DBT Path
ONLINE DBT SKILLS CLASSES SINCE 2013

DBT Skills Cheat Sheet

Quick reminders for all four DBT skills modules

Each skill below has **what it's for** and **how to use it**. Keep this handy, practice when things are calm, and be gentle with yourself as you learn.

Mindfulness — THE FOUNDATION

Notice what's happening inside and around you, without getting swept away.

Wise Mind
The balance point between Emotion Mind and Reasonable Mind. Use it for big choices and big feelings.
How: Slow your breath and ask, "What does my Wise Mind know right now?" Wait for the quiet, steady answer.

"What" Skills Observe · Describe · Participate
How: Notice without reacting, put words to just the facts ("I notice tightness in my chest"), then throw yourself fully into what you're doing.

"How" Skills Nonjudgmentally · One-Mindfully · Effectively
How: Trade judgments for facts ("I'm anxious," not "I'm pathetic"), do one thing at a time, and do what actually works.

Distress Tolerance — CRISIS SURVIVAL

Get through a painful moment without making it worse.

STOP
For the second an urge hits. **S**top, freeze. **T**ake a step back. **O**bserve what's going on. **P**roceed mindfully.

TIPP
For emotions so high you can't think. Calms your body fast: **T**emperature (cool water on your face), **I**ntense exercise, **P**aced breathing (breathe out longer than in), **P**aired muscle relaxation.
Check with your doctor first if you have heart or other medical concerns.

ACCEPTS
Distract until the wave passes: **A**ctivities, **C**ontributing, **C**omparisons, **E**motions (create a different one), **P**ushing away, **T**houghts (count, puzzles), **S**ensations (a warm shower, music).

Self-Soothe
Comfort yourself through your five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch. **How:** Build a soothing kit ahead of time.

IMPROVE the Moment
Imagery, **M**eaning, **P**rayer, **R**elaxation, **O**ne thing at a time, **V**acation (a brief break), **E**ncouragement ("I can do this").

Pros & Cons
For urges to act on impulse. **How:** List the pros and cons of acting on the urge, and of resisting it. Remember the long term.

Radical Acknowledgement (Radical Acceptance)
For pain you can't change right now. **How:** Acknowledge reality as it is: "This happened, and here's where I go from here." Acknowledging is not approving.

Practice tip: *Pick one skill this week and try it when you're calm, so it's ready when you need it most. Small steps count.*

Emotion Regulation — UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

Understand your emotions, and change the ones you want to change.

Name It
Describe the emotion: what prompted it, what you feel in your body, and what it urges you to do. Naming it helps tame it.

Check the Facts
For emotions that may not fit the situation. **How:** Ask, "What actually happened? What am I assuming? Do my emotion and its intensity fit the facts?"

Opposite Action
For emotions that don't fit the facts or don't help. **How:** Act opposite to the urge, all the way: approach when afraid, be gentle when angry, get active when down.

Problem Solving
When your emotion does fit the facts. **How:** Name the problem, brainstorm options, pick one, try it, then see how it went.

ABC
Build a life that's less vulnerable to painful emotions: **A**ccumulate positives (small pleasant moments daily, plus values-based goals), **B**uild mastery (one thing a day that makes you feel capable), **C**ope ahead (rehearse a hard situation in your mind).

PLEASE
Care for your body so emotions are easier to manage: treat Physica**L** illness, balanced **E**ating, **A**void mood-altering substances, balanced **S**leep, **E**xercise.

Interpersonal Effectiveness — RELATIONSHIPS

Ask for what you need, say no, and protect both your relationships and your self-respect.

Clarify Your Priorities
Before a hard conversation, ask: "What do I want? How do I want them to feel about me? How do I want to feel about myself afterward?"

DEAR MAN Getting what you want
Describe the facts, **E**xpress your feelings, **A**ssert clearly, **R**einforce (why it helps them). Stay **M**indful (repeat if needed), **A**ppear confident, **N**egotiate.

GIVE Keeping the relationship
Be **G**entle, act **I**nterested, **V**alidate, use an **E**asy manner (a little warmth or humor).

FAST Keeping your self-respect
Be **F**air (to you and them), no unneeded **A**pologies, **S**tick to your values, be **T**ruthful.

Validation
Let someone know their feelings make sense. **How:** Listen fully, reflect back what you heard, and say, "That makes sense because..." Validating isn't the same as agreeing.

Want to learn these skills step by step, with support?
Join a live, online DBT Path skills class.
emotionallysensitive.com

Based on Dialectical Behavior Therapy, developed by Marsha M. Linehan, PhD. For education, not a substitute for therapy. In crisis? Call or text 988 (US).

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