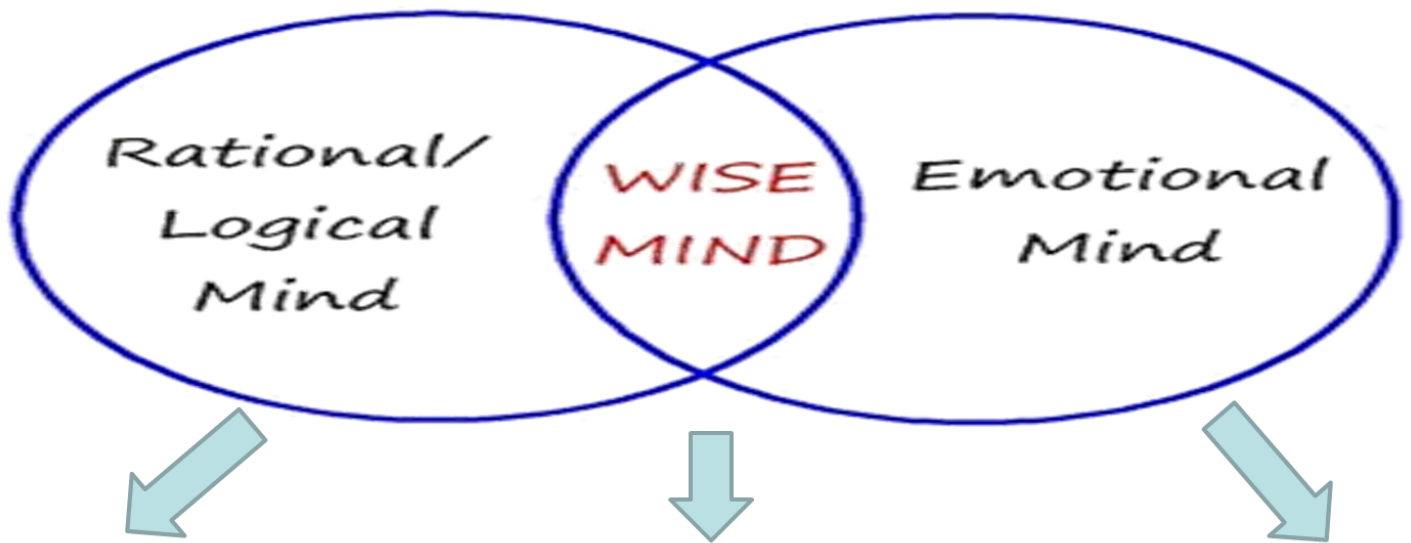
EMOTION	ACTION URGE	OPPOSITE ACTION
ANXIOUS	Run away & escape, avoid	Approach: go anyway & stick with it
ANGRY	Attack	Gently withdraw or kindly approach
SAD	Withdraw & isolate, do less	Be with others, do more

Opposite action

Try using the opposite action skill with an emotion you are experiencing when it is not helping you.

1. What is the emotion?	
2. Is it justified?	
3. What action urge do you feel? What is the emotion asking you to do?	
4. Ask yourself whether the urge is effective. Is it in line with your morals and goals?	
5. Identify the opposite action if you want to change the emotion.	
6. Act opposite all the way to the urge	
7. Repeat acting opposite until the original emotion changes	

3 states of mind



Cool
Rational
Task-focused
Ruled by facts and logic
Feelings not important

Balanced
Middle path
Wisdom
Seeing the value of both
reason and emotion

Hot
Mood-dependent
Emotion focused
Ruled by mood,
urges and feelings

My rational mind

My wise mind

My emotional mind

Reducing vulnerability to intense emotions

The acronyms ABC and PLEASE in DBT help us to remind ourselves of what we can do to take care of ourselves to reduce our vulnerability to intense emotions.

<u>A</u>ccumulate	Accumulate positive emotions by building time into your routine to do some things that are pleas-
<u>B</u>uild	Build mastery by doing things we enjoy and are good at. Whether it is reading, cooking, swimming, doing Sudoku. Practice these things to master them and in time we then feel competent.
<u>C</u>ope	Cope ahead by rehearsing a plan ahead of time so that you are prepared to cope skilfully. This takes time and learning which situations you might struggle in and how best to deal with them.

<u>P</u>hysical Illness	Make sure to treat any physical ailments and take medications as prescribed.
<u>E</u>ating	Balance eating in order to avoid mood swings
<u>A</u>void Mood Altering drugs	Avoid mood altering drugs to avoid addiction and have mood control.
<u>S</u>leep	Maintain good sleep hygiene to ensure you are well rested
<u>E</u>xercise	Get exercise to release feel good hormones, maintain mood stability and improve physical health

Distress tolerance

Sometimes as many skills as we are able to use to change a situation or how we feel, it is hard or not possible to change it. Distress tolerance skills can be used in these times of crisis when the pain is very intense and difficult or impossible to change. Some acronyms that are used to remember distress tolerance skills in DBT are IMPROVE the moment and wise mind ACCEPTS. Write your own ideas of things you have tried for each example below.

IMPROVE the moment

I imagery for example safe place visualisation

M for finding the meaning in a situation

P for connecting to spirituality or a higher meaning, using affirmations

R for relaxation using breathing exercises or anything else you know

O for one thing in the moment or one crisis at a time

V for vacation, give yourself time away from the crisis

E encouraging and calming self talk

Distress tolerance

Wise mind ACCEPTS

A activities and distractions away from the crisis

C contributing and helping others to distract and bring achievement

C comparing yourself with your better self

E generating different emotions—remember opposite emotion

P pushing away, thinking about something else

T thinking new thoughts, counting to 10, naming 10 animals

S sensations 5 things you can smell, 4 things you can see etc.

Distress tolerance

Distress tolerance can bring in mindfulness skills learned earlier. Remember these cards with mindfulness techniques? They can be really useful when feeling distressed to quickly ground yourself. You could keep a card as a reminder in your pocket.

Mindfulness

Can be used when you feel anxious, angry, uneasy, sad, content, happy, joyful, grateful...

- 5** Things you can see
- 4** Things you can hear
- 3** Things you can feel
- 2** Things you can smell
- 1** DEEP BREATH



- S - Stop**
- T - Take a moment**
- O - Observe**
- P - Pull Back - Put in Some Perspective**
- P - Practice What Works**
- Proceed**

Radical acceptance

Radical acceptance can be another way of tolerating distress. Radical acceptance does not mean:

- Judging that a situation is good
- Giving permission for the situation to go on forever
- Giving up hope and giving up your options

Instead, radical acceptance involves turning the mind again and again, to experience a situation exactly as it is, with all of its intricacies. It is accepting exactly how things are, not as we think they should be. You may have to turn your mind again and again in a short period of time and this is normal, as your mind is busy and will want to always come up with other ideas and interpretations. It is trying to come back to the situation exactly as it is, not judging it as good or bad, and just allowing yourself to be in this moment exactly as it is.



Helicopter view


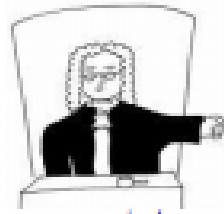

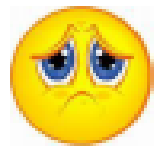


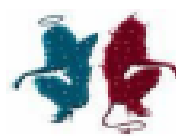

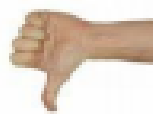



Sometimes when sometimes is really distressing us, we are focused so much on it that it is hard to stand back and gain perspective. In this case it can be helpful to take the helicopter view and gain more perspective on the situation.



Thinking styles

Unhelpful Thinking Habits

Over the years, we tend to get into unhelpful thinking habits such as those described below. We might favour some over others, and there might be some that seem far too familiar. Once you can identify your unhelpful thinking styles, you can start to notice them – they very often occur just before and during distressing situations. Once you can notice them, then that can help you to challenge or distance yourself from those thoughts, and see the situation in a different and more helpful way. *Blue text (italics) helps us find alternative, more realistic thoughts.*

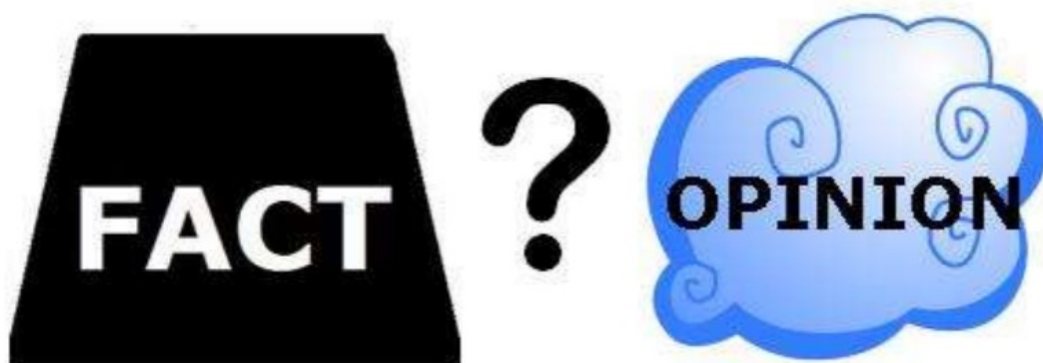
 <p>Mental Filter - When we notice only what the filter allows or wants us to notice, and we dismiss anything that doesn't 'fit'. Like looking through dark blinkers or 'gloomy specs', or only catching the negative stuff in our 'kitchen strainers' whilst anything more positive or realistic is dismissed. <i>Am I only noticing the bad stuff? Am I filtering out the positives? Am I wearing those 'gloomy specs'? What would be more realistic?</i></p>	 <p>Judgements - Making evaluations or judgements about events, ourselves, others, or the world, rather than describing what we actually see and have evidence for. <i>I'm making an evaluation about the situation or person. It's how I make sense of the world, but that doesn't mean my judgements are always right or helpful. Is there another perspective?</i></p>
<p>Prediction - Believing we know what's going to happen in the future. <i>Am I thinking that I can predict the future? How likely is it that that might really happen?</i></p> 	<p>Emotional Reasoning - I feel bad so it must be bad! I feel anxious, so I must be in danger. <i>Just because it feels bad, doesn't necessary mean it is bad. My feelings are just a reaction to my thoughts – and thoughts are just automatic brain reflexes</i></p> 
<p>Mind-Reading - Assuming we know what others are thinking (usually about us). <i>Am I assuming I know what others are thinking? What's the evidence? Those are my own thoughts, not theirs. Is there another, more balanced way of looking at it?</i></p> 	<p>Mountains and Molehills Exaggerating the risk of danger, or the negatives. Minimising the odds of how things are most likely to turn out, or minimising positives <i>Am I exaggerating the bad stuff? How would someone else see it? What's the bigger picture?</i></p> 
<p>Compare and despair Seeing only the good and positive aspects in others, and getting upset when comparing ourselves negatively against them. <i>Am I doing that 'compare and despair' thing? What would be a more balanced and helpful way of looking at it?</i></p> 	<p>Catastrophising - Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen <i>OK, thinking that the worst possible thing will definitely happen isn't really helpful right now. What's most likely to happen?</i></p> 
<p>Critical self Putting ourselves down, self-criticism, blaming ourselves for events or situations that are not (totally) our responsibility <i>There I go, that internal bully's at it again. Would most people who really know me say that about me? Is this something that I am totally responsible for?</i></p> 	<p>Black and white thinking - Believing that something or someone can be only good or bad, right or wrong, rather than anything in-between or 'shades of grey'. <i>Things aren't either totally white or totally black – there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?</i></p> 
<p>Shoulds and musts - Thinking or saying 'I should' (or shouldn't) and 'I must' puts pressure on ourselves, and sets up unrealistic expectations. <i>Am I putting more pressure on myself, setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible? What would be more realistic?</i></p> 	<p>Memories - Current situations and events can trigger upsetting memories, leading us to believe that the danger is here and now, rather than in the past, causing us distress right now. <i>This is just a reminder of the past. That was then, and this is now. Even though this memory makes me <u>feel</u> upset, it's not <u>actually</u> happening again right now.</i></p> 

Fact or opinion

Sometimes when we feel distressed, our thoughts can be driven by opinions which make our emotions feel stronger, which then make our opinions feel even stronger and so on.

It can be helpful to realise that many thoughts are opinion rather than fact, making them less distressing and help us to make more calm decisions about the best action to take.

FACT or OPINION



FACT

- Evidence to support its truth
- Undisputable
- Driven by rational thought
- Head

OPINION

- Based upon a belief or personal view
- Arguable
- Driven by and reinforced by emotion
- Heart

Fact or opinion

Here is an example of facts and opinions in one situation.



Fact

Evidence-based

- Clown
- Painted face
- Colourful
- Circus performer
- Smiling

Opinion

Varies, personal view

- Funny
- Weird hair
- Scary
- Happy
- Ugly

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www.get.gg

Fact or Opinion Scenario

You have arranged to meet a good friend for a coffee and they don't turn up. You think they are really rude and you are very upset by them not arriving. You feel very let down and feel they probably don't like you anymore. You are never going to speak with them again as they always let you down. People always do this to you!!

Write down what is fact and what is opinion from this particular scenario.

Fact or opinion

Here are the facts and the opinions from the scenario on the previous page. Do they match up with what you had written down?

• Fact	• Opinion
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arranged for a coffee• Friend hasn't turned up• I'm upset	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rude• Let down• They don't like you anymore• Always let you down• People always do this to you



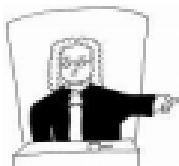
Taking your thoughts to court

The Court Case



Write down your thought/s – put the really troublesome thought (not you!) in the “dock”, the thought that makes you feel really bad or upset. (To help identify this thought, ask yourself questions such as: What’s the worst that could happen? What does that say about me?)

Look for evidence to support the accuracy of the thoughts – what tells you this thought is true? What would a barrister / lawyer / advocate for the defence say? (Remember this is a “court case” and evidence should be able to stand up in court as facts)



Look for evidence against the thoughts – what tells you this thought is not totally true, all of the time? Is this opinion rather than fact? What would a barrister / lawyer / advocate for the prosecution say? What factual evidence is there? Consider what others would say (witnesses) etc.

Sum up all the evidence and come to your own conclusions – find a **closing statement that is based on the evidence, that is realistic, rational and balanced.** Rephrase the original thought in a way that includes the evidence. (You might start with: “Even though I.....”)



Problem solving

Problem Solving is one of the Distress Tolerance DBT skills. We often come across situations that we find triggering and these can make us feel very overwhelmed with emotion. If we stop for a moment and utilise a problem solving technique this can help us to come to a more rational solutions. Often we can use this technique before a potentially triggering situation, helping us to overcome the problematic situation before it actually happens.

Step 1 Problem	I want to lose weight but I have no motivation to do so. How can I help myself?
Step 2 Solutions	Swap chocolate for fruit 2 evenings a week. Go for a 15 minute walk every second day.
Step 3 Pros /Cons	Doing something every second day will get me into a routine. / It might rain
Step 4 Choice	15 minute walk every second day
Step 5 Plan	Mark it in calendar / Do it at the same time every second day / Have rain-gear ready just in case.
Step 6 & 7 Do it & re-view	Do it and see how it goes.... It rained on Wednesday but I had my gear ready so I had no excuse not to do it!
Step 8 Adjust	Goal achieved.... Now add in 'swap chocolate for fruit every other 2nd day' and see how it goes!

Problem solving

Step 1	Identify the Problem Break it down into smaller steps and decide what you need to action first
Step 2	Brainstorm and write down as many ideas as you can that might help solve the problem, no matter how silly they seem – don't dismiss any possible solutions.
Step 3	Consider the pros and cons of each possible solution, using a separate piece of paper.
Step 4	Choose one of the possible solutions that looks likely to work, based on the advantages and disadvantages
Step 5	Plan out step-by-step what you need to do to carry out this solution. What? When? How? With whom or what? What could cause problems? How can you get around those problems? Is this realistic and achievable?
Step 6	Do it! Carry out the plan
Step 7	Review how it went. Was it helpful? Did you achieve what you set out to achieve? If not, how could you have done it differently? Did you achieve any progress, however small, towards your goal? What have you learned?
Step 8	If you achieved your goal – consider tackling the next step of your original problem. If you didn't fully achieve your goal – make adjustments to your chosen solution, or return to steps 3 and 4 and choose another possible solution.

Interpersonal effectiveness

Interpersonal effectiveness skills are also known as communication skills. There are many types of skills you can learn in this area and in DBT there are several acronyms which cover the main skills.

DEAR MAN—objective effectiveness or how to clearly express your needs in a situation.

Describe	Describe the facts of the situation, no interpretations.
Express	Let the person know how the situation makes you feel. Use “I feel _____ because_____.”
Assert	Say what you need to say. Don’t say “I don’t know if I can do that” say “I can’t do that” instead.
Reinforce	Reward the person for responding well, for example by smiling and saying thank you.
Mindful	Be mindful of why you are having the interaction and don’t get lost in arguments and emotions.
Appear	Appear confident and consider your posture, eye contact and tone.
Negotiate	Be open to negotiation—no one can have everything they want all of the time.

Interpersonal effectiveness

GIVE—relationship effectiveness and how we can foster positive interactions in a relationship.

Gentle Don't attack, threaten or express judgement.

Interested Show interest in what the person is saying, try to not interrupt

Validate Be outwardly validating to the person—remember validating doesn't mean you agree with them.

Easy Have an easy attitude and be lighthearted.



Interpersonal effectiveness

FAST—self respect effectiveness or sticking to your own values and beliefs while also getting what you want.

Fair Be fair to others and to yourself.




Apologies Don't apologise unless it is warranted. It is not warranted for having an opinion, disagreeing or making a request.

Stick to values Don't compromise your own values just to be liked or get what you want.

Truthful Don't exaggerate or be dishonest about the situation.



Interpersonal effectiveness

	Communication Styles		
	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
			
General	Compliant, submissive, talks little, vague non-committal communication, puts self down, praises others <i>"I don't mind...that's fine....yes alright"</i>	Actions and expressions fit with words spoken, firm but polite and clear messages, respectful of self and others <i>"That's a good idea, and how about if we did this too..." or "I can see that, but I'd really like..."</i>	Sarcastic, harsh, always right, superior, know it all, interrupts, talks over others, critical, put-downs, patronising, disrespectful of others <i>"This is what we're doing, if you don't like it, tough"</i>
Beliefs	You're okay, I'm not Has no opinion other than that the other person/s are always more important, so it doesn't matter what they think anyway	I'm okay, you're okay Believes or acts as if all the individuals involved are equal, each deserving of respect, and no more entitled than the other to have things done their way	I'm okay, you're not Believe they are entitled to have things done their way, the way they want it to be done, because they are right, and others (and their needs) are less important
Eyes	Avoids eye contact, looks down, teary, pleading	Warm, welcoming, friendly, comfortable eye contact	Narrow, emotion-less, staring, expressionless
Posture	Makes body smaller – stooped, leaning, hunched shoulders	Relaxed, open, welcoming	Makes body bigger – upright, head high, shoulders out, hands on hips, feet apart
Hands	Together, fidgety, clammy	Open, friendly and appropriate gestures	Pointing fingers, making fists, clenched, hands on hips
Consequences	Give in to others, don't get what we want or need, self-critical thoughts, miserable	Good relationships with others, happy with outcome and to compromise	Make enemies, upset others and self, feel angry and resentful

Thank you for using this workbook

We hope this workbook has been helpful.

If you have any feedback, positive or negative, please get in touch with us on cwp.involve-and-recover@nhs.net or 01625 505 647.

For full list of helplines, go to <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>

WE SPEND A LOT OF TIME
JUDGING OURSELVES HARSHLY
FOR FEELINGS THAT WE HAD NO
ROLE IN SUMMONING. THE ONLY
THING YOU CAN CONTROL IS
HOW YOU HANDLE IT.

DAN HARRIS

POSITIVE  ROUTINES

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