

Introduction to This Book

This book contains informational handouts and worksheets for people learning Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills. The overall goal of DBT skills training is to help you increase your resilience and build a life experienced as worth living. DBT skills are aimed at teaching a synthesis of how to change what is and how to accept what is. Skills teach you both how to change unwanted behaviors, emotions, thoughts, and events in your life that cause you misery and distress as well as how to live in the moment, accepting what is. There are different sets of DBT skills, and no single training program will include all of the handouts and worksheets in this book. Your skills trainer or individual therapist/case manager will direct you to the appropriate handouts and worksheets for your particular program.

How This Book Is Organized

There are five main sections in this book, and each begins with a brief introduction. Following a first section on General Skills, there is a section of handouts and worksheets for each of the four main DBT skills modules: Mindfulness Skills, Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills, Emotion Regulation Skills, and Distress Tolerance Skills. There are topical subsections of handouts and worksheets within each skills module, as described below. Every skill or set of skills has a corresponding handout with instructions for practicing that skill. Nearly every handout has at least one (often more than one) associated worksheet for recording your practice of the skill. The introductions to each section summarize the handouts, their purposes, and the worksheets that go with them.

General Skills: Orientation and Analyzing Behavior

During **Orientation**, you will be introduced to DBT and the goals of skills training, and will be encouraged to identify your own personal goals. You will also be oriented to the format, rules, and meeting times of your particular skills program.

The handouts and worksheets for this portion of General Skills cover skills training goals, guidelines, assumptions, and DBT's biosocial theory. Biosocial theory is an explanation of why some people find it challenging to manage their emotions and actions. Also included in this section are handouts and worksheets for two skills for **Analyzing Behavior**: chain analysis and missing-links analysis. These skills are often taught in individual DBT, but they may also be taught at any point during skills training.

Mindfulness Skills

Following a brief presentation on **Goals and Definitions**, the handouts and worksheets for the Mindfulness module focus on **Core Mindfulness Skills**. These skills are central in DBT: They teach how to observe and experience reality as it is, to be less judgmental, and to live in the moment with effectiveness. They are the first skills taught, and they support all the other DBT skills. DBT mindfulness skills are translations of meditation practices from Eastern and Western spiritual traditions into specific behaviors that you can practice. No spiritual or religious convictions are expected or necessary for practicing and mastering these skills.

Other Perspectives on Mindfulness includes several subsets of handouts and worksheets. A Spiritual Perspective (including Wise Mind from a Spiritual Perspective and Practicing Loving Kindness) is a set of handouts and worksheets included for those who consider spirituality an important part of their lives. The skills covered here focus on experiencing ultimate reality, sensing our intimate connection with the entire universe, and developing a sense of freedom. The Skillful Means: Balancing Doing Mind and Being Mind set focuses on balancing two seeming polarities: working to achieve goals, while at the same time letting go of attachment to achieving goals. The handouts and worksheets for Wise Mind: Walking the Middle Path cover skills for finding a synthesis of extremes.

Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

The handouts and worksheets in the Interpersonal Effectiveness module help you manage interpersonal conflicts effectively and maintain and improve relationships with other people (those you are close to, as well as strangers). After a short introduction on **Goals and Factors That Interfere**, there are three main sets of these forms. The first set is focused on **Obtaining Objectives Skillfully**. These are strategies for asking for what you want, saying no to unwanted requests, and doing this in a way that maintains your self-respect and keeps others liking you. The handouts and worksheets for **Building Relationships and Ending Destructive Ones** help you find potential friends, get people to like you, maintain positive relationships with others, and (when necessary) end destructive relationships. This module's handouts and worksheets for **Walking the Middle Path** are about walking a middle path in your relationships, and balancing acceptance with change in yourself and in your relationships with others.

Emotion Regulation Skills

The handouts and worksheets in the Emotion Regulation module help you to manage your emotions, even though complete emotional control cannot be achieved. To a certain extent, we all are who we are, and emotionality is part of us; however, we can learn to have more control. There are four sets of these forms. The first set covers **Understanding and Naming Emotions**. Emotions serve important functions, and it can be hard to change an emotion if you don't understand what it does for you. The second set covers **Changing Emotional Responses**. These handouts and worksheets help you reduce the intensity of painful or unwanted emotions, such as anger, sadness, shame, and so forth. They also tell you how to change situations that cause painful or unwanted emotions. **Reducing Vulnerability to Emotion Mind** is the third set. The strategies covered here increase your emotional resilience and make you less likely to become extremely or painfully emotional. The final set of handouts and worksheets deals with **Managing Really Difficult Emotions**.

Distress Tolerance Skills

The handouts and worksheets in the Distress Tolerance module help you learn to tolerate and survive crisis situations without making things worse. There are two main sets of these forms. The **Crisis Survival Skills** set covers techniques for tolerating painful events, urges, and emotions when you cannot make things better right away. The **Reality Acceptance Skills** set shows you how to reduce suffering by helping you accept and enter fully into a life even when it is not the life you want. This module also includes a set of specialized handouts and worksheets for **When the Crisis Is Addiction**.

Numbering of Handouts and Worksheets

Within each of this book's five main sections, handouts for each module are grouped together first, followed by worksheets.

Every handout has a number; some also have a letter. The latter are supplements to handouts with the same number. For example, Mindfulness Handout 3 is the main handout for the skill of Wise Mind. Mindfulness Handout 3a is supplementary and lists ways that Wise Mind can be practiced. (Worksheets are numbered in a separate sequence, as described below.) Most, but not all, handouts have corresponding worksheets that can be used for recording skills practice. Associated worksheets are listed by number next to the handouts in the table of contents, as well on the handouts themselves.

There are multiple alternative worksheets associated with many of the handouts. There are worksheets that cover all the skills in a section, as well as worksheets that cover individual skills. For example, Mindfulness Worksheets 2, 2a, 2b, and 2c all cover the same core mindfulness skills, and so each carries the same number, 2. However, each worksheet is formatted a bit differently, and the worksheets vary as

to how many practices they can accommodate. The handouts associated with worksheets are listed by number next to the worksheets in the table of contents, as well as on the worksheets themselves.

Not all DBT skills programs teach all the modules or all the skills in each module. Even those that do cover all the modules will not necessarily use every handout and worksheet. You are, however, likely to use some worksheets multiple times. For this reason, the author and publisher grant you, the book purchaser, permission to make photocopies of handouts and worksheets in this volume for your personal use. You can also download and print out copies of the worksheets from www.guilford.com/dbt-worksheets.

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GENERAL SKILLS: ORIENTATION AND ANALYZING BEHAVIOR

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Introduction to Handouts and Worksheets

There are two sets of handouts and worksheets in this part of the book. The first covers **Orientation**, which typically takes place during the first session of a new skills group, or when new members join an ongoing skills group. The purpose of orientation is to introduce members to one another and to the skills trainers, and to orient members to the format, rules, and meeting times of the particular skills training program. As described below, General Handouts 1 through 5 cover these issues, along with General Worksheet 1. General Handouts 6 through 8, and their corresponding worksheets, cover two important general skills for **Analyzing Behavior**: chain analysis and missing-links analysis. These are also described below.

Orientation

- **General Handout 1: Goals of Skills Training.** This handout lists the general and the specific goals of DBT skills training. Use this handout to think how you could personally benefit from skills training. Which areas are you most interested in? Use **General Worksheet 1: Pros and Cons of Using Skills** any time you aren't sure whether there are benefits to practicing DBT skills. Be sure to fill out the pros and cons for both the option of practicing skills and the option of not practicing.

- **General Handout 1a: Options for Solving Any Problem.** Although there are many, many things that can cause us pain, our options for responding to pain are limited. We can solve the problem that is causing the pain. We can try to feel better by changing our emotional response to the pain. Or we can accept and tolerate the

problem and our response. Each of these options requires use of one or more DBT skills. The final option is to stay miserable (or make things worse) and use no skills.*

- **General Handout 3: Guidelines for Skills Training.** This handout lists the guidelines for most standard DBT skills programs. These are standards of behavior that people in a group skills program are asked to follow. Some programs may have somewhat modified guidelines.

- **General Handout 4: Skills Training Assumptions.** Assumptions are beliefs that cannot be proved. In DBT skills training, all group members and skills trainers are asked to abide by these assumptions.

- **General Handout 5: Biosocial Theory.** Biosocial theory is an explanation of how and why some people find it challenging to manage their emotions and actions. DBT skills are particularly useful for these people.

Analyzing Behavior

- **General Handout 6: Overview: Analyzing Behavior.** This handout previews the two general skills for analyzing behavior—chain analysis and missing-links analysis.

- **General Handout 7: Chain Analysis.** Any behavior can be understood as a series of linked parts. These links are “chained” together because they follow each other—one link in the chain leads to another. Chain analysis is a way of determining what has caused a behavior and what maintains it. This handout provides a series of questions (e.g., “What happened before that? What happened next?”) for unlocking the links in a behavior chain that can feel stuck together. It guides you through figuring out what factors led to a problem behavior and what factors might be making it difficult to change that behavior. Knowing this is important if you want to change the behavior.

- **General Handout 7a: Chain Analysis, Step by Step.** This handout explains in greater detail how to do a chain analysis. **General Worksheet 2: Chain Analysis of Problem Behavior** is a worksheet for doing a chain analysis. Use it with General Handouts 7 and 7a, which have the same steps. **General Worksheet 2a: Example: Chain Analysis of Problem Behavior** is a completed sample version of General Worksheet 2.

- **General Handout 8: Missing-Links Analysis.** Missing-links analysis is a series of questions to help you figure out what got in the way of behaving effectively. Use it to identify why something did not happen that was needed and that you agreed to do, planned to do, or hoped to do. **General Worksheet 3: Missing-Links Analysis** can be used with this handout.

*This last option was suggested to me in an e-mail. Unfortunately, I simply cannot find the message so that I can properly credit the person here. Nevertheless, it was a fabulous addition.



Goals of Skills Training

GENERAL GOAL

To learn how to change your own behaviors, emotions, and thoughts that are linked to problems in living and are causing misery and distress.

SPECIFIC GOALS

Behaviors to Decrease:

- Mindlessness; emptiness; being out of touch with self and others; judgmentalness.
- Interpersonal conflict and stress; loneliness.
- Absence of flexibility; difficulties with change.
- Up-and-down and extreme emotions; mood-dependent behavior; difficulties in regulating emotions.
- Impulsive behaviors; acting without thinking; difficulties accepting reality as it is; willfulness; addiction.

Skills to Increase:

- Mindfulness skills.
- Interpersonal effectiveness skills.
- Emotion regulation skills.
- Distress tolerance skills.

PERSONAL GOALS

Behaviors to Decrease:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Skills to Increase:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Options for Solving Any Problem

When life presents you with problems, what are your options?

1. SOLVE THE PROBLEM

Change the situation . . . or avoid, leave, or get out of the situation for good.

2. FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE PROBLEM

Change (or regulate) your emotional response to the problem.

3. TOLERATE THE PROBLEM

Accept and tolerate both the problem and your response to the problem.

4. STAY MISERABLE

Or possibly make it worse!

1. TO PROBLEM-SOLVE:

Use interpersonal effectiveness skills

Walking the Middle Path (from interpersonal effectiveness skills)

Use problem-solving skills (from emotion regulation skills)

2. TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE PROBLEM:

Use emotion regulation skills

3. TO TOLERATE THE PROBLEM:

Use distress tolerance and mindfulness skills

4. TO STAY MISERABLE:

Use *no* skills!

**Overview:
Introduction to Skills Training**

GUIDELINES FOR SKILLS TRAINING

SKILLS TRAINING ASSUMPTIONS

**BIOSOCIAL THEORY
OF EMOTIONAL AND
BEHAVIORAL DYSREGULATION**



Skills Training Assumptions

**An assumption is a belief that cannot be proved,
but we agree to abide by it anyway.**

1. People are doing the best they can.

All people at any given point in time are doing the best they can.

2. People want to improve.

The common characteristic of all people is that they want to improve their lives and be happy.

3. People need to do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change.*

The fact that people are doing the best they can, and want to do even better, does not mean that these things are enough to solve the problem.

4. People may not have caused all of our own problems, but they have to solve them anyway.**

People have to change their own behavioral responses and alter their environment for their life to change.

5. New behavior has to be learned in all relevant contexts.

New behavioral skills have to be practiced in the situations where the skills are needed, not just in the situation where the skills are first learned.

6. All behaviors (actions, thoughts, emotions) are caused.

There is always a cause or set of causes for our actions, thoughts, and emotions, even if we do not know what the causes are.

7. Figuring out and changing the causes of behavior work better than judging and blaming.

Judging and blaming are easier, but if we want to create change in the world, we have to change the chains of events that cause unwanted behaviors and events.

*But trying harder and being more motivated may not be needed if progress is steady and at a realistic rate of improvement.

**Parents and caregivers must assist children in this task.

Biosocial Theory

Why do I have so much trouble controlling my emotions and my actions?

**Emotional vulnerability is BIOLOGICAL:
It's simply how some people are born.**

- They are more **sensitive** to emotional stimuli; they can detect subtle emotional information in the environment that others don't even notice.
 - They experience emotions **much more often** than others.
 - Their emotions seem to hit for no reason, from **out of the blue**.
- They have more **intense** emotions.
 - Their emotions hit like a **ton of bricks**.
 - And their emotions are **long-lasting**.

**Impulsivity also has a BIOLOGICAL basis:
Regulating action is harder for some than for others.**

- They find it **very hard to restrain** impulsive behaviors.
 - Often, without thinking, they do things that **get them in trouble**.
 - Sometimes their **behavior seems to come out of nowhere**.
- They find it very **hard to be effective**.
 - Their moods get in the way of **organizing** to achieve their goals.
 - They **cannot control** behaviors linked to their moods.

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**An invalidating SOCIAL environment
can make it very hard to regulate emotions.**

- An invalidating environment doesn't seem to understand your emotions.
 - It tells you your emotions are *invalid, weird, wrong, or bad*.
 - It often *ignores* your emotional reactions and does nothing to help you.
 - It may say things like "Don't be such a baby!" "Quit your blubbing." "Quit being such a chicken and just solve the problem." or "Normal people don't get this frustrated."
- People who invalidate are **OFTEN DOING THE BEST THEY CAN**.
 - They *may not know* how to validate or how important it is to validate, or they *may be afraid* that if they validate your emotions, you will get more emotional, not less.
 - They *may be under high stress* or time pressure, or they may have too few resources themselves.
 - There may be just a *poor fit* between you and your social environment:
You may be a tulip in a rose garden.

**An ineffective SOCIAL environment
is a big problem when you want
to learn to regulate emotions and actions.**

- Your environment may *reinforce out-of-control emotions and actions*.
 - If people give in when you get out of control, it will be hard for you to get in control.
 - If others command you to change, but don't coach you on how to do this, it will be hard to keep on trying to change.

**It's the TRANSACTIONS that count
between the person and the social environment.**

- Biology and the social environment influence the person.
- The person reciprocates and influences his or her social environment.
- The social environment reciprocates and influences the person.
- And so on and on and on.