



What to expect your first day in program?

Welcome to MHS!

Your first day in program can be a bit overwhelming so here is some information to help know what to expect when you start your journey through your program.

If you have never done DBT before, the beginning might be confusing. DBT has a lot of acronyms and language that takes some getting used to. But you will get used to it! We encourage you to be patient and ask questions. This will help you get into the swing of things.

On your first day, the Facilitator/s will orient you to the group and the process. You will review the group rules and expectations (also found in this Handbook).

You can expect the group and Facilitators will be:

- Welcoming
- Accepting
- Interested in you
- Patient as you get used to the program
- Helpful with things that might be confusing
- Ready to answer questions
- Safe

We look forward to working with you,

MHS Staff

MHS DBT Program Attendance Policy

Consistent attendance is necessary for DBT programming to be effective. Research has shown that consistent attendance leads to better results in therapy. Attendance, timeliness, and consistency are also life skills.

It is expected that program members attend all program sessions. Please schedule other appointments around your DBT programming. Attending all scheduled program groups consistently is an essential part of progress not just for individuals, but for the group as a whole. While the policy accounts for absences for illness, emergencies, and other causes, absences are counted regardless of the reason for missing programming. There are no “excused” or “unexcused” absences.

If you miss more than 1 out of 10 sessions, you will receive an **attendance contract** for the next 10 sessions. Your therapist will discuss and problem-solve barriers to attendance with you, and may include members of your treatment team as needed. While on an attendance contract you must attend 9 of the 10 sessions to end the attendance contract. If you miss more than 1 of 10 sessions while on an attendance contract you will receive a 10-day **discharge contract** and barriers to attendance will be discussed with all who can help you succeed. Like the attendance contract, you must attend 9 out of 10 of these sessions. If you miss more than one of those 10 sessions, you can be discharged from the program and cannot reapply until the barriers to attendance have been successfully addressed. The goal of all contracts is to support success in programming.

At the discretion of the program, allowances for circumstances beyond a person’s control will be considered prior to discharge. For this to occur documentation of the cause of the absence may be required.

You are responsible for keeping your therapist and the program informed if you have to miss your program session. Always call before programming if you will be absent.

Three consecutive absences without phone calls will be grounds for discharge.

If you are late to an individual therapy session, depending on your history of tardiness and the availability of the therapist, your session could be canceled or rescheduled.

Three instances of tardiness, in a short period of time, count as an absence. A tardy is returning late after break or arriving late for the start of programming.

A **Leave of Absence (LOA)** may be granted at the discretion of the therapist/treatment team and must be planful with a clear time-limit. It is your responsibility to contact your therapist and team during an LOA. Documentation to support a LOA may be required.

Acknowledged by: _____



Group Rules and Expectations Virtual Adolescent DBT

Group members are expected to use their Wise Mind to act respectfully and effectively in the group. Additional rules for specific program groups may be added at the discretion of the group facilitator.

Confidentiality

Group members are expected to keep information about all clients at MHS private. This includes names of group members, issues discussed in group, and disclosing how you know a group member. Breaking confidentiality may lead to discharge from programming. Therapists are required by law to act on behalf of all members if there are reports of maltreatment, neglect, or safety concerns if a member cannot commit to safety.

Communication with Caregivers

Therapists will use their discretion in what they share with your caregiver. Therapists will provide updates and involve them in treatment goal planning. Caregivers will be updated when safety or other concerning behaviors increase and/or are needed to support change. MHS believes it is best practice to support collaborative communication between caregivers and teens, and therapists aim to facilitate this process.

Safety

Safety is the primary goal of therapy. Group members are encouraged to avoid sharing details about suicidal ideation, self-injury, or other sensitive topics that may cause distress to others. Group members may not make contact with other group members for 24 hours after acting on SI or SIB.

Assessing Safety

If safety concerns are present, they will be addressed by safety planning. Teen will review the current safety plan or choose to create a new one. Therapist will ask for a commitment to safety. If the teen cannot commit to safety using the skills and supports identified until returning to program, the therapist will initiate a Wellness Check. Emergency services will come to your location and determine what services are needed moving forward. **If you accidentally become disconnected during a safety assessment, email or call your therapist immediately. Your therapist will also reach out to your caregiver. If you intentionally disconnect from session during a safety assessment, you will be discharged from program.**

Attendance

Group members are expected to attend every group on time and stay for all scheduled hours. If your attendance falls below 90%, you will be put on an attendance contract. Group members are expected to inform the therapist of absences. Please contact your therapist if you will be late or absent from programming. If you do not attend, do not make attempts to contact your therapist, and are unable to be reached for three therapy sessions in a row; you will be discharged from programming.

Drugs and Alcohol

Group members are not allowed to attend group under the influence of alcohol/drugs or use alcohol/drugs during group time. These behaviors are grounds for discharge. Group members may not glamorize the use of substances, and any discussion about substances in group is expected to be effective

Treatment Team

Group members are required to participate in ongoing individual therapy, comply with prescribed medications and recommendations from psychiatrists and medical professionals. Group facilitators will contact members of your treatment team regularly to check in about your progress in therapy.

Relationships with Group Peers

Group members are not allowed to spend time with each other outside of group or to have romantic or private relationships with one another. Each group facilitator will establish specific expectations regarding communication between group members outside of group. If communication outside of group is allowed, group members should not discuss safety concerns or details of TIBs with each other. Anything discussed between group members outside of group must also be discussed in the group setting. Group members are not allowed to use alcohol or drugs, or participate in other treatment-interfering behaviors together. Violation of any of these rules may lead to discharge.

Preparing for Group

Please arrive early to test your technology. Bring your DBT manual and completed diary card. Be prepared to take notes. Have a fidget, snack, and/or drink ready. Turn your camera on. Use headphones when you are able. You must be in a confidential space with a door closed without others around. You are not able to join group from a moving vehicle.

Breaks

You may turn video and audio off when on break. You will use your break time to prepare your diary card for sharing. Use appropriate volume, tone, and language during breaks. Therapists can monitor breaks to ensure skillfulness.

Feedback and Behavior

Group members' feedback and behavior are expected to be respectful at all times. Discrimination and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated and may be grounds for discharge. If a group member is disrespectful, a verbal warning will be given and the member may be asked to leave or take a break from group. Group members may be placed on a behavior contract or discharged from programming for a pattern of disrespectful behavior.

I will participate in effective behavior by:	Ineffective Behavior is Considered:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Arriving on time and staying in program until dismissed- Fully dressed and sitting up, as though you are in person- Silencing other devices- Completing diary card prior to group- Engaging with group by asking questions, answering questions or offering skills suggestions throughout group- Practicing active listening- Showing my face on camera- Using zoom chat feature when needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Recording any part of session- Turning camera on and off- Using multiple devices or other distractions- Playing games, doing homework or texting others- Swearing or using judgmental language directed at others- Privately chatting other group members- Arguing with program therapist

Families are expected to comply with their monthly payment agreements and can make payments via the MHS website: <https://www.mhs-dbt.com/pay-online/>



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Communication with Caregivers

Therapists will use their discretion in what they share with your caregiver. Therapists will provide updates and involve them in treatment goal planning. Caregivers will be updated when safety or other concerning behaviors increase and/or are needed to support change. MHS believes it is best practice to support collaborative communication between caregivers and teens, and therapists aim to facilitate this process.

Safety

Safety is the primary goal of therapy. Group members are encouraged to avoid sharing details about suicidal ideation, self-injury, or other sensitive topics that may cause distress to others. Members are not allowed to act on suicidal ideation (SI) or self-injurious behavior (SIB) urges while on premises; doing so would be grounds for discharge. Group members may not make contact with other group members for 24 hours after acting on SI or SIB.

Assessing Safety

If safety concerns are present, they will be addressed via safety planning. Teen will review the current safety plan or choose to create a new one. Therapists will ask for a commitment to safety. If the teen cannot commit to following their safety plan, using the skills and supports identified until returning to program, the therapist will initiate a Transport Hold in which police and paramedics will support transporting them to the hospital. If caregivers refuse this process and/or further assessment, this may be grounds for discharge.

Attendance

Group members are expected to attend every group on time and stay for all scheduled hours. If your attendance falls below 90%, you will be put on an attendance contract. Group members are expected to inform the therapist of absences. Please contact your therapist if you will be late or absent from programming. If you do not attend, do not make attempts to contact your therapist, and are unable to be reached for three therapy sessions in a row; you will be discharged from programming.

Treatment Team

Group members are required to participate in ongoing individual therapy, comply with prescribed medications and recommendations from psychiatrists and other medical professionals. Group facilitators will contact members of your treatment team regularly to coordinate care.

Relationships with Group Peers

Group members are not allowed to spend time with each other outside of programming, have romantic, or private relationships with one another. Each group facilitator will establish specific expectations regarding communication between group members outside of programming. If communication outside of programming is permitted, group members should not discuss safety concerns or any other ineffective behaviors/topics with each other. Anything discussed between group members outside of programming must also be disclosed in the group therapy setting. Group members are not allowed to use alcohol or drugs or participate in other treatment-interfering behaviors together. Violation of any of these rules may lead to discharge.

Drugs and Alcohol

Group members are not allowed to attend programming under the influence of alcohol/drugs or use alcohol/drugs during program time. These behaviors are grounds for discharge. Group members may not glamorize the use of substances, and any discussion about substances in programming is expected to be effective. Group members are not allowed to smoke cigarettes, use smokeless tobacco products, or e-cigarettes (this includes vaping of non-nicotine products) at any time while on the premises.

Preparing for Group

Please arrive on time with your DBT manual and completed diary card. Be prepared to take notes. You may bring a fidget or snacks if desired.

Breaks

Group members are expected to be effective during break times and comply with building rules. Break times include writing diary card on the board and using the restroom as needed. It is expected that group members avoid inappropriate topics, are mindful of their volume, and are respectful of all spaces in the building.

Feedback and Behavior

Group members' feedback and behavior are expected to be respectful at all times. Discrimination and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated and may be grounds for discharge. If a group member is disrespectful, a verbal warning will be given, and the group member may be asked to leave or take a break from programming. Group members may be placed on a behavior contract or discharged from programming for a pattern of disrespectful behavior.

I will participate in effective behavior by:	Ineffective Behavior is Considered:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Arriving on time and staying in program until dismissed- Silencing devices- Completing diary card prior to group- Engaging with group by asking questions, answering questions or offering skills suggestions throughout group- Practicing active listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Playing games, doing homework or texting others- Taking phone calls, recording or taking photos within the group room- Swearing or using judgmental language directed at others- Arguing with program therapist

Families are expected to comply with their monthly payment agreements and can make payments via the MHS website: <https://www.mhs-dbt.com/pay-online/>

Safety Plan

I, _____, will follow this safety plan until the next time I receive services. This means I will not act on my urges to commit suicide. I will use the steps listed below to assist with my safety, call my team members/people in my support system/crisis numbers listed below as needed, or admit myself into the hospital if needed.

Events that might lead to safety concerns:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

Specific steps I will take to maintain my safety:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

Team members/other people in my support system/crisis numbers I will call for help are:

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1) | Phone number: |
| 2) | Phone number: |
| 3) | Phone number: |
| 4) County Crisis Line | _____ |
| 5) Crisis Text Line | 988 |
| 6) Crisis line for MH and Substance Use | 988 |
| 7) Emergency | 911 |

Client signature: _____

Date: _____

Therapist signature: _____

Date: _____

MON	Rx	SI	SIB	URG	TIB	RIB	DEP	ANX	ANG	SOS	Energy	Sleep	BM	BPE	OTHERS (MY GOALS)
RATING 0-10															1.
Skills															2.
															3.
TUES	Rx	SI	SIB	URG	TIB	RIB	DEP	ANX	ANG	SOS	Energy	Sleep	BM	BPE	OTHERS (MY GOALS)
RATING 0-10															1.
Skills															2.
															3.
WED	Rx	SI	SIB	URG	TIB	RIB	DEP	ANX	ANG	SOS	Energy	Sleep	BM	BPE	OTHERS (MY GOALS)
RATING 0-10															1.
Skills															2.
															3.
THURS	Rx	SI	SIB	URG	TIB	RIB	DEP	ANX	ANG	SOS	Energy	Sleep	BM	BPE	OTHERS (MY GOALS)
RATING 0-10															1.
Skills															2.
															3.
FRI	Rx	SI	SIB	URG	TIB	RIB	DEP	ANX	ANG	SOS	Energy	Sleep	BM	BPE	OTHERS (MY GOALS)
RATING 0-10															1.
Skills															2.
															3.
SAT	Rx	SI	SIB	URG	TIB	RIB	DEP	ANX	ANG	SOS	Energy	Sleep	BM	BPE	OTHERS (MY GOALS)
RATING 0-10															1.
Skills															2.
															3.
SUN	Rx	SI	SIB	URG	TIB	RIB	DEP	ANX	ANG	SOS	Energy	Sleep	BM	BPE	OTHERS (MY GOALS)
RATING 0-10															1.
Skills															2.
															3.

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Self: Family: Adults: Peers:							
FEELINGS							
THANKFUL							
Eating							
Exercise							
Daily Goal							

Core Mindfulness

Wise Mind (WM) To dialectically balance emotion and reason so you can respond rather than react
Observe (OB) To just notice experience
Describe (DE) To put words on experience
Participate (PA) To fully enter into your experience
Nonjudgemental Stance (NJS) To not attach strong opinions or labels to experience
One-mindfulness (OM) To focus your attention on one thing
Effectiveness (EF) To focus on what works

Distress Tolerance

Distract with ACCEPTS
Activities (AC): To keep busy and involved
Contributing (CON): To do something for others
Comparisons (COM): To see that others struggle, too
Emotions (EM): To do something that creates other emotions
Push Away (PA): To shelve your problem for later
Thoughts (T): To think about something other than your distress
Sensations (S): To invigorate your senses or to do something physically engaging
Self-Soothe (SS) To relax yourself through the senses
Urge Surfing (US) To ride the ebbs and flows of emotions/urges without reacting
Bridge Burning (BB) To remove the means to act on harmful urges

Emotion Regulation

Pleasured (PL)
Physical Health: To engage in behaviors that keep your body healthy
List Resources and Barriers: To identify your resources and barriers for each area of PLEASED
Eat Balanced Meals: To maintain a healthy diet everyday
Avoid Drugs and Alcohol: To minimize or eliminate drug and alcohol use
Sleep 7 to 10 Hours: To get the amount of sleep that helps you feel good
Exercise: To exercise 20 minutes three to five times each week
Daily: To make PLEASED skills daily habits, for maximum benefit

Build Mastery (BM) To do things to help you feel competent and in control
Build Positive Experience (BPE) To seek out events that create positive feelings
Attend to Relationships (A2R) To connect with meaningful people in your life
Mood Momentum (MM) To perform balanced behaviors to maintain positive moods
Opposite to Emotion (O2E) To do the opposite of the action a negative emotion pulls you to perform

IMPROVE the Moment

Imagery (IM): To relax or practice skills visually in your mind
Meaning (ME): To find the "why" to tolerate a difficult time
Prayer (PR): To seek connection and guidance from a higher power
Relaxation (RE): To calm the mind and body
One Thing at a Time (OT): To focus on one thing when overwhelmed
Vacation (V): To take a brief break
Encouragement (EN): To coach yourself with positive self-talk

Pros and Cons (P&C) To weigh the benefits and costs of a choice
Grounding Yourself (GY) To use OB and DE to come back to the here and now
Radical Acceptance (RA) To acknowledge "what is" to free yourself from suffering
Everyday Acceptance (EA) To accept daily inconveniences that occur in life
Willingness (WI) To remove barriers and do what works in a situation

Fast (F)

Fair: To be just and take a Nonjudgemental Stance (NJS) with yourself and others.
Apologies Not Needed: To not apologize for having an opinion, for your own viewpoints or for things over which you have no control
Stick to Values: To know what values are non-negotiable and when values conflict, work to resolve the conflict through Wise Mind (WS)
Truth and Accountability: To be honest and accountable with yourself and others

Give (G)

Genuine: To be honest, sincere, respectful and real with others
Interested: To make efforts to connect with a person — listen intently, ask questions and listen to the answers, make appropriate eye contact
Validate: To acknowledge others' feelings, thoughts, beliefs and experiences without judgement
Easy Manner: To treat others with kindness and a relaxed attitude

Dear Man (DM)

Describe: To outline the situation in nonjudgemental language
Express: To share your opinions and feelings if they relate and will help others understand the situation
Assert: To ask clearly for what you want or need, say no or set your boundary
Reward: To let others know what is in it for them, avoid ultimatums and threats
Mindful: To stay focused on your goal
Appear Confident: To use an assertive tone of voice, make eye contact and use confident body language
Negotiate: To strike compromises that make sense, meet in the middle

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Introduction to Skills Training

A hallmark of DBT-S is the explicit emphasis on learning and using new skills and behaviors to replace behaviors that are no longer effective, are unhealthy, and/or are unsafe. Unlike other approaches, DBT-S does not assume that people have the ability to change without new learning. In fact, it can be invalidating for others to expect you to change without assessing whether effective behaviors are in place to make it happen. Simply put, overcoming symptoms of mental illness and giving-up substance use is easier said than done and is not simply an issue of desire or “getting” and “staying” motivated. In DBT-S, we believe that a sense of motivation is accomplished by stringing together effective behaviors that are acknowledged, reinforced, and that work in getting you more of what you want and less of what you do not want. *The power of change comes through skills!*

In DBT-S, you will learn skills to:

- Manage painful emotions and crisis
- Manage harmful urges including urges to use substances
- Engage in healthy and enjoyable behaviors
- Regulate emotions
- Increase positive emotions
- Step out of behaviors that maintain negative emotions
- Set limits (boundaries) with others, say no, and ask for what you want or need
- Make and take care of relationships
- Create a more satisfying life

Learning skills requires some study and a lot of practice. After learning about some initial ideas and philosophies about dialectics and stages of change that will guide your recovery, you may be ready to start work on exercises that define your goals, your barriers to reaching them, and how to use skills to learn from mistakes and make progress. These exercises also include developing skill plans that include the *Suicide and Self-Injurious Behavior Prevention Plan*, the *Substance Use Behaviors Prevention Plan*, the *Mental Health Symptom Response Plan*, and ultimately the *Health Maintenance Plan*.

These exercises and plans are intended to get you thinking about and, most importantly, employing new behaviors. Start with the plan that addresses your greatest areas of difficulty as decided in collaboration with your therapist. Note that the intention is to get you going with the skillful behaviors that you already have in place. You will develop even more strategies as you progress through skills training.

As you work through each relevant plan, bear in mind that many substance use and mental illness symptoms are intertwined. Cross-reference and revise among the skill plans. You may ultimately choose to use the information from each plan to create your own customized integrated plan. Down the road, the *Health Maintenance Plan* will be the capstone when you have met most of your treatment goals and are maintaining your progress.

Creating a more satisfying life is a byproduct of effective action that generalizes to all aspects of your life. Keep mindfully practicing skills in your plans until they become a part of your behavioral repertoire and create lasting changes.

If you have this book, or if you are in a treatment program, it is a given that you have chosen to consider change, even if it is to please someone else. Your goals will vary depending on whether you are ready to embark on change now versus simply considering change. Even if you do not think you need to change anything, keep an open mind to DBT-S skills...*They are life skills that can apply to anyone, with or without problems, in any phase of life.*

What Are Dialectics?

Dialectics refer to a way of understanding and resolving the tensions that happen within us, between us, and in the world at large. A few basic assumptions make up dialectics:

- We experience opposing tensions, often perceived as contradictory. As noted above, these tensions can be internal or can happen between people and/or in situations. These dialectical conflicts, in which different positions arise, happen continuously. For example, many people in therapy experience the tension between doing what is familiar (staying the same) and doing something new (change).
- Each position in tension or conflict has its own truth or validity depending on the vantage point. There is no such thing as absolute or complete truth, and even the most contradictory ideas or forces have their own validity and are interrelated. No one position can exist without a relationship to another, with each part making up a larger whole. In the present example, there are valid reasons to stay the same and valid reasons to change, and all of those reasons are intertwined.
- Resolution of dialectical tensions or conflict occurs when one opposing force gradually or suddenly overcomes another, creating movement, change, a new synthesis, and ultimately a new dialectical tension. In this “stay the same versus change” example, each resolution point between the tensions leads to a movement of one type or another. Choosing to try something different, like using a skill, is an easily seen change. But even choosing to stay the same creates change too, though not always as easily seen. Doing what is familiar creates a new context that will lead to a new tension or conflict.
- Having all sorts of opposing tensions that lead to change is continual, and we make the most effective choices when we seek to understand the dialectic nature of our conflicts.

As you proceed through treatment, you may experience several common dialectical tensions:

Self-Acceptance versus Making Personal Changes

The inter-relatedness of these concepts is apparent. Self-acceptance is oftentimes the prerequisite to making personal changes (and is change itself). There are times and places for both.

Doing Your Best versus Needing To Do Better

At any given time you (and others) are doing the very best that you can with what you have. When you accept this assumption, you find compassion and self-acceptance. Yet doing your best is dialectically counter-balanced by the need to do better. That is the reason you are practicing skills to create a more satisfying life.

The next page has a list of frequent dialectical conflicts. Consider how each tension between these perceived opposites relates to your life (or the life of someone you know).

Frequent Dialectical Tensions

Following are common dialectical conflicts. See if any of these conflicts relate to you and brainstorm what approaches or skills could be helpful to resolve them effectively. Also think about and discuss other dialectical tensions that frequent your life and how to navigate them effectively.

Wanting to be different yet resisting change

*Being pulled into versus stepping out of unskillful behaviors
(related to substance use and/or mental illness)*

Wanting to use yet knowing it will be harmful

Seeing only one side to a situation

Being independent yet still needing help

Taking things personally when it isn't about you

Having a mismatch between your values and behaviors

Deciding a relapse means total failure

Wanting to be like others who don't struggle with substances

Feeling good in the moment with substances knowing it will lead to feeling lousy later

Deciding between a lie or the truth

Wanting respect but not practicing respect

Telling too much versus too little to others

Balancing your wants and needs with those of others

Separating feelings and facts

Staying non-judgmental in difficult situations

Leaving open options to act unskillfully

Taking an "all or nothing" approach to anything

Indulgence versus restriction

Balancing emotion with reason

Having your goals conflict with your current behaviors

Dialectical Abstinence

In DBT-S, dialectical abstinence means that you take the (undialectical) stance that alcohol and drug use is so destructive to your life that you commit to only to one side of the dialectic: working on sobriety. This one hundred percent commitment means that your sole focus is on learning and using skills to establish and maintain abstinence (Koerner, 2012).

It is a reality that many people who work on getting and staying sober have setbacks. If you make a mistake or have a slip, the goal is to remember dialectical abstinence and your 100% commitment to avoid a full-blown relapse. You do this by quickly repairing your mistake and throwing yourself completely back into your goal(s). What you want to avoid is giving up and working against yourself by making one mistake a bigger one, or worse yet, a series of bigger ones. If you were climbing a mountain and lost your footing, you would quickly re-stabilize, check your anchors, make necessary adjustments, and get back to climbing; you would not just throw yourself off!

As other analogies, successful people in any pursuit (e.g., parenting, business, sports) make mistakes, but the key difference between them and less successful people is that they actively learn from mistakes, sometimes mining their greatest opportunities from them. If a parent yelled at his child, the goal would be to learn and practice more skillful parenting, not to practice more yelling or escalate into extremely ineffective parenting. If a businessperson lost an account, she would learn and correct the mistake in the future, not commit the same error with her other accounts too. And if a pitcher gave up a home run, he would re-group and continue to try his best to get strikeouts, not just give up and start throwing slow, easily hittable pitches!

One hundred percent commitment to doing better flows from the skills of self-acceptance and being non-judgmental. Beating yourself up and getting into judgments is counter-productive to your goals and will not help you to do better. Remember the basic assumption that you are doing your best and need to do better, and resolve yourself to learn from mistakes. Use behavioral analysis with your therapist(s) and the philosophies promoted in this book to learn from relapses. This approach will improve your progress toward abstinence and a better life.

Note that the concept of dialectical abstinence can be used with other problems too, such as making a 100% commitment not to act on harmful thoughts such as suicide, self-injury, or substance use, and/or not to fall into behaviors that feed into symptoms of mental illness.

Stages of Change Descriptions and Worksheet

Change is continual, and we are continually changing. Change is also a process, and research has demonstrated that a process of change transcends all models of therapy and is at the heart of self-change efforts too. Regardless of where you are at in the stages of change, you are in the *process*. It is also noteworthy that you may be in different stages of change with different behaviors.

Each stage of change is listed below with a description of it. Based on these descriptions and other relevant information, discuss the stage that applies to you with your therapist(s) and fellow program members, as well as what might be helpful to move you to the next stage of your recovery.

Some general categories to guide you include information, support, supportive challenge, assistance in planning, problem-solving, and recognition of actions. Research has shown that people intuitively know a lot about what is needed to change, so tap into your intuitive knowledge to discover what will be useful.

From this discussion, record what will help in the space that follows the stage that best captures where you are at in recovery from mental health symptoms and/or substance use. When describing what you need, try to be as *specific* as possible.

Revisit this exercise throughout your treatment to determine where you are at in the change process and what you would benefit from at each step.

Precontemplation: In this stage people feel like they do not have problems aside from others bothering them about doing something different. People in this stage may also feel resigned and hopeless, perhaps thinking that the current state of affairs is their destiny.

What will help you most at this stage?

Contemplation: This stage is characterized by knowing that problems exist, but not being ready to do anything about it. Sometimes people can be in this stage for a long time. Knowing that change is a journey, many contemplators do not yet feel up to the journey.

What will help you most at this stage?

Preparation: At the transition from contemplation to preparation, the focus on solutions and the future start to solidify. Because doubts about change often still exist during preparation, it is beneficial to make intentions to change public to bolster resolve. Chances of long-term success are improved by careful assessment and planning and not rushing too fast into action. Any journey requires careful preparation to go the distance.

What will help you most at this stage?

Action: This stage is most easily identified as change (although all of the stages are equally important in the process of change). During action people are actively moving down the road toward the destination, whether that means sobriety or overcoming the symptoms of mental illness. During this stage you will be actively learning, practicing, and using skills to tackle specific issues and to create a better life.

What will help you most at this stage?

Maintenance: This stage is a time when people work to reinforce their accomplishments and to prevent lapses into old behavior. Maintenance is an active process that requires ongoing attention to the continuation of new behaviors and skills while avoiding and planning for the pitfalls that accompany the reappearance or threatened reappearance of old behaviors.

What will help you most at this stage?

Termination: Some people ultimately reach a place in which the temptations, urges, and difficulties that could trigger a setback no longer have any hold over them. Other people stay in maintenance for the long-term: both stages represent the culmination of great efforts in realizing change.

Setbacks and Change: What It Means

Many people feel demoralized by setbacks, slips, or relapses. Often these occurrences reinforce a sense of being powerless or hopeless. Thankfully, the evidence shows that setbacks are simply a part of change, and not a hindrance to it! People who successfully change problem behaviors have starts and stops, ups and downs, and they sometimes revisit earlier stages of change after a relapse.

The excellent book *Changing for Good* (Prochaska, Norcross, & DiClemente, 1994) has a wonderful metaphor for the process of change. The authors state that changing behavior is like climbing the Leaning Tower of Pisa. As you climb the tower there are times when you are clearly rising up, but when you circle back to the leaning direction it seems like you are going back down, at least until you circle back up. Overall, you are making progress up the tower, especially if you seek to learn from the “down” times.

This book sometimes uses words like setback and relapse, but the change authors noted above like to use the word “recycle” to emphasize that we learn from all efforts toward change. Each effort toward change has its lessons that can be used for the next attempt and, like recycling, the material of what was is transformed into something new.

Conscientious people do not judge their recyclables to be useless and throw them in the garbage. Instead, they make sure their recyclables make it to the recycling center. Treatment is your recycling center when steps forward are interrupted by a step back.

Make your mistakes useful. As Albert Einstein said, “Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.”

Along these lines, if you fall back, remember the acronym SLIP. In DBT-S, SLIP¹⁰ stands for:

Skills

Learning

Improves

Progress

The following exercise will put this concept into action.

¹⁰ In other substance use treatments SLIP has stood for “Sobriety Loses Its Priority.” This definition implies a loss of motivation or desire to do well and seems inherently judgmental. The author has redefined this acronym to better fit DBT-S philosophies and to emphasize learning.

Skills Learning Improves Progress Worksheet —————

What made you vulnerable to the SLIP?

What triggered the SLIP?

What were the consequences of the SLIP (for both you and others)?

What did you learn from the SLIP?

What skills can you use to avoid a similar SLIP?

What skills can you use to deal with the consequences (so they do not become vulnerabilities)?

What skills can you use to make amends with yourself?

What skills can you use to make amends with others?

What are you committed to do to move forward?

With whom are you going to share this commitment?

Suicide and Self-Injurious Behavior Prevention Plan

Complete this plan as a primary goal of treatment to build awareness about your suicidal and/or self-injurious patterns and to develop alternatives to them. As you learn more skills, revise the plan, and remember to review it daily and to practice it.

List the reasons why you want to work on eliminating suicidal and self-injurious behaviors:

List the short- and long-term consequences that often follow suicidal and/or self-injurious behaviors and/or how these behaviors interfere with your goals and life:

List your strengths and resources to avoid suicidal and self-injurious behaviors including skills and behaviors that have helped in the past:

List what makes you vulnerable to suicidal and/or self-injurious behaviors (e.g., consider feelings, thoughts, behaviors, what is or is not happening in relationships and your environment, self-care issues, etc.):

List the skills and behaviors you can use to decrease your vulnerability to suicidal and/or self-injurious behaviors:

List the warning signs that often lead to suicidal and/or self-injurious behaviors (i.e., indications that you are in the danger zone):

List the skills and behaviors you can use to respond effectively to your warning signs:

List primary triggers that immediately precede and "set off" suicidal and/or self-injurious behaviors (e.g., consider feelings, thoughts, behaviors, what is or is not happening in relationships and your environment, self-care issues, etc.):

List the skills and behaviors you can use effectively to remove and/or respond to your primary triggers and urges:

List ways you can burn the bridge between your urges and reacting with suicidal and/or self-injurious behaviors:

List the self-care skills and behaviors that decrease your overall vulnerability and that are important to use at all times:

List the skills and behaviors to replace suicidal and/or self-injurious behaviors and to tolerate distress and/or crisis:

List the people in your personal support system, their contact information, and their availability:

List the people in your professional support system, their contact information, and their availability:

**If you are unable to maintain your safety with suicidal behaviors,
call 911 or go to the hospital for assistance.**

Substance Use Behavior Prevention Plan

Complete this plan as a primary goal of treatment to build awareness about your substance use patterns and to develop alternatives to substance use. As you learn more skills, revise the plan, remember to review it daily, and practice it. If you have a SLIP (Skills Learning Improves Progress), use that situation to revise and add to this plan.

List the reasons why you want to work on decreasing substance use and/or achieving and maintaining abstinence:

List the short- and long-term consequences that often follow substance use and/or how substance use interferes with your goals and life:

List your strengths and resources for decreasing use and/or achieving and maintaining abstinence, including skills and behaviors that have helped in the past:

List what makes you vulnerable to substance use (e.g., consider feelings, thoughts, behaviors, what is or is not happening in relationships and your environment, self-care issues):

List the skills and behaviors you can employ to decrease your vulnerability to use substances:

List the warning signs that often lead to substance use (i.e., indications that you are in the danger zone):

List the skills and behaviors you can use to effectively respond to your warning signs:

List primary triggers that immediately precede and "set off" substance use urges and/or substance use itself (e.g., consider feelings, thoughts, behaviors, what is or is not happening in relationships and your environment, self-care issues):

List the skills and behaviors you can use to effectively remove and/or respond to your primary triggers and urges:

List ways you can burn the bridge between your urges and reacting with substance use:

List the self-care skills and behaviors that decrease your overall vulnerability and that are important to use at all times:

List skills and behaviors to replace substance use and to tolerate distress and/or crisis:

List the people in your personal support system, their contact information, and their availability:

List the people in your professional support system, their contact information, and their availability:

If you have a SLIP, describe your action plan for minimizing the mistake, repairing it, and getting back to your goal of decreasing substance use and/or achieving and maintaining abstinence:

Mental Health Symptoms Response Plan

Complete this plan as a primary goal of treatment to build awareness about your symptom patterns and to develop effective ways of managing them. As you learn more skills, revise the plan, remember to review it daily, and practice it.

List the reasons why you want to work on decreasing and managing your symptoms of mental illness:

List your diagnosis and the symptoms you experience:

List the short- and long-term consequences of your symptoms not being actively managed and how these symptoms interfere with your goals and your life:

List your strengths and resources for decreasing and managing your symptoms, including skills and behaviors that have helped in the past:

List the vulnerabilities that might lead to a worsening of your symptoms (e.g., consider feelings, thoughts, behaviors, what is or is not happening in relationships and your environment, self-care issues):

List the warning signs that your symptoms might worsen:

List the skills and behaviors you can use to respond effectively to your warning signs:

List primary triggers that immediately precede and "set off" an increase in symptoms (e.g., consider feelings, thoughts, behaviors, what is or is not happening in relationships and your environment, self-care issues):

List the skills and behaviors you can use effectively to remove and/or respond to your primary triggers and urges:

List the self-care skills and behaviors that decrease your overall vulnerability and that are important to use at all times:

List the skills and behaviors to decrease and manage your symptoms and tolerate distress and/or crisis:

List the people in your personal support system, their contact information, and their availability:

List the people in your professional support system, their contact information, and their availability:

Health Maintenance Plan

Complete this plan when you have entered the maintenance stage of recovery with substance use and mental illness symptoms.

Describe how maintaining abstinence and managing mental health symptoms has improved your life:

List the self-care skills that you continue to use daily to maintain your recovery:

Describe the vulnerabilities and triggers that could lead to a relapse of substance use and/or mental illness symptoms:

List the primary skills and behaviors that you use daily to maintain your recovery:

List the secondary skills and behaviors that you use daily to maintain your recovery:

List the personal and professional supports you use to maintain your recovery:

Your Life Vision (LV)

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Knowing why you want change motivates you to change.

A vision for your life helps to define your priorities, goals, and values and the roads you want to explore on your journey. Fill in each section of this worksheet and refer to it often. Do not judge what you write down: It is your vision based on your wants, needs, and dreams. You will start with a big picture and then fill in details. Imagine you are painting a picture of a life you can work toward.

Look to revise the picture every few months as you grow and improve. We are all works in progress, so changes will happen. Use the information from this exercise for treatment planning with your therapist.

It is difficult for some people to imagine a satisfying life, especially when they feel hopeless and out of options. If this is your situation, fill in what you can today and do not judge yourself for struggling with this exercise. As you learn skills over time, your Life Vision will come into focus.



Life Vision: Big Picture

Describe your priorities, goals, and values in life. What is important to you? What is your motivation to improve? How would you like life to be different? What would/will you be doing if you managed life more effectively? What are your dreams in life?

Describe what you do effectively and what you want to improve on in each of the following areas. See how what you do and what you want to improve on will be part of the big picture. Remember that even small details can impact your Life Vision in important ways. Create one manageable goal for each area that builds on what you do effectively or that addresses a desired improvement. Keep in mind that your goals may change each time you review and revise this section.

Mental health:

Physical health:

Chemical health (avoiding drugs and alcohol):

Education (school or self-education):

Productivity (work or projects):

Volunteering or contributions:

Finances:

Home environment:

Leisure:

Family:

Friends:

Spirituality (religion or other connection):

Choose one to three of your goals in these areas to get started on, and refer to them often.

Describe your strengths and other resources that will help you move toward your goal(s):

Describe how your life will be different when you accomplish your goal(s):

Mindfulness Module

Mindfulness has been around since the dawn of humankind. The essence of mindfulness is the ability to collect and focus our attention, to sustain our concentration and to make responsive choices in how to direct our mental processes and subsequent behavior. To be responsive, we need to be awake and connected to each here-and-now moment.

The pursuit of mindfulness is like the pursuit of physical fitness: There is no finish line or terminal goal to reach. Instead, the daily practice of mental and physical fitness is worthwhile in and of itself in order to be as healthy as possible. Research continues to show that mindfulness practice has lasting positive effects both in terms of brain neurochemistry and in overall health.

Many of us suffer from what could be called an “untrained” mind. Like a body that has not been systematically exercised, an untrained mind does not perform well. It falls victim, often without awareness, to intense emotions and urges and to the never-ending barrage of stimulation that is encountered daily. This type of unquiet mind creates stress that is expressed both mentally and physically, and the deficits in sustaining and directing attention and concentration in the service of making responsive choices leads to a reactive lifestyle.

Just as physical exercise leads to optimal physical performance and relaxes the body, mindfulness exercise creates optimal mental performance and ultimately relaxes and quiets the mind, leading to peace, serenity, and more responsive living.

DBT-S has specific states of mind and core mindfulness skills to practice daily to train the mind and be more effective in life. This section will also cover awareness of emotional cycles, substance use cycles, and triggers for substance use.

As you practice the skills in the mindfulness module, remember the words of a famous Koan:

Before enlightenment, chop wood and carry water; after enlightenment, chop wood and carry water.

States of Mind

DBT-S identifies three basic states of mind: “Emotion Mind,” “Reason Mind,” and “Wise Mind.” As seen in the diagram below, Wise Mind is the dialectic balance between emotion and reason.



None of the states of mind are good or bad, or right or wrong. Instead of judging states of mind, we simply consider if a given state is helpful or works in a given situation, or if a shift to another spot on the continuum would be more effective.

For example, being in emotion mind can be quite effective sometimes, in particular if you need to be motivated into action quickly. Think about how a spike in fear motivates you to study for that test in an hour. Because emotions have the adaptive function of organizing and motivating behavior, some degree of emotion is inherently useful in most situations.

That said, emotion mind can be a difficult place to be stuck, especially when emotions and urges seem overwhelming and never-ending. Seeing just from emotion mind often leads us to try to escape and avoid discomfort through rejecting and invalidating emotions and getting into unhealthy coping behaviors such as self-harm and substance use. In addition to escape and avoidance behaviors, emotion mind can lead to mood-congruent behaviors; these type of behaviors typically feed emotions and continue to create the same unwanted emotions over and over again. Examples of mood-congruent behaviors include isolating when depressed, avoiding when anxious, and getting into hostile or passive-aggressive behaviors when angry.

Like emotion mind, reason mind can be effective too. Occasionally there are problems that require a purely logical response. As examples, creating a budget on a fixed income may require reason mind, or working through a protocol during an emergency may require reason mind.

However, reason mind also has its pitfalls. Being stuck in reason mind can lead to the neglect of emotions, which can result in intensifying them over time. An example includes intellectualizing, a thinking behavior where excessive reasoning leads one to avoid uncomfortable emotional experiences. Like escape and avoidance through substance use or other behaviors, ignoring emotions through maintaining a purely “logical” position tends to be self-defeating. Staying only in reason mind also means that we cannot benefit from the adaptive information and motivations that come from emotions.

In most situations, we are most effective in Wise Mind. In this state of mind we are awake and connected to emotions along with our ability to reason. Effective action springs responsively from a centered and balanced place, even when strong emotions and urges exist. Wise Mind is both intuitive and thoughtful, and being an expression of the true self, the behaviors we choose from this state of mind reflect true values and intentions.

Clear Mind

For people who struggle with substance use, three additional states of mind can be helpful to guide recovery. These states of mind include “Addiction Mind,” “Clean Mind,” and “Clear Mind.”



When people are still using or are in the early stages of change, they are frequently stuck in what can be called addiction mind. This state of mind is focused on urges and cravings to use along with alcohol- and drug-seeking and planning behaviors. Addiction mind keeps the doors to use wide open. In addiction mind, a myopic view of use keeps people from seeing the consequences of continued use. They are ready and willing to deceive both themselves and others in the pursuit of substance use. From traditional treatment approaches, being in addiction mind is similar to being caught in denial or ambivalence about giving up substances.

Once people have obtained sobriety through treatment or other means, they can then be stuck in what is called clean mind. One example of this state of mind is a “treatment high” in which the person moves quickly forward but neglects underlying issues, making a relapse more likely. Clean mind is also characterized by being naïve to warning signs, triggers, and environmental cues to substance use and not being sufficiently proactive and planful to avoid relapse. In clean mind, people may also fall into the trap of believing that they have enough behavioral control to go back to “moderate” use.

As with Wise Mind, ultimately we want to move into Clear Mind. From traditional treatment approaches, Clear Mind is similar to being in the responsive state of sustained recovery. In Clear Mind, strong emotions and urges are non-judgmentally acknowledged and respected, and people are proactive and planful about how to handle them. Clear Mind has no illusions about how falling into old behaviors and relapsing can occur subtly and outside of awareness without sufficient practice of mindfulness, self-care, and use of resources. *The path to Clear Mind comes from decreasing use, achieving abstinence, managing physical and psychological discomfort, dealing effectively with urges, and keeping doors to use closed while working on skills to build a satisfying life.* In Clear Mind, the continued practice of effective behaviors happens moment by moment, one day at a time, even after many years of abstinence.

The Path to Wise Mind (WM)

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** The What and How skills lead us to Wise Mind.

Wise Mind is less elusive when we understand the skills used to lead us there: Observe, Describe, and Participate are the What skills. In other words, these three skills are *what* we do to get to Wise Mind. Nonjudgmentally, One-mindfully, and Effectively are the How skills. In other words, these three skills are *how* we apply the What skills to get to Wise Mind.

Although each What and How skill is described individually, remember that they work together to refine our connection with experience and bring us to Wise Mind. To orient yourself to use these skills, practice the directives of this mantra:

Pause, breath, center . . . enter

What skills

Observe

Notice your experience without adding to it or subtracting from it, without amplifying it or pushing it away. Let the experience pass through like clouds drifting in the sky or scenery passing by a car window. Cling to nothing.

Use your senses to gather information. What is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched? What is happening in your mind and body?

Note your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors as well as other people, your situation, and the environment—look inside *and* outside yourself. Notice what is happening physically in your body and the associated sensations. Direct your attention and decide what enters and what stays out; open and close your mental windows with intention.

Describe

Outline the details of your observations with specific descriptions. Use words to bring your observations to life. Language frequently makes greater sense of experience than thought alone. Clarify your experience for yourself and others.

Do not get caught in analyzing your thoughts, feelings, sensations, impulses, and urges. Instead, remember that thoughts are just thoughts, feelings are just feelings, sensations are just sensations, and impulses and urges are just impulses and urges. You are not your mind, and these experiences are not commands.

Participate

Observe and Describe bring awareness to experience. Use this awareness to make choices and to become one with your experience. Go from simply watching your experience to being connected to your experience. Ultimately, *be in* your experience. Inhabit it.

Choose whether you want to stay with and relate further to your experience or redirect your Observe and Describe skills. Recognize whether you are participating in symptoms or problems and choose to participate in skills instead. Redirect your attention and what you participate in based on your wisdom of what works and not simply out of aversion to your experience or a desire to escape from your experience.

Practice these skills until they flow naturally from you.

How skills

Nonjudgmentally

Stick to the facts without coloring them with opinions. Focus on who, what, where, when, and how like an objective reporter. Use respectful language to describe yourself, others, and situations. Be impeccable with your words.

Remember that “good” and “bad” judgments are relative and may not be useful. Sometimes what appears to be desirable can be suffering in disguise, and sometimes problems are hidden opportunities.

Stay away from judgments that amplify or reduce experience or get you stuck in a painful experience by adding suffering. Instead, simply accept what is.

When you observe judgments, gently let go of them. We all judge, so do not amplify your judgments by giving them unneeded power.

One-mindfully

Focus on one thing with your complete attention. Distractions from inside and outside you will happen. Practice stepping out of distractions and avoid being consumed by them. Instead, gently notice and let go of distractions that keep you from your focus.

Treat yourself with kindness and compassion as you practice being One-Mindful and accept distractions instead of judging them. Do not trade the present moment for judgment mind.

If your attention gets divided, stop and focus your attention on what you choose to experience. Be in the here and now with one mind.

Effectively

Do what works best based on the demands of the situation as it is and not what you would prefer it to be. Do not spend your energies fighting reality, which does not unfold according to your preferences and desires.

Do not act out of judgments and a need to be “right.” Instead, stay connected to your goals, priorities, and values and use them as guides to act as skillfully as possible.

Use Willingness to get from point “A” to point “B” to accomplish your goals. Remove your own complications and barriers to get out of your own way.

Train yourself to be responsive to experience rather than reactive to experience. Doing what works is a reflection of Wise Mind.

Focus on Nonjudgmental Stance (NJS)

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Understand judgments and when to let them go.

Judgments (nonjudgmentally speaking!) are not “good” or “bad” or “right” or “wrong.” In fact, judgments can be quite useful at times when we need to label, categorize, and move on or when we simply want to communicate quickly.

It is easier to say that the weather is “bad” than Observing and Describing every detail of the forecast to justify staying home during a storm. Similarly, we might say we have had a “good” day to quickly let others know that problems have been minimal or handled effectively.

Judgments have likely been useful in other ways too. If most men or most women have hurt you in life, judgments about that sex might keep you safe psychologically or even physically in some situations.

However, judgments are less effective when they become overgeneralized or rigid and when we are unable to shift them based on new or different information and experiences. Judgments that no longer work cause strong, ongoing negative emotions and interfere with you meeting your wants and needs. If judgments result in you clashing with a variety of people over time, this might be a sign that Nonjudgmental Stance could be worthwhile.

To see whether judgments might be more or less useful, try to see whether they are “Teflon” judgments or “sticky” judgments. We have no personal investment in or strong emotional reactions to Teflon judgments. These types of judgments can be readily revised when we take in more or different information. In fact, these judgments can be useful when we need to quickly make a decision and move on.

Sticky judgments act like tinted or colored glasses that shade almost everything around us. Because we are committed to these judgments, we refuse to take off those glasses to see ourselves, others, situations, and the world in a different light. Sticky judgments do not help us move on but weigh us down like rocks in a backpack. If you find that your “backpack” is full of heavy judgments, it may be time to take it off, put it down, and gently start to remove those rocks (and use one to smash your tinted glasses, metaphorically speaking of course!).

Focus on One-Mindfulness (OM)

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Direct yourself back to One-Mindfulness when your attention is divided.

We can clarify One-Mindfulness through examples of divided attention and mindlessness. When we find ourselves in these situations, we go back to the What and How skills to be One-Mindful.

Continual partial attention

Many of us go through our days attending to multiple stimuli simultaneously without giving any one thing our full and complete attention. We eat while watching TV and check our email while in the presence of our families. We think about our problems in the middle of a conversation or during an otherwise positive experience. We talk on the phone while driving and choose to distract ourselves from everyday tasks rather than attending to them. We escape the small moments rather than recognizing that life *is* the small moments.

The result is disconnected attention and incomplete connections. When you notice this continual partial attention, stop, make a choice, and focus on one thing. Continued partial attention is also called the “unquiet mind” or “monkey mind.”

Multitasking

We have been misled to believe that multitasking is a strength and is desired. In reality, we can only multitask when behaviors are overlearned or automatic. In these cases, we do not use our conscious minds but instead act like robots.

When we try to multitask with behaviors and in situations that require our conscious attention, we are not actually doing more than one activity at once. Rather, we are shifting our attention back and forth. This approach requires much more mental energy and sets us up to make mistakes.

To illustrate, try this multitasking experiment with two independently easy tasks and notice the outcome: First, count from 1 to 26 as quickly as possible, noting the time. Next, say the ABCs as quickly as possible, again noting the time. Add up the times of these two tasks done one-mindfully. Now, try a true multitasking activity. Time yourself as you alternate performing the tasks of counting and reciting the ABCs (i.e., 1 A 2 B 3 C 4 D and so on). Notice the difference in time, energy, and accuracy.

As another example, you may notice that your computer progressively slows as you have more and more functions open. Your computer is programmed to “multitask,” but at some point it spends more time switching and reorienting than actually working. It may even shut down. Your computer’s limitations mirror our own limited capacity to spread out our focus. Work on doing one thing at a time as a habit.

Automatic behaviors

Automatic behaviors include anything you can do unconsciously or without thought. While not recommended, most of us can drive, carry on basic conversations, and do most activities of daily living with virtually no attention or connection.

Automatic behaviors can be useful at times. In fact, sometimes automatic behaviors can be highly effective, such as when someone automatically follows an overlearned protocol in an emergency situation or when you swerve or hit your brakes to avoid an automobile accident.

The other side of the dialectic is that automatic behaviors remove us from the here and now of life and deprive us of basic pleasures. A great exercise is being mindful of your automatic behaviors, step by step, with intention. Examples include mindfully preparing and eating meals, driving with your full attention, and taking a shower or bath with awareness of the experience. Any thought or behavior in your day can be attended to one-mindfully.

Observing and Describing the Effects of Substance Use

Different substances have both different and similar effects on people's lives. The goal of this exercise is to build awareness about the impacts that the substances you use (or have used) have on areas of your life. If you are not sure that the substances you use cause problems for you (or think that they do not), then observe and describe the impacts these substances have on other people who do have problems with them. *Also "fast-forward" and observe and describe concerns you (or others) have about longer-term consequences of your substance use.*

Use information from your therapist(s), program members, books, the internet, discussion, and other sources to complete this exercise. If you are not sure if the information you found is accurate, be sure to inquire further and/or ask someone who knows (e.g., a therapist, physician, or other expert).

Note that this exercise can be done with other problem behaviors too, like chronic suicidal behaviors, self-injury, gambling, over-eating, or any other behaviors that cause undesirable consequences.

Describe how substance use affects the following areas of your life:

Mental Health:

Physical Health:

Spiritual Health:

Family:

Friends:

Education/Self-learning:

Work/Volunteering/Productivity:

Leisure:

Other areas:

Cycle of Emotions and Substance Use ---

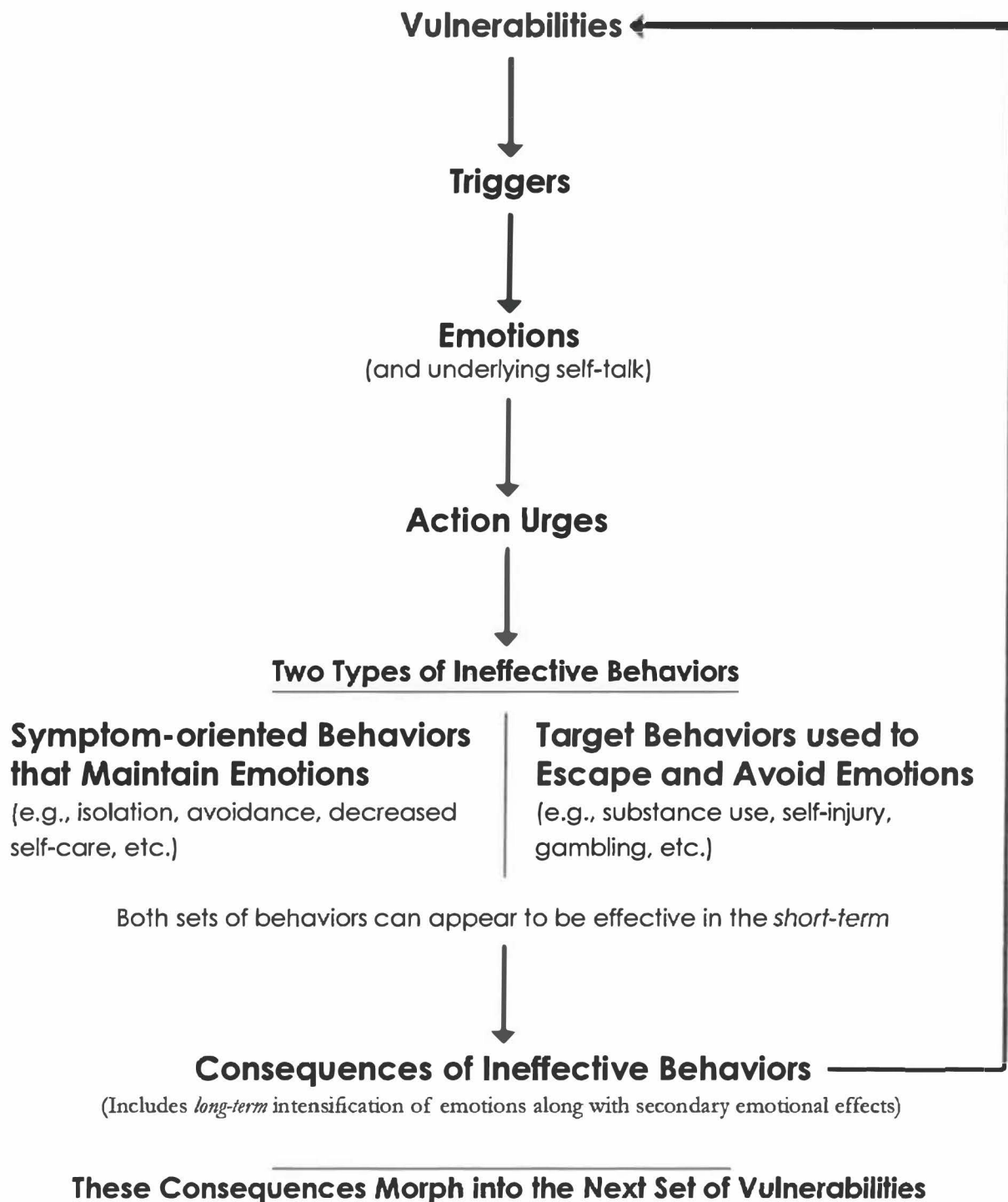
The following page outlines how emotions and substance use follow a cyclical pattern. Notice how vulnerabilities, triggers, emotions and action urges pull us into ineffective behaviors in an attempt to cope. These ineffective behaviors usually fall into two categories: mood-congruent behaviors that maintain mood states or escape and avoidance behaviors to get away from mood states.

These ineffective behaviors often meet short-term needs, but their consequences can intensify the emotions that we needed help with in the first place. Further, these ineffective behaviors can cause other secondary painful emotions like regret, guilt, and shame among others. These consequences then feed into the next vulnerabilities at the top of the cycle. Over time, ineffective coping can become an addiction, where you can become psychologically and/or physically dependent on it.

Study this cycle and use the accompanying handout to identify the specifics of your emotions and substance use cycle. As you complete it, start to think of ways to skillfully intervene at each part of the cycle; each potential problem is an opportunity for practice. Also consider that both substance use and symptoms of mental illness need to be addressed at the same time to effective.

As you learn more about your cycle and its components, consider how you will use that information in your skills plan(s).

Mental Illness and Substance Use Cycle



Observing and Describing a Process of Relapse —

The following exercise discusses common elements that contribute to a relapse. It is important to know that a relapse is not simply an event but a process. Sometimes this process happens quickly, and at other times it may unfold over days, months, or even longer.

Gaining awareness of how this process unfolds can help you to be proactive in how you can minimize risk and maximize effective coping to stay on track toward your goals. Use your substance use and mental health history and behavior patterns to discover your relapse process and transfer what you discover to your skills plans.

1) Vulnerabilities Thrive

Vulnerabilities frequently begin with a lack of adequate self-care. When people are not getting enough sleep, exercise, and nutrition, it is difficult to be emotionally regulated. If you have cut down or eliminated substance use, the discomfort that comes with withdrawal symptoms is a set-up to relapse without careful attention to helping your body and mind recover (this occasionally happens after a long, sustained period of abstinence too).

Inadequate self-care paired with too much stress (e.g., work, school, financial, housing issues, isolation and/or other relationship problems) can make it especially hard to resist substances.

Additionally, not actively working on creating a satisfying life without substances leaves a lot of opportunities to fall into old behavioral patterns, as does unnecessarily exposing yourself to people, places, situations, and things that are high risk when vulnerabilities are strong.

Describe the vulnerabilities that apply to you, including additional vulnerabilities not listed:

Describe the skills you need to practice to address these vulnerabilities:

2) Strong Feelings, Cravings, and Urges Build

Unchecked vulnerabilities feed strong emotions, especially when people are predisposed to anxiety, depression, anger, or another type of emotion dysregulation. Vulnerabilities also lead to strong cravings and urges, especially if substance use had short-term benefits in the past. In an emotional moment, urges can seem like they last forever.

Describe the feelings, cravings, and urges that can be difficult to manage:

Describe the skills you need to practice to address these feelings, cravings, and urges:

3) Thinking about Substance Use Becomes a Preoccupation

At this part of the process people can become preoccupied with substance use. You may minimize or rationalize using or get into another type of “stuck thinking” that will not work for you. You may convince yourself that substance use will work and not be any big deal, “just this time.” Or you may tell yourself that it is hopeless and does not matter anyway.

Describe what you have told yourself in your mind (i.e., your self-talk) about substance use before a relapse happens. Also describe how your self-talk at those times appears to you in retrospect:

Describe the skills you need to practice to address this self-talk:

4) Planning a Relapse in Your Mind

At some point thinking might shift into planning. What are you going to use, where will it happen, who will you be with, or how will you plan the time you need to do it alone? How will you keep it secret or minimize it to others? At this point you are practicing in your mind what does not work in your life.

Describe how your planning at those times appears to you in retrospect:

Describe the skills you need to practice to address “mental planning”:

5) Putting Your Plans into Motion

At this point you are taking active steps to use substances. You decide to drive to the liquor store or to call a friend who is “holding.” You call in sick to work and go to a bar, or you take some other behavioral steps. While each of these steps is an opportunity to change course and make a u-turn, the farther you go down this road, the more difficult it is to avoid a SLIP.

At this stage you are in emotion and addiction mind, and need to work toward Wise and Clear Mind.

Describe how putting your plans into motion at those times appears to you in retrospect:

Describe the skills you need to practice to address behavioral steps toward use:

6) Having a SLIP

A SLIP is the final destination in this process: This is actual use. The task now is to revisit dialectical abstinence as soon as possible, to quickly repair the mistake, and to learn from it as you recommit to your goals. A step in a different, skillful direction is needed.

Describe what you have learned from your SLIPs and how it can improve your progress:

Describe the skills you need to practice to minimize and/or avoid SLIPs:

Breathing: The Anchor to Mindfulness

Breathing is the essence of life and the most fundamental anchor to come mindfully back to the present moment. Breathing can also be considered to be an “incompatible skill” in that practicing it is directly incompatible with many problem emotions, urges, and behaviors. Once you have practiced breathing, you will find that it counters stress, anxiety, anger, and impulsivity--all issues that commonly contribute to substance use.

There is an Eastern belief that each person has a finite number of breaths, and once that amount is used, the person dies. While this belief is not literally true, it does reflect a great deal of wisdom. If you breathe quickly and shallowly, you never get the optimum amount of oxygen into your body, and your systems run inefficiently, causing a greater load and stress on your body (and you use your finite breaths quickly!). Alternatively, if you practice breathing slowly and deeply, you get the oxygen you need, your systems run better, and not only do you decrease stress, but you find peace and serenity.

Practicing more effective breathing is free, takes relatively little time, and can be done anywhere. To reap its rewards, you must practice breathing exercises at least a few times a day, and dedicate some effort to developing this skill. Remember to be non-judgmental when you practice breathing; the whole point is to engage acceptance by breathing into the moment.

Breathing Exercises

Practice at least one of these exercises at least three times a day and when you feel a strong emotion, have a judgmental thought, or when you feel impulsive or experience an urge. Observe and describe your level of distress before and after each exercise.

- **3-5-7 Breathing Technique:** Start by exhaling completely. Then inhale through your nose for a count of three, hold it for a count of five, and completely exhale through the mouth for a count of seven. Do not be afraid of making a little noise as you exhale!
- **Counting Breaths:** Breathe in and say “one” as you exhale, then continue breathing and counting on each exhalation until you reach 10. Once you reach 10 (or if you lose your count), go back to one. Do this exercise for three to five minutes.
- **Cue to Breathe:** Decide on five to 10 stimuli in your environment that will now “cue” you to take one to three deep breaths. Possible examples of cues to breath include:
 - seeing a certain color
 - having your child misbehave
 - seeing someone you don’t like (or do like)
 - walking through a doorway
 - being at a red light
 - sitting at your computer or workstation
- **Frustration to Peace:** As a variation of the above exercise, pick five common frustrating events that will cue you to breathe deeply. Remember also to practice being non-judgmental and to accept the moment. Try repeating a mantra such as “life is like this” along with your breathing.
- **Bellows Technique:** Breathe rapidly in and out through your nose, trying to get three cycles of inhaling and exhaling in per second. Continue for 10 seconds. This technique is designed to stimulate and give an energy boost.
- **Alternate Nostril:** Hold your left nostril closed and breathe in through your right nostril; then open your left nostril and hold your right nostril closed while you breathe out through the left nostril. Breathe back in through your left nostril, and continue the exercise alternating back and forth. This technique is designed to bring balance.
- **Square Breathing** (Moonshine, 2008): Breathe in for four seconds, hold it for four seconds, breath out for four seconds, repeat four times.

Distress Tolerance Module

Distress tolerance skills replace unhealthy behaviors used to escape, avoid, or otherwise attempt to cope with painful emotions, situations, and crises.

We all have times in life in which we feel overwhelmed and need relief. Sometimes people have learned to cope through using substances, or through other behaviors like over-eating, self-injury, gambling, and/or spending too much money, among other behaviors. While these types of behaviors “solve” the problem in the short-term, they often cause more distress and problems in the long-term, being self-defeating.

It is difficult to give up any behavior without replacing it with something new. The goal of distress tolerance skills is to build a new repertoire of behaviors to replace ways of coping that have lost their usefulness or that have lead to other kinds of distress and problems.

As you learn and practice the skills in this module, add them to your *Substance Use Prevention Plan*, your *Mental Health Symptom Response Plan*, and your *Health Maintenance Plan*. The goal of distress tolerance is to have a full toolbox to handle any type of emotion, problem, or crisis that occurs in your life.

Distress Tolerance Guidelines for Use ---

The effectiveness of distress tolerance is based on knowing when to use these skills and recognizing their limitations. The guidelines listed here identify situations in which distress tolerance is indicated and also to maximize its effectiveness:

- 1. Use distress tolerance when you cannot solve a problem and feel like using substances, acting on urges to harm yourself, or doing anything else that is self-sabotaging.** If you are able to solve your problem, it is an okay time to do so, and you are sufficiently in Wise Mind to do so, then take care of the problem. Otherwise, use distress tolerance.
- 2. Develop your distress tolerance skills and plan before you need them.** Similar to protocols and drills people practice in other emergency situations like fires, dangerous weather, and other crises, you need to know your protocols and drills to follow when crisis happens to you. Plan to be proactive in tolerating distress, and practice your plans! Practicing distress tolerance can keep you in Wise and Clear Mind.
- 3. Continue to diversify your distress tolerance skills.** You cannot have too many options available. Do not get complacent in developing these skills...work to master as many as possible. The more tools you have, the better, especially since many of these skills are short-term strategies.
- 4. When a particular skill does not work, step back and see what is missing.** Maybe you need to use mindfulness too, maybe you have “burnt out” the effectiveness of that skill, or maybe you just need to switch strategies. If so, change it up. If you cannot get over the mountain, walk around it. Sometimes it is not about trying harder, but trying differently.
- 5. Do not give up.** Coach yourself, ask for help, and be responsive (not reactive) to the realities of the situation.

ACCEPTS

Wise Mind allows us to accept distress and orients us toward these skills

Use the acronym **ACCEPTS** to remember the building blocks of this skill: (Activities, Contributing, Comparisons, Emotions, Push Away, Thoughts, Sensations). These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Activities: Activities give you alternatives to substance use, decrease depression, anxiety, and other mental health symptoms, and can create positive emotions. The more invigorating the activity, the better. Throw yourself mindfully into activities without expecting or clinging to certain outcomes. The outcomes take care of themselves when you are on the journey.

Think of all the time dedicated to seeking substances, using them, and recovering from them and/or the time spent stuck in mental health symptoms. You need other stuff to do!

Plan and schedule activities as part of your daily routine and follow through with the plans. Consult the Activities List that follows ACCEPTS.

Contributing: Contributing helps you get out of yourself and your distress and into participating with others and in the world. We all need a break from ourselves, and contributing creates connection and positive feelings.

Assist other people in overcoming their symptoms and in their recovery by being available, supportive, and sharing ideas. Contribute by walking the walk, and being a model for other people.

Comparisons: Comparisons keep us from falling into a dark place through bringing balance and perspective. You can compare yourself to other times when you struggled more or been less effective with skills. You can also compare yourself to others with greater problems than you. Even though you may have it tough, other people have been dealt an even worse hand.

Emotions: Seek out activities, events, and thoughts that create different feelings. Remember that emotions can be influenced by what you choose to do and what you choose to think about.

Listen to music that creates different emotions: loud and fast music when fatigued, calming music when anxious or upset, or uplifting music when sad. Watch favorite shows or movies, fondly remember fun times (without comparing them to your current situation), or work on a project.

Push Away: Push away distress by mentally locking it in a box and putting it on a shelf in a locked room. Make the imagery as vivid as possible, practicing it over and over. Say: “This is a tomorrow problem” and then focus on something else. Or, write down something about the problem and put it away in a drawer or someplace where you will find it when you are ready.

Remember to take out your problem at a safe time to attend to it. Pushing-away is a short-term strategy.

Thoughts: Mindfully focus on distracting thoughts. You can only think about one thing at a time, and your distress will diminish when you focus on other thoughts. The classic example is counting to 10 when angry; thinking about something else (counting) helps us to cool down and be more rational.

Read a magazine or book, do Sudoku or other puzzles, think about inspirational sayings and quotes, listen to the lyrics in music, get into a great conversation, or watch a movie.

Sensations: Sensations include anything that is physically vigorous or actively awakens your senses. The skill is different from the Self-Soothe skills in that it seeks to stimulate rather than relax.

Take a brisk walk or engage in exercise, such as running, swimming, or weight-lifting. Get into a hot or cold bath or shower or splash cold water on your face. Engage your senses with loud music, bold colors, or strong tastes or smells.

Getting Busy with Activities

Symptoms of mental illness and substance use take up a lot of time. As you start to address these issues, you may find that you need to fill that time with healthy and beneficial activities. Below is a list of pleasant activities, many of which are free. Add specific pleasant activities to the list that you enjoy. Make sure to schedule at least three pleasant activities each day. Also, remember to use mindfulness skills with each experience.

1. Go for a walk, jog, or run
2. Fix or ride a bike
3. Watch lectures on YouTube®
4. Refinish furniture
5. Sit on a park bench and people-watch
6. Browse magazines or books at the library
7. Play board games
8. Have a snack mindfully
9. Appreciate a favorite actor or act yourself
10. Read the Bible or other religious text
11. Advocate for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), a political cause, or the environment
12. Stargaze, find constellations, or wonder about the universe
- Read about animals or visit the zoo
13. Appreciate the arts or create your own
14. Play badminton
15. Redecorate or rearrange your house
16. Join a group
17. Have a conversation with a friend or a stranger
18. Watch or play baseball or softball
19. Make crafts
20. Watch, read about, or fly an airplane or build a model
21. Watch or play basketball or play HORSE
22. Bathe or shower mindfully
23. Relax at (or imagine being at) the beach; look for shells or clean up the beach
24. Do beadwork
25. Beatbox, rap, or sing
26. Ring a bell
27. Breathe mindfully
28. Write a short story
29. Bike
30. Feed or watch birds
31. Blog or visit blogs
32. Boat
33. Bowl
34. Bet a *small* amount of money (if you have no gambling issues)
35. Start a fantasy football league (or join one)
36. Play checkers
37. Help the disabled
38. Contribute at a food pantry
39. Bake a cake and decorate it
40. Go geocaching
41. Do calligraphy
42. Camp
43. Make candles or ice candles
44. Canoe
45. Have a picnic in your home
46. Read about cars or go for a drive
47. Do some cheerleading
48. Take a nap
49. Watch one television show mindfully
50. Window-shop (without spending)
51. Play chess
52. Go to church and associated activities
53. Watch clouds
54. Make a sand castle
55. Collect coins
56. Go to an antique shop to browse
57. Collect artwork

58. Collect albums or CDs or look at and listen to old ones
59. Compose music or lyrics
60. Look at architecture in magazines or around town
61. Enjoy perfume or cologne
62. Do computer activities
63. Cook
64. Crochet
65. Cross-stitch
66. Do a crossword puzzle
67. Dance anywhere
68. Play darts (not lawn darts)
69. Look at your collectibles
70. Bowl with friends or in a league
71. Daydream
72. Juggle
73. Play dominoes or set them up to let them fall
74. Draw
75. Eat out or fix a special meal at home
76. Take a community education course or educate yourself on a new topic
77. Tinker with electronics
78. Do embroidery
79. Entertain others
80. Exercise: aerobics, weights, yoga
81. Go fishing
82. Watch or play football
83. Take a hot or cool shower
84. Tell jokes and laugh
85. Go four-wheeling
86. Paint a wall
87. Enjoy or maintain an aquarium
88. Play Frisbee® or disc golf
89. Mend clothes
90. Have a spirited debate (without needing to be right)
91. Join a club
92. Play games
93. Garden
94. Swim
95. Keep a dream journal
96. Hug a friend or family member
97. Visit garage sales
98. Be intimate with a loved one
99. Be a mentor
100. Build a bird house
101. Do genealogy
102. Walk your (or a neighbor's) dog
103. Visit an art museum
104. Go to the movies or watch a favorite DVD
105. Golf
106. Practice putting
107. Give yourself a facial
108. Paint a picture or finger-paint
109. Watch funny YouTube® videos (or post one)
110. Find an activity listed more than once on this list
111. Go go-kart racing
112. Play Texas Hold 'Em
113. Volunteer at the Humane Society
114. Write a letter to the editor
115. Light a candle and enjoy the smell or the flame
116. Play video games
117. Scrapbook
118. Become a pen pal
119. Support any cause
120. Play guitar
121. Write a handwritten letter
122. Hike
123. Do home repair
124. Breathe in fresh air
125. Build a home theater system
126. Record your favorite shows and watch back-to-back
127. Air drum or air guitar to a cool song

128. Ride a horse
129. Write a thank-you letter
130. Hunt
131. Surf the Internet
132. Fix a bike
133. Make jewelry
134. Browse your favorite store
135. Put together a jigsaw puzzle
136. Build a fort with your kids
137. Journal
138. Juggle
139. Kayak
140. See life like a young child
141. Say a prayer
142. Build or fly kites
143. Knit
144. Tie knots
145. Sing a silly song
146. Pick flowers
147. Learn anything new
148. Learn a foreign language
149. Practice telling a joke
150. Learn an instrument
151. Listen to music
152. Macramé
153. Color with kids (or without)
154. Smile at someone
155. Be affectionate
156. Do a magic trick
157. Meditate
158. Use a metal detector
159. Teach a child something
160. Build models
161. Ride or look at motorcycles
162. Play with children
163. Go mountain biking
164. Work with a team
165. Plant an herb garden
166. Go to a community center
167. Grow a Chia® pet
168. Climb a mountain
169. Make a root beer float
170. Lie in the grass
171. Scrapbook
172. Practice a musical instrument
173. Needlepoint
174. Read reviews on a topic of interest
175. Do Origami
176. Play Trivial Pursuit® or any trivia game
177. Clean out a closet and donate unneeded items
178. Plan a movie marathon
179. Look at StumbleUpon.com
180. Join a chat room
181. Play paintball
182. Go to a water park
183. Share something thoughtful found on the Internet
184. Go to a video arcade
185. Indulge in a guilty pleasure
186. Email friends and family
187. Join a drum circle
188. Rollerblade
189. Swing at a playground
190. Go to the mall to walk or browse (without spending)
191. Water your plants
192. Make a collage
193. Hang with a friend
194. Listen to music and read the lyrics
195. Try a new recipe
196. Paint your nails
197. Sit by any body of water
198. Go to the library

199.Organize a neighborhood garden

200.Groom a pet

201.Watch a sunrise or sunset

202.Take a walk

203.Go the a health club or YMCA

204.Go to a coffee shop

List the activities you like (or have liked) to do:

Circle at least 10 new activities from the list that you are willing to try.

Describe how these activities will help you manage mental illness and substance use issues:

IMPROVE the Moment

Like ACCEPTS, these skills provide healthy distractions.

Use the acronym **IMPROVE** to remember the building blocks (Imagery, Meaning, Prayer, Relaxation, One thing or step at a time, Vacation, Encouragement) of this skill. These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Imagery: Harness the power of positive imagery to feel better and more relaxed. Concentrate on a scene in your mind (a beach, the forest, a safe and happy place) and concentrate on it or practice guided imagery with a CD. Your mind will convince your body that it is there, slowing your breathing, dropping your blood pressure, relaxing your muscles, and slightly increasing your body temperature.

Rehearse skill use in your mind's eye, seeing yourself cope or perform effectively. Imagine what your life will be like when you are sober, feeling good, and accomplishing your goals. Envision specifically what your satisfying life will be like.

Consider practicing imagery before bedtime as part of your sleep routine. Remember to never practice in your mind what does not work in your life (e.g., misuse imagery by imagining substance use or other harmful behavior).

Meaning: Contemplate what you might gain from this struggle. Sometimes tremendous growth and wisdom springs from adversity. Is this a tragedy or “great practice”? Is it a problem or an opportunity? Many people who have struggled with addictions consider themselves grateful for the experience and the lessons learned. Perhaps struggling with addiction and mental illness has shown you that you can be resourceful and overcome great obstacles. Dialectically, every downside has an upside.

Prayer: Pray for strength and resolve in distressful times. Seek connection with and guidance from your higher power. Avoid “why me” or bargaining prayers; those prayers tend to demoralize us rather than build us up.

As an alternative, “talk” to anyone important to you: A deceased relative you loved, a person you admire (whether you know him/her or not), or anyone who helps you feel connected outside yourself.

If you have found Twelve-Step programs helpful, you might understand the power of this skill.

Relaxation: Practice breathing exercises (see Mindfulness), Self-Soothe skills, progressive muscle relaxation with each major muscle group, or anything that calms you.

Because many people use substances to relax, it is paramount to find other ways of meeting this human need and to build it into your daily routine.

One Thing or Step at a Time: When overwhelmed, go back to the most important priority again and again. If you have many problems, pick the most important one to focus on or the one you have the most resources to solve. Sometimes we need to accept having many problems to solve one.

One thing or step at a time is vital in recovery. You may not know how to stay clean for a week, but you probably can for a day, or an hour, or a minute. Commit to the time period that you can successfully manage and continue to renew your commitment in increments. Take one thing at a time, one step at a time.

Vacation: Vacation means taking a break when we are in distress (or before we are in distress). Step outside, breathe fresh air, and take a short walk. Spend ten minutes listening to music or surfing the Internet. Exercise, engage in a hobby, talk with a friend, or watch your favorite shows. Plan “you” time everyday in one way or another.

If substance use has been your way of taking a vacation or break, you have to find new ways of meeting this need, and you need to address the need proactively, not just as a distress tolerance skill.

Remember that this is intended to be a time-limited break and not long-term avoidance.

Encouragement: Notice the content of your self-talk, non-judgmentally. Gently let go of discouraging statements and replace them with coping and encouraging statements such as:

“I can do this.”

“I have friends who care about me.”

“I can survive this next minute.”

“I’m doing the best I can.”

“Skills can help me now.”

“This is happening to teach me patience (or some other virtue)”

The content of our thoughts has tremendous influence, so do not just let those old tapes play. Create some new music.

Burning Bridges: Remove the Means of Acting on Urges to Use and Other Harmful Behaviors

Bridge-burning refers to actively removing the means of acting on your urges to use substances or act on other harmful behaviors. The concept of bridge-burning recognizes that relapse into harmful behaviors happens more easily when there is the immediate opportunity to act on impulses. Eliminating the opportunities and/or inserting barriers between urge and action will result in more opportunities to practice skills.

Bridge-Burning with Substance Use:

- Remove all alcohol and drugs from your home
- Remove all alcohol- and drug-related objects and paraphernalia from your home (e.g., cocktail glasses, corkscrew, pipes, papers, lighters, and/or anything associated with use)
- Erase the numbers of using friends, associates, and dealers from your phone
- Block the phone numbers of using friends, associates, and dealers from your phone or get a new number
- Stay away from bars, liquor stores, and locations associated with use, changing your routines and routes to actively avoid them
- Do not carry cash
- Tell anyone and everyone that you have given up substances
- Actively tell others when you experience urges to use

List other ways to burn bridges to substance use:

Bridge-Burning with Self-Injury and/or Suicidal Urges:

- Remove razors, lighters, and other self-injury tools
- Mix up and change rituals associated with self-injury
- Remove the specific method of acting on suicide
- Tell others when you are unsafe and need help
- Go to the hospital before acting on suicidal urges

List other ways of bridge-burning with self-injury and/or suicidal urges:

Bridge-Burning with Spending:

- Cut up credit cards (if you need to keep one, freeze it in water so it will take longer to access it or have someone trustworthy hold it for you)
- Have someone trustworthy keep extra money when urges are high
- Establish a “waiting period” before making a decision to buy any non-essential item
- Stay away from stores, the mall, online shopping, and/or TV shopping

List other ways of bridge-burning with spending:

Bridge-Burning with Unhealthy and/or Hopeless Relationships:

- Erase the other person’s number from your phone
- Block the other person’s number or get a new number
- Route emails from the other person to your “junk mail folder”
- Tell anyone and everyone that you have moved on from the relationship
- Fill your free time with activities and healthy people

List other ways of bridge-burning with hopeless relationships:

Bridge-Burning with Overeating:

- Keep binge and “comfort” foods out of your home
- Dish out your portions and put the rest away before eating
- Eat multiple times a day, mindfully, including healthy snacks

List other ways of bridge-burning with overeating:

Bridge-Burning with Gambling:

- Avoid places where gambling occurs
- Limit your access to cash and credit that can be used for gambling.
- Have someone trustworthy hold onto your money when urges are high
- Block internet access to gambling websites

List other ways of bridge-burning with gambling:

Bridge-burning works best in conjunction with other skills. When we remove the ability to act on harmful behaviors, we need to replace them with something new and skillful. *Be careful not to trade one unhealthy behavior for another.*

Building New Bridges

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Build bridges to new ways to meet your wants and needs.

Burning bridges removes the means of acting on your addictive behavior. As a rule, anytime you subtract a behavior from your life, you should look to add new behaviors to replace what was lost. This is where bridge-building comes in.

If your addiction made you feel good (in the short term)

- Increase opportunities to laugh (e.g., listen to comedy, watch a favorite sitcom, read a joke book and tell others your favorites).
- Practice Build Positive Experience.
- Boost your endorphins through movement, physical touch, or getting outdoors.
- Practice affirmations.

List other ways of feeling good:

If your addiction relaxed you

- Practice Self-Soothe skills.
- Practice deep breathing every hour.
- Schedule down time in which you can turn off your electronics and not be responsible for anything.
- Learn to let go of the “small stuff.”

List other ways of practicing relaxation:

If your addiction involved a ritual

- Start a meditation practice.
- Develop a prayer routine.
- Create morning and bedtime rituals.
- Take morning or afternoon tea time.

List other ways of getting into rituals:

If your addiction had social aspects

- Go to a 12-step meeting.
- Get involved in a cause or advocacy group.
- Develop friendships with people who do not involve themselves in your addictive behavior.
- Make time for small talk with people as you go through your day.

List other ways of being social:

If your addiction involved fun

- Identify new hobbies.
- Get a do-it-yourself guide on something you're interested in doing or creating.
- Join a sports league (softball, bowling, kickball, flag football, etc.).
- Play music and sing and/or dance.

List other ways of having fun:

If your addiction involved the excitement of risks or danger

- Take up an exciting hobby such as trail running, snow-boarding, or rock climbing.
- Join (or form) a band.
- Invest a small amount in penny stocks (but do your homework and avoid scams).
- Work up a comedy routine and show up on amateur night.

List other ways of creating excitement through safe risks:

If your addiction is a way to rebel and break rules

Practice alternative rebellion by:

- Questioning commonly held beliefs
- Speaking your mind or writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper or other publication
- Supporting a fringe cause or political candidate you believe in
- Learning to stand out from the crowd in positive ways.

List other ways to rebel that do not hurt you or other people:

Take a Break

- **CORE CONCEPT:** Taking a break provides a glimpse of life without your ineffective behavior.

Taking a break means that you set aside a period of time in which you do not engage in an ineffective behavior. To practice this skill you select an amount of time to remain free from your selected behavior in order to Observe and Describe the outcomes. This skill is a form of harm reduction, and it works especially well for people who are unsure about the effect of ineffective behaviors in their lives and/or for people who are not ready to give up their ineffective behavior “forever.” Taking a break can serve as a personal experiment to gauge your level of dependence and the benefits of stopping that behavior.

Taking a break work best when you have established a skills plan for how to deal with urges, how to occupy open time in your schedule, and how to address barriers or problems you anticipate may upset your plans.

Taking a break can be short (e.g., an hour or evening), intermediate (e.g., a week), or a longer period of time (e.g., a month or more). To feel the benefits of moving away from your ineffective behavior, it is best to choose a reasonable amount of time to see what happens, knowing that within this time period you can still take on the challenge one moment at a time. The goal is to recognize that your life can be *better* without your ineffective behavior than with it.

The following are examples of taking a break:

- Going 30 days without drinking alcohol
- Turning off all your electronic devices after 5pm for a week
- Avoiding added sugar for 2 weeks
- Going without cutting for the weekend
- Not seeing a harmful friend for a month
- Attending a concert without consuming drugs or alcohol
- Not smoking marijuana for 6 months.

Ready to try life without your ineffective behavior for a while? Use the following Taking a Break worksheet to get started.



Taking a Break

CORE CONCEPT: Use this worksheet to monitor your break.

Taking a break is an opportunity to try life without one (or more) of your ineffective behaviors. This worksheet is set up for 1 week, but your break can be for any length of time. A good rule of thumb is to plan to go long enough for the average difficulty of abstaining from the behavior (rated from 10, extreme difficulty, to 0, no difficulty) to drop while the average observed benefits increase (rated from 10, great benefits, to 0, no benefits). You want to see that life can be better without the behavior!

If at any time you revert to the behavior, try dialectical abstinence and get back to your plan as soon as possible.

L Monday

Average level of difficulty: _____ Observed benefits: _____

L Tuesday

Average level of difficulty: _____ Observed benefits: _____

L Wednesday

Average level of difficulty: _____ Observed benefits: _____

L Thursday

Average level of difficulty: _____ Observed benefits: _____

L Friday

Average level of difficulty: _____ Observed benefits: _____

L Saturday

Average level of difficulty: _____ Observed benefits: _____

L Sunday

Average level of difficulty: _____ Observed benefits: _____

Urge Surfing: Ride the Wave

Urge surfing is the non-judgmental acceptance of urges that allows you to simply notice and ride their ebbs and flows without reaction.

The essence of urge surfing is to understand that urges are a part of our experience and are not commands for action. Often, instead of just watching our urges, we unwittingly intensify them. Judging and catastrophizing are two ways in which we make it harder on ourselves to tolerate urges. We have a natural tendency to want to escape urges we judge to be intolerable by fighting them or acting on them. Both of these approaches to urges ultimately intensify them.

Trying to fight urges is not unlike struggling to escape quicksand: Frantic efforts lead to sinking. Like fighting urges, escaping discomfort by acting on urges will also cause you to go under in time. This happens because relieving tension with unhealthy behaviors is reinforcing and feeds the cycle of urges followed by ineffective actions.

The secret is to not panic and react, but to float. Riding the ebbs and flows requires us to be willing to have a non-judgmental relationship with our urges, even when they cause intense discomfort. It may seem counter-intuitive, but an acceptance-based relationship with urges, emotions, or any other uncomfortable experience will decrease the intensity of many of these experiences over time. Remember that acceptance is not resignation; instead it is a state of mind in which we acknowledge “what is,” freeing up our resources to be responsive and effective.

Practice urge surfing when your urges are at lower levels. Like real surfing, you learn to ride smaller waves before you can graduate to large swells, and you also learn when the waves are too intense to ride. Keep in mind that urge surfing works well in combination with other skills, such as distraction. Be responsive and switch up skill strategies based on what works.

Self-Soothe: Calming Your Mind and Body ---

Tension and anxiety often intensify substance use urges and symptoms of mental illness. Relaxation is a key to recovery and self-soothing is one way to practice relaxation. Self-soothe is the mindful connection to pleasant experiences through our senses. Practicing self-soothe daily will increase peace and serenity in your life, and you will notice the corresponding effects in your body including decreased heart rate, blood pressure, slower and deeper breathing, and muscle relaxation.

Self-soothe with the senses includes the following examples:

Sight: Look at your surroundings and notice the details. Attend and linger on what is visually pleasing. It may be art, architecture, nature, or simply seeing the beauty in our everyday surroundings.

List how you can use self-soothe with sight:

Hearing: Listen to sounds that are relaxing, perhaps closing your eyes to focus in on them. Notice the sounds all around you that have their own beauty and rhythm. Put on music or listen to the sound of running water or a crackling fire.

List how you can use self-soothe with hearing:

Smell: Breathe in deeply scents that calm and soothe. Notice the pleasant scents of people, places, and things that you enjoy. Breathe in the aromas of the food you eat.

List how you can use self-soothe with smell:

Taste: Eat and drink everything you consume mindfully, paying full attention to the complex tastes and textures of what you eat and drink. Remember not to eat and drink mindlessly and excessively. The goal is to get maximum enjoyment from small amounts of food and drink. Also, strive to use self-soothe with taste with healthy and nutritious fare.

List how you can self-soothe with taste:

Touch: Feel that which creates pleasant bodily sensations: comfortable clothing, a plush chair, a warm or cool breeze, the warmth of the sun, the softness of a pet, or the touch of someone you love.

List how you can self-soothe with touch:

Multisensory: Mindfully activate and attend to each sense when you eat at a restaurant (or create a restaurant experience in your home), go to a movie, visit a park, or have any other potentially engaging experience.

List how you can self-soothe by combining your senses:

Mind Sense: Engage in peaceful thoughts, affirmations, and meditations as well as daydreams and fantasies. Focus your mind, complete with imagery, on that which creates serenity.

List how you can self-soothe by engaging in your mental processes:

Spiritual Sense: Connect with your higher power, your spirituality, or with nature. Tapping into a spiritual sense can create peace, serenity, and well-being, especially through mindful reflections, rituals, and contemplation.

List how you can self-soothe by engaging in your sense of spirituality:

Many people do not practice self-soothe because of barriers. Recognize if you have any of these common barriers and note the challenges to these barriers that follow them.

- **Barrier:** Thinking that you do not have time to self-soothe.

Challenge: Think about how much time seeking, taking, and recovering from substance use and/or being stuck in symptoms of mental illness takes. Spending 20 minutes a day to self-soothe is an excellent trade!

- **Barrier:** Thinking that you have more important responsibilities to do.

Challenge: Think about how more efficient and effective you will be when you approach life in a more relaxed manner.

- **Barrier:** Thinking that you do not deserve to self-soothe and/or have not earned it.

Challenges: 1. Having a more relaxed life will help you to better reach your goals. 2. Having a more relaxed life is more of a human right than something that must be deserved or earned.

- **Barrier:** Feeling guilty when you self-soothe (often in connection with one of the thought barriers above).

Challenge: Coach yourself with self-talk by saying its “ok” and even desirable to self-soothe and then practice it over and over until you can self-soothe without guilt (this is opposite to emotion).

- **Barrier:** Struggling with mindfulness and being frustrated or overwhelmed by distractions.

Challenge: Remind yourself that distractions are part of the world and that struggles with mindfulness are opportunities to practice.

Pros and Cons (P&C)

Pros and Cons is a reason mind exercise to counter-balance strong emotions and urges. After completing a thorough Pros and Cons, many people find themselves solidly in Wise Mind and ready to act responsively.

Further, if we use Pros and Cons to decide whether we want to engage in substance use or another harmful behavior, we will frequently find that urges subside by the time the exercise is complete. To use this skill, start by identifying your basic choices. Examples include drinking or using drugs versus staying sober, using self-injury versus staying safe, and practicing an old behavior versus practicing a skill.

When you have identified the basic choices, plug them into the worksheet that follows. After you have determined both short- and long-term pros and cons, check to see if you are in Wise Mind and make a decision. If you find that you are not in Wise Mind, table your decision and try another skill.



Distress Tolerance 4: Pros and Cons

Pros and Cons (P&C) Application	
My Basic Choices Are _____ versus _____.	
Short-Term PROS of _____	Short-Term CONS of _____
Long-Term PROS of _____	Long-Term CONS of _____
Versus	
Short-Term PROS of _____	Short-Term CONS of _____
Long-Term PROS of _____	Long-Term CONS of _____

My Decision:

Grounding Yourself

Grounding exercises bring us back to the present moment when we struggle with dissociation or with feeling unreal. Dissociation is a natural way of coping when faced with extreme danger or being hurt. However, leaving reality is less effective when we are distressed but not in imminent harm and, after a while, this manner of coping actively interferes with life.

Practice these exercises proactively and mindfully, and they will decrease symptoms of dissociation and derealization. These grounding techniques can also be used to cope with painful emotions and intense urges.

- Open your eyes and observe and describe your surroundings in detail.
- Who or what is around you? You are here, now. The more detail, no matter how minor, the better.
- Work your senses: Name what you see, hear, smell, and touch right here and now, again using as many details as possible.
- Use the Sensations skill from ACCEPTS. Practice the different variations of Sensations.
- Observe your body in contact with your chair. Feel your back, behind, and back of your legs in connection with the chair. Feel your arms in connection with the armrests or your lap. Feel your feet firmly planted on the ground. Now think about how your body is connected to the chair, which is connected to the floor, which is connected to the building, which is connected to the earth.
- Breathe slowly and deeply, counting your breaths.
- Get up and stretch out, feeling your body and moving about.
- Repeat a mantra like “this is now and not then.”

List other ways to ground yourself:

Radical Acceptance

Many people have great pain due to trauma, difficult life circumstances, and losses. Pain is an inevitable part of life, but it can seem impossible to accept. Pain is also created when people do not want to accept problems with substances, frequently because substance use is meeting important needs. Unfortunately, meeting those needs through substances becomes self-defeating and harmful once the immediate needs have been gratified.

If we are unable to accept situations that cause pain and are self-defeating, the result is being stuck and trapped in chronic suffering that can no longer be covered up. The refusal to accept and connect with our suffering creates unending suffering. Counter-intuitively, we decrease suffering by being willing to accept it and relate to it rather than fight it. We may have to tolerate pain, but there will be a qualitative difference in our experience of it.

An old recovery adage (that also applies to mental health symptoms) is “when nothing changes, nothing changes.” Acceptance instead of resistance releases our resources to move forward, so something can finally change.

It is helpful to know that Radical Acceptance is a process similar to Kubler-Ross’s (2005) stages of acceptance:

- 1. Denial:** not believing our loss, problem, or situation is real.
- 2. Anger:** being angry about why this has or is happening to us.
- 3. Bargaining:** trying to make a deal with someone or a higher power to change reality, or telling yourself you will only use on certain days, or at certain times, or that this use will be your last time.
- 4. Depression:** feeling despondent as reality sets in.
- 5. Acceptance:** acknowledging reality without fighting it.

These stages do not always unfold step-wise and sequentially. Instead, we commonly go back and forth, sometimes getting stuck in one stage and/or skipping others. When you experience these stages and emotions, you are in the process of acceptance and, by definition, in the process of change. Similar to the stages of change, each stage of acceptance has its own purpose and lessons, and just like changing a problem behavior, acceptance can lead to freedom.

Everyday Acceptance

Radical Acceptance is the skill used to deal with painful and difficult-to-accept situations. Everyday Acceptance orients us to the practice of acceptance as a lifestyle. The daily practice of acceptance is necessary to maintaining mental health and abstinence, knowing that painful feelings and urges to use substances feed on willfulness, resistance, and fighting reality. What does everyday acceptance mean? Consider these examples:

- Experiencing an uncomfortable feeling or urge without reaction
- Recognizing that life is sometimes spelled “HASSLE” (in the words of Albert Ellis)
- Being last in line
- Knowing that getting drunk or high is not an option for you anymore (this would likely be radical acceptance early in recovery!)
- Having someone share a criticism with you
- Being out of shape
- Having crabby, unappreciative, or disrespectful people around you
- Being behind on the laundry, dishes, or some other important task
- Losing your keys
- Wanting to get high and knowing you cannot (for all the reasons)
- Having to work when you do not want to
- Missing out on something fun
- Feeling an increase in symptoms
- Having your car, bike, or other mode of transportation break down

Do not confuse this approach to everyday life as being resigned, being walked on, or remaining helpless. Many of these problems require active solutions and skill use (although some may simply be acceptance issues). The use of everyday acceptance allows us to have the emotional balance to solve problems more effectively through reducing the emotional energy and load we often lump on them. Acceptance is not resignation, but empowerment!

Willingness (W) Versus Willfulness

Willingness means doing what is necessary to meet the demands of the situation we are in, assessing what is needed and responding without getting caught in judgments. It means adopting an attitude of acceptance and side-stepping emotions that create willfulness (e.g., self-righteousness, pride, fear, doubt) in order to meet reality with effective action.

Life does not unfold according to our preferences and expectations; in many situations we do not choose the cards we are dealt. Willingness involves playing the hand you have to your best ability, using all of your resources and removing your own barriers to reach whatever outcome is desired.

We frequently know what is needed but resist it anyways, for a lot of different reasons. Resistance to reality, and the refusal to play the hand you are dealt is willfulness. Willfulness can be bold, like acting in a way that blatantly sabotages your own self-interest to “show” others, and willfulness can be subtle, like making quiet, seemingly unnoticed choices that slowly erode your goals and what you want in life.

Identifying a willful state of mind is the first step toward willingness. Once you acknowledge willfulness as being a barrier with any situation, you can begin to identify what would be effective to reach your goals. Contrary to the Western idea, “Where there is a will, there is a way,” you want to adopt the philosophy: “Where there is willingness, there is a way.”

This philosophy speaks to the common misconception that using your “will” or “will power” to cope, stay sober, control a situation, or reach some other desired outcome will be helpful. Do not confuse the idea of “willing oneself” with “being willing,” and strive for the latter.

Willingness, like acceptance, brings greater peace, serenity, control, and effectiveness to life.

Problem-Solving

Introduction to Problem-Solving

- **CORE CONCEPT:** A systematic approach promotes effective problem-solving.

Problems of various types and levels of difficulty frequent our lives. If we do not actively work to solve our problems, they grow in number and size, and we end up chronically overwhelmed or even paralyzed by them.

Unfortunately, many of us do not have a method for solving problems. We try to solve them by trial and error or in a haphazard manner. These approaches sometimes work but tend to be ineffective overall.

Another difficulty many of us have is Emotion Mind “problem-solving.” We place disproportionate importance on our feelings and the information that comes from them. In turn, we neglect information and facts that would give us a more balanced approach to problem-solving based on more complete information. Therefore, it is beneficial to balance our emotions with our reason to reach a Wise Mind place to work through problems and difficulties. In Wise Mind, we can validate our feelings *and* connect with our priorities, goals, and values to engage in an effective approach to problem-solving.

Problem-solving starts with being aware of problems as they come up and developing a willingness to address them effectively.

Basic Principles of Problem-Solving

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Use these principles when you approach solving a problem.

Take one problem at a time

Most people have more than one active problem at any given time. It is overwhelming to have many problems, but the reality is that you can only solve one at a time. Start somewhere. You might start with your easiest problem to solve or your most important problem to solve, or you might need to address problems sequentially (i.e., you might need to solve a certain problem first in order to solve a related problem).

Understand and define the problem

Once you pick a problem, specifically define the problem with nonjudgmental, descriptive language. If you do not understand the problem and cannot define it, then it may be difficult to figure out a solution. Be as precise as possible in your definition of the problem.

Research the facts

To better understand and define your problem, you need to do your homework. What information do you need or are you missing? Information is power and is the difference between being uncertain or paralyzed in the face of a problem and seeing a clear pathway to a solution.

What is the cause of the problem?

Identifying and addressing the cause of the problem is sometimes necessary to solving it. Stay nonjudgmental and be sure that identifying the cause of the problem does not lead you to blaming. Getting stuck in “blaming mind” is seldom productive and can often make the problem worse. However, if you are able to be skillful to decrease or eliminate the cause(s) of your problem, do so.

What works (or has worked)?

Have you solved this problem (or one like it) before? If so, what did you do that worked? Do more of the solution behavior(s). In a similar vein, what is different about your behavior, others’ behavior, or the environment when the problem is not happening? Do more of what is working when the problem is not happening. From Wise Mind, do what you think is needed to solve the problem with a focus on Willingness and Effectiveness.

What does not work (or has not worked)?

Have you done anything that has contributed to the problem or has not worked in bringing about a solution? What are you doing, or not doing, when the problem is happening? Do less of or eliminate behaviors that have contributed to the problem or have not worked toward finding a solution.

Can you take it one step at a time?

Some problems, especially large or complicated ones, need to be solved sequentially or in steps. Break your problem down into steps that will enable you to reach a solution, and take the first one.

Use Willingness, cooperation, commitment, and follow-through!

Often what is needed to solve a problem does not fit with our preferences. Be willing to put aside your preconceived notions of how you think things should happen in order to do exactly what is needed. Be willing to cooperate and be part of solutions and not part of problems. Work with and not against others in seeking a solution; offer and seek help as needed. Once your action steps toward a commitment are identified, commit yourself to following through.

Using SOLVED (SO)

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Use this systematic approach to solve problems.

Use the acronym SOLVED to remember the building blocks (Step back and be objective, Observe available options, Limit barriers, Values driven, Effectiveness first, Dialectical thought and action) of this skill. These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Step back and be objective

Observe and Describe from Reason Mind or Wise Mind. What is the problem in nonjudgmental terms? Stick to the facts: who, what, where, when, how, and why. Write it down.

Observe available options

Brainstorm and list as many options as you can, and then determine what options are available. Remember to accept the realities of both the problem and the possible solutions. Also list the resources you can use at this step. Use DEAR MAN to ask for ideas, help, and guidance if needed.

Limit barriers (emotional and environmental)

Remove barriers that stand between you and a potential solution. Do not get in your own way. Use Radical or Everyday Acceptance, Willingness, and Nonjudgmental Stance. Do not amplify or minimize your problems. Gauge the level of your problem and address it in a manner-of-fact way. Identify whether barriers exist in your environment and address them as needed. Again, use DEAR MAN to ask for ideas, help, and guidance if needed.

Values driven (what are your priorities and goals?)

Use your priorities, goals, and values as your compass. Values will not lead you astray in the long term. They will be the foundation of solutions that work. From your available options, pick the solution that best solves the problem while building or at least maintaining your self-respect.

Effectiveness first

What will work? The most effective solutions will not always be your preferred solutions. Accept that life has problems and solve this one so you can get on to the next one.

Dialectical thought and action

Solutions often involve compromise. Be dialectical with thoughts and actions and remember that effective, values-driven solutions often come from the middle ground.

After following this process, make a decision and take action. Evaluate the outcomes and use the SOLVED process to readjust your approach and the solution to your problem if needed.



Problem-Solving 1: SOLVED

CORE CONCEPT: Use this worksheet to solve problems.

Step back and describe your problem from Wise Mind:

Brainstorm and then describe the options and resources available to you:

Describe your barriers and the skills that you will use to address them:

Describe your priorities, goals, and values and how they can guide your solution:

Use the above information to describe what will work:

Describe your solution and action plan:

Describe how your life will be different when you solve this problem:

Emotion Regulation Module

Emotion regulation skills reduce our vulnerability to extreme feelings and urges to use substances. A common acronym in the treatment of substance use is HALT, which stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely, and Tired. It is well known that these states make one vulnerable to using (and other problems), and there are skills in this module to address each of them.

An initial goal of emotion regulation is to identify and understand how feelings occur and how they can be influenced by changing events and how we interpret them. Knowledge about our emotions can be empowering.

Along with understanding our emotions, we want to change our relationship to them. Instead of judging or attempting to “get rid” of negative emotions, the practice of accepting, listening to, and having a relationship with emotions leads to soothing them and reducing emotional suffering.

Effective self-care is a cornerstone of emotion regulation. It is nearly impossible to feel emotionally healthy if basic physical self-care is not practiced daily. Balanced eating and sleeping (as evidenced in the HALT acronym) is essential to feeling good, as is exercise and taking care of physical illness when it comes up.

Lastly, emotion regulation is based on having enough positive events scheduled in life as well as learning how to step out of mood-congruent behaviors that are self-defeating, like isolating when depressed and avoiding when anxious.

What Good Are Emotions?

Emotions Give Us Information.

- Emotions provide us with a signal that something is happening (e.g., “I feel nervous standing alone in this dark alley”).
- Sometimes our emotions communicate by “gut feeling” or intuition. This can be helpful if our emotions get us to check out the facts.
- It’s a problem when we treat emotions as if they are facts about the world. For example: “If I am afraid, there must be a threat,” or “I love him, so he must be good for me.”
- We need to be mindful that emotions are *not* facts. Therefore, it is important to check the facts about the situation.



Emotions Communicate to, and Influence, Others.

- Facial expressions, body posture, and voice tone say a lot about how you’re feeling. They communicate emotions to others (e.g., your sad face may cause someone to ask you if you are OK and to give you support).
- Whether you realize it or not, your emotions—expressed by words, face, or body language—influence how other people respond to you.



Emotions Motivate and Prepare Us for Action.

- The action urge connected to specific emotions is often “hardwired.” For example, when we hear a loud horn beep suddenly, we startle.
- Emotions save time in getting us to act in important situations. Our nervous system activates us (e.g., we instantly jump out of the way of an oncoming car). We don’t have to think everything through.
- Strong emotions can help us overcome obstacles—in our mind and in the environment.



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Short List of Emotions

LOVE	HATE	FEAR	JOY	shame	Guilt	ANXIETY
loneliness						
ANGER	Excited	FRUSTRATION	sadness	shyness	envy	
BOREDOM	SURPRISE!	embarrassed				
CONFUSED	CURIOUS	PRIDE	suspicious	HAPPY		
Rage	INTEREST	DEPRESSED	WORRY	IRRITABLE	PANIC	
Jealous	optimistic	hopeless	Disgust	hurt		
sympathy	DISAPPOINTED	Content	Calm			

Other names for emotions I frequently have:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

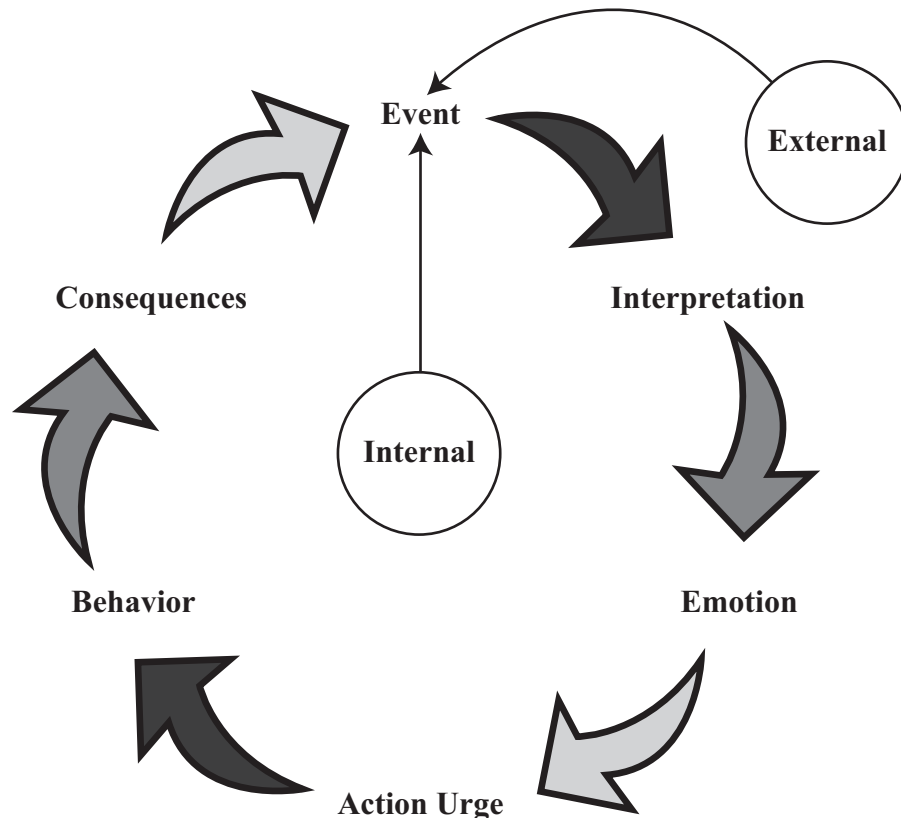
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Model of Emotions

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Knowing how emotions happen helps us influence them.

Emotions seem to happen out of the blue for many people, complete with ineffective and reactive behaviors that flow from those emotions. Fortunately, you can learn to influence and even change many emotions and resulting actions by understanding how emotions happen in the first place. The model of emotions below will assist your efforts. At any given time you can stop and use your mindfulness skills to reflect on this model and how it relates to your emotions, and then make any necessary changes.



Event

Events begin the cycle of emotion, and they can be internal (within us) or external (in our environment). Use your mindfulness skills to connect an emotion to its source.

Interpretation

How we interpret events has a tremendous influence on what we feel. Step back and Observe and Describe the available facts to check your interpretation (also called self-talk or automatic thoughts) of the event. Ask yourself whether the interpretation works in the situation, and consider other ways of looking at the situation. Is the interpretation from Wise Mind? Is Nonjudgmental Stance needed? Are there dialectical alternative interpretations?

Emotion

Use Observe and Describe to notice your emotional experience. What is happening in your body (e.g., muscle relaxation or tension, heart rate)? What is happening externally with your body (e.g., facial expressions, posture)? What are you communicating both verbally and nonverbally? Use the available information to name your emotion. Remember to Observe and Describe the emotion nonjudgmentally.

Also, try to see whether another feeling is underneath what you Observe and Describe on the surface. For example, hurt or embarrassment might underlie anger or guilt, and shame might underlie depression. Getting to the emotions underneath the surface emotion increases understanding, and increased understanding creates more options.

Action urge and Behavior

What is the emotion urging or pulling you toward? Or, is a behavior already happening? From what state of mind are your action urges and behaviors flowing? Remember to validate your emotion(s) and choose behaviors from a centered, Wise Mind place. Participate with Effectiveness and respond rather than react. Delay your behavior if you anticipate that it will be ineffective.

Note that some action urges can be effective and it is important to act on those, but other actions should not be acted on because they will be ineffective. Can you think of examples of each?

Consequences

Observe and Describe what consequences result from your behavior. Evaluate what worked and what did not work, and learn from your experience.

Emotions and choices in response to them influence what happens with subsequent events, perpetuating the cycle. Use this knowledge to continue positive emotions with Mood Momentum or break out of ineffective emotions with Opposite to Emotion.



Emotion Regulation 4: Feelings Model

CORE CONCEPT: Use this worksheet to discover how emotions (and emotional patterns) happen.

Describe the **event**: What happened; who, what, when, and where?

Describe your **interpretation**: What judgment, evaluation, self-talk, or belief was activated?

Describe your **emotion**: What is happening physically? What body language do you detect? Put a name on the emotion; using a feeling chart if needed. Identify underlying emotions, too, if possible:

Describe your **action urge**: What action, inaction, or communication are you being emotionally pulled toward? Would it fit Wise Mind? This is a moment of CHOICE:

Describe your **behavior**: What action or inaction can be made? Participate using Effectiveness:

Describe the **consequences**: What consequences occurred? Include other emotions, thoughts, actions, and inactions, and their effect on relationships and situations. How did the results set up the next event (e.g., did a pattern continue or did the cycle change?):



Effective Thinking: Shifting and Expanding Interpretations of Events

Our emotions affect our thinking, and our thinking affects our emotions. An interpretation is an internal behavior that determines the meaning of an event, and that meaning depends on perspective. To be most effective, it is important not to be stuck in an interpretation, but to be open to further evaluation and shifting and expanding interpretations. Dialectically speaking, no interpretation can be the absolute truth.

Note the following types of interpretations with suggestions on how to dialectically shift them.

Black and White Interpretations (Either/or; Dichotomous; All-or-Nothing Thinking): Language that signals this interpretation includes *always*, *never*, *every*, and *all the time*, among others. Black and white interpretations rarely see the whole picture and may negatively feed emotion mind. These interpretations lead to rigidity and inflexibility, the opposite of a dialectical orientation.

Dialectical Shift: If your interpretations seem extreme, think of opposite thoughts or beliefs, and then identify middle-ground ways of thinking. You may not believe the opposite thoughts or beliefs, but the intention is to practice flexibility in your interpretations.

Regret Orientation (Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda Thinking; or Hindsight Bias): A common idiom is “hindsight is 20/20.” This means that past choices seem clear with the benefit of knowing all of the outcomes now. Regret orientation keeps you stuck in the past, rather than focusing on what you can do effectively right now.

Dialectical Shift: Rather than fixating on past mistakes, focus on what you can do to be effective in the present moment.

Mind-Reading: An assumption that you already know how others are thinking or feeling leads you to feel or act in a certain manner. None of us can read other peoples’ minds.

Dialectical Shift: When you catch yourself mind-reading, check out your assumptions with other people, especially the person whose mind you are trying to read. The only way to know is to ask.

Minimization: Minimization happens when something large or significant is reduced to something very small. Sometimes this reduces the emotional impact of a situation (in the short-term), but the result is emotional invalidation.

Dialectical Shift: Observe and describe the situation accurately without adding or subtracting, validating your feelings.

Magnification: Magnification is the opposite of minimization. It happens when something that is small or insignificant is exaggerated into something that is very large. It is similar to looking at a kitten through a magnifying glass and seeing a tiger.

Dialectical Shift: As with minimization, observe and describe the situation accurately without adding or subtracting.

Catastrophizing: Catastrophizing is an extreme form of magnification. It involves taking a situation and continuing to build it and build it and build it in your mind into a calamity with dire consequences.

Dialectical Shift: Focus on the *one* situation or problem at hand without exaggerating it. Most situations do not end up with extreme and dire consequences, so take one thing at a time. Alternatively, purposefully catastrophize to the point of absurdity to break you out of this interpretation.

Fortune-Telling (Crystal Ball-Gazing): Fortune-telling interprets the future in negative ways, assuming that you already know what is going to happen.

Dialectical Shift: Rather than let a negative prediction of the future paralyze you, focus on what you can do effectively right now to cope with your situation or problem. Stay in the present moment.

Overgeneralization: Overgeneralization involves taking a small bit of information and applying it broadly across all kinds of different people and situations.

Dialectical Shift: Do not assume that your knowledge fits all people and all situations. Acknowledge when your information does fit, and actively look for times when it does not. Be open to not knowing all of the facts.

Selective Information-Gathering (Selective Abstraction; Mental Filter; or Confirmation Bias): Sometimes you gather information that fits with your current thought or belief, ignoring evidence to the contrary. Some other interpretations may be missing here.

Dialectical Shift: Actively gather information and viewpoints that are different from your own. Remember that you do not need to agree with these different perspectives, but that they may lead you to greater flexibility and more effective choices.

Labeling (Judging): Labeling reduces a person or situation to only a name. Labels fail to look at people and situations in a holistic manner and miss important subtleties or nuances.

Dialectical Shift: Let go of the urge to label a person or situation, as the world is usually more complex than labels and judging.

Personalization: Personalization makes it all about you. Frankly, most everything in the world is not about you.

Dialectical Shift: Remember that most of the time it is not about you. Take responsibility for what is yours and gently let go of the rest. Enjoy the ensuing freedom!

Emotion Mind “Reasoning”: Emotion mind reasoning happens when emotion, and not reason, is the only filter for interpretations.

Dialectical Shift: Use mindfulness to move to Wise Mind and then re-evaluate.

Should Statements: These statements focus on judgments rather than the realities of a particular situation or interaction. Reality unfolds in ways that do not fit our preferences (i.e., what “should” happen).

Dialectical Shift: Focus on “what is,” not what “should be.” Stop “shoulding” on yourself and others.

Discounting Positives: The negatives and downsides of situations blind you to the positives. Minimizing or negating positives about yourself, others, situations, or the world is undialectical.

Dialectical Shift: Seek out positives, upsides, and silver linings for balance. Own the positives about yourself and give yourself credit. Seek the positives in people and situations that seem negative.

Blaming: Blaming makes everyone but you responsible for your problems and difficulties. Blaming relinquishes your power and control and leaves you dependent on others to fix a situation or your life.

Dialectical Shift: Someone or something else may be responsible for a problem, but your power and control comes from focusing on how you can influence situations and your life, if only through choosing how you respond.

Shifting and Expanding Interpretations Worksheet

Identify your current interpretation, thought, belief, or self-talk:

Identify the origins of this interpretation, thought, belief, or self-talk. Where did it come from and how could it have been useful at that time or in certain situations?

Describe how this interpretation, thought, belief, or self-talk is facilitating (or not facilitating) the attainment of your goals and/or what you want or need in the current situation.

What alternative interpretations, thoughts, beliefs, or self-talk are possible? Can you identify an expansion or shift?

Describe how these alternatives, expansions, or shifts might facilitate your goals and/or what you want or need in the current situation.

Continuum of Emotions

Emotions have different intensity levels. When we notice lower-intensity feelings, we can be proactive and more effective with skills use. If you struggle with intense emotions, use this chart to help you identify when those feelings happen at lower intensity levels, prompting you to use skills and your skills plans. With positive emotions, be mindful and appreciate them at all intensity levels, and be aware of the events and interpretations that create those feelings.

BASIC FEELING: **SAD**

Unhappy → Sad → Blue → Depressed → Despondent → Hopeless → Black

BASIC FEELING: **ANGRY**

Annoyed → Frustrated → Mad → Angry → Pissed → Outraged → Vengeful

BASIC FEELING: **HAPPY**

Glad → Satisfied → Content → Happy → Joyful → Excited → Euphoric

BASIC FEELING: **LOVING**

Liking → Caring → Fond → Attracted → Infatuated → Loving → Passionate

BASIC FEELING: **FEARFUL**

Nervous → Worried → Anxious → Dreadful → Fearful → Panicky → Terrorized

BASIC FEELING: **GUILTY**

Sorry → Regretful → Remorseful → Guilty → Shameful

If you have trouble identifying different feeling words, rate a basic emotion (e.g., depression, anxiety, or anger) on a continuum from 1 to 10 (low to high) or simply observe it as low, medium, or high. Then think about how to cope effectively with that emotion.

Changing How You Relate to Emotions

Emotions are not good, bad, right, or wrong. The first step to changing our relationship to feelings is to be curious about them and the messages they send to us.

Emotions motivate us in relationships and in other aspects of life. Emotions can be effective and can motivate behavior that has to happen automatically, without thought. A parent who chases a child into a busy street is motivated by emotion (i.e., fear), not by reason. Emotions enable us to overcome seemingly impossible obstacles at times.

Even when emotions seem to overtake life, such as when we are depressed or anxious or angry, it is important to remember that those emotions still give us important information. Rather than judging our emotions, practice acceptance of them and open your mind to their messages. Rejection of emotions or trying to push them away usually intensifies them. If the message is not heard, it needs to get louder. As an example, invalidation by others tends to intensify emotions, and self-invalidation has the same effect.

Practice nonjudgmental acceptance of your feelings and listen to their messages because trying to get rid of, fighting, or judging emotions unwittingly adds suffering to emotional pain. Willingness to be with your feelings soothes them. It is similar to hearing others' concerns and sitting with their distress without having to fix anything. *Not* fixing your feelings and being mindful of them is a solution, because even strong emotions do not require action.

Similar to Urge Surfing, we “hold” our emotions through mindfulness. Holding feelings means that you recognize them as a part of your experience, but not as who you are as a person. As you simply allow yourself to be with your emotions, you open yourself to their ebbs and flows and find that the intensity usually subsides.

Observe your emotions without getting stuck, and practice acceptance when they are painful. If you find yourself overwhelmed, change strategies and use distress tolerance skills.

You will find that emotions have important information for you, and they soothe themselves when you listen to them. Acceptance in the moment frees you from the grip your feelings have on you.

PLEASED

Self-care goes by the wayside when struggling with mental illness and substance abuse, often because symptoms interfere with using these skills in the first place. Inadequate sleep, poor nutrition, a lack of exercise, and untreated medical issues result in emotional dysregulation that can cycle back into symptoms and chemical dependency. Just as a lack of self-care can cause or exacerbate problems, a concerted effort to increase self-care can alleviate them.

When people have neglected self-care in combination with abusing substances, they feel lousy. Because alcohol and drugs make people feel better in the short-term, feeling physically ill can be a trigger to continue the cycle of use. The way to break this cycle is to initiate balanced self-care while you practice other skills to manage your symptoms and urges.

Use the acronym **PLEASED** to remember the building blocks of this skill (**P**hysical Health, **L**ist Resources and Barriers, **E**at Balanced Meals, **A**void Drugs and Alcohol, **S**leep between 7 and 10 Hours, **E**xercise 20 to 60 Minutes, **D**aily). These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Physical Health: Regular medical checkups and engaging in proactive skills and behaviors that keep our bodies healthy contribute to well-being. Treat physical illness when it arises and comply with medical advice. Take your medications as prescribed (or consult your prescriber), and make life changes to minimize use of medications when indicated. Always consider how your physical health impacts your mental health and urges to use.

List Resources and Barriers: Resources include skills we might already use (e.g., O2E, Pros and Cons, and Willingness), people who support us, and having knowledge about health and wellness. Identify strengths and all available resources for each part of the PLEASED skill. Barriers also abound with PLEASED skills. Develop a plan to use skills to address barriers.

Eat Balanced Meals: Eat three balanced meals plus a couple of healthy snacks mindfully throughout the day. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein are must-haves. Eat “whole” (unprocessed or minimally processed) or single-ingredient foods when possible. Drink 10 full glasses of water a day. Avoid eating too much or too little and minimize sugars, saturated fats, and food or beverages with little or no nutritional value. Replace “diets” with lifestyle changes and keep current on reputable nutritional information. Start small and build on success. Consult with a physician or nutritionist if needed. Remember that being overly hungry can trigger urges to use substances.

Avoid Drugs and Alcohol: As emphasized throughout this manual, the risks associated with drugs and alcohol, along with the emotional, physical, relational, financial, and other effects, can make their use problematic. If you find you need larger amounts to reach a “desired” effect and/or experience an inability to cut down or quit use, you need help and support.

Sleep between 7 and 10 Hours: Sleep is important to regulate your moods. Find an amount of sleep that works for you. See the instructions in the “Sleep Routine” section for more information.

Exercise 20 to 60 Minutes: Exercise for a minimum of 20 minutes three to five times weekly. Balanced exercise positively impacts symptoms of mental illness and decreases urges to use. Find natural ways of exercising, like taking stairs, parking at the far end of a parking lot, and playing with pets or children. Humans are not biologically designed to be sedentary, so movement is vital. Consult a physician with concerns about starting an exercise routine.

Daily: PLEASED skills need to be daily habits for you to reap their great benefits, but their positive effects cannot be overstated.

HALT

- **CORE CONCEPT:** Before engaging in any ineffective behaviors, ask yourself: are you...

HUNGRY

- When did I last eat?
- Is my hunger emotional or does my body need food?
- If my body is asking for food, can I find something nutritious to snack on?

ANGRY

- What stressors am I experiencing right now?
- What is making me angry and how can I diffuse that anger?

LONELY

- When is the last time I socialized?
- Was it a positive or negative experience?
- Can I reach out to my support system for help?

TIRED

- Have I been getting enough rest and giving my body the breaks it needs?
- How can I energize myself?
- How can I practice self-care?

Sleep Routines

Behavioral interventions usually improve sleep over a period of a few weeks, and they may even work well enough to minimize or eliminate sleep medications for some people. The following suggestions will greatly improve your sleep if you practice them consistently, and they will probably be enjoyable, too.

- Create a sleep routine that begins at least one hour before going to bed. Like landing an airplane, healthy sleep involves getting into a pattern and getting the landing gear down well ahead of time. A sleep routine should consist of relaxing activities that cue the mind and body for sleep. Deep breathing, muscle relaxation, and mindfulness work well in a sleep routine.
- Establish consistent sleep and wake times. Avoid using the “snooze” button on your alarm clock.
- The bed should be for sleeping and intimacy only. Wakeful activities in bed confuse the mind and body, and the bed no longer becomes a cue for sleep and rest.
- Create a relaxing environment. A clean and uncluttered environment with fresh bed linens and comfortable blankets and pillows will help create the conditions for sleep. Also, block out sources of light and keep the temperature at a comfortable level, preferably a few degrees cooler than during the daytime.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine for four hours (or more) before bedtime.
- Avoid heavy meals and spicy foods before bedtime.
- Avoid any stimulation before bedtime, including arguments or conflict, vigorous activity, or anything else that is likely to activate your mind and body.
- Get exercise during the daytime.
- Avoid daytime napping.
- If you are unable to sleep after 20 minutes, get up and do something boring and/or relaxing until you are sleepy and ready to return to bed.

List other ways to improve your sleep:

Using ROUTINE (RO)

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Develop a schedule to get your life on track.

Use the acronym ROUTINE to remember the building blocks (**R**esponsibilities, **O**ngoing structure, **U**se of skills, **T**raditions, **I**nterests included, **N**ovelty, **E**nvision a satisfying life) of this skill. These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Responsibilities

We get overwhelmed when our responsibilities are not taken care of daily. Break bigger responsibilities down into daily steps. Make a list of both major and minor responsibilities and fill them into the My Routines and Schedule worksheet (below).

Ongoing structure

Routines are about structure that is ongoing, predictable, and repeating. Structure keeps us from getting stuck in symptoms and is the foundation for building a satisfying life. Use the My Routines and Schedule worksheet (below) to structure your days, and be sure to follow it.

Use of skills

Remember that you need to learn and practice all of your skills as a part of your routine, just like someone in school or college does daily homework. Include reminders for the skills you specifically want to practice on a given day. Also remember that other skills might be needed to follow your routine, such as Opposite to Emotion.

Traditions

Traditions give meaning to our lives and those of others. Part of a satisfying life is developing traditions that you and the people around you enjoy.

Many of us think of traditions as being tied to seasons and holidays, and those can be fun to establish, but traditions can also be as simple as a family bowling night, a specific dinner on a certain night, or celebrating accomplishments (yours or others') with something special. You can get back into traditions you have valued or use your imagination to create new traditions for yourself and your loved ones.

Interests included

Routines that do not include our personal interests are difficult to maintain. Be sure to build in what you like to do. If you are unsure what you are interested in, pick some options from the Activities List (see below) and plug them into your schedule. Remember to approach a new interest or activity with a Nonjudgmental Stance.

Novelty

Be careful not to build too much structure into your routine. Routines also need space for flexibility and novelty. Make sure you explicitly leave space to try new activities or be spontaneous. Consider scheduling a free morning, afternoon, evening, or day into your routine.

Envision a satisfying life

Routines, schedules, and structure take time to get established. Remember not to give up on building habits toward living a more satisfying life. Stay mindful of how your routine will help you with your priorities, goals, and values. Do not give up!

Everyday Care

- **CORE CONCEPT:** Basic physical and mental self-care need to be part of a daily routine.

Basic physical and mental self-care are needed every day to establish a foundation on which to build. As we learn more skills, we might develop (or you may already have developed) more elaborate and effective self-care. For most of us, we need to revisit the basics at least occasionally, and all of us need to have these basics be part of our daily routine.

Refer to the lists that follow and then describe the other tasks you would like to attend to each day.

Routine physical self-care

Brush teeth

Wash face and/or bathe or shower

Put on clean clothes

Take medications, vitamins, etc.

Eat a balanced meal at least three times a day plus healthy snacks

Move around, stretch, and exercise

Have a bedtime routine

Describe other routine **physical** self-care tasks you need daily:

Routine mental self-care

Mindfulness (breathing or relaxation)

Identify positives and gratefulness

Encourage yourself

Plan positive activities

Connect with family, friends, and support

Nurture your spirit

Describe other routine **mental** self-care tasks you need daily:

Describe how your life will be different when you effectively practice physical and mental self-care:

Building a Satisfying Life 3: Small Routines

CORE CONCEPT: Develop small routines that reap big benefits.

Start to develop small routines in life and be consistent with what works. Note the examples, but be sure to individualize your routines. Be sure you make time for these small routines in your daily schedule above. Also remember to practice mindfulness with your routines.

Describe your morning routine (e.g., get up, take medications, use bathroom, make tea, eat breakfast, shower/bathe, journal, meditate/relax, prepare to leave or transition to next routine):

Describe your work (or school, volunteering, etc.) routine (e.g., arrive, get organized, listen to voicemail and check emails, check in with coworkers, set goals for the day, get started):

Describe your evening routine (e.g., check mail and complete tasks, make dinner and eat, clean up kitchen, socialize, read, watch TV, relax):

Describe your bedtime routine (e.g., brush teeth, wash face, put on pajamas, lay out clothes for tomorrow, write down positives and gratefulness and goals for tomorrow, practice mindfulness and relaxation):

Describe other small routines (e.g., leisure, relaxation) that are important to you:

Describe how your life will be different when you effectively and mindfully follow routines and schedules:

Build Mastery

Many of us have daily tasks that lead us to feel in control when completed. The flip side is that when these tasks build up, we tend to feel overwhelmed and out of control.

For example, basic activities of daily living (ADLs) need our daily attention. The following brief list includes basic Build Mastery activities for many of us:

- Hygiene (e.g., brushing teeth, cleaning self, wearing clean clothes)
- Doing the dishes
- Shopping for food and necessities
- Cleaning whatever needs it
- Doing laundry
- Following a to-do list
- Returning phone calls or emails
- Accomplishing important tasks or chores
- Opening mail and/or paying bills
- Completing homework or work tasks
- Tending to our children or pets
- Maintaining a certain level of organization
- Attending a meeting

In addition to ADLs, Build Mastery skills include taking on challenges and working toward goals. Here are some examples:

- Practicing DBT-S and relapse prevention skills
- Pursuing a hobby
- Initiating an exercise program
- Working on friendships
- Taking steps to resolve a problem
- Accomplishing tasks outside your comfort zone
- Dealing with an interpersonal issue
- Standing up for yourself
- Volunteering
- Doing your best in a tough situation
- Joining a club
- Staying sober today
- Learning something new

Technically, any attempt to be effective or any accomplishment can be considered to be a Build Mastery skill.

Be mindful of your efforts and give yourself due credit. Do not minimize or discount your attempts to build mastery. As a rule, if you would judge yourself when you have not made an effort or have not accomplished a task, then you deserve credit for the effort or accomplishment when you do try and when you get a task done.

Using Build Mastery skills decreases emotional vulnerability and increases our self-respect, leading to feeling better.

Build Positive Experience (BPE)

Emotions are a byproduct of what we think and what we do. Positive events and positive thoughts create positive feelings, but as straightforward as this concept seems, it can be difficult to put into action.

Symptoms of mental illness and barriers like lack of energy and motivation can discourage the occurrence of positive events, meaning that positive emotions remain unlikely. In these cases, use opposite action to get into Build Positive Experience. Interest, enjoyment, and energy will eventually follow positive events, especially if we invest in the experience without a strong desire or need to control the outcome. Let positive emotions happen organically.

As you work on abstinence, you may find that you have not developed many positive experiences that have not involved the use of alcohol and/or drugs. Your challenge now is to have good times without substances. It can and will happen if you coach and encourage yourself instead of imagining how much better it would be if you were high.

Sometimes we feel like we do not deserve positive experiences, we worry about expectations, or we dread positive experiences' ending. Treat these issues like distractions and mindfully re-focus on the positive experience. Other barriers to Build Positive Experience exist, too. Take a moment to consider barriers that apply to you.

Build Positive Experience includes positives that can happen right now as well as positives that can be planned in the short- and long-term future.

Positive Events Right Now: What can be a positive in the here and now or immediate future? Maybe it is a conversation, hearing or telling a joke, or helping someone. It might be taking a break, taking a quick walk, or taking a few minutes to practice mindfulness. You may find that the positive event is simply soaking in some sunshine, seeing rain wash everything clean, or feeling a warm breeze.

There are an enormous number of positive events possible now. We just need to turn our minds toward them and be open to the experience with our full attention. Read through the Activities List (p. 87) to find some possibilities.

Positive Events Planned in the Short Term: These positive events can include a regular family meal, an outing alone or with a friend, a Friday movie night, or anything you can plan and schedule over the short term.

List the interests, hobbies, and activities you like to do (or used to do) and add activities to try from the Activities List. If you have a short list, you may have to develop some additional interests through trying out a lot of new activities with an open mind. Plan time for these positive events in your schedule and follow through with them.

Short-term positive events need to be regular occurrences and planned daily to be effective. Having regular positive events that you look forward to and that you mindfully participate in moves you toward a satisfying life.

Positive Events to Work Toward in the Long Term: List your long-term priorities and goals. They may include going to school, learning a craft, making a career change, taking up an instrument, being in great physical shape, or having a vision for making a difference in the world. Of course, sobriety is an example of a long-term positive to work toward.

Pick something from your list and break it down into manageable steps. Plan and schedule time to work on that first step, and follow through on it. As you accomplish each step, give yourself credit and plan and schedule the next step. All great journeys unfold one step at a time.

Your work toward long-term positives is a major part of building a satisfying life. Remember that some steps can be hard or frustrating. Do not give up, and stay focused on your long term goals.

Positive Event Planning, Scheduling, and Your Routine: You may not know what to do to build or plan positive experiences. As stated earlier, first, you should identify possible positive experiences and schedule them, or they

are less likely to happen. Then you have to follow through with your plan using Opposite to Emotion when needed.

Mindfulness and Positive Events: Using Build Positive Experience requires you to bring your Mindfulness skills along. When distractions occur, gently notice and release them, and then refocus on your BPE.

Attend to Relationships (A2R)

Symptoms of mental illness, substance use, and their associated behaviors can disrupt relationships. You may have neglected friends and family or have simply lost track of those connections. At other times, you may have actively damaged relationships or burned out others with your problems. You may feel lonely, and isolation tends to create and maintain unwanted feelings.

Attending to Relationships is a form of Build Positive Experience that creates positive feelings over time through investing in and enjoying people who are important to you.

Start with two lists of people: those who are currently in your life and those from the past who you would want in your life again. Only list people with whom you have or had a positive connection with overall. *Do not list unhealthy people or people with whom you have had hopeless relationships. Also avoid people who have encouraged you to participate in unhealthy behaviors like using substances.*

People I would like to have a better relationship with:

Specific steps I can take to improve these relationships:

People I would like to reconnect with:

Specific steps I can take to reconnect with these people:

Mood Momentum (MM)

We influence feelings with the behaviors we choose. When we experience an emotion that we want to continue, we can use Mood Momentum. This skill directs us to stay involved in events and thoughts that maintain our positive emotions so we can benefit from the momentum of already feeling good. This skill is especially beneficial for people who use substances to continue “feeling good” or riding an otherwise natural high.

Emotions tend naturally to draw us to behaviors that are congruent or fit with them. Mood Momentum is a mindful effort to choose healthy mood-congruent behaviors when they will be helpful. Ways to continue positive moods include the following:

Engage in using Build Positive Experience

Balance using BPE with using Build Mastery

Use mindfulness to reflect on a positive emotion

Engage in using PLEASED

Balance active positive events with relaxing positive events

Engage in healthy relationships

Work on a responsibility and stay mindful of your efforts and accomplishments (and avoid judgments)

Practice mindfulness exercises

Work on a hobby or project or try something on the Activities List

Think of other ways you can use Mood Momentum:

A key to Mood Momentum is to pick from a variety of positive experiences, activities, and behaviors to keep it interesting. Even the most fun or relaxing event will eventually reach the point where it no longer creates a positive effect. We benefit most from MM when we take a balanced approach, switch up our strategies, and keep it fresh.

If you have tried to maintain positive moods through substance use, remember that this skill can be used to replace substance use behaviors in order to continue feeling good in a way that does not compromise your mental health and sobriety.

Opposite to Emotion (O2E)

We get stuck in difficult emotions due in part to mood-congruent behavior. Mood-congruent behavior occurs when we fall into behavior patterns that keep our negative emotions around. For example, when we feel depressed, we may respond by:

- Becoming isolated (e.g., being disconnected from relationships, not answering the phone, missing social engagements and appointments)
- Being inactive (e.g., staying in bed or on the couch, not participating in hobbies or potentially positive experiences, letting chores and other responsibilities pile up)
- Engaging in stuck thinking (e.g., focusing only on the negative, ruminating, wanting to die)
- Neglecting self-care and hygiene
- Eating and sleeping too much or too little
- Deciding to stop therapy and medications
- Engaging in other behaviors that perpetuate negative emotional states

Unfortunately, these reactions to depression keep us depressed and may even make it worse. This is where Opposite to Emotion (also known as Opposite Action) helps. This dialectical skill directs us to act in ways that are the opposite of the behaviors our difficult emotions pull us toward. For the depressive examples above, we would use Opposite to Emotion to:

- Reach out to relationships for assistance and positive experience.
- Get moving by doing activities, hobbies, and important tasks.
- Practice dialectical thinking, take a nonjudgmental stance, or use Encouragement.
- Use PLEASED.
- Go to therapy appointments and discuss medication issues with your prescriber before making sudden changes on your own.

See the following explanations and examples for ways to use Opposite Action to address common difficult emotions.

Opposite to Emotion with Anxiety or Fear: Anxiety and fear lead to avoidance, and avoidance gets reinforced because it protects us from distress in the short-term. However, the more we avoid, the more our anxieties build over time, and the more overwhelmed we end up feeling.

Using Opposite Action means approaching anxieties and fears one step at a time and learning to tolerate the distress that comes with it. The key is to start small and gradually build up to larger fears. The more we approach rather than avoid, the more our nervous system learns to be “bored,” and the less anxious we feel.

We can also learn to accept our anxious thoughts and sensations rather than judge them, fight them, or catastrophize about them. This acceptance-based approach takes the power out of anxieties and has the paradoxical effect of them diminishing them.

Opposite to Emotion with Anger: Anger leads to replaying anger-inducing situations over and over in our minds as well as coming across to others as hostile and sometimes lashing out. It also may include self-harming behaviors or contribute to difficulties maintaining sobriety. Many people find that harboring resentments is a primary factor in continuing to use and in relapse.

Using Opposite Action means being kind and compassionate to others and yourself. We can spend quality time with our pets and children, being careful to be gentle and not to displace our anger, and we can choose to do something to soothe or take care of ourselves.

Alternatively, we might imagine compassion for someone we feel anger toward. If you are angry at yourself, remember that you also need self-compassion. Most people, including you, do not want to make mistakes and do not want others to be angry at them, no matter how unskillfully they act. Compassion can be dialectically balanced with accountability.

Distract from angry thoughts by using the Thoughts skill. Count to 10 or recite the alphabet. Focus on thoughts that are the opposite of angry thoughts.

Do not stuff anger, because this sets the stage for rage. When anger is at a workable level, see if it fits Wise Mind and use Interpersonal Effectiveness skills if needed.

Opposite to Emotion with Guilt and Shame: We feel guilt when we have done something to hurt ourselves or others or when we make mistakes. Often we try to avoid or hide from others when we feel guilt, or we try to blame or otherwise avoid accepting responsibility for our actions. *Not making amends is a set-up to falling back into problem behavior.*

Using Opposite Action means addressing what happened with whomever was affected. Apologize and try to make the situation better if possible. If the situation cannot be improved, then try to do something better somewhere; this is a symbolic way to “right” a “wrong.” Be committed to not repeating the same mistakes and develop a plan to act differently in the future.

A genuine apology is to assuage the other person and not a means for avoiding consequences. Others may continue to be upset for a time after an apology. Be patient with the process. Accept consequences with grace unless they do not fit the situation as evaluated in Wise Mind. Do not participate in guilt or consequences that are out of proportion with the situation.

After you have completed the steps listed here, let go of the situation and the thoughts that caused the guilt. Use Radical Acceptance.

If you feel guilty because of a SLIP, repair the mistake(s) if you are able and get back to your skills and action plan(s) to reduce the impact of emotions that will keep you in a cycle of substance use. Sometimes Wise Mind does not accept guilt. For example, we have a right to say no and to have boundaries, and we do not need to feel guilty for exerting this right. We may experience guilt in the absence of wrongdoing for a variety of reasons. Examples include feeling guilty for practicing Self-Soothe skills, for having a good time, or for taking time for ourselves. This type of guilt leads us to avoid behaviors like saying no, setting boundaries, and participating in beneficial activities.

When we have guilt that Wise Mind does not endorse, the Opposite Action is to approach rather than to avoid. Keep practicing saying no, setting boundaries, and participating in activities until you no longer feel guilt as a response. Remember to encourage yourself to overcome this type of guilt and to use a non-judgmental stance.

We feel shame when guilt is not addressed, when we have done something serious, or when something serious has happened to us. Shame can involve having judgments about being damaged, unlovable, or unforgivable.

We can also feel shame for how we look or who we are as people even when it does not fit Wise Mind. This type of shame frequently originates from others' judgments and from being mistreated. Shame causes us to hide, and hiding keeps the shame around.

Using Opposite Action with shame involves coming out of hiding and talking about what causes us shame with someone *safe, nonjudgmental, and accepting*. As we work through shame, we can open ourselves up to more and more supportive people and begin to heal. The process of working through shame also requires a nonjudgmental stance and Distress Tolerance skills.

O2E with Urges to Use: U-Turn

A u-turn means making a complete change of direction. Sometimes urges to use lead us to take steps to make substance use happen, leading to a relapse. Imagine a continuum where one direction leads to greater health and well-being and the other direction leads to diminished health and well-being. Sometimes we get moving in an ineffective direction (accidentally or by choice), but once we realize we are moving farther away from our goals, we can make an abrupt change and head in the other direction.

Think about times when you have been driving or been a passenger in a car that has taken a wrong turn and is moving away from the destination. How does it feel to willfully stay on this route in spite of increasing indications that the direction is leading to a place you do not want to go? The reality is that it is possible to stop, re-assess the situation, and make a u-turn if needed, and that many opportunities to turn around usually exist until we have actually acted on an urge. Even if you have a lapse, there is still an opportunity to turn it around by recognizing the mistake, quickly repairing it, and reversing course before a full-blown relapse happens.

When we understand the vulnerabilities and triggers that lead to substance use, we can identify many intersections in which to make a u-turn and avoid being in a place that we want to avoid. The next time you notice urges and behaviors that move you toward relapse, take the wheel and make a u-turn.

O2E/U-Turn Worksheet

EVENT	EMOTION/URGE	NATURAL RESPONSE

FOLLOWED NATURAL RESPONSE?

YES	NO
ACTION	OPPOSITE ACTION
OUTCOMES	OUTCOMES

Interpersonal Effectiveness Module

Interpersonal effectiveness has three sets of skills that meet three different goals. Used together, these sets of skills improve our ability to interact with all types of people and to have more effective relationships.

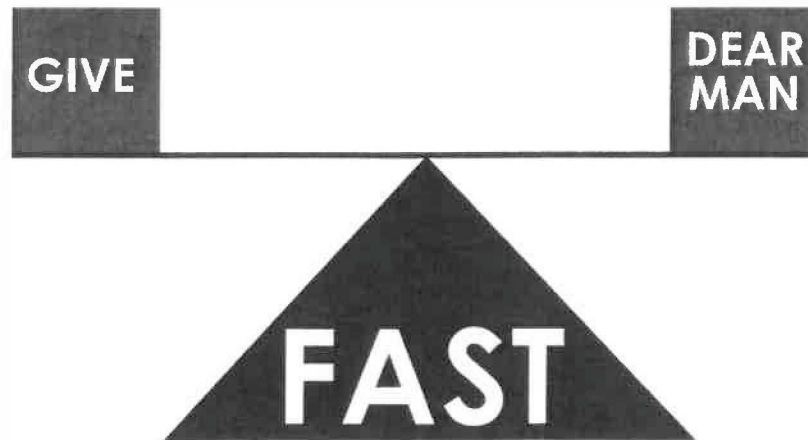
The first set of these skills is FAST. FAST is about self-respect, and it is designed for you to live in a way that emphasizes fairness, truthfulness, and values. When we live according to our values, we develop a solid core of identity and feel good about ourselves and our choices. When you have a healthy relationship with yourself, then you have better relationships with others.

The second set of skills is GIVE. These skills teach us to show interest in others and to respond to them in a genuine manner, emphasizing understanding their experience and being able to validate it. GIVE skills also assist us in conflict resolution.

The last set of interpersonal effective skills is DEAR MAN. DEAR MAN is a model of assertiveness, used to increase the probability that you will get your wants and needs met. DEAR MAN is also used to empower you to say no when needed (like when refusing substances) and to set healthy boundaries.

Interpersonal Effectiveness and Dialectics

Balance is central to maintaining healthy relationships. Being too focused either on ourselves or others leads to unmet wants and needs and conflict. Instead, it is desirable to find middle ground in relationships, depending on the interaction and the context of what is needed.



Think of GIVE and DEAR MAN existing on a dialectic:

At times we need to focus on others and at other times we need to focus on ourselves. In practice, we are most effective when we blend both sets of skills. The blend between thinking about others versus ourselves is grounded in FAST. We use our values to guide us in relationships to enhance our self-respect and others' respect for us.

Ask yourself three questions when working the dialectic in relationships:

What does the other person need in this interaction (GIVE)?

What do I need in this interaction (DEAR MAN)?

What is needed in this interaction to maintain or build my self-respect (FAST)?

What Is Your Goal and Priority?

Keeping and maintaining healthy relationships (GIVE Skills)

Question: How do I want the other person to feel about me?

Example: If I care about the person or if the person has authority over me, act in a way that keeps the person respecting and liking me.

Getting somebody to do what you want (DEAR MAN Skills)

Question: What do I want? What do I need? How do I get it?
How do I effectively say “no”?

Example: How do I ask for something, resolve a problem, or have people take me seriously?

Maintaining Your Self-Respect (FAST Skills)

Question: How do I want to feel about myself after the interaction?

Example: What are my values? Act in a way that makes me feel positive about myself.

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What Stops You from Achieving Your Goals?

I. Lack of skill

You actually *don't know* what to say or how to act.

II. Worry thoughts

You have the skill, but your worry thoughts interfere with your doing or saying what you want.

- Worries about bad consequences:
 - "They won't like me"; "He will break up with me."
- Worries about whether you deserve to get what you want:
 - "I'm such a bad person, I don't deserve this."
- Worries about being ineffective and calling yourself names:
 - "I won't do it right"; "I'm such a loser."

III. Emotions

You have the skill, but your emotions (anger, fear, shame, sadness) make you unable to do or say what you want. Emotion Mind, instead of skills, controls what you say and do.

IV. Can't decide

You have the skills, but you *can't decide* what you really want: asking for too much versus not asking for anything; saying "no" to everything versus giving in to everything.

V. Environment

You have the skill, but the environment gets in the way:

- Other people are too powerful (sometimes despite your best efforts).
- Other people may have some reason for not liking you if you get what you want.
- Other people won't give you what you need unless you sacrifice your self-respect.

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Worry Thoughts and Wise Mind Self-Statements

Turn negative thoughts into realistic ones.

1. Why bother asking? It won't make a difference anyway.

WISE MIND STATEMENT: _____

2. If I ask for something, she'll think I'm stupid.

WISE MIND STATEMENT: _____

3. I can't take it if he's [she's] upset with me.

WISE MIND STATEMENT: _____

4. If I say "no," they won't like me or want to hang out with me anymore.

WISE MIND STATEMENT: _____

5. If I say "no," they'll be really angry at me.

WISE MIND STATEMENT: _____

6. If I make a request or ask for help, I will look weak.

WISE MIND STATEMENT: _____

Examples of Wise Mind Self-Statements:

1. "Just because I didn't get what I wanted last time does not mean that if I ask skillfully this time that I won't get it."
2. "I can handle it if I don't get what I want or need."
3. "It takes a strong person to admit that he [she] needs help from someone else and then ask for it."
4. "If I say 'no' to people and they get angry, it doesn't mean I should have said 'yes.'"
5. "I can deal with it if he [she] is annoyed with me."

Others? _____

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FAST (F)

FAST skills are focused on our priorities, goals, and values so we can make choices that build our self-respect. Self-respect is the foundation to liking ourselves, and it creates a solid base for us to build and maintain relationships with others.

Use the acronym FAST to remember the building blocks of this skill (Fair, Apologies Not Needed, Stick to Values, Truth and Accountability). These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Fair: Be just and take a nonjudgmental stance with yourself and others. Avoid extremes and ground yourself in Wise Mind in interactions with others. Think of fair weather as being neither too hot nor too cold and without storms. Keep a moderate climate with others without whipping up bad weather. Use respectful words and actions with yourself and others. Others do *not* need to earn your respect. We treat others with respect because it builds our own self-worth. *Respond rather than react in relationships.*

Apologies Not Needed: Do not engage in unneeded apologetic behavior. Do not apologize for having an opinion or for your own viewpoints. You are allowed to disagree. Do not apologize for being you. Avoid apologies for things over which you have no control. Chronic, unnecessary apologies erode self-respect and devalue apologies that are genuinely needed. Note that “no apologies” does not apply to situations that require an apology (e.g., hurting someone).

Stick to Values: Use your priorities, goals, and values as guides and ground yourself in them. Choose behaviors and have interactions with others that build your self-respect. Identify what is important to you and stick to it. Know what values are non-negotiable, and when values conflict, work to resolve the conflict through Wise Mind. Live your true intentions based on your values.

Truth and Accountability: Be honest and accountable with yourself and others. Sometimes we avoid the truth because we are afraid of the consequences, but trying to deceive others destroys self-respect and can cause greater problems. Even if you have a great memory and can keep from getting tangled in a web of lies, *you* will still know the truth. Being accountable is more effective in most cases.

When dealing with substance use, lying and keeping secrets will almost always increase the negative effects on emotions, others, and your life in general. *Lying and keeping secrets keeps the doors to substance use cracked open, and most experts agree that being less than 100% truthful about your urges, thoughts, and plans to use is a sure route to relapse.*

In addition, act in a manner that respects your true abilities and avoid feigned helplessness and excuses. Take responsibility for yourself.

Values Inventory

This is a partial list of values. You might have an important value that is not on the list or notice some overlap between values. Review the list and circle your top ten values. Use your selected values in the exercises that follow.

Acceptance	Compassion	Encouragement
Achievement	Confidence	Endurance
Activity	Connection	Energy
Adaptability	Consistency	Enjoyment
Adventurousness	Contentment	Enthusiasm
Affectionateness	Contribution	Excellence
Altruism	Cooperation	Exploration
Ambition	Courage	Expressiveness
Assertiveness	Courteousness	Fairness
Attentiveness	Creativity	Faith
Availability	Credibility	Family
Awareness	Decisiveness	Fellowship
Balance	Dependability	Fidelity
Belongingness	Determination	Financial independence
Bravery	Devotion	Firmness
Calm	Dignity	Fitness
Capability	Discipline	Freedom
Caring	Discretion	Friendship
Challenge	Diversity	Fun
Charity	Drive	Generosity
Cleanliness	Duty	Giving
Closeness	Education	Grace
Comfort	Effectiveness	Gratitude
Commitment	Empathy	Happiness

Harmony	Order	Sharing
Health	Passion	Simplicity
Honesty	Peace	Sincerity
Honor	Persistence	Sobriety
Hopefulness	Playfulness	Spirituality
Humility	Pleasantness	Spontaneity
Humor	Pleasure	Stability
Hygiene	Popularity	Strength
Imagination	Practicality	Structure
Independence	Pragmatism	Success
Integrity	Privacy	Support
Intelligence	Professionalism	Teamwork
Intensity	Prosperity	Thankfulness
Intimacy	Recovery	Thoughtfulness
Joy	Relaxation	Trust
Kindness	Reliability	Truth
Knowledge	Religion	Usefulness
Leadership	Resilience	Warmth
Learning	Resoluteness	Willingness
Love	Respect	Wisdom
Loyalty	Restraint	
Mindfulness	Sacrifice	
Modesty	Security	
Motivation	Self-control	
Neatness	Self-reliance	
Openness	Sensitivity	
Optimism	Service	

Once your values are identified, you can describe specific behaviors that you can practice to live your values with intention. The following are examples for how you can complete this exercise:

I value: TRUTH

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

Be honest when others ask how I'm doing

Report when I have had a SLIP so I can learn from it

Take responsibility for mistakes that I make

I value: FRIENDSHIP

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

Return phone calls from my friends

Listen and be supportive of other people in meetings

Practice "give and take" in my relationships

I value: PEACE

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

Not yell at my wife and kids when I am angry

Practice MINDFULNESS exercises in the morning and at bedtime

Use acceptance and stop judging myself

I value: HEALTH

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

Practice my PLEASED skills

Use opposite to emotion when depressed or anxious

Work hard to eliminate drugs and alcohol

Now it's your turn:

I value:

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

I value:

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

I value:

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

I value:

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

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Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

I value:

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

I value:

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

I value:

Describe three specific ways you can live this value:

Values Conflict Worksheet

Our values frequently come into conflict, and we need to find ways to resolve those tensions in different situations. To move toward resolution, try to decide what your highest ranking values and priorities are and what will best meet the demands of the situation. The overall goal is to maintain and build self-respect. Choices that maintain and build self-respect may mean committing to difficult decisions and actions in some cases. Use Wise Mind to consider the short- and long-term results of each potential course of action. This exercise can also be helpful when you are struggling to maintain mental health and sobriety.

The following exercise will help you resolve value conflicts.

Describe the situation non-judgmentally:

Describe the priorities, goals, and values in conflict:

Rank the priorities, goals, and values from most to least important:

Describe options that either honor your top-ranked value(s) or that show adequate respect across values:

Evaluate the options. Describe a course of action from Wise Mind that maintains or builds self-respect:

Note: Occasionally we must make choices that sacrifice important values. Make these decisions from Wise Mind and only when the outcome is essential.

GIVE (G)

GIVE skills focus on others. Relationships work best when our wants, needs, and desires stay in balance with those of the people around us. Everyone benefits from relationships grounded in genuine interest and validation, and healthy relationships are essential to maintaining mental health and recovery. GIVE is also key to resolving conflicts.

Use the acronym GIVE to remember the building blocks of this skill (Genuine, Interested, Validate, Easy Manner). These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Genuine: Be honest, sincere, and real with others. Speak and act from your heart with caring and use mindfulness to be with others in the moment. Let others know that you value them and treat them with respect. Recognize and address how substance use and/or sobriety affect your ability to be genuine in relationships.

Interested: Interest comes from efforts to connect with a person. Let others have the focus. Listen intently to others and pause to make space before responding. Ask questions and listen to the answers.

Be mindful of your nonverbal communication. Our nonverbals communicate a great deal of information to others, both intentionally and unintentionally. Send the nonverbal messages that you want to send to others. Nonverbally, interest is communicated by looking at the person, making appropriate eye contact, and keeping your mannerisms and posture open and relaxed.

Validate: To validate means to acknowledge others' feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and experience non-judgmentally. Validation is "walking a mile in others' shoes," and seeing life from their perspective. We validate when we find others' truths and how their experiences make sense given their life circumstances and the situation. (See VALIDATE) *Remember to validate yourself, too.*

Easy Manner: Remember the idiom: "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." Having an easy manner means treating others with kindness and a relaxed attitude. It also means not being heavy-handed with our judgments, opinions, and viewpoints. Allow space for others.

We can always raise our interpersonal intensity if necessary. It can be more effective to start out in a relatively relaxed and laid-back manner.

VALIDATION (V)

Validation is a complicated skill. Use this expanded teaching to learn a more advanced approach to this GIVE building block.

Use the acronym **VALIDATE** to remember the building blocks of this skill (**V**alue Others, **A**sk Questions, **L**isten and **R**eflect, **I**dentify with Others, **D**iscuss Emotions, **A**ttend to Nonverbals, **T**urn the Mind, **E**ncourage Participation). These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Value Others: Seeking the inherent value in others is essential to validation. Adopt an attitude of acceptance toward others. Demonstrate your caring and concern, and let others know they are important to you.

Ask Questions: We ask questions to help clarify others' experience. Ask specific questions about what others are feeling as well as about thoughts and beliefs. Ask questions to make sure you understand accurately. Be genuinely curious about what is behind behaviors. Use questions to draw out others' experience.

Listen and Reflect: Listen to others' answers to your questions and reflect back the major themes. Invite others to confirm your understanding (or lack of understanding). Continue to question, listen, and reflect for clarity.

Identify with Others: Work to see the world through the eyes of others. How do relationships and the world make sense to *them*? Seek to understand others, identifying when you can and accepting differences when you cannot.

Discuss Emotions: Talk about others' feelings and how they affect them from *their* perspective (not how they affect you). Acknowledging the impact of others' experience on them demonstrates understanding.

Attend to Nonverbals: Notice others' nonverbal communication to give you information about their experience. Do they look open or closed? Are they making eye contact? Read facial expressions and body language to identify feelings, and then check out your observations with others for accuracy.

Turn the Mind: Validation does not mean that we agree with others. Validation means that we non-judgmentally accept what they feel, think, and experience and how their behaviors make sense given their context. Turn the mind toward validation, especially when it is difficult to relate to an individual. Turning the mind is especially important in conflicts.

Encourage Participation: Validation can be a difficult process at times, so we need to encourage ourselves and others to be engaged with each other. Do not give up, even when understanding is hard, when you feel disconnected, or when you are in conflict with others.

What Validation Is Not

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** These interactions can be confused with validation.

Validation is complex and takes practice. Another way to improve this skill is to understand interactions that are not experienced as validation. The following ways of relating with others often get confused with validation. Some of these ways of relating can work, but we want to minimize their use or use them in balance with accurate validation.

Personalizing others' experience

Keep the focus on the other person. One or maybe two self-statements that communicate your similar experience can be validating, but, when we start to tell our own story, the focus leaves the other person.

Getting too absorbed

Validation is about connection with others' experience *but not getting absorbed into it*. We can validate without taking on others' distress. *Be with* others in distress without *being* their distress. Also avoid taking on someone as a "project." We can show concern and connection without being responsible for the feelings of others.

"Fixing," offering solutions, or giving advice

These strategies are effective in some situations, but they are on the opposite end of the dialectic from validation. Most of us do not need our situations to be fixed, or we already know how to do it ourselves. Instead, we are looking for acknowledgment and understanding.

Cheerleading and encouragement

These approaches can be effective in balance with validation, but they can feel dismissive or condescending if a person has not been validated first.

It is also useful to avoid looking on the bright side, stating that the situation could have been worse, or one-upping others to try to put their issues into perspective (or accomplish something else). These approaches do not usually work well. Even if what the other person is saying does not seem like a big deal to you, remember that it may be a big deal to him or her.

Agreeing or giving in

You can validate others' experience even if you disagree, are in conflict, or want a change to happen. Validation can be a starting point for change.

TRUST (T) and Relationships

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Learn how to develop trust in relationships.

People who have been hurt or betrayed and/or who have experienced inconsistent relationships commonly struggle with trust. It is difficult to have rewarding friendships and other relationships if trust does not develop. The information below will help you decide whether people are trustworthy and will assist you in becoming more trustworthy yourself.

Use the acronym TRUST to remember the building blocks (Truthful, Respectful, Understanding, Stable, and Time) of this skill. These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Truthful

Trustworthy people tell the truth, even when it is inconvenient, difficult, or will result in consequences. Do not give your trust to other people whom you know to be dishonest, and do not erode others' trust in you by being dishonest.

Respectful

Being respectful means that others (and oneself) are treated fairly and with dignity. People who shout, intimidate, bully, are aggressive, or are otherwise disrespectful are not trustworthy.

Understanding

People who care enough to understand others and take their perspectives, wants, and needs into account tend to be more trustworthy. It is difficult to trust those who cannot look outside themselves to care for others too.

Stable

Trustworthy people are stable and consistent, and others can rely on their predictability. By contrast, erratic, unstable, and inconsistent people can be too hard to predict and have poor follow-through, both of which erode trust.

Time

Time is one of the best ways to gauge trustworthiness. Trust should not be automatic; it should be developed over time. For people who have destroyed trust, working the other components of the TRUST acronym over time will help in repairing it.

Making Friends

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Making friends takes positivity, time, and consistency.

Most of us want to have at least a couple of good friends, and a lot of people struggle with how to create lasting and meaningful friendships. Here are some suggestions for creating friendships to get you started.

Meet people who share similar values and interests to yours

People tend to make friends with other people who are similar, although sometimes quite different people become fabulous friends, so do not limit yourself either. If you have a particular hobby or interest (e.g., music, woodworking, scrapbooking, ham radio, politics), maybe there is a club, group, message board, or another meeting place for people into the same thing. If you have children, seek out other parents with children of a similar age group, or, if you have dogs, visit a dog park or area where people commonly walk their dogs (or take an obedience class; your dog might need it and you will get to learn more about behaviorism).

Get active in your community or involved in particular causes (e.g., social justice, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, issues in your own community). We have to get involved to meet other people.

Meet people around you

People commonly become friends based on proximity. Getting to know the people who live close to you, who you work with, or whose paths you frequently cross is an effective way to develop friendships. These people do not have to be a lot like you as the familiarity that comes with getting to know people over time often bridges differences. However, as mentioned above, you have to get involved with those around you to make friendships.

Be curious, show interest in others, ask questions, and really listen

Most people enjoy it when others take an interest in them. Learning about others is a great way to get to know them and they may reciprocate interest. When taking an interest in others, be mindful of their nonverbal communication and whether they are taking part in the interaction. Also be mindful of boundaries and do not overreach in asking questions. Stay clear of potentially controversial topics such as politics and religion at least at first, unless the context of the conversation or situation naturally leads to these topics.

Practice give and take in relationships

Healthy relationships are based on give and take. Those who take without giving burn out friends. Those who give without getting in return feel hurt and resentful. Strive to have balance in relationships. Be the kind of friend to others that you want them to be to you.

Be a rewarding person to be around

Consistent with behaviorism, your presence around others needs to be sufficiently rewarding or others will disconnect and avoid you. Work on being pleasant and enjoyable to be around, and others will respond. That does not mean that every interaction needs to be positive, or that you cannot rely on others for support from time to time, but if others do not feel at least intermittent rewards, it will be hard to maintain friendships. That is behaviorism.

Do not share too much or too little

People who immediately share their story or intimate, private details of life often scare off others. On the other end of the dialectic, people who are too private can take too much effort to get to know for other people, or others may interpret a private disposition as disinterest (accurately or not). Aim for the middle ground with what you share in relationships.

Realize that people have different social wants and needs

People are a lot like plants. Some need a lot of light and others thrive in shade. Some need only a bit of water, and others need a lot. Some plants have deep roots, and others do not. Plants are diverse, as are people. Think about yourself and people you know. Some are “people persons” and others have fewer people needs. Some people like to get to know others intimately, and others like to keep relationships more superficial. Match yourself to others in ways that work, finding people with similar people needs and accepting differences when they exist.

Take your time

While some people become friends quickly, most friendships develop over time. Be patient. Focus on being a consistent friend to others, and in time friendships with others will materialize.

Build respect over “liking”

If you behave in a respectful manner that leads others to respect you, others will also like you most of the time. However, if you place “liking” above respect, others might like you but there is no guarantee that they will respect you. Strive to earn others’ respect in order to build friendships.

DEAR MAN (DM)

The DEAR MAN skill focuses on us. We use DEAR MAN to get our wants and needs met, to say no, and to set boundaries. This skill is the DBT version of assertiveness. *Clearly and proactively communicating your wants and needs to others is vitally important to maintaining mental health and recovery.*

The building blocks of DEAR MAN (described later in this section) work best together, but some of them can be used independently (e.g., you can assert without using any other DEAR MAN building blocks). Use as much or as little of DEAR MAN as is required by the situation. To be most effective, approach DEAR MAN with the following core assumptions and guidelines:

Others cannot read your mind: This includes your closest friends and family. Assume that others are oblivious and cannot tell how you are feeling or know what you want or need; it may feel personal but it is simply reality. We sometimes get frustrated and blame others when our wants and needs go unmet. We need to *ask* for our wants and needs, say *no* when appropriate, and *maintain* our own boundaries.

Effective communication of your wants and needs requires words: Do not sigh, sulk, cop an attitude, get destructive, withdraw, or otherwise communicate without thoughtful words *and* expect it to work effectively. It is true that our behaviors communicate volumes—just not clearly.

DEAR MAN does not always work, even when done effectively: DEAR MAN increases the probability that you will get your wants and needs met, but it does not guarantee it. Sometimes self-respect (e.g., that you spoke up or tried) is the consolation prize.

You must be mindful of your DEAR MAN goals before you begin: Decide what is important and what is negotiable before you use DEAR MAN.

Remember to balance DEAR MAN with GIVE grounded in FAST: Attending to others (GIVE) makes them more willing to assist, accept when you say no, and respect your boundaries. Keep track of priorities, goals, and values in relationships (FAST).

By learning and practicing assertiveness, you can avoid and prevent resentments: All of us require some of our wants and needs to be met to feel good about the people in our lives. Similarly, we need to learn how to say no and set boundaries to avoid feeling like a door mat and used by others. Part of avoiding resentments is speaking up.

Use the acronym **DEAR MAN** to remember the building blocks of this skill (**D**escribe, **E**xpress, **A**ssert, **R**eward, **M**indful, **A**ppear Confident, **N**egotiate). These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Describe: Use observe and describe to outline the situation in nonjudgmental language. Identify the facts that will support your request, your reason for saying no, or your need for a boundary.

Express: Share your opinions and feelings if they relate and will help others to understand the situation. Sometimes you may choose not to include this step.

Assert: Ask clearly for what you want or need, say no, or set your boundary. Establish your DEAR MAN goals up front so you know what you want out of the situation and work to be straightforward and matter of fact. The assert step is essential. Otherwise, no one will know what you want or need.

Reward: Let others know what is in it for them. How will meeting your wants and needs, accepting your refusal, or respecting your boundaries benefit the relationship? Try to focus on rewards rather than threats. Create opportunities for others to feel positive about helping or respecting for you. However, sometimes we need to discuss consequences instead of rewards. Again, be matter of fact, and avoid ultimatums that will box everyone in. Overall, try to provide incentives to others for meeting your wants and needs.

Mindful: Use a “broken record” approach. Others will often try to change the subject or throw in comments to derail you. Repeat your request or limits over and over again, but also be aware of when the broken record technique is not working and switch strategies accordingly.

Appear Confident: Act as if you feel confident even if you do not. Pretend you have the confidence you have seen in someone else. Use an assertive tone of voice, make eye contact, and use confident body language. Be mindful of your facial expression (keeping it relatively neutral) as well as your posture and overall personal appearance. Use nonverbal communication to your advantage. Write down and practice your DEAR MAN skills before using them so you feel more confident in the actual situation.

Negotiate: Negotiation means that we compromise and are willing to give to get. Decide what compromises make sense if you cannot meet your desired DEAR MAN goal(s). If you get stuck, turn the issue over to the other person for options to solve it; for example, say, “What do you think will work?” Turning the tables shifts the dialectical balance and can get the process moving again.

Negotiation is a dialectical strategy to get wants and needs met by meeting someplace in the middle. However, in some cases, you may decide in Wise Mind that negotiation is not an option.

DEAR MAN Factors to Consider

Be in Wise Mind: Wise Mind is essential for the effective use of DEAR MAN. If you are not in Wise Mind, consider soothing your emotions before using DEAR MAN in most cases. (Sometimes using DEAR MAN based in emotion mind is needed; e.g., if safety is an immediate issue.)

Use GIVE First: Start an interaction with GIVE to increase your effectiveness. Others are more receptive when you consider their feelings, point of view, and situation. GIVE can open doors for using DEAR MAN.

Think About Timing: It's been said that "timing is everything." They also say, "There's no time like the present." Both of these sayings have truth. Consider whether the timing of your use of DEAR MAN seems to favor it, but do not use timing as an excuse to put off using DEAR MAN when you need to, especially if the situation is time sensitive.

Direct DEAR MAN Appropriately: Make sure you speak to someone who can actually respond to your use of DEAR MAN. Sometimes it is difficult to predict if someone will respond well to your use of DEAR MAN. Start where you can and be respectful at all times, then move on to a different person if your use of DEAR MAN is not working. Remember that even if one person may not be able to help you when you use DEAR MAN, he or she might have influence with the next person you address.

Do Not Give Up: DEAR MAN is a difficult skill that varies in its effectiveness. Practice it in everyday situations and you will improve your overall assertiveness.

Interpersonal Intensity (II)

Effective use of DEAR MAN sometimes depends on our level of intensity. Assertiveness is a dialectical concept, with passivity on one end and aggressiveness on the other:



There are times to be more passive or more aggressive, but the most effective level of assertiveness is usually someplace in the middle. When we are too passive, it is easy for others to dismiss us, but when we are too aggressive, others get defensive and resist our demands. Use observe and describe to make a Wise Mind assessment of each unique situation.

It works to start in the low-middle end of the dialectic in most situations. From the low-middle end, you can dial up the intensity if needed; it is less effective to start out too intense and then try to dial it down.

Consider your baseline interpersonal style when applying Interpersonal Intensity. If you are normally passive, an effective DEAR MAN level will probably feel uncomfortably aggressive. If you are normally aggressive, an effective DEAR MAN level will probably feel uncomfortably passive. Closely observe others' reactions and responsiveness and adjust your Interpersonal Intensity accordingly.

Sometimes it is hard to gauge if you are being passive, assertive, or aggressive. Consider the following descriptions to guide you:

Qualities of being passive: You struggle to say no and easily (or automatically) give in to others' requests, even when you do not want to. You have trouble setting boundaries and standing up for your rights, and you avoid conflict at all costs.

Qualities of being assertive: You are direct, speaking confidently and maintaining eye contact. You are able to express your wants and needs without having to "beat around the bush" and can say and stick to "no." You are able to take responsibility for yourself, and you act in a respectful and thoughtful manner in resolving conflicts.

Qualities of being aggressive: You are focused on having things your way, no matter the effect on others. You interact with a loud, forceful, and argumentative style. You can be prone to bullying others into doing what you want, and you are not shy about initiating conflicts, taking a "win at all costs" approach.

To practice adjusting your interpersonal level of intensity, do behavioral rehearsal responding to different situations at different levels, followed by discussion on what was most effective.

DEAR MAN Bill of Rights

Review the bill of rights below. Refer to it to encourage yourself to use DEAR MAN. Also, remember that rights require responsibility, so use DEAR MAN mindfully and effectively. Choose your “DEAR MAN” moments wisely.

- I have the right to be treated with respect.
- I have the right to my own opinions.
- I have the right to express my feelings.
- I have the right to stand up for my values.
- I have the right to disagree with others.
- I have the right to understand a request before agreeing.
- I have the right to ask for information.
- I have the right to take time to think about a request.
- I have the right to say no without guilt.
- I have the right to ask for my wants and needs.
- I have the right to set healthy boundaries with others.
- I have the right to be in Wise Mind before I get into a discussion.
- I have the right to disengage from a conflict.
- I have other rights related to my needs and wants.

List other DEAR MAN rights:

Conflict Resolution

Many of us have conflicts with others (or may avoid them at all costs). Use the following steps to guide you through conflicts. As with other interpersonal skills, it is essential to do behavioral rehearsal with your therapist, program members, or someone else, especially if you struggle with handling conflict effectively.

- Address issues proactively with DEAR MAN to keep the potential for and intensity of conflicts lower.
- When in conflict, step back and see if you and others are in Wise Mind. If you want to win or be “right” more than seek understanding and resolution, you are probably not in Wise Mind. Emotion mind conflicts are rarely effective. If either of you are not in Wise Mind, disengage and discuss the issue later. Use distress tolerance skills before getting back into the issue(s).
- Consider the relevant issues. Use Wise Mind to consider whether this is a conflict worth having right now with this person. Consider your priorities, goals, values, and the nature of the conflict. Pick your conflicts wisely.
- Use FAST throughout any interpersonal situation and especially with conflict. Lowering yourself to another’s “level” will decrease your self-respect and will rarely result in an effective outcome.
- Start with GIVE. Think about companies with great customer service. They avoid arguing and listen instead and then let you know they understand your problem. This approach frequently defuses arguments.
- Use a non-judgmental stance and you might find that you agree with at least some of what the other person has to say. Breathe and give some space before you respond. Many conflicts escalate because of a mutual lack of listening coupled with rapid-fire responses.
- Use DEAR MAN effectively. Be clear about your wants and needs, saying no, or setting boundaries. Do so in a matter-of-fact way without calling names, labeling, judging, or getting into extremes.
- Use Radical Acceptance when conflicts are not resolved or when others are upset and angry. Not all conflicts have an immediate resolution. Sometimes we need to step away and let it be. When resolution seems unlikely or when the conflict is escalating, gently disengage yourself and agree to revisit it later.
- Remember that negotiation and making Wise Mind concessions are useful. Stay away from all-or-nothing in situations and work the dialectic.
- Do not engage in conflicts when under the influence of substances. Substance use dramatically decreases the probability that the conflict will be handled respectfully and skillfully, and it dramatically increases the probability that the conflict will escalate.

Using DEAR MAN to Refuse Substances

When people give up substances (or are working to do so) it is common to encounter pressures, both subtle and obvious, to take up using again. You may find yourself in situations where others are drinking and/or using drugs and where it seems to be part of the “norm.” In these situations you may find that others encourage you to use, sometimes in seemingly friendly ways, and sometimes in pushy ways. Sometimes the encouragement is subtle, being passive and implied.

In situations where you are offered alcohol, drugs, or anything else that is unwanted, you can simply say “no” without any additional information or justifications. Saying no is difficult for many people. For this reason, it is important to do behavior rehearsal, having your therapist, a fellow program member, or someone else “pressure” you to use while you practice setting a limit. Have your behavior rehearsal partner continue to challenge you in more intense ways while you continue to use broken record. Note that you can also rehearse other ways of refusing if you find that to be useful.

As you rehearse this skill, remember to practice different scenarios (e.g., being at a social event, having someone bring substances to your home, having your partner or spouse encourage you to use with him/her) with different people (e.g., strangers, a close friend, a family member), making the rehearsal as real as possible. It helps to have people share actual events with each other to increase the realism of the rehearsal. Having one or more observers to give feedback and to “jump into” the rehearsal to model skills when you get stuck increases the effectiveness of this exercise. Writing a script to follow can assist those who are in the process learning how to speak more spontaneously.

Remember that you have worked hard for your successes, and people who would ridicule, criticize, or pressure someone who has worked to improve have their own issues. Try not to personalize, and remember that you can simply leave the situation if necessary. Use your Wise and Clear Mind to guide you.

Using Interpersonal Effectiveness to Address Resentments

Resentments contribute to painful emotions, substance use, and other ineffective behaviors. Start by observing and describing the role resentments have had in your life with your therapist and/or program members. We can be surprised how much resentment we have once we begin to talk about it. In these discussions, be straightforward in how you have played a role in and participated in resentments.

Resentments can then be divided into categories. One category is for resentments that you decide to accept and release without addressing them with other people, essentially beginning a process of unburdening yourself. It is helpful to share your desire to release these resentments with someone else, and you may find that you need to revisit this process of acceptance from time to time.

The other category is for resentments that need to be addressed with other people, directly or symbolically. Begin by talking about these resentments in greater detail with impartial others to better understand the nature of the resentments and what you need to say. Try to discuss resentments descriptively and non-judgmentally, and allow yourself to feel the pain attached to them. Do not amplify your emotions, but also do not attempt to minimize their impacts on you. You may consider journaling as an alternative to or as an initial step toward talking with someone. If expressing the resentments will likely overwhelm you, make sure you are in a safe environment and in Wise and Clear Mind.

After journaling and/or discussing resentments, choose one that you may want to address. Take on resentments one at a time. Specifically decide what you want to say to the person or people relative to your chosen resentment. Remember your FAST skills, especially being fair and grounded in values, and how you can use GIVE along with what will essentially be a DEAR MAN. Write a script and rehearse it with someone. Anticipate how your DEAR MAN, even done skillfully with GIVE, will be received. *Remember to own your contributions to the situations that caused the resentment and include that in the script.*

After you finish this preparation, make a final decision about whether you want to address the resentment directly. Discussing resentments with the people involved works when you anticipate that they will be receptive. *In general, avoid directly discussing resentments with people who would likely react in a way that harms you and with people who would likely be harmed by the discussion.* In these situations, writing a letter that you will not mail, journaling, or talking to an open chair (i.e., Clint Eastwood-ing) can be a healing outlet.

When you have clear interpersonal and distress tolerance plans along with sufficient behavioral rehearsal, reach out to set up a time to talk. Consider the timing and other factors to set the discussion up for success. Keep in mind the qualities of being assertive: Your goal is to skillfully discuss the resentment.

The ultimate goal of addressing resentments in one way or another is acceptance and forgiveness, so you can be free to move forward. The preparation and conversation can be stressful, but the reward will likely be worth it.

Resentments Worksheet

Use this exercise to learn more about your resentments and to begin the process of addressing them.

Describe a resentment related to another person in detail and in non-judgmental language:

Describe your behaviors that contributed to the resentment:

Describe what your goal(s) are for addressing the resentment (if you choose to do so):

Describe what you would like to say to the other person using GIVE and DEAR MAN (use another sheet of paper if necessary):

Describe in more detail your plan for addressing this resentment (if you choose to do so), including the skills you will need to practice:

Using Interpersonal Effectiveness to Make Amends

Substance use and other ineffective behaviors can result in harm to other people in both direct and indirect ways. The pain and suffering you may have caused others through your actions (and inactions) may create pain and suffering for you as well. The guilt and shame that results from harming others can directly keep people in the cycle of addiction or make them vulnerable to relapse by allowing for escape and avoidance of these emotions.

Not addressing the harm caused to others also interferes with recovery. For example, you may think you need to continue to avoid those you have hurt, closing your world rather than opening it. Additionally, ignoring the need to make amends allows you to ignore the negative effects of substance use (or other behavior), creating another barrier to your recovery.

Making amends begins with openly acknowledging the behaviors that harmed other people. What did you do, and who did it affect? With this acknowledgement comes emotion, and you need to experience it without amplifying it or minimizing it. The emotion honors the relative seriousness of what was done. Balance experiencing any intense emotion with distress tolerance skills, and consider if you need to do this work in a safe environment.

One part of making amends is apologizing for the specific actions that affected others, clearly recognizing the impacts of those actions. If a direct apology cannot be made (i.e., if it would cause further harm), then it can be helpful to write a letter that you will not mail, to journal, or to talk to an open chair.

However, amends go far beyond an apology. An important part of amends is repairing the situation to the best of your ability. For example, if you stole money or property, you would pay it back or return it. Justice is restored through restitution that honors the pain and loss that resulted from your actions. If you cannot make amends for a practical reason (e.g., you cannot or should not contact the affected person, you literally do not have the means to restore the situation), then you may have to make symbolic amends, often through committing to touch the lives of others in positive ways. Dialectically, this makes meaning out of something that was terrible.

Truly making amends is about changing your life so that you no longer fall into the same mistakes that caused others harm; it is about pursuing health, wellness, and recovery. It is about working skills to live a life grounded in values and your true intentions.

Although the process of making amends is focused on and for others, you can enjoy the freedom that ultimately comes from sincere efforts.

Making Amends Worksheet

Use this exercise to begin the process of making amends.

Describe in detail and in non-judgmental language the behavior that harmed someone else and who that person is:

Describe in detail and in non-judgmental language how you believe that person was affected by your behavior, including the emotional impact:

Describe the apology you would like to make, taking responsibility for your behavior and making no excuses:

Describe how you plan to repair the situation, in real and symbolic ways:

Describe your commitment to making changes in your life to avoid the same mistake:

BOUNDARY (BO)

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** This skill guides healthy boundaries.

Healthy boundaries are the foundation of safe and respectful relationships with others, but many people do not know where to start in terms of developing boundaries. The BOUNDARY skill establishes a system to develop effective boundaries.

Use the acronym BOUNDARY to remember the building blocks (**B**e aware of self, **O**bserve others and the situation, **U**nderstand your and others' limits, **N**egotiate sometimes, **D**ifferences exist, **A**lways **R**emember your values, **Y**our safety comes first) of this skill. These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Be aware of self

Use Observe and Describe to notice what you are sharing and what you are doing. Does your behavior fit the situation and your relationships with others? Does your behavior feel comfortable? Notice whether your boundaries are at either extreme, being too closed or too open for the situation and the relationships.

Observe others and the situation

What is happening in the situation and with others? Notice the level of interest, the information shared, and the behavior of others. Do the sharing and the behavior of others seem healthy and respectful? Note that observing others does not mean *copying* others. Keep your self-respect in mind and act accordingly. Observe and Describe what you are sharing and doing in the context of others, and understand that your boundaries exist in relation to those of others.

Understand your and others' limits

We all have important boundaries or limits. Be aware of your boundaries and maintain them from Wise Mind based on the needs of the situation and the relationships between you and others. Also be aware of others' boundaries and respect them.

Negotiate sometimes

In important relationships, we sometimes negotiate our boundaries. Negotiations happen from Wise Mind and rarely involve extreme changes. Avoid negotiating boundaries in unimportant relationships, in new relationships, or to be liked. Put your self-respect above being liked by others.

You may also negotiate your boundaries if there is a benefit in adjusting them. If your boundaries can be too undefined, work on developing tighter limits. If your boundaries can be too rigid, work on developing more flexible limits. Again, make adjustments from Wise Mind.

Differences exist

Negotiating boundaries is effective at times, but we need to balance negotiations with a healthy respect for individual differences, too. Differences in boundaries happen due to personality, personal history, culture, religion, situations, settings, and other reasons. Sometimes it is not about negotiating boundaries but maintaining your boundaries while being respectful of others' boundaries. Use Radical Acceptance or Everyday Acceptance with individual differences and learn not to take those differences personally (this is a boundary, too).

Always Remember your values

The decision to negotiate and adjust your boundaries or to maintain them needs to be grounded in your priorities, goals, and values. Use your values as a compass to guide your boundaries and do not compromise boundaries at the expense of self-respect.

Your safety comes first

People sometimes compromise boundaries to be liked or to fit in with others. Avoid situations that can harm you emotionally, psychologically, physically, spiritually, or in other ways.

Definitions and Types of Boundaries

■ **CORE CONCEPT:** Define boundaries in order to practice them.

Physical

Physical boundaries include your body and the space that surrounds it (i.e., your personal space). Physical boundaries can be defined in terms of who is allowed to touch us and in what areas. These boundaries include all levels of physical intimacy and all sexual practices. Additionally, physical boundaries include what goes into us, such as food and drink, and anything else that affects our physical being.

Psychological

Psychological boundaries include information about yourself, your thoughts and beliefs, and your values. These boundaries might include topics of conversation and anything that occupies your “mental” space. Who knows about your inner life and how it is shared (if at all) constitute psychological boundary issues.

Emotional

Emotional boundaries include your feelings and their ability to be leveraged or manipulated (e.g., emotional “hostage-taking” or guilt-tripping). Emotional boundaries also include not taking on others’ distress or expecting them to take on yours. Like psychological boundaries, who knows about your feelings and how they are shared (if at all) constitute emotional boundary issues.

Spiritual

Spiritual boundaries include your ability to choose your own religion, higher power, or spiritual life or lack thereof. Who knows about your spiritual life and how it is shared (if at all) constitute spiritual boundary issues.

Biographical

Biographical boundaries have to do with your history and life story. What to tell others about your life depends on many factors. Of course, psychological, emotional, and other boundaries intersect with biographical boundaries.

General

Anything that defines and differentiates you as separate from others (and others from you) is a boundary, and anything needed to keep you healthy and safe interpersonally and in the world constitutes a boundary issue. General boundaries might be where you live, where you work, who your friends and family members are, and other general information about you.



Interpersonal Effectiveness 5: BOUNDARY Application

CORE CONCEPT: Use this worksheet to define boundaries.

Describe your **physical** boundaries:

Describe your **psychological** boundaries:

Describe your **emotional** boundaries:

Describe your **spiritual** boundaries:

Describe **general** boundary issues important to you:

Describe what boundaries may be negotiable in some situations:

Describe what boundaries are non-negotiable to you:

Describe how establishing and maintaining boundaries can build and maintain your self-respect:

Describe how your life will be different when you establish and maintain effective boundaries:
