

Self-Directed DBT Skills Exercises

Introduction

EXERCISE: *Commit to Practicing DBT Skills*

Week 1: Build Your Mindfulness Muscle

EXERCISE: *Observe with Your Senses*

EXERCISE: *Describe What You Observe*

EXERCISE: *Participate One-Mindfully*

EXERCISE: *Identify and Replace Your Judgments*

EXERCISE: *Mindfulness Practice over the Upcoming Week*

Week 2: Meet Your Wise Mind

EXERCISE: *Integrating Emotion Mind and Reasonable Mind*

EXERCISE: *What Does Your Wise Mind Feel Like?*

EXERCISE: *Breathing into Wise Mind*

EXERCISE: *Everyday Wise Mind*

Week 3: Understand Your Emotions

EXERCISE: *Observing and Describing Emotions*

EXERCISE: *Mindfulness of Current Emotions*

EXERCISE: *Create Your Personal Emotion Dictionary*

Week 4: Work Through Emotional Blocks

EXERCISE: *Differentiating Between Thoughts and Facts*

EXERCISE: *Checking the Facts*

EXERCISE: *Opposite Action*

Week 5: Decrease Stressors to Decrease Stress

EXERCISE: *Identify Opportunities for Problem Solving*

EXERCISE: *Identifying Your Goals*

EXERCISE: *Brainstorming*

Week 6: Build Emotional Resilience

EXERCISE: *Identify Opportunities to Accumulate Positive Emotions in the Short Term*

EXERCISE: *Identify Your Values and Goals*

EXERCISE: *Take Steps Toward Your Goals*

EXERCISE: *Identify Opportunities to Build Mastery*

EXERCISE: *Schedule for Accumulating Positive Emotions and Building Mastery*

Week 7: Prepare for Stormy Weather

EXERCISE: *Create a Distress Tolerance Kit*

EXERCISE: *Pros and Cons*

EXERCISE: *Coping Ahead for How to STOP in Crisis*

Week 8: Use Your Body to Calm Down

EXERCISE: *Tip Your Temperature*

EXERCISE: *Intense Exercise*

EXERCISE: *Paced Breathing*

EXERCISE: *Paired Muscle Relaxation*

EXERCISE: *Tracking Your TIP Skills*

Week 9: Practice Radical Acceptance

EXERCISE: *Identifying What You Need to Radically Accept*

EXERCISE: *Half-Smiling and Willing Hands*

EXERCISE: *Cope Ahead for Turning the Mind*

EXERCISE: *A Week of Radical Acceptance*

Week 10: Approach Your Relationships Mindfully

EXERCISE: *Clarifying Interpersonal Goals and Priorities*

EXERCISE: *Practice Communicating at Different Levels of Intensity*

EXERCISE: *Determine the Effective Level of Intensity*

Week 11: Get More of What You Want in Your Relationships

EXERCISE: *Constructing a DEAR Script*

EXERCISE: *Incorporating the MAN Skills*

EXERCISE: *DEAR MAN Practice*

Week 12: Protect Your Relationships with Others . . . and with Yourself

EXERCISE: *Validate in Your Day-to-Day Interactions*

EXERCISE: *Practice the GIVE Skills*

EXERCISE: *Putting It All Together: Incorporating the FAST Skills*

EXERCISE: *Commit to Practicing DBT Skills*

Learning DBT skills can be super tough; you'll have to force yourself to try new tools and rely less on the habits you've been using to cope. But the potential rewards are life changing. It can be useful to focus on those rewards when times get tough. Take a few minutes right now to figure out your hopes for the next three months.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In DBT, we focus on **commitment**. In this first exercise, we want to help you identify your specific goals and commit to working toward them. Consider the following questions: What do you want to be different in your life? How important is it to you that these things change? How can DBT modules like Mindfulness, Emotion Regulation, Distress Tolerance, and Interpersonal Effectiveness help you?
2. **Target behaviors** are the things you do when you're upset that you wish you didn't do or that cause you problems. For example, maybe you use risky behaviors to cope or purposely hurt yourself. Alternatively, perhaps you avoid doing important things due to anxiety, depression, or shame, and there are things you wish you did more. Think about the emotionally reactive behaviors you personally struggle with.
3. Choose three target behaviors that you would like to change (decrease or increase) during the next three months; we've provided examples on the following page. In the second column, write the current frequency of each behavior. You'll use this information to track your progress after you complete the program.

INTRODUCTION

TARGET BEHAVIOR	FREQUENCY OF BEHAVIOR NOW	FREQUENCY OF BEHAVIOR AT END OF BOOK
<i>Decrease binge-eating</i>	<i>Four times per week</i>	<i>Once in the past month (typically when triggered)</i>
<i>Increase asserting my needs</i>	<i>Rarely! Less than once per week?</i>	<i>Spoke up six times last month; asserting needs is starting to feel more natural</i>

INTRODUCTION

4. Next, reflect on a time in your life when you made a big change, completed a challenging task, or kept a difficult commitment. What kept you motivated or helped you push forward? What roadblocks did you hit, and how did you cope with them? Note anything that helped you then that could support your DBT skills learning now. (If you don't have a previous experience to pull from, we made some helpful suggestions in the FAQs on page 12.)

5. Finally, write a statement to yourself about how you commit to completing this workbook and doing your best to learn and practice DBT skills. You could also comment on why the commitment is important to you. For example, you might write, "I, (your name), commit to practicing all of the skills exercises in this book at least twice, because research shows DBT skills could help me with my BPD and PTSD symptoms," or "I, (your name), commit to following this book as written for the next three months, because I no longer want to feel anxious all of the time, and I believe DBT skills could help me." Use your own language and make a sincere commitment to yourself.

6. Excellent! Refer to this as much as necessary to stay motivated over the next three months. When you're ready, we'll see you in

EXERCISE: *Observe with Your Senses*

The Observe skill helps bring your attention to the present moment through the five senses—sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. You focus on the sensory experience rather than using words to describe it. When your mind wanders or starts describing what you're observing, bring your attention back to observing. Don't rush—allow yourself to be fully present, observing with curiosity as though you have never encountered this object before.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sit in a comfortable position with a small piece of food. Close your eyes and take 3–5 slow breaths, focusing your entire attention on your breath. When you feel ready to begin, open your eyes.
2. Begin with your sense of vision: Look at the food and observe the color, texture, shape, and anything else you can see. Look at it as if you have never seen this food before.
3. Next, bring your attention to your sense of touch. Use your fingers to observe how the food feels. You might find it helpful to close your eyes. Notice the temperature of the food, its weight in your hands, and the texture on your fingertips, as well as anything else that comes to your attention.
4. Listen to any sound the food makes using your sense of hearing. You might need to create the sounds, for example, by squeezing, rubbing, or tapping the food.
5. Bring the food to your nose and observe with your sense of smell. Notice the scent of the food and how strong or weak it smells.

Exercise: Observe with Your Senses *continued*

6. Lastly, taste the food. Take just one bite and chew it slowly and deliberately for at least 10 seconds, noticing the taste. Pay attention to whether the taste changes as you continue to chew. Bring your attention to your sense of touch again. How does the food feel in your mouth? What do you notice with your sense of touch and taste as you swallow and after you swallow?
7. Take your time with the food as you continue to eat it, bite by bite. Is the look or smell of the food different now that you have taken bites? Bring your attention fully to your five senses as you continue to eat, slowly and deliberately.

Did you notice anything about the food that you hadn't noticed before or had forgotten? How does this experience compare to when you mindlessly eat something, barely paying attention until you realize that there is nothing left? When you mindfully observe, it allows you to fully experience the world around you and the moment you are in. You can use this type of mindfulness practice just about anytime or anywhere to anchor yourself in the present!

EXERCISE: *Describe What You Observe*

In this exercise, you will practice bringing your awareness to the present moment by describing what you observe, in words. The key is to describe just the facts, and to be as specific as you can. If you notice interpretations, assumptions, or judgments popping up, you can label them, too (“I’m having the interpretation that . . .”).

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On your computer, TV, or phone, find a video or show that you have never seen before and mute the volume. Set a timer for three minutes.
2. Close your eyes and take 3–5 slow breaths, focusing your entire attention on your breath. When you feel ready to begin, open your eyes and hit play.
3. Watch the video and describe out loud what you see. Be as specific as you can. For example, rather than just saying, “I see two people walking down the street,” you might say, “I see two people walking down the street. The one on the left is taller, has fair skin and curly blond hair, and is wearing jeans, black shoes, and a red shirt. The other person has brown skin, straight dark hair, and is wearing jeans and a green T-shirt. They are walking past a blue car . . .”
4. Notice any interpretations or assumptions that come up, and label them when they do. For example, you might notice that the people are smiling and laughing and assume that one of them is telling a funny story. Separate the facts—“One of the people spoke for about 10 seconds and then they both smiled and laughed”—from your interpretations—“I’m having the thought that one of them told a funny story.”
5. Continue describing everything you see, in as much detail as you can, until your timer goes off.

WEEK 1

Exercise: Describe What You Observe *continued*

Describing can be a very helpful way to focus your attention on the present—after all, it’s hard to think about other things when you are actively describing what you are observing! Additionally, in many situations your thoughts and interpretations can have a big impact on your emotions (we will talk about this point much more in Weeks 4 and 5). Since the Describe skill allows you to recognize where the facts end and your interpretations begin, it can be helpful for managing emotions as well.

EXERCISE: *Participate One-Mindfully*

Being completely present in your life, fully engaged in whatever you're doing, is the ultimate goal of mindfulness. Whereas Observing and Describing can feel like being outside your experience, Participating is being one with the experience. Some call this being in a "flow state." In this exercise, you'll practice Participating by immersing yourself in an activity while letting go of distracting thoughts or self-consciousness.

INSTRUCTIONS

Note: If you have dyslexia, dyscalculia, or another form of neurodivergence that makes writing backward or counting backward difficult, choose another activity for this exercise, one that you find slightly challenging (e.g., standing on one foot with eyes open or closed, playing a computer game, drawing or coloring). Follow the same steps below, noticing any judgments that come up, and bring your attention back to the activity whenever you get distracted.

1. Sit in a comfortable position with a pen/pencil and paper on a desk in front of you. Close your eyes and take 3–5 slow breaths, focusing your entire attention on your breath. When you feel ready to begin, open your eyes.
2. First, write the alphabet backward. Start with "Z" and make your way back through the alphabet, not stopping until you get all the way to "A." It is not a race—take your time, doing your best to come up with the correct letter. If you find your mind wandering, simply bring your attention back to the exercise. Similarly, if you notice any judgments or reactions—for example, criticizing yourself for struggling to identify the next letter, or feeling embarrassed that you can't go faster—acknowledge the judgment, then let go of it and bring your attention back to the exercise.

Exercise: Participate One-Mindfully *continued*

3. Once you have completed the alphabet, move on to the next part of the exercise. Beginning with the number 200, count backward by 7s. For example, after 200 would come 193, then 186, and so on. Once again, write out each number on the page, focusing your attention on the exercise if any distracting thoughts or feelings arise.
4. When you have completed counting backward by 7s, begin alternating between letters and numbers as you go through the alphabet backward and count down from 200 by 7s again. In other words, after “Z” would come 200, then “Y,” then 193, then “X,” and so on until you reach the end of the alphabet.

If you found yourself immersed in this challenge, even just temporarily, then congratulations—you just experienced Participating One-Mindfully! The wonderful thing about this skill is that there is no shortage of ways to practice, and you don’t need to set aside time for it—you can turn literally anything you already do into an opportunity to practice Participating. Some common examples include singing or dancing, exercising or playing a sport, or even just spending time with a friend or loved one.

EXERCISE: *Identify and Replace Your Judgments*

In this exercise, you will practice two ways of using Nonjudgmentally. The first is increasing your awareness of judgments by noticing (i.e., Observing) and labeling (i.e., Describing) them. The second takes it a step further, replacing your judgments by identifying what they actually mean when you break them down.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Before you begin, identify a recent event or experience that brings up unwanted emotions for you. Frustration and annoyance are often helpful emotions for this exercise. Choose something that isn't too overwhelming, though, because it can be challenging to learn a new skill when you're very upset.
2. Once you have chosen a memory, sit in a comfortable position with a pen/pencil and paper. Close your eyes and take 3–5 slow breaths, focusing your entire attention on your breath. When you feel ready to begin, open your eyes.
3. Write about the event or situation as though you were telling a close friend about it. Don't censor yourself—at this stage, we are not asking you to practice the Nonjudgmentally skill yet. Describe what happened, and include any feelings, opinions, or judgments that come to mind. For example, you might write “and then my boss yelled at me. He's so arrogant and narcissistic, I really can't stand him. He just likes to feel like he's the one with the power.”
4. When you are finished writing, pause for a moment and once again take 3–5 slow breaths. If you find yourself distracted by thoughts or emotions about the event, simply note them and bring your attention back to your breath.

Exercise: Identify and Replace Your Judgments *continued*

5. Return to your writing and identify your judgments. Read through what you wrote slowly and carefully, and circle any judgment words that you find (e.g., “arrogant and narcissistic” in the previous example). You may also notice places where there isn’t specifically a judgment word, but there is a judgment implied “between the lines” (e.g., “He just likes to feel like he’s the one with the power.”) Circle those too. If you didn’t write anything judgmental, consider whether you might have been censoring yourself, or if it would help to choose a different event. If so, go back and complete Step 3 again before moving on.
6. Now you will restate your judgments in nonjudgmental language. Judgments are often shorthand for three things: the facts of the situation, the consequences of those facts, and/or your emotions in response to those facts (not all three components will necessarily be relevant to every judgment). For each judgment that you circled in Step 5, see if you can identify:
 - a. What are the facts that you are responding to here? For example, “My boss yelled at me and said I wasn’t doing my job.”
 - b. What are the consequences of those facts? For example, “It makes me want to quit my job, or yell back at him. I don’t want to work for a person who treats me like this.”
 - c. What are your emotions in response to the facts? For example, “I felt embarrassed, hurt, and angry. I really dislike my boss.”
7. When you have completed Step 6 for all the judgments you circled, rewrite the event. This time, however, use your new, nonjudgmental words and phrases in place of the original judgments.

continued

Exercise: Identify and Replace Your Judgments *continued*

Do you notice anything different about how you feel when you read the new, nonjudgmental version of this event compared to how you felt when you wrote the original version? Judgments tend to intensify our emotions. In fact, when we react ineffectively, it is often because we are reacting to our judgments—for example, to the thought that someone *shouldn't* have done something, that they're a *jerk*, or that this is *unfair*. In other words, judgments usually just pour fuel on our emotional fires, which can damage our relationships and interfere with our ability to change things we don't like. Increasing our awareness of judgments and identifying what we mean by them instead—the facts, consequences, and emotions—allows us to experience the moment with curiosity and openness, recognize the actual reality of the situation, and respond in more effective ways to achieve our goals.

Despite how important this skill is, we find that people are often reluctant to use it at first because they think that we are suggesting they turn negative judgments into positive ones. Trust us when we say that we are not selling positive thinking! This skill is about letting go of judgments *entirely*—not just the negative ones, the positive ones too. Additionally, this does not require letting go of emotions, opinions, preferences, or values.

EXERCISE: *Mindfulness Practice over the Upcoming Week*

The exercises in this chapter so far have been intended to illustrate each of the mindfulness skills. We don't develop skills by doing something once, though; it takes consistent practice! In this exercise, you will come up with a plan for how to continue practicing mindfulness over the upcoming week.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Review the lists on page 34 of additional ways to practice Observing, Describing, and Participating. Select examples from these lists that you would like to try, or come up with your own mindfulness practice ideas that would fit into these categories.
2. In the table on page 35, write down a mindfulness practice you'll do each day over the coming week. Having a specific plan increases the likelihood that you will actually practice!
3. After each day's mindfulness practice, note in the third and fourth columns what your experience was like as you attempted to practice Nonjudgmentalness and One-Mindfulness during that day's practice (e.g., "I was really able to let go of judgments and just participate!" or "I kept getting distracted by thoughts about things I need to do today.").
4. Use the final column to record any other notes to yourself about what the experience was like (e.g., "I was mostly able to remain present," "I noticed a lot of anxiety come up during this one," or "I really enjoyed that one!").

continued

WEEK 1

Additional Ways to Practice Observing

- ♦ Observe the sensations in your body as you slowly walk around, stretch, lie down, etc.
- ♦ Observe any sounds you hear at home, in the park, at a store, etc.
- ♦ Observe something you eat or drink slowly with all your senses.
- ♦ Choose one instrument in a song and observe just the sounds of that instrument.
- ♦ Observe what you see as you walk around your neighborhood.
- ♦ Smell all the spices in your kitchen cabinet.

Additional Ways to Practice Describing

- ♦ Look at the face of someone you know and describe it in detail.
- ♦ Look at something you use frequently and describe it in as much detail as you can.
- ♦ Close your eyes and use only your sense of touch to explore something in your home. Describe everything you can feel.
- ♦ Doodle, and then describe it to a friend to see if they can draw exactly what you drew without seeing your original drawing.

Additional Ways to Practice Participating

- ♦ Exercise, focusing entirely on exercising (i.e., not focusing on your phone, TV, or anything else).
- ♦ Take a class to learn a new skill (dance, cooking, sports, art).
- ♦ Play a musical instrument.
- ♦ Doodle, paint, or color in a coloring book.
- ♦ Have dinner with your friend, with both of your phones turned off and out of sight.
- ♦ Sing a song out loud and dance around your room.

While we won't be asking you to complete this exercise every week, we recommend continuing to practice mindfulness on a regular basis going forward. Many people struggle with these skills, especially when they are just starting out in their mindfulness journey. It is hard work to stay present when distractions are trying to steal your attention—not to mention while you're also trying to let go of judgments! Just like any workout routine, though, what seems impossible at first will get easier as you build up those muscles; the key is a commitment to the process, and consistent practice.

WEEK 1

DAY	MINDFULNESS PRACTICE	NON- JUDGMENTALNESS	ONE-MINDFULNESS	NOTES/COMMENTS

EXERCISE: *Integrating Emotion Mind and Reasonable Mind*

For this first exercise, we'll give you some guidance on how you might find Wise Mind by exploring Emotion Mind and Reasonable Mind more fully, and then attempting to integrate them.

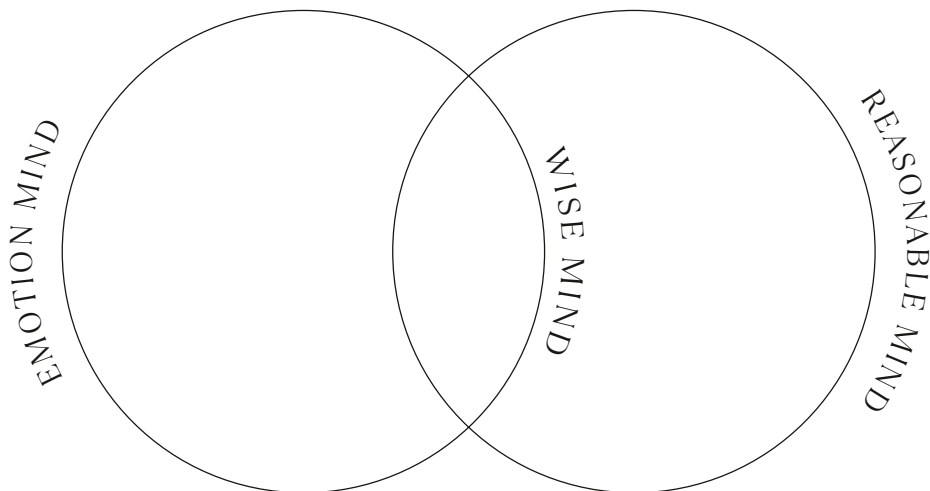
INSTRUCTIONS

1. Grab a pen/pencil and take a few deep breaths. Choose a current or upcoming decision that would be helpful to make in Wise Mind. Perhaps you need to decide something about a job (current or potential), who to date or spend your time with, or how to handle an ongoing conflict. If you can't think of one, you can choose a decision you recently made and complete the following steps, reflecting back on the situation in order to get the practice.
2. On your paper, briefly write down the facts of the situation. What's going on? What are you trying to decide? What happened, what is about to happen, or what do you want to prevent happening? Focus on facts you can observe, not interpretations or judgments.
3. Next, write about what Emotion Mind says. What are you feeling? What would Emotion Mind look like in this situation? What do your emotions want you to do? What does your body make you feel like doing? What would the pros and cons be if you followed through with any of those behaviors? Could it lead to any regrets?

continued

Exercise: Integrating Emotion Mind and Reasonable Mind *continued*

4. Write about what Reasonable Mind says. What would Reasonable Mind look like in this situation? What is the purely rational or logical thing to do here? What would the most cool-headed person you know do in this situation? What would the pros and cons be if you followed through with those behaviors? Could it lead to any regrets?
5. Now, considering these answers, do you know what Wise Mind says? Do you see any overlap between the two minds? Is there a way they could be combined, such that you get the best of both? Is there an option that balances the pros and cons in the best way for you?
6. If you figure out what Wise Mind wants you to do, do it! If you're still not sure, put the paper down and take five minutes to do something else—go on a walk, watch a music video, drink a glass of water, etc. Then, return to the above questions/answers and see if you know Wise Mind now. Repeat if you need to, take your time, or ask a friend or mentor for help.
7. This Wise Mind exercise is quite structured and analytical, asking you to really think about your various options in the given situation. If you are more of a visual person, you could complete the above steps as a part of a Venn diagram like the one below.



EXERCISE: *What Does Your Wise Mind Feel Like?*

The Wise Mind skill is like riding a bike—hard when you're first learning, but then second nature once you get used to how it feels. This exercise helps you get a better idea of how Wise Mind feels to you by remembering a time when you were in it.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sitting in a comfortable position, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Using the examples of common Wise Mind experiences on page 39 for guidance, think about any times in your life when you were in Wise Mind. Pick one of these moments that feels clearest in your memory.
2. Nonjudgmentally, write a few sentences about the facts of this experience to help you remember. When and where were you? What happened?
3. Describe what you were experiencing internally during the situation. What emotions did you feel? What thoughts did you have? What physical sensations did you experience?
4. Finally, describe how you know that you were in Wise Mind. Did you notice a sense of peace, confidence, centeredness, or groundedness? What was that like for you? Did you feel your Wise Mind in a particular place in your body (in your belly, your sternum, somewhere else)? Did you know at the time that you were acting wisely and intuitively? If so, how did you know that? If not, what lets you know now that it was Wise Mind?

You could repeat the above exercise with several different Wise Mind experiences to see if there's a pattern for you. Putting in the effort to understand how your Wise Mind has felt in the past will help you recognize and find it more easily in future situations.

EXERCISE: *Breathing into Wise Mind*

One of the simplest ways to connect to Wise Mind is to bring yourself back to mindfulness basics. In this exercise, you'll Observe your breath as a way to tap into your body and access the feeling of groundedness and centeredness that usually accompanies Wise Mind. By connecting to our physical core when trying to figure out what to do, we can connect to our embodied, inner wisdom.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sit in a comfortable yet alert position (i.e., a position in which you can stay still without falling asleep), preferably away from people or technology that could disrupt you.
2. Take three long, slow breaths, deep into your belly.
3. Return to breathing normally, and for several breaths, just Observe your breath as it goes in and out. You can even silently say to yourself “in” on every inhale and “out” on every exhale. If your mind wanders into thought, just bring it back to the breath, without judgment.
4. After Observing your breath for a few rounds, bring your attention to a current situation in which you must make a decision or that you want to change.
5. Identify a question related to this situation for which you want to find your Wise Mind. For example, you might ask: “What do I need to do this morning to have a good day?” “Should I break up with this friend?” or “Where should I order takeout from for dinner tonight?”
6. Once you have one situation/question in mind, take three long, slow breaths, deep into your belly.

Exercise: Breathing into Wise Mind *continued*

7. Return to breathing normally. On each inhale, ask yourself your question for Wise Mind. While exhaling, see if the answer comes to you. If in the past you have felt Wise Mind in a specific place in your body, you could bring your attention to this place specifically.
8. Keep asking your question with each inhale, and listening on the exhale, until an answer comes. If no answer comes, accept that your Wise Mind doesn't have an answer yet (or that you can't yet hear it), and try again later.

Breathing into Wise Mind is a useful, simple exercise that you can practice to get into the habit of mindfully checking in to the moment, yourself, and your wisdom. When you're in the middle of having urges that could cause you problems (e.g., urges to call in sick to work when you're stressed, urges to binge-watch another TV episode, or urges to cancel plans with friends), the question may be "Would that be Wise Mind?" Sometimes it will be—we all need to rest, distract, or avoid at times. The goal is to ensure that we notice when these choices aren't coming from Wise Mind, because Emotion Mind has a nasty habit of convincing us to do tons of ineffective things!

A breath-focused exercise may be particularly hard if we're feeling intense emotions. Some people might be really uncomfortable using Breathing into Wise Mind at any time because they find their body or physical sensations too upsetting or distracting. While Breathing into Wise Mind *will* get easier the more you practice it, you can always use something like the "Integrating Emotion Mind and Reasonable Mind" exercise instead.

EXERCISE: *Everyday Wise Mind*

At the end of the day, being in Wise Mind means being mindful. We hope you'll try to integrate Wise Mind practice into your everyday life as much as you can over the next 11 weeks (and beyond!). For this exercise, we encourage you to start implementing some (or all) of the steps to help yourself increase awareness and groundedness in your daily life.

INSTRUCTIONS

For this week, choose one or two of the below tactics, and see how your mindfulness changes! Use the space on page 47 to write your mindfulness plan for the week, specifically noting what you will do to remember to practice and how you intend to practice Wise Mind or other mindfulness skills.

- a. Set alarms. It's easy to get swept up in handling life's responsibilities, or to get lost in an internet/social media/technological rabbit hole of distraction. In order to prompt yourself to practice mindfulness throughout the day and week, set alarms for yourself; put mindfulness into your calendar; or set up automatic reminders to yourself via text, email, or other messaging systems.
- b. Inspire yourself with quotes. Read some blogs, books, or social media accounts that focus on mindfulness. If anything ever inspires you and resonates with your reasons for wanting to practice mindfulness, write it down and put it somewhere that you will see it regularly.
- c. Do a daily activity mindfully. One way to get more mindfulness practice is to start associating an activity you do every day with mindfulness. Brush your teeth mindfully. Take a few deep, mindful breaths before checking your phone after waking up. Take a minute to mindfully pet your cat, hug your partner, or water your plants before you leave for work in the morning.

WEEK 2

Exercise: Everyday Wise Mind *continued*

- d. Take breaks. In today’s world, there’s a lot of emphasis on achievement and *doing, doing, doing*. If you struggle with feeling frazzled and overwhelmed, simply take breaks mindfully, in whatever way works for you. You could practice one of the Wise Mind exercises in this chapter. Or you could simply breathe for a minute. Close your eyes and put your hand over your heart. Say to yourself “just this moment” or “one thing at a time.” Stop to smell the roses by Observing and Describing what’s happening in any given moment.

- e. Get support. If you’re really motivated to get the positive effects of mindfulness, we encourage you to find a support system or something that can keep you accountable. Join a meditation group, download a mindfulness app, attend a silent retreat, find a mindfulness buddy, or take a mindfulness class. (We’ve included some possible options in the “Additional Resources” section on page 206.)

MY MINDFULNESS PLAN FOR THIS WEEK

EXERCISE: *Observing and Describing Emotions*

A fundamental skill in DBT is understanding your emotions in all their multidimensional glory by Observing and Describing them using the full Model of Emotions. Sometime during or after you feel an emotion this week, fill out the worksheet on page 58. You do not need to complete the steps in order; you can start with whatever parts of the emotion are easiest for you to observe/describe and go from there.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the first line, label your emotion. If you're struggling with naming your emotion, you can use the emotion words provided in the "Create Your Personal Emotion Dictionary" exercise on page 62, or use other resources for naming emotions as necessary. (See "Additional Resources" on page 206.)
2. Briefly describe the prompting event. What happened that triggered the emotion? What did you Observe? What were the who/what/where/when facts?
3. Write out the thoughts, opinions, assumptions, or beliefs you had about the prompting event.
4. Reflect on whether there were any vulnerability factors that influenced your emotion, physiological reactions, or interpretations. How were you feeling before the prompting event happened? Does the prompting event remind you of any emotional events from your past? Is there anything in your physical health that could make you more sensitive right now—think about sleep, diet, menstrual cycle, illness, pain, medications, etc.?
5. Detail how you physically felt. How did your body change while feeling the emotion? Were there any physical sensations in your face, neck, chest, stomach, limbs, or other body parts? Did you feel any tension/relief, lightness/heaviness, discomfort/pleasure, warmth/coolness?

WEEK 3

Exercise: Observing and Describing Emotions *continued*

6. Note your action urges. What did the emotion make you feel like doing, saying, or expressing?
7. Note your behaviors. What did you *actually* do or say while feeling the emotion?
8. Describe your emotional expressions. What would others have been able to see on your face and in your body language? Did you smile, frown, sneer, gasp? Did your eyebrows raise, furrow, or move? Did your eyes squint, widen, or change focus? Did your hands, head, shoulders, limbs, or body posture shift in some way? Did the tone or volume of your voice change?
9. Finally, report any aftereffects. What consequences did your emotions and your behaviors have? How did they influence your environment or other people? Did you feel any other emotions in response to the original emotion you felt? How was your body, mood, or state of mind impacted in the minutes/hours following your initial emotional reaction?

OBSERVING AND DESCRIBING AN EMOTION WITH THE MODEL OF EMOTIONS

1. Emotion name: _____
2. Prompting event: _____

3. Interpretations: _____

4. Vulnerability factors: _____

5. Body sensations: _____

6. Action urges: _____

7. Behaviors: _____

8. Expressions: _____

9. Aftereffects: _____

EXERCISE: *Mindfulness of Current Emotions*

This exercise helps shift our focus into our bodies and allows us to just “ride the wave” of our emotion. Practice this skill when you’re actively experiencing an emotion. For your first time, we recommend practicing with an emotion that’s mild or moderate in intensity. You could listen to a song or watch a video that prompts you to feel an emotion of your choosing. We recommend 1–3 minutes for your first time, and then you can lengthen your practices each time.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take three deep breaths, close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so, and bring your attention to the physical sensations you feel as you’re experiencing your emotion. Note any action urges, and don’t act on them. Simply observe what you notice in your body.
2. If you find yourself distracted by your environment or by thoughts, you could try describing the physical sensations you observe. Do you feel any tension, pain, bubbling, pleasure, burning, sweating, pounding, tightening, or tingling? Do you feel lightness or heaviness, warmth or coolness, constriction or expansion? How do different parts of your body feel?
3. Notice if the physical sensations change as you Observe or Describe them. Does your emotion appear to increase or decrease as you bring your attention to physical sensations? What happens to your action urges as you just sit with them? Can you observe your emotion like it’s a wave or tide in the ocean, rising and falling, changing naturally?

continued

Exercise: Mindfulness of Current Emotions *continued*

4. If you feel willing, practice loving your emotion. Perhaps remind yourself that this emotion will not last forever, that every person alive feels this emotion sometimes, or that emotions exist to help or protect you. Perhaps thank your body for the emotion, or thank yourself for having the courage to sit with an emotion without trying to avoid it. You can softly adjust your hands so your palms are open and facing up, put your hand over your heart, or softly stroke your own arm or face in a soothing way.
5. Whether you try Step 4 or not, just keep observing your emotion. Whenever your focus is elsewhere, bring your attention back to the emotional experience in your body. Don't try to suppress or amplify the emotion. Don't judge it. Simply feel it.
6. Finally, when you're ready, take a few more deep breaths to end the exercise.

It's easy to get caught up in our heads when we're emotional; when we're anxious, we often worry about how everything could go wrong, and when we're sad, we often ruminate about how everything *is* wrong. Focusing on our thoughts, however, leaves us vulnerable to creating more emotional suffering. One of the most effective ways to overcome this thinking trap is to tap into the physical sensations of our emotions.

That being said, we know emotions can be painful. They may even feel dangerous, particularly if you struggle with panic attacks or if you engage in harmful behaviors when you are very upset. Emotions themselves cannot hurt us, however. In their natural state, emotions are short term, usually lasting no more than two minutes unless we strengthen them with emotional thinking. Trying to avoid or suppress our emotions also keeps them around longer, just buried deeper in our brains or bodies.

WEEK 3

Exercise: Mindfulness of Current Emotions *continued*

Practicing Mindfulness of Current Emotions by focusing on physical sensations can teach us how to sit with emotions without overthinking, without acting impulsively, and without becoming overwhelmed. It can remind us that emotions can't hurt us, we are not our emotions, and emotions aren't wrong or bad. *Emotions just are*. This skill can be really tough, we know. So, if needed, continue to limit your initial practices to lower-intensity emotions, to seconds at a time, or to specific body parts rather than your whole body. With more practice, your comfort with and control of your emotions will increase.

EXERCISE: *Create Your Personal Emotion Dictionary*

For this final exercise, you'll create your own "emotion dictionary" by reflecting on how *you* feel specific emotions. By identifying patterns in the way that you have experienced certain emotions in the past, you will be able to more easily recognize and name them when you feel them in the future. This exercise could take some time to complete—feel free to complete it in pieces across this week or future weeks.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Review the eight emotions on pages 64 to 67. For each emotion, we've also provided other emotion labels that are related to the main emotion listed. If you aren't sure what a word means, we encourage you to look it up.
2. For each emotion, identify at least one time in your life when you have previously felt that emotion and briefly describe it. Please choose a time you can easily recall your emotional experience, even if you don't remember it perfectly—a more recent memory might be easiest. (We included common types of prompting events for each of the eight emotions to help guide you, but they are not the only possibilities.) When completing the following steps, you can reflect on this specific emotional experience, or on your experience generally, whenever you feel this emotion.
3. Next, think about the action urge you felt when experiencing that emotion. What did the emotion make you feel like doing? What has that emotion made you feel like doing at other times you've felt it? We included common action urges for each emotion. If any of the suggested action urges resonate with your experiences, circle them; write your specific action urges into the provided space.

Exercise: Create Your Personal Emotion Dictionary *continued*

4. Finally, reflect on what else you can observe and describe about your experience when feeling the emotion, using the questions from the exercise “Observing and Describing Emotions” on page 58. Are there certain physical sensations, expressions, behaviors, or interpretations that normally accompany this emotion for you? Is there anything else about experiencing this emotion that stands out for you—even something not captured by the DBT Model of Emotions? For example, someone might write the following for their experience of sadness: “physically tired, heaviness, thinking about all of the issues wrong with the world, just wanting to sleep, seeing blue or darkness, desire to be in the dark and listen to sad music or read philosophy.”

Naming our emotions can give us self-confidence and power, but it can be very difficult. It requires us to be aware of our emotions and to be knowledgeable about various emotional words and experiences—something that we’re (usually) not taught in school, and often not taught at all! Practicing labeling and describing our emotions can help us improve. The more specific we can get about how we’re feeling, the better we can understand ourselves and the better we can communicate our needs to others. Although there are many more emotion words than the ones we’ve included here, this exercise is a place to start. We’ve included some resources for growing your emotional vocabulary in the “Additional Resources” section on page 206.

[continued](#)

Emotion: Sadness <i>hurt, depressed, disappointed, lonely</i>	Emotion: Disgust <i>repulsed, grossed out, contempt, hate</i>
TIME I'VE FELT SAD: _____ _____ _____	TIME I'VE FELT DISGUSTED: _____ _____ _____
COMMON PROMPTING EVENTS: losing someone or something you care about; things not working out how you wanted; being excluded or isolated; hearing about other people's grief or problems; distressing news	COMMON PROMPTING EVENTS: you're physically near something that could make you sick; someone or something is morally repellent to you
ACTION URGES: stop and cry, seek comfort, rest and slow down, curl up, isolate _____ _____	ACTION URGES: recoil, get away from, remove or clean up, change or avoid someone, vomit, be rude or cold toward someone, wash/clean _____ _____
WHAT DOES SADNESS FEEL LIKE FOR ME? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	WHAT DOES DISGUST FEEL LIKE FOR ME? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Emotion: Happiness <i>joyful, content, delighted, enthusiastic</i>	Emotion: Fear <i>anxious, dread, ill at ease, panicked</i>
TIME I'VE FELT HAPPY: _____ _____ _____	TIME I'VE FELT AFRAID: _____ _____ _____
COMMON PROMPTING EVENTS: getting something you want; achieving something you've worked for; being praised/credited/loved/accepted; being part of a group; hearing good news for yourself or someone you care for; feeling pleasure	COMMON PROMPTING EVENTS: the life, health, or well-being of you or someone you care about is in danger; being in a situation that reminds you of a time you've been threatened/hurt before; being alone or in the dark, unknown, or unfamiliar
ACTION URGES: smile, share joy with others, focus on positive things, take up space _____ _____	ACTION URGES: avoid what you fear, run away, escape, freeze up/shut down, hide _____ _____
WHAT DOES HAPPINESS FEEL LIKE FOR ME? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	WHAT DOES FEAR FEEL LIKE FOR ME? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Emotion: Anger <i>frustrated, enraged, indignant, irritated</i>	Emotion: Love <i>warm, affectionate, limerent, caring</i>
TIME I'VE FELT ANGRY: _____ _____ _____	TIME I'VE FELT LOVE: _____ _____ _____
COMMON PROMPTING EVENTS: you or someone who matters to you are attacked, threatened, or disrespected; you're kept from getting something you want or from reaching a goal; things aren't the way you want them to be in the world (e.g., social injustice)	COMMON PROMPTING EVENTS: someone/ something provides things you want, need, or value; being with someone you have fun with, have great communication with, or share a special connection with (e.g., biological, emotional, cultural); physical attraction
ACTION URGES: fight or attack, be aggressive, criticize, intimidate, protect or defend, work toward change _____ _____	ACTION URGES: touch or be near the thing or person you love, fantasize or daydream about the person or thing you love _____ _____
WHAT DOES ANGER FEEL LIKE FOR ME? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	WHAT DOES LOVE FEEL LIKE FOR ME? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Emotion: Guilt remorse, regret, sorry	Emotion: Shame embarrassed, mortified, self-conscious
TIME I'VE FELT GUILTY: _____ _____ _____	TIME I'VE FELT ASHAMED: _____ _____ _____
COMMON PROMPTING EVENTS: behaving, speaking, or thinking in a way that goes against your values or morals; harming someone else or yourself; failing to keep a commitment you made	COMMON PROMPTING EVENTS: being rejected, criticized, stigmatized, invalidated, or made fun of; believing you are bad or not living up to some standard; having a private part of yourself made public
ACTION URGES: apologize, acknowledge your wrongdoing, repair or work to correct, change your behavior/thinking _____ _____	ACTION URGES: hide and withdraw/isolate, punish yourself, hide your “transgressions” or “negative” features _____ _____
WHAT DOES GUILT FEEL LIKE FOR ME? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	WHAT DOES SHAME FEEL LIKE FOR ME? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

EXERCISE: *Differentiating Between Thoughts and Facts*

Noticing the difference between the facts and our thoughts is essential for improving emotional well-being. One of the most effective ways to practice this skill is to reflect on recent emotional experiences and differentiate between the prompting event itself and your interpretations of the event.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Think about three times in the past week that you felt an emotion, and complete the table on page 74 for each experience.
2. In the first column, briefly describe the prompting event for the emotion. What happened right before you felt what you felt? Write only the who/what/where/when information that you directly observed with your own senses.
3. In the second column, write your interpretations of the prompting event. What did you believe about the facts? Did you make any assumptions about anything? What thoughts did you have?
4. In the third column, label your emotion(s). What did you feel in response to the prompting event and your interpretations? (Note: this column will be one-word answers only! If you notice you're using phrases or sentences, it's likely you're actually describing a thought rather than an emotion. Your emotion dictionary from last week can help.)

You may find it interesting to note whether your emotion (or its intensity) changes at all when you distinguish between the facts of what happened and your interpretations of those facts!

[continued](#)

WEEK 4

PROMPTING EVENT	INTERPRETATIONS/ THOUGHTS	EMOTION(S)
<i>I showed my new haircut to my friend and she didn't say anything about it.</i>	<i>She hates it. It's a bad haircut. I look stupid.</i>	<i>sadness, regret, shame</i>

EXERCISE: *Checking the Facts*

In this exercise you will practice Checking the Facts using the worksheet on page 77. Choose a time when you're feeling an emotion at a moderate level—something intense enough to have some meat to it, but not too intense that you feel overwhelmed.

INSTRUCTIONS

Fill out the worksheet on page 77 as you complete the following steps.

1. First, identify your emotion. What exactly are you feeling? Use the skills you practiced last week to help you recognize and label your emotional experience.
2. Describe the prompting event and your interpretations separately, like you did in the previous exercise. Differentiate between *what you directly observed* through your senses (i.e., the objective facts of the situation) and *what you thought* about what you observed.
3. Notice if your interpretations are “adding on” anything to the prompting event. Might a “fly on the wall” disagree with how you described the situation? Are there other ways to look at this situation? Write down as many perspectives and interpretations as you can think of, even if you feel confident in your initial interpretation. Using Wise Mind, circle the interpretation that is most likely to be true. (Sometimes it will be your original thought, sometimes not.)

continued

Exercise: Checking the Facts *continued*

4. Notice if you're viewing the prompting event as a "threat," expecting that it will lead to painful or unwanted consequences. What are you most worried might happen because of it? How likely is this outcome? Are there other possible outcomes? Write down all the outcomes you can imagine. Using Wise Mind, circle the one that is most likely.
5. Allow yourself to truly answer any "what if" worry thoughts. *What if* the worst possible outcome does happen? *What if* your worries come true? What could you actually do in case of the catastrophe? How could you problem solve? Who or what could you lean on for support? Would it be as bad as your current emotion wants you to believe it to be? Note the worst-case scenario, and then briefly write out your best coping plan.
6. Finally, considering all the above steps you've taken to explore your thoughts, ask yourself in Wise Mind: "Did my initial emotion, identified in Step 1, fit the facts? Was it justified by the facts?" In DBT, an emotion is *justified* only when it fits the reality of the situation based on facts alone, separate from interpretations. This is different from an emotion being *valid*; if you're feeling something, then it makes sense you're feeling it and the emotion *is* valid. When determining whether an emotion fits the facts, it's also important to consider the intensity or duration of the emotion relative to the prompting event.
7. If you're unsure whether your emotion is justified by the facts, take a break and repeat Steps 3–5, check out the "common prompting events" in the emotion dictionary from last week, ask friends for their opinions, or research whether your interpretations or predictions are accurate.

Checking the Facts can be difficult. No one can think clearly when they're 10-out-of-10 upset—sometimes you have to use Distress Tolerance skills (which we're going to cover in Weeks 7–9) before using this skill. It's also hard to Check the Facts when you're emotionally vulnerable. But the more you practice Checking the Facts, the easier it will become, whatever your mood.

CHECKING THE FACTS WORKSHEET

1. Emotion name: _____

2. Prompting event: _____

3. Initial interpretations: _____

Other possible interpretations: _____

4. The threat I'm worried about: _____

Other possible outcomes: _____

5. The catastrophe I'm worried about: _____

What I could actually do to cope: _____

6. Does my emotion fit the facts? (circle one)

YES

NOT AT ALL

NOT THE INTENSITY

NOT SURE

EXERCISE: *Opposite Action*

We recommend that you practice acting opposite at least twice this week to an emotion that either doesn't fit the facts or isn't effective for you to act on. For at least one practice, write about your experience using the worksheet on page 80. Reflecting on your Opposite Action experience will help you learn from your practice so you can act opposite more easily and effectively in the future.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Identify the emotion you want to change. What exactly are you feeling? Use the skills you practiced last week to help you recognize and label your emotional experience.
2. Check the Facts. Is your emotion justified (rather than just being valid)? Does your emotion (and its intensity or duration) fit the facts? If needed, use the Checking the Facts worksheet on page 77!
3. Identify your action urges. What does your emotion make you feel like saying, doing, or expressing? Does your body feel pressured to act/respond in a specific way? Refer to your emotion dictionary for action urges you could be feeling in response to the emotion.
4. Check effectiveness. Practice Wise Mind and ask: Would following through on my action urges be effective? Would acting the way the emotion wants me to act cause me any problems? Would it help me?
5. Confirm that Opposite Action is the skill to use. Did you determine that the emotion you're feeling is either unjustified, ineffective, or both? If so, continue! If not, either acting on the emotion or Problem Solving (next week's skill!) are likely the best options.

Exercise: Opposite Action *continued*

6. Identify the essential Opposite Actions. Think about the action urges you described in Step 3; what is the *opposite* of acting on your emotion? What would you do or not do?
7. Identify the all-the-way Opposite Actions. How can you change your body posture, face, voice tone? How could you change or refocus your thoughts? (Rather than just forcing untrue “happy thoughts” in response to sadness, for example, you could work to actively reframe your perspective, focus on different aspects of things around you, or fill your mind with other unrelated thoughts or sensations.) How can you continue to act opposite fully, even if the unwanted emotion continues?
8. Finally, act opposite! Take the first step, and then keep acting opposite over and over until your unwanted emotion diminishes or disappears.

It is especially helpful to proactively plan and schedule ways to practice Opposite Action for any specific emotions that you consistently struggle with and find more challenging. For example, for social anxiety, you could go out of your way to try to meet new people, rather than wait for your friend to invite you to a dinner. When we consistently have trouble managing a specific emotion, often it is because of how trapped we become in the emotion’s self-loving cycle—the emotion causes us to act in ways that feed and maintain it, potentially in ways that we might not even realize. Though it is very hard to practice, there’s no skill quite as powerful as Opposite Action in getting us “unstuck” from this cyclical emotional suffering.

OPPOSITE ACTION WORKSHEET

1. What was I feeling at first? _____
2. What was the prompting event? _____
3. Did my emotion fit the facts? (circle one)
YES NOT AT ALL NOT THE INTENSITY NOT SURE
4. Why or why not? _____

5. What were my action urges? _____

6. Would acting on my action urges have been effective? (circle one)
YES NO
7. Why or why not? _____

8. What did I do to act opposite? _____

9. Did my emotion change? (circle one)
A LITTLE A LOT NO
10. What were the aftereffects to my mind, mood, body, or environment? _____

11. Is there any way I could've acted opposite more *all the way*? How? _____

12. What would be most effective in a similar situation next time? _____

EXERCISE: *Identify Opportunities for Problem Solving*

We often fail to recognize when there is a problem that needs solving, or avoid facing it until it has become too big to ignore. In this exercise, you will consider some of the situations in your own life in which Problem Solving skills could be helpful. Please be sure to read all the instructions before you begin to write!

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the next page, list any and all problems in your life. These can include one-off problems (e.g., an argument with a friend, a job interview) or recurring/ongoing problems (e.g., relationship issues, social anxiety, financial stress). It can be helpful to think about what situations bring up painful emotions or lead to problematic behaviors, as these are often the ones in which we need Problem Solving skills the most.
2. In listing each problem, describe just the facts as nonjudgmentally as possible. Don't judge problems as too big or too small to include, or leave anything out because you think it "shouldn't" be a problem for you. If you need more space than provided here, please continue on a separate piece of paper.

Thinking about the problems in our lives almost always brings up painful emotions, and you may feel tempted to procrastinate, stop writing, or rush through this exercise. If this is the case, try to create your list again using your new Opposite Action skills (e.g., take your time, be thorough, breathe slowly and deeply, and relax any tension you notice in your body and your facial muscles). While this process may be difficult in the short term, it will almost certainly be more effective for you in the long term than avoidance.

WEEK 5

Exercise: Identify Opportunities for Problem Solving *continued*

MY PROBLEM LIST

EXERCISE: *Identifying Your Goals*

A common mistake is to confuse goals with solutions. A goal is an outcome you want in a situation—for example, an apology from a friend or a raise at work. Solutions, on the other hand, are the methods you use to try to bring about that outcome. In this exercise, you will practice identifying goals for a few of the problems you listed in the previous exercise. You will practice generating solutions in the next exercise.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Refer to the Problem List you created in the previous exercise. Choose a few problems that you would like to focus on solving now, and list these in the table on the next page. We recommend starting with problems that feel more manageable for the purpose of this practice exercise, rather than the biggest problems in your life.
2. Next, identify your goal for each of the problems you have identified. What would need to change or happen in this situation for you to feel better? What is the outcome you want? Be as specific as possible.
3. Check your work! Make sure the goals you have identified are realistic, and focus on things that you can work toward in the short term. If you have a longer-term goal in mind, consider intermediate goals along the path to that longer-term goal. For example, if your long-term goal is to graduate from college with honors and you are only a first-year student, you might set the goal of achieving certain grades this semester.
4. Ask yourself: If I achieve this goal, will I think I made progress on this problem? Will it lead to any emotional change? If the answer is no, consider whether you might actually have a different goal.

Exercise: Identifying Your Goals *continued*

PROBLEM	GOAL

Some of your problems may seem impossible to solve. Continue practicing Opposite Action as needed, and don't succumb to any urges to avoid thinking about your goals in these situations. Focus on identifying realistic, achievable goals; don't dismiss goals that are actually possible, and don't ignore the truth of the challenges you face. If you find yourself unable to identify a goal for any given problem, consider whether you are thinking in all-or-nothing terms. Is there an outcome that might represent progress, even if the problem wouldn't be completely solved?

EXERCISE: *Brainstorming*

Brainstorming is harder than it sounds! In this exercise, you will practice brainstorming in the context of one of your personal goals. As always, for the purpose of learning a new skill, it is most effective to practice at a manageable level of difficulty. When choosing a goal for this exercise, pick one that is mildly to moderately challenging, rather than the biggest or most complex goal on your list.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Refer to the goals you identified in the previous exercise, and choose a moderately challenging one that you would like to work on now.
2. Brainstorm as many ideas as possible for how to achieve this goal and write them down in the table on the next page. Don't evaluate or dismiss any options as they come to you—write *everything* down! Continue on a separate piece of paper if necessary.
3. If you find yourself thinking of solutions that all fall into the same general approach, do your best to think outside that box. For example, if your goal is to get a new job and your solutions are all job-searching websites (e.g., “I can search on monster.com, indeed.com, simplyhired.com”), try to think of other ways that people find jobs (e.g., you can make cold calls to companies or ask friends in the industry if they know of anyone hiring). If you hit a wall and can't think of many ideas, ask someone you trust for suggestions or search the internet for additional options.
4. Keep going until you can't think of any more options, or until you are confident that you have thought of everything with a reasonable chance of success.

5. Once you're done brainstorming, choose which solution to implement using process of elimination, Wise Mind, and pros and cons. Consider how effective each solution would be in achieving your goal, and how feasible each would be to implement. Circle your chosen solution.
6. If necessary, break your solution down into small, manageable steps. Write down the first step you will take.

GOAL I WOULD LIKE TO ACHIEVE	
Potential solutions for my goal	
First step toward my chosen solution	

For many people, suspending critical thinking is the most difficult part of brainstorming. Notice if you start evaluating the ideas you generate, and bring your attention back to just coming up with more ideas. You may also find it helpful to deliberately think of some options that are clearly ineffective or ridiculous as a way to get your brain out of critical thinking mode!

EXERCISE: *Identify Opportunities to Accumulate Positive Emotions in the Short Term*

To be thoughtful and effective in Accumulating Positive Emotions in the Short Term, the first step is to identify activities that bring up pleasant emotions for you. The goal in this exercise is to come up with a variety of options that you can begin to build into your life.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. List as many activities as you can think of that bring up positive emotions for you. Aim for a minimum of five (but don't stop there if you can come up with more!). While there is no right or wrong amount, it can be helpful to have a variety of options. If you need additional space, continue on another piece of paper.
2. You might find it helpful to think of activities that evoke different types of positive emotions—for example, joy, pleasure, relief, amusement, happiness, excitement, pride, love, or contentment.
3. Include activities that you know you enjoy or that at the very least you think there is a reasonable chance you would enjoy. Keep in mind that these do not need to create intense positive feelings (though that is acceptable too!); even mildly enjoyable activities count.
4. You can also search for “pleasant activities list,” “pleasant events schedule,” “self-care activities,” or similar search terms on the internet to find ideas and examples.

continued

WEEK 6

Exercise: Identify Opportunities to Accumulate Positive Emotions in the Short Term *continued*

IDEAS FOR ACCUMULATING POSITIVE EMOTIONS IN THE SHORT TERM

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

For some people, it can be difficult to come up with ideas for enjoyable or pleasant activities. It might be hard to find time in your busy schedule; finances might be a challenge; or you may simply be unable to think of options that you actually expect to enjoy. If this is the case for you, this is a great opportunity to put the Problem Solving skills that you learned in Week 5 to work!

EXERCISE: *Identify Your Values and Goals*

In this exercise, you will begin the process of Accumulating Positive Emotions in the Long Term by identifying some of your values and setting specific goals based on these values. This will allow you to take steps more mindfully toward living life in a way that feels personally meaningful, valuable, and fulfilling.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In the first section on the next page, identify values that are important to you. Keep in mind that values are guiding principles rather than specific goals—for example, “be productive and hard working in my job” is a value, whereas “get a promotion at work” is a goal.
2. Many people find it challenging to identify their values. You might find it helpful to think of different life domains (e.g., work, education, leisure, relationships, physical/emotional/spiritual well-being) and the values you have for each. You can also search for “values inventory” or “values list” on the internet to find examples of common values.
3. From the list of values you have identified, select two or three that are high-priority values to you *right now*. Note that your values and priorities may change over time. For example, although you may always value being a supportive friend, it may be an even higher priority if you know a close friend is going through a difficult time.
4. Next, for each of your current high-priority values, identify goals related to that value. Remember that goals should be specific enough that you can clearly determine whether they have been achieved. Additionally, it is important to choose goals that are realistic in order to set yourself up for success.

continued

WEEK 6

Exercise: Identify Your Values and Goals *continued*

As you complete this exercise, you may find yourself questioning if something is truly a value for *you*, or if it's something you think you *should* value even though it isn't actually very important to you personally. Many of us experience this because we have been raised in families or communities that emphasize certain values that we don't actually share. It can be difficult to accept when your values differ from those of people or groups you care about. To get the most meaning and fulfillment from life, though, it is important to consider your personal values. For this exercise, use your Wise Mind to select values that are important to *you*.

VALUES OF MINE INCLUDE:

HIGH-PRIORITY VALUES RIGHT NOW	GOALS RELATED TO THIS VALUE

EXERCISE: *Take Steps Toward Your Goals*

In this exercise, you will move toward Accumulating Positive Emotions in the Long Term by choosing one value to focus on now and one goal related to this value. You will then determine the steps necessary to work toward this goal. This focused approach will decrease the likelihood that you get distracted, overwhelmed, or feel stuck.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose *one* high-priority value you identified in the previous exercise, and select *one* goal related to that value that you would like to work on now. In deciding which goal to begin with, use your Wise Mind and consider how realistic each goal is as well as how important each one is to you.
2. Break down your goal into small, manageable steps. What is the very first step you would need to take toward this goal? What would come next? For example, if your goal is to find a romantic partner, the first step might be to download a dating app.
3. Take the first step!

Often we get stuck in our pursuit of a goal because the task feels too daunting, like there is a mountain in front of us to climb. The thing to keep in mind is that if you reach any step that feels too big, you can always break that down into smaller steps, too. For example, if the goal of downloading a dating app stops you in your tracks, you can break that down into smaller steps and begin by deciding which app to download. If you find yourself stuck on that decision, you can break that down into smaller steps and start by asking a friend about their experience with dating apps, or google the pros and cons of different apps.

TAKING STEPS TOWARD MY GOAL WORKSHEET

GOAL I WANT TO WORK ON NOW: _____

STEPS TOWARD MY GOAL

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

EXERCISE: *Identify Opportunities to Build Mastery*

Building Mastery effectively often requires mindfully identifying and planning activities that generate feelings of capability and accomplishment. In this exercise, you will take a proactive approach to identifying and pursuing opportunities to Build Mastery.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the following page, list as many activities as you can think of that create feelings of competence, capability, accomplishment, pride, or self-confidence. What kinds of activities evoke these emotions for you? Are there things you already do, or that you have done in the past, that bring up these feelings? What about new ideas? Consider things you do at work or school, in your family or home life, “adulting” tasks, and personal hobbies and interests.
2. Remember that the key is for the activity to be at least a little bit challenging, without it being so difficult that you are unlikely to succeed. If you want to get better at cooking, for example, you might start with learning how to fry an egg rather than trying to make egg soufflé. Look at the ideas you have generated and, if necessary, edit what you have written to specify what would be in that “challenging but achievable” sweet spot for each.
3. You can also search “how to build mastery,” “ideas for building mastery,” or similar terms on the internet for ideas and examples.

continued

WEEK 6

Exercise: Identify Opportunities to Build Mastery *continued*

IDEAS FOR BUILDING MASTERY

[illegible]

Many of us only experience feelings of mastery in one or two domains, but this can start to feel stale over time; you may find that you get a different kind of satisfaction from overcoming challenges in new or different contexts! For example, someone whose job is more analytical and intellectual might experience a different kind of mastery from doing something hands-on, like painting a room or learning to play a musical instrument; someone whose mastery comes from active pursuits like sports might enjoy learning a new language or playing chess. If you notice that the activities you listed all fall into the same one or two categories, consider whether you might find it valuable to try something new.

EXERCISE: *Schedule for Accumulating Positive Emotions and Building Mastery*

When Accumulating Positive Emotions and Building Mastery, it is important not to rely on activities that “fall into your lap” or are initiated by others, as this leaves too much to chance. In this exercise, you will plan and schedule activities that have the potential to be emotionally rewarding in order to increase the likelihood you actually experience more positive emotions.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Look at the table on page 107. In the column under “Planned Activities,” identify activities and action steps that you can take each day over the next five days. There is no need to reinvent the wheel here—use the lists you already came up with in the previous exercises! It may be helpful to schedule a specific time of day to increase the likelihood that you follow through with the plan. If you want to create a 7-day schedule, photocopy page 107 or download and print an extra copy of it (using the QR code on page 207) before filling it out.
2. While we certainly encourage you to try to engage in activities from all three categories every day, we realize that this isn’t always realistic. As they say, “Don’t let perfect be the enemy of good!” Plan and schedule an activity or step from at least one category per day, and use your Wise Mind to strike a balance between pushing yourself to work hard while also knowing the limits of what you can realistically accomplish.
3. Be sure to incorporate at least a few different activities or pleasant events rather than just repeating the same one every day. While you can certainly use the same activity more than once, having a variety of positive experiences and emotions can enhance the benefit you get from this process.

continued

Exercise: Schedule for Accumulating Positive Emotions and Building Mastery *continued*

4. Over the course of the week, fill out the “Notes” column to record comments to yourself about what the experience was like and any challenges you faced (e.g., “It was hard to enjoy because I was ruminating,” “Way too hard—I need to try it again at a lower level of difficulty,” or “I feel so proud of myself for finishing that!”).

You know what they say about “the best-laid plans.” Adding so many new events to your schedule can be a big change, and it can be easy to forget what you intended to do. Consider if it would be helpful to incorporate these activities into your daily calendar, set reminders on your phone, or put a copy of this worksheet somewhere you will see it to ensure you remember your action plan. If you find yourself tempted to avoid following through on these plans, remember to use Opposite Action and avoid that avoidance at all costs! Lastly, use your notes from the last column when you plan future pleasant events or mastery activities; they can help guide you toward the activities that were most valuable, or highlight what you might need to troubleshoot next time around.

My Schedule for Accumulating Positive Emotions and Building Mastery

DATE	PLANNED ACTIVITIES	NOTES
	Pleasant events: Steps toward goals: Mastery activities:	
	Pleasant events: Steps toward goals: Mastery activities:	
	Pleasant events: Steps toward goals: Mastery activities:	
	Pleasant events: Steps toward goals: Mastery activities:	
	Pleasant events: Steps toward goals: Mastery activities:	

EXERCISE: *Create a Distress Tolerance Kit*

When we're really distressed, we're often not thinking clearly, and it can be hard to remember new coping skills. Set yourself up for success by creating a Distress Tolerance kit that will be ready and waiting for you to use the next time you're in crisis.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Consider all of the strategies from ACCEPTS, self-soothing, and IMPROVE. Think about which could help you tolerate your distress and get through a crisis without doing things that could make it worse. Choose skills that you've used successfully before, and new ones you're willing to try.
2. Designate a specific space and/or use a special container (e.g., a basket, toiletry bag, or decorated box) to act as your kit.
3. Fill the kit with the actual physical objects you might use to self-soothe (e.g., candy and photography book), distract (e.g., fidget spinners and a list of acts of kindness you could do), and IMPROVE the moment (e.g., a book of Rumi poetry and note of encouragement). For skills that can't be physically stored in your kit, write a note to remind yourself (e.g., "go grab ice" or "call Marcia").

You can make kits for anywhere—while traveling, at work or school, at dinner parties, wherever! We recommend making your first Distress Tolerance kit a "general" one for your home. Some of our clients have created "digital kits" for when they only have access to their phones. You can keep an app folder or note with a list of skills, mantras, YouTube links, playlists, or photos. Wherever your kit is, know it is always a work in progress. Throughout this week, we recommend you experiment and try new skills! Our clients have often been surprised by a "weird" or "corny" crisis survival skill working for them.

EXERCISE: *Pros and Cons*

The crisis survival skill of Pros and Cons can help you resist “problem behaviors” by bringing your attention to *all* the consequences that would come from engaging in them.

Although you can use this skill in a moment of a crisis, it’s *much* more effective to complete Pros and Cons beforehand when it’s easier to access Wise Mind. We recommend you complete the exercise now for the impulsive behaviors you usually struggle with during crises.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On page 119, name the problem behavior that your distress prompts for you during a crisis. For example: using substances, sending an angry text message, or avoiding doing work. (Note: if you have multiple problem behaviors, you should complete a separate Pros and Cons for each behavior.)
2. In the grid, identify the pros of acting on your crisis urge (i.e., engaging in your problem behavior). What positive consequences happen (both short term and long term) when you engage in this behavior—for example, immediate relief, feel validated, let my emotion out, receive support?
3. Next, identify the cons of acting on your crisis urge. What negative consequences happen when you engage in this behavior—for example, guilt/shame, hurt someone else, negative physical consequences, damage relationships, create new problems?
4. Identify the pros of resisting the crisis urge or using skills. What positive consequences happen when you resist the urges for this behavior, or use skills—for example, pride, improve relationships, keep commitments, receive support, personal growth?

continued

Exercise: Pros and Cons *continued*

5. Next, identify the cons of resisting the crisis urge or using skills. What negative consequences happen when you resist the urges for this behavior—for example, takes effort, distress may last longer, confusion, discomfort, anxiety/fear?
6. Review all the pros and cons you identified. Make sure you've included both short-term and long-term consequences wherever relevant.
7. Circle or mark the consequences that are most important to you. For example, perhaps you know that during a crisis you will really want immediate relief from physical discomfort (i.e., a pro of acting on crisis urges), and you are really focused on improving your relationships right now (i.e., a pro of resisting crisis urges) and not breaking commitments (i.e., a con of acting on crisis urges).

Pros and Cons *usually* end up showing two things. First, it makes sense that you want to engage in impulsive behaviors—they work, at least in the sense that they often help you feel better in the short term! Second, your impulsive behaviors usually have more negative consequences than acting skillfully, especially in the long term. Reading your Pros and Cons grid repeatedly for a few days (or weeks) will make it more likely that you remember them when in crisis.

You can also review your grid when you're in Emotion Mind. Put the grid in your distress tolerance kit, keep a photo of it on your phone, or post it somewhere near where you commonly have crisis urges (e.g., on your fridge, in your bathroom, or by your bed). For some people, it's more useful to write out the 2–3 primary Pros and Cons and focus on those rather than the full grid. When having crisis urges, using Pros and Cons can help you access Wise Mind and validate yourself while still saying “no!”

WEEK 7

Exercise: Pros and Cons *continued*

PROBLEM BEHAVIOR/CRISIS URGE

	PROS	CONS
Acting on this urge		
Resisting this urge		

EXERCISE: *Coping Ahead for How to STOP in Crisis*

While you can Cope Ahead for acting effectively in any type of difficult situation, we're going to focus here on how you could use STOP and other crisis survival skills when you're very distressed. The most effective coping skills are likely to be at least a little different in different situations, so it will be useful to complete separate Cope Ahead plans for distinct types of crises, problem behaviors, or emotions.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In the worksheet on page 123, describe the crisis, crisis urge, or emotion for which you want to Cope Ahead. Although you can't predict the future perfectly, use previous experiences to describe the anticipated situation. Most importantly, what would you be feeling? At the very least, identify your crisis urge and how you first experience that urge in your body or mind before emotions overwhelm you. There might be a *pressured* or agitated feeling. Get specific about what thoughts or physical sensations you feel as you're slipping into Emotion Mind.
2. Identify how you could **Stop**. How could you pause, freeze, and not react? You could clap your hands together, put a hand out in a "stop" gesture, say "stop!" aloud or in your head, or mentally picture a stop sign.
3. Identify how you could **Take a Step Back**. You could literally take a step back, away from a person or thing related to your problem behavior. You could sit down, turn around, close your eyes, or leave the room. You could close your computer or turn off your phone.

Exercise: Coping Ahead for How to STOP in Crisis *continued*

4. Identify how you could **Observe**. Use your mindfulness skills to check in with yourself and the situation. Take deep breaths and purposefully stretch or relax your body. Label your urges, feelings, or sensations and validate them (“I’m feeling really angry, and I really want to yell”). Describe the facts to yourself, or use the Check the Facts skill.
5. Identify how you could **Proceed Mindfully**. Practice Wise Mind, read your Pros and Cons, or consider what would be most effective based on the facts and your goals. Use your distress tolerance kit or ask someone for help. Like at a real stop sign, you don’t STOP forever. You look both ways and move forward. Identify exactly what crisis survival skills you would use and in what order, followed by any other skills you would use to address the situation. (Be specific! Write “watch *Parks and Recreation* or *Schitt’s Creek*” rather than “watch TV.”)
6. Identify your ideal outcome. How would this crisis end if you act totally skillfully? How would you want to feel by the time you’re finished with your skills? Describe in detail the outcome you desire.
7. Using the information from the above steps, imagine yourself following this Cope Ahead plan. Visualize it as if you are living it in real time, not just watching it as a spectator. As vividly as possible, picture yourself experiencing the initial crisis—your urges, emotions, and sensations—then visualize STOP-ing, acting skillfully, and reaching your desired outcome. If you struggle with mental imagery or visualization, write out a detailed script and reread it instead. You can also record yourself reading your script, and then listen to your recording. “Rehearse” your coping plan in your mind repeatedly.

continued

Exercise: Coping Ahead for How to STOP in Crisis *continued*

8. Finally, as you develop your Cope Ahead plan, notice if there is anything besides the scripting or rehearsing that you can do *right now* to help yourself succeed in your plan. Put your written-out plan in your distress tolerance kit. If you suspect you'll be in a certain place when you have problem behavior urges, you can put a picture of a stop sign there to remind yourself to STOP. Share your Cope Ahead plan with a friend, partner, roommate, or therapist who might be willing to support you during a crisis. We also have included a DBT Skills Cheat Sheet on page 203—you can use it to craft a personalized list of the skills you find most helpful, and use it while developing your Proceed Mindfully plan!

If your crisis plan doesn't work the first time, that's okay. Coping with intense emotions is *hard*. Changing behavior is *hard*. One of the most common experiences during crises is feeling physical pressure to do something. These sensations are often what drive impulsivity, so dealing with them is likely going to be an important part of your crisis coping plan. While some skills from this week can help, next week we'll be giving you some skills specifically for the physical aspects of distress.

If you engage in your problem behavior this week despite Coping Ahead, don't get too down on yourself! Use some self-soothing skills and, when you feel ready, use your Problem Solving skills to reexamine the parts of your coping skills plan that didn't work. We have more skills in the upcoming chapters that might be helpful to incorporate into your plan as well!

CRISIS COPE AHEAD PLAN WORKSHEET

After completing this worksheet, remember to review your plan or imagine yourself implementing it.

1. What is the crisis/urge/emotion I want to Cope Ahead for? _____

2. What feelings, thoughts, or sensations will I observe before falling into Emotion Mind? _____

3. How I will STOP in that first moment: _____

4. How I will Take a Step Back: _____

5. How I will Observe: _____

6. How I will Proceed Mindfully: _____

7. How the crisis will end (ideally): _____

EXERCISE: *Tip Your Temperature*

The Temperature skill can work so well at changing your physiological state that people with cardiac issues have to be careful with it. Consult your medical provider if you have any history of cardiovascular problems. While even splashing cold water on your face can be a really useful grounding exercise, there are a few specific steps to fully activate the dive reflex and get the most out of this skill.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Gather your materials. You'll need a bowl (or a sink you can plug up) that is large enough for your face to fit into, ice, and a towel. No bowl/sink? Grab a flexible ice pack or bag of frozen vegetables and a paper towel.
2. Fill the bowl/sink with cold water and a big handful of ice cubes. You want the water to be cold, but not painfully so. If you're using an ice pack, wet the paper towel until it's thoroughly damp and wrap it around the pack.
3. Take a deep breath. With a bowl/sink, submerge just your face fully into the water. With an ice pack, hold the pack against your face, making sure it covers your eyes and nose/nostrils, and bend over. (This is key for activating the dive reflex!) Hold your breath for as long as you *comfortably* can.
4. After you remove your face from the water (or remove the ice pack from your face), take a few breaths as slowly as you can, and then repeat Step 3. Often 2–4 times is enough, but you can repeat as many times as you want. Add ice to the bowl if the water gets lukewarm.

When you're in Emotion Mind, you may not feel capable of getting all of the materials for this skill together. Help yourself by preparing them ahead of time in your distress tolerance kit (page 116).

EXERCISE: *Intense Exercise*

Stress leads to urges to fight or flee to safety. When we're emotionally aroused and then exercise, we're letting the body do what it wants to do—move! While any kind of movement can help, the skill of Intense Exercise works best when you bring your heart rate high enough. (Again, consult your medical provider before trying any new kind of exercise!)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a form of exercise that you are physically capable of doing, that you feel willing to do, and that will get your heart rate to moderate intensity. You can estimate your heart rate during exercise by talking out loud as if you were having a conversation with someone. If you're able to talk normally, your heart rate is too low. If you're only able to get a word or few out at a time, your heart rate is too high. At moderate intensity, you'll be able to speak about one sentence before needing to catch your breath.
2. Exercise! Whether you're using exercise as a TIP skill to calm down immediately, or you're trying to improve your overall mood by exercising regularly, it's most effective to exercise for 20–30 minutes at a time.
3. Stretch and relax when you're done exercising to purposefully lower your heart rate.

While you'll get the biggest bang for your buck by exercising at moderate intensity for at least 20 minutes, we know that's not always possible. Even one minute of Intense Exercise can be useful to calm down when you're past your skills breakdown point, because it's a great way to distract from your thoughts. Some of our and our clients' favorite quick exercises include jumping jacks, push-ups, squats, or yoga flows.

EXERCISE: *Paced Breathing*

There are three main features of Paced Breathing: inhaling through your nose, breathing into your belly, and elongating your exhales. When you're distressed, changing your breathing in any of these ways will be helpful for calming you down. Using all three will help the most.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sit in a comfortable, upright position with your legs uncrossed. Have a clock or timer in front of you that you can watch while breathing to count the seconds of your inhales and exhales.
2. If you've never practiced diaphragmatic breathing or "belly breathing" before, follow the instructions in this step before going into Paced Breathing. Lightly place your hands on your stomach, below your ribs, around your belly button. See if you can breathe deeply *into your belly* so that you feel your hands moving along with your inhales and exhales. Your shoulders should not move up and down. You also should not breathe so deeply that you feel tension or pain in your chest. If you're feeling confused, googling "how to belly breathe" should bring up some additional resources.
3. Before you begin Paced Breathing, choose a pattern of breathing in which your exhale is longer than your inhale. For example, one pattern is inhaling for 4 seconds and exhaling for 6; with 10 seconds for each whole breath, this timing allows for 6 even breaths in one minute. Some people also like to hold their breath between inhaling and exhaling, between exhaling and inhaling, or both. A common pattern is called "4-7-8 breath"—you inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7, and exhale for 8. Choose any pattern you like, as long as the exhale is longer than the inhale.

Exercise: Paced Breathing *continued*

4. To practice Paced Breathing, get in a comfortable position and place your hands softly on your lap or on your belly. When you're ready, begin diaphragmatic breathing, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth, according to the timing pattern you chose in Step 3. When exhaling, lightly purse your lips. You can think about inhaling like you're smelling a birthday cake and exhaling like you're blowing out the candles.
5. Continue Paced Breathing until you feel more grounded. It may very well take more than 10 minutes to feel less tense or agitated.

Paced Breathing is a versatile skill. Although it may not work as quickly as the other TIP skills, you can use it anywhere, anytime, around anyone, relatively invisibly. It's also a very effective skill to use routinely, even when you're not in crisis, to ground yourself, activate the parasympathetic nervous system, and reduce your vulnerability to unwanted emotions. If you'd like more structured guidance while breathing, you can find lots of videos by searching "paced breathing," "478 breathing," or "box breathing" on YouTube.

EXERCISE: *Paired Muscle Relaxation*

In PMR, we allow our bodies to do what they want to do when stressed—tense up, but then relax. When you are struggling with injury or illness and can't exercise in order to work through your stress response, PMR is a handy option. In the next steps, you will systematically tighten and loosen the various muscles in your body, starting at your toes and going up to your head.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The first time you practice PMR, it's useful to give yourself enough time to go slowly through your whole body and get the hang of it. Lie down or sit in a comfortable position, with legs and arms uncrossed and with your head resting against something. Take a few deep belly breaths.
2. Starting at your feet, as you inhale or hold your breath, tighten your muscles (curl your toes and point them in toward each other to flex your ankles). Hold the position stiffly for at least four seconds—you should feel notable tension in the muscles of your feet, but you should *not* feel pain.
3. Quickly release all the tension in your feet and ankles, letting them fall totally limp like a rag doll. At the same time, exhale deeply, releasing your breath as you release your muscles, and say “relax” softly to yourself in your mind. Stay here for a few slow breaths, bringing your full attention to what it feels like for your feet muscles to be relaxed. You can repeat the word “relax” in your mind on the exhales while you do so.

WEEK 8

Exercise: Paired Muscle Relaxation *continued*

4. Move up the body, repeating Steps 2 and 3, tightening then releasing/relaxing each muscle group in your body. Here is a potential order to follow:

- ♦ feet, calves (point your toes down)
- ♦ thighs (tense the fronts and backs of your upper legs)
- ♦ butt (squeeze buttocks together)
- ♦ stomach (suck or hold in abs)
- ♦ back (arch your back, bringing shoulder blades toward each other and down)
- ♦ upper arms (bend your arms at the elbow, squeeze your hands toward/against your shoulders)
- ♦ lower arms and hands (clench your fists and pull them up toward your wrist)
- ♦ shoulders (hunch up your shoulders toward your ears)
- ♦ neck (push your head back against the ground/chair)
- ♦ mouth (clench your jaw and push your tongue against the roof of your mouth)
- ♦ face (pucker your lips, scrunch your nose, shut your eyes, and furrow your brow)

continued

WEEK 8

Exercise: Paired Muscle Relaxation *continued*

5. After finishing all muscle groups, scan up and down your body. If you notice tension has reappeared anywhere, relax that muscle—you can briefly tighten and release again, if needed. Observe how your body feels loose and relaxed. Take a few deep breaths. Sit or stand up slowly when you are finished.

The more you practice PMR, the easier it will be for you to consciously relax your body. As you gain experience, you will be able to relax/release multiple muscle groups at a time rather than one by one. If you practice daily, you may eventually be able to relax your entire body all at once, perhaps even just by saying “relax” to yourself in your mind. Regular practice also will improve your *interoception*, your awareness of your internal body. This will allow you to notice your stress sooner by becoming more mindful of tension in your body, which in turn will increase your ability to calm yourself *before* you reach a crisis point.

EXERCISE: *Tracking Your TIP Skills*

The TIP skills use the power of your body's nervous system to cope. This final exercise asks you to practice each of the TIP skills at least once this week, even if you don't experience any crisis, and provides a space for you to track all of your practices.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. This week, practice the Temperature, Intense Exercise, Paced Breathing, and Paired Muscle Relaxation skills. Practice each skill at least once, and practice as much as you can. Use the worksheet on the next page to track your practices.
2. Before each practice, circle the TIP skill you're practicing and rate how emotionally aroused or activated you feel on a scale of 1 through 10.
3. Practice your chosen TIP skill. After you've completed the skill, rate how aroused or activated you feel now on a scale of 1 through 10.
4. Jot down notes about your experience, including any tips for improving the skill's efficacy for next time.

All of the TIP skills are immensely powerful tools. While this chapter introduced TIP as skills to use when you're in crisis or acutely distressed, practicing these skills regularly can also reduce your overall emotional vulnerability by helping you feel calmer and less burned out. They help our bodies recover from stress and intense emotions, even when we are not in crisis. Additionally, the more you practice them in general, the easier it will be for you to use them when a crisis *does* occur.

continued

WEEK 8

Exercise: Tracking Your TIP Skills *continued*

DATE	TIP SKILL(S) USED (circle)	AROUSAL BEFORE/AFTER (0-10)	NOTES (How did I practice, how did the skill help, what would I do differently next time, etc.)
	T I P P	/	
	T I P P	/	
	T I P P	/	
	T I P P	/	
	T I P P	/	
	T I P P	/	

EXERCISE: *Identifying What You Need to Radically Accept*

The first step of Radical Acceptance is recognizing that you are not accepting reality. It's easy to get caught up in denial and avoidance, such that you don't even realize you're fighting reality. To be willing to accept reality, you must first notice the ways in which you're not. This exercise will help you practice this skill.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the next page, list out six things about your reality (e.g., situations, events, or facts) that you currently need to radically accept, putting each on its own line. Choose three things that are important or very difficult for you to accept, and three that are less painful or not as much of a “big deal.” (Friendly reminder: acceptance does not mean approval.)
2. The “major” things you need to accept might evoke some stronger emotions, including grief or rage. Some examples include personal, familial, or cultural traumas; deaths of loved ones; failures or goals you did not achieve; or being unable to pursue a dream of yours that would require sacrifices that you're not able/willing to make right now. (Note: there is no right or wrong answer here, and what is a “major” thing is personal and subjective.)
3. The “minor” things you need to accept might feel like inconveniences or letdowns. Disappointment and irritation (at others, yourself, or the world) are common experiences. Some examples are your roommate's “annoying little habit”; obstacles outside of your control; feeling an emotion intensely; or not getting something you wanted. (Of course, some of these “minor” things may bring up intense emotions at times!)

continued

Exercise: Identifying What You Need to Radically Accept *continued*

4. Now, double-check that there aren't any judgments, interpretations, or assumptions sneaking into your list. As needed, rewrite any items using the Nonjudgmentally skill you practiced during Week 1. For example, rather than "I'm broken," you might write, "I have trouble trusting others because of what I've been through." Or, rather than "I'm going to be alone forever," you might write, "My past five dates have been unpleasant," "I don't have as many friends as I want," or both (you may need to practice accepting each separately). Your nonjudgmental rewrite may be just as painful or difficult to radically accept. When you *accurately* accept what you need to accept, though (i.e., reality as it is), you will cope or problem solve more effectively, even as you feel painful emotions.

"MAJOR" THINGS I NEED TO RADICALLY ACCEPT

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

"MINOR" THINGS I NEED TO RADICALLY ACCEPT

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Good news: if you've completed this exercise, you've already started the process of radically accepting. Well done practicing one of the hardest DBT skills! If you felt any emotions while completing this exercise and then practiced mindfulness of those emotions, even better. A huge part of Radical Acceptance is allowing yourself to feel sadness, disappointment, or grief that is understandable and justified; this is often what makes Radical Acceptance so tough. Use crisis survival skills (particularly self-soothing) whenever you need.

EXERCISE: *Half-Smiling and Willing Hands*

Half-Smiling and Willing Hands are ways to practice Radical Acceptance with your body by softening your facial expressions and hands. These strategies help you Act Opposite to the common action urges you likely experience when you're frustrated with reality. For your first practice of these skills, bring to mind something that is only somewhat irritating (rather than rage-inducing) so it's a bit easier.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sit in a comfortable position with closed fists in your lap, and bring to mind something or someone that you dislike or find frustrating. For example, you can think of one of the “minor” things you need to radically accept from the previous exercise, or a recent conflict you had with someone.
2. Imagine this person, remember the conflict, or think about the situation that has caused you suffering. Notice any tension that arises in your body, particularly in your face and your arms.
3. First, practice Half-Smiling. Relax all the muscles in your face—unfrown your brow, let go of any tension in your cheeks, let your tongue drop from the roof of your mouth, and let your teeth drop slightly apart within your mouth. Then, ever so slightly, bring the corners of your lips up; this “half smile” should not feel tense and forced, and will likely not even be visible to anyone watching you.
4. Next, practice Willing Hands. Relax all the muscles in your upper body—drop your shoulders, let your arms hang loosely, gently open your palms upward, and relax your hands and fingers. (It's okay if your fingers naturally curl in this position.)
5. Continue to think about the thing that frustrates you, and notice how your body feels now in your new position. If you notice muscle tension return, intentionally soften your hands or facial muscles. Take deep belly breaths to further your relaxation.

EXERCISE: *Cope Ahead for Turning the Mind*

This exercise will help you plan ahead for how you might Turn the Mind when you're nonaccepting. Coping Ahead will increase the likelihood that you act willingly and practice Radical Acceptance. It will help you feel a greater sense of mastery over dealing with the unavoidable pains in your life.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. First, choose something that you anticipate finding difficult to accept. This might be something you repeatedly struggle with accepting, or it might be something you anticipate happening in the future.
2. Describe what you expect to be able to notice in a moment when you are not accepting. Will you have certain emotions, sensations, or judgmental thoughts? How does it look when you fight, deny, or avoid this reality?
3. Identify how you can Turn the Mind. How will you turn toward acceptance? You could say aloud "I will choose to radically accept this," or remind yourself of the pros and cons of accepting versus rejecting reality.
4. Identify how you would then practice Radical Acceptance. You could Nonjudgmentally Describe the facts that you need to accept, or practice Paced Breathing, relaxation techniques, Half-Smiling, or Willing Hands.
5. Finally, identify how you could practice Willingness and Participate fully in life. How could you avoid avoidance, solve problems related to the situation, or take steps toward your Life Worth Living? How could you allow yourself to feel your justified emotions? How could you Act Opposite to nonacceptance, and unjustified emotions associated with it?

**RADICAL ACCEPTANCE COPE
AHEAD PLAN WORKSHEET**

- 1. What is the thing I will need to radically accept? _____

- 2. What feelings, thoughts, sensations, or behaviors will I observe in nonacceptance? _____

- 3. How will I Turn the Mind? _____

- 4. How will I practice Radical Acceptance? _____

- 5. What will I do to willingly, effectively, and wholeheartedly engage in reality? _____

EXERCISE: *A Week of Radical Acceptance*

The reality acceptance skills are considered part of Distress Tolerance because we use these skills to survive particularly painful moments. The more you practice them, the more your confidence in your ability to cope with even the hardest parts of your life will increase.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take time this week to practice Radical Acceptance using the skills and strategies we've introduced in this chapter (listed in the table on the next page). You can practice accepting the things you identified in the first exercise, or accepting new situations, events, or facts that come up during the week.
2. Be sure to use your crisis survival and Accumulating Positive Emotions skills, too. How can you self-soothe after acceptance practices? What pleasurable activities can you schedule?
3. Finally, we strongly recommend that you actively reward or care for yourself after practicing Radical Acceptance, since it can be draining and difficult.

As this week is dedicated to the reality acceptance skills, we encourage you to practice these as much as possible this week. That said, these skills are particularly challenging. We recommend that you keep using the following worksheet to track your practices over the next few weeks if you need to spread them out.

WEEK 9

REALITY ACCEPTANCE SKILL	WHEN AND HOW I PRACTICED	HOW DID THIS SKILL HELP ME ACCEPT REALITY?	WHAT DID I LEARN FROM THIS PRACTICE?
Mindfulness of emotions			
Relaxation or breathing techniques			
Half-Smiling			
Willing Hands			
Reminded myself that reality is what it is			
Considered causes of reality			
Used self- encouragement			
Acted Opposite to nonacceptance			
Turned the Mind			
Did pros and cons of accepting vs. not			
Coped Ahead for acceptance			

EXERCISE: *Clarifying Interpersonal Goals and Priorities*

In this exercise, you will practice identifying and prioritizing among your objective, relationship goal, and self-respect goal several times over the coming week. You will also consider the ways in which your goals might come in conflict with one another so that you are better prepared to act based on your priorities.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the worksheet on page 163 to complete this exercise. If you do not face any challenging or emotional interpersonal situations this week, you can practice using examples from the past, issues that you anticipate coming up in the future, or even everyday interactions that are not particularly challenging or emotional (e.g., asking your roommate to pick something up from the grocery store). Even in these everyday interactions, you can consider Objectives Effectiveness, Relationship Effectiveness, and Self-Respect Effectiveness!

1. At least three times over the coming week, choose an interpersonal situation to practice clarifying your goals and priorities. Briefly describe just the facts of the situation.
2. Identify your objective. What is the result or outcome that you want from this discussion? What do you want to ask for, say no to, or express? What will help you bring about this outcome?
3. Identify your relationship goal. How do you want the other person to feel about you based on how you behave in this interaction? What do you need to do to achieve this goal? For example, “I want this person to continue liking me, so I need to make sure not to start criticizing or raising my voice.”

4. Identify your self-respect goal. How do you want to feel about yourself based on how you behave in this interaction? What do you need to do (or not do) to achieve this goal? For example, “I want to feel proud of myself for not losing my temper, so I need to have a plan for how to cope if I start feeling angry.”
5. Considering the specific objective, relationship, and self-respect goals you have identified, which one is your top Wise Mind priority in this situation? Which comes second, and third? Consider these questions:
 - a. If the only way I could achieve my objective would be to sacrifice the relationship goal, would I do it?
 - b. If the only way to achieve my objective would be to sacrifice my self-respect goal, would I do it?
 - c. If the only way to achieve my relationship goal would be to sacrifice my self-respect goal, would I do it?
6. Some of your goals may align. Others will conflict with one another. For example, a relationship goal of keeping the other person happy with you may conflict with a self-respect goal of standing up for yourself by saying no to an unwanted request. Are there any ways in which you see your objective, relationship goal, and/or self-respect goal potentially coming into conflict with one another? If so, describe how in the space provided.
7. Finally, given the priorities you identified in Step 5, what would you need to do in order to act based on Wise Mind if your goals do come in conflict with one another?

It is not uncommon for someone to say, “I don’t have a relationship goal (or self-respect goal) in this situation!” While the relationship or your self-respect may be less important than your objective in a given interaction, we actually always have goals in each of these categories—don’t ignore them just because they are a lower priority!

For example, if you have to call your internet service provider because your Wi-Fi isn't working, it may not be a high priority to have the customer service representative like you. That said, assuming you can get your internet up and running again either way, would you prefer to have a pleasant interaction with the representative and hang up knowing that they enjoyed speaking with you, or would you rather act aggressively and know that you were unpleasant to deal with? Most of us would choose the former, achieving our objective *and* our relationship and self-respect goals. If you left out any of the goals above, go back now and consider what those would be.

CLARIFYING INTERPERSONAL GOALS AND PRIORITIES PRACTICE WORKSHEET

Situation: _____

Objective: _____

Relationship goal: _____

Self-respect goal: _____

1. First priority (circle one):

OBJECTIVE

RELATIONSHIP GOAL

SELF-RESPECT GOAL

2. Second priority (circle one):

OBJECTIVE

RELATIONSHIP GOAL

SELF-RESPECT GOAL

3. Third priority (circle one):

OBJECTIVE

RELATIONSHIP GOAL

SELF-RESPECT GOAL

- 4.** Are there any ways in which I see my objective coming in conflict with my relationship goal and/or self-respect goal? Are there any ways in which I see my relationship goal and self-respect goal coming in conflict?

- 5.** How can I act based on my Wise Mind priorities if my goals do come in conflict with one another? _____

EXERCISE: *Practice Communicating at Different Levels of Intensity*

In this exercise, you will practice expressing yourself at varying levels of intensity. Many people struggle to communicate across the full range of options; the goal here is to broaden your repertoire so that you aren't limited to just a few levels of intensity!

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a recent or ongoing interpersonal situation that brings up unwanted emotions (tip: you can use one of the situations you chose for the previous exercise).
2. Consider what you want from the other person (your objective) in this situation. For the purpose of this exercise, don't worry if it is something that you think is unrealistic or that you wouldn't actually express.
3. Using the table on page 156, practice expressing what you want at each of the levels of intensity. Practice each level of intensity *out loud*, so you can actually hear your own voice at each one. Don't be surprised if you feel uncomfortable at several levels! Although some of the levels will likely be inappropriate or ineffective for the situation you have chosen, practice each one anyway. The goal is to better understand and get comfortable communicating across the range of intensity, not to find the right one for this situation.
4. For extra credit, close your eyes and imagine that you are in the situation right now. Picture the other person, hear their voice, and imagine them resisting or pushing back in response when you ask (or when you say no to their request).

Exercise: Practice Communicating at Different Levels of Intensity *continued*

5. For further practice, choose at least two more situations and go through Steps 1 through 4. Try to come up with at least one situation in which you are making a request (the left column in the table on page 156) and at least one in which you are considering saying no to someone else's request (the right column in the table).

People often assume that to communicate at a higher level of intensity requires being aggressive or rude. The goal is to be assertive, though, not aggressive; you can be firm without bullying or intimidating the other person! If you think you might have approached the higher levels of intensity this way, go back again and instead try to express yourself in a way that is clear, direct, and unwavering rather than hostile.

EXERCISE: *Determine the Effective Level of Intensity*

Now that you are more comfortable expressing yourself across the full range of levels of intensity, all that remains is to learn how to determine the most effective level for any situation! In this exercise, you will practice this skill by applying it to a current situation in your own life.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a recent or ongoing interpersonal situation that brings up unwanted emotions, and identify what you want from the other person (your objective) in this situation. Feel free to use one of the situations you chose for a previous exercise in this chapter.
2. Consider each of the factors for determining level of intensity using the worksheet on the next page. Write a “+1” to the right of each factor that is present in the situation you have chosen. If you are uncertain whether a given factor is present, we would recommend erring on the side of caution and not adding a +1. Keep in mind, this doesn’t mean that you will make your request at a low level of intensity; it simply means that you are not increasing the level one more degree. Additionally, any underestimation will be corrected when you adjust the final intensity based on Wise Mind!
3. Add up the total, and identify the corresponding level of intensity in the table on page 156. Check in with your Wise Mind to confirm if this seems to be an effective level of intensity (even if it would feel uncomfortable!). Adjust up or down as necessary.

Being more strategic about what level of intensity you use will help you get more of what you want as well as protect your relationships and your self-respect!

WEEK 10

FACTORS FOR DETERMINING LEVEL OF INTENSITY	+1 IF YES:
ABILITY: Does the other person actually have the ability to give you what you're asking for?	
PRIORITIES: Consider how the goals and priorities you have identified might inform your level of intensity. If your objective or self-respect goal is the highest priority, consider raising your intensity; if your relationship goal is the highest priority, consider lowering your intensity.	
SELF-RESPECT: Will asking strengthen your sense of self-respect or help you feel more capable and effective?	
RIGHTS: Do you have the right to what you want according to any law or universal moral principle? In other words, would just about everyone agree that you are entitled to it?	
AUTHORITY: Are you in a position of authority relative to the other person?	
APPROPRIATENESS TO THE RELATIONSHIP: Given the nature of your relationship with this person, is it appropriate to ask for what you want?	
IMPACT ON LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP: Will asking for what you want help the relationship in the long term? Or is it more likely to give you what you want in the short term at the expense of the longer-term relationship?	
BALANCE: Do you give at least as much as you get? Is there balance in the relationship across time?	
THE FACTS: Do you have all the relevant facts that you need in order to make this request? Have you done whatever research might be necessary?	
TIMING: Is this a good time to ask the other person? Are they likely to say yes right now, or are there any reasons why now might not be the best time to ask?	
TOTAL	
Effective level of intensity (including any adjustments for Wise Mind)	

EXERCISE: *Constructing a DEAR Script*

In this exercise, you will practice constructing a DEAR script using an example from a recent or ongoing personal situation. As you go through each step, make sure to be concise! A common mistake is to go into an unnecessary amount of detail, and the other person is likely to stop listening to what you're saying. A full DEAR script is typically just a few sentences, not several paragraphs.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose an interpersonal situation that brings up unwanted emotions. Briefly describe the facts of the situation using the worksheet on page 176.
2. Identify your objective. What is the result or outcome that you want from this discussion? For example, getting the other person to agree to something, saying no, or obtaining an apology.
3. For this step and the remaining steps, write out the actual words you will say to the other person, as though you are writing a script for yourself. First, Describe relevant facts. What exactly are you responding to? What made you want to communicate something? Remember to be objective and nonjudgmental.
4. Next, Express how you feel about these facts. Don't assume the other person should know! Include specific emotion words and/or your opinion about the situation, while remaining nonjudgmental.
5. Assert yourself. Ask for what you want (or say no), clearly and explicitly. Again, the other person can't read your mind, so don't tiptoe around actually asking for what you want.
6. Reinforce the other person. Tell them why they would want to agree to what you Asserted. Emphasize rewards rather than punishments.

continued

Exercise: Constructing a DEAR Script *continued*

SITUATION: _____

OBJECTIVE: _____

DESCRIBE: _____

Example: "When you said I don't do my fair share of the chores . . ."

EXPRESS: _____

Example: "I felt hurt. I worry you don't notice everything I do."

ASSERT: _____

Example: "I would like for you to apologize for saying that, and to acknowledge the things that I do."

REINFORCE: _____

Example: "The truth is that I'll be likely to do even more if you acknowledge what I already do and I feel like my efforts are appreciated."

Once you have completed all the components of your DEAR script, review your responses and edit as necessary to increase their effectiveness. Be sure to use your Wise Mind as you do this, as Emotion Mind is liable to make your script more aggressive, judgmental, or avoidant! Lastly, practice reading your script out loud or role-play it with a friend. Although this is often uncomfortable at first, it will get easier with repetition. When the time comes for the real conversation, you will be more likely to stick to the script *and* sound more natural doing it.

EXERCISE: *Incorporating the MAN Skills*

In this exercise, you are going to practice incorporating the MAN skills into a DEAR script.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Review your objective and DEAR script from the previous exercise.
2. Identify what you can do to stay Mindful of your objective. Are there any specific attacks, threats, or distracting comments that the other person is likely to make? While it isn't possible to predict everything, it can be helpful to identify likely responses and prepare for them. How could you act like a broken record? Would you repeat your full DEAR script, or just a portion of it? Is there some other response you want to use in your broken record?
3. Consider steps you can take to Appear confident. What happens to your body language, posture, facial expression, eye contact, or tone of voice when you feel anxious or insecure? What would it look like to Act Opposite to anxiety? How would you avoid saying anything that sounds tentative or uncertain (e.g., "I'm so sorry to bother you with this, but . . .")?
4. Prepare specific Negotiation strategies to use. Ask Wise Mind: What would I be willing to give in order to get what I want? It is harder to negotiate effectively on the fly—especially when emotions are running high—so it is helpful to have a "Plan B" (and C!) in mind in case negotiation is needed. Write down specific statements you can use to suggest these options.

continued

Exercise: Incorporating the MAN Skills *continued*

5. Practice! Here are three options:
 - a. The most effective approach is to have another person role-play the conversation with you. Provide some context beforehand, and tell them the specific types of attacks or responses you want them to make in the other person's role.
 - b. If role-playing isn't possible, practice in front of a mirror or while recording yourself, imagining the other person's responses. This will also give you a useful perspective on your Appear confident strategies.
 - c. Close your eyes and imagine yourself in the conversation, as though it is happening right now. Say your parts of the conversation out loud.

You might feel tempted to skip Step 5 once you have written everything out above. Don't! It isn't enough to know what you plan to say or do, especially because emotions are likely to interfere with sticking to the plan if you haven't rehearsed it. Actual behavioral practice is the most effective way to both improve at these skills as well as increase the likelihood that you use them.

Exercise: Incorporating the MAN Skills *continued*

ATTACKS AND OTHER COMMENTS I WILL IGNORE (e.g., *When they call me too emotional; when they say “it’s always something”; if they threaten to walk out.*)

BROKEN-RECORD PLAN (e.g., *Repeat my full DEAR script; repeat my Reinforce; keep saying, “You haven’t responded to what I requested. I would appreciate a response, please.”*)

STRATEGIES FOR APPEARING CONFIDENT (e.g., *Make eye contact, maintain confident voice tone.*)

NEGOTIATION STRATEGIES AND STATEMENTS (e.g., *Offer to work on the thing I know they want if they agree to this; tell them I can accept that they won’t do X if they’re willing to do Y.*)

EXERCISE: *DEAR MAN Practice*

Now that you have tried out each of the DEAR MAN skills, it's time to practice! For this exercise, you will use DEAR MAN several times this week. You can use these skills in everyday situations, even if they aren't necessary. For example, you can even use DEAR MAN in ordering your morning coffee ("I've been tired all morning and would love to feel more alert. Can I please have a large iced coffee with skim milk and sugar? I would really appreciate it!")

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Three times over the coming week, choose a situation to practice DEAR MAN. If a new situation doesn't arise that obviously requires these skills, consider ongoing situations in which they could be helpful (e.g., something your parents regularly do that annoys you; something you've been avoiding telling your partner that you want to change in the relationship). As we mentioned earlier, you can also practice in everyday situations. Last but not least, if you don't have any social interactions on a given day, you can complete this exercise regarding past interactions as well.
2. Use the worksheet on the next page to implement the skills you learned in the first two exercises of this chapter for each of these situations. Review the instructions to those exercises if necessary. As you will be practicing several times, download copies of this template (use the QR code on page 207), or write out the steps on a separate piece of paper.
3. Don't just write out the steps—put them into action!

Although we recommend including all of the steps of DEAR MAN as you practice, it is worth noting that not every situation requires Describing and Expressing. As you can tell from our example of ordering coffee above, at times it is perfectly fine to just skip right to your Assert! Assume that it will generally be most effective to use the full DEAR script though, and use your Wise Mind if you are considering leaving out any steps.

WEEK 11

Exercise: DEAR MAN Practice *continued*

SITUATION: _____

OBJECTIVE: _____

DESCRIBE: _____

EXPRESS: _____

ASSERT: _____

REINFORCE: _____

ATTACKS/COMMENTS TO IGNORE: _____

BROKEN-RECORD PLAN: _____

APPEAR CONFIDENT STRATEGIES: _____

NEGOTIATION STRATEGIES AND STATEMENTS: _____

EXERCISE: *Validate in Your Day-to-Day Interactions*

Although validation is particularly important in a disagreement or a conversation that brings up strong emotions, you can practice it just about any time. Incorporating validation into your day-to-day interactions will improve your relationships, too! In this exercise, you will practice each of the levels of validation over the course of the week.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Once per day over the coming week, choose a conversation in which to practice validation.
2. In each conversation, choose a specific level of validation to practice from the list on pages 185–186. For example, you may decide you are going to practice Level 1 (“pay attention”) when you speak to a colleague or Level 5 (“acknowledge what is valid”) when your partner complains about work.
3. Keep validating at this level throughout the conversation! Don’t just do it once and stop there.
4. In the chart on the next page, record what level you practiced, how you did so, and any notes or observations about the experience. How did it feel to Validate? What did you notice about the other person’s reactions? How did the conversation go?
5. Over the course of the week, be sure to practice each level of validation at least once.

As you get more comfortable with validation, we recommend practicing in conflicts and disagreements as well. One challenge is that in our eagerness to defend ourselves or express our own opinions, we often do not pause to first acknowledge what the other person has said. Instead, respond with validation first and only then go on to present your side of the argument. This can work wonders in defusing tension in difficult conversations.

[continued](#)

WEEK 12

Exercise: Validate in Your Day-to-Day Interactions *continued*

DAY	SITUATION	HOW I VALIDATED	NOTES/ OBSERVATIONS

EXERCISE: *Practice the GIVE Skills*

In this exercise, you will practice incorporating the GIVE skills into a DEAR script. You will begin by identifying the relevant GIVE skills to use within a specific situation, then integrate your GIVE plans into the text of your DEAR script.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a recent or ongoing interpersonal situation that brings up unwanted emotions, in which your relationship goal is an important priority. Briefly describe the facts of the situation.
2. Consider which of the GIVE skills to incorporate and how:
 - a. Are there any specific strategies you will use to be Gentle? Any attacks, threats, judgments, or disrespectful behaviors that you need to avoid?
 - b. What questions will you ask to act Interested? How can you show the person you care about their viewpoint? What behaviors would demonstrate interest?
 - c. Are there any Validating statements you can incorporate into your initial DEAR script? Although there is no way to predict everything the other person might say, is there anything you know about them or the situation that you can use to validate at Levels 4 or 5?
 - d. How can you use an Easy manner and lighten the mood? (Note: this does not necessarily mean you have to lower the intensity of your Assert.) Should you use any skills beforehand to relax and ensure that you can act more lighthearted?

continued

Exercise: Practice the GIVE Skills *continued*

3. Write out your DEAR script, keeping in mind your relationship goal and the GIVE skills you have decided to use.
4. Practice! Role-play the conversation with someone, practice in front of a mirror or while recording yourself, or close your eyes and imagine yourself having the conversation. Pay attention to your GIVE skills, in particular.

SITUATION: _____

RELATIONSHIP GOAL: _____

HOW I WILL INCORPORATE GIVE SKILLS

Strategies for being Gentle: _____

Act Interested strategies and questions: _____

Validation plans and statements: _____

Easy manner behaviors: _____

Exercise: Practice the GIVE Skills *continued*

DEAR SCRIPT (WITH GIVE SKILLS INCLUDED)

Describe: _____

Express: _____

Assert: _____

Reinforce: _____

The GIVE skills may appear fairly obvious; after all, who wouldn't agree that attacks and threats are damaging to a relationship, and that paying attention to the other person is a basic necessity if you want to protect the relationship? The challenge is often how to keep these strategies in mind when you need them, especially when Emotion Mind threatens to take the conversation in an ineffective direction. Use this exercise to get in the habit of planning ahead as well as to practice using these skills.

EXERCISE: *Putting It All Together: Incorporating the FAST Skills*

In this exercise, you are going to put together all of the Interpersonal Effectiveness skills you've learned these past three weeks by integrating the DEAR MAN, GIVE, and FAST skills and considering how to apply all of these in a single situation. Use the worksheet on page 196 to write out your answers. Review the instructions from any previous exercises for additional details if necessary.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a recent or ongoing interpersonal situation that brings up unwanted emotions. Briefly describe the facts of the situation.
2. Identify your objective, relationship goal, and self-respect goal, and rank your priorities among these. Consider any ways in which you see your goals potentially coming in conflict with one another, and plan how to act based on Wise Mind if this happens.
3. Consider your level of intensity using the worksheet on page 156.
4. Keeping in mind the balance of your priorities between your objective, relationship goal, and self-respect goal, consider which of the MAN, GIVE, and FAST skills to incorporate and how. Consult the instructions from the "Incorporating the MAN Skills" exercise last week and from the "Practice the GIVE Skills" exercise on page 191 as necessary. Regarding the FAST skills:
 - a. Consider if you are being Fair to yourself and the other person. If not, how can you balance your feelings and theirs?
 - b. Don't (over)Apologize. If you feel an urge to say sorry repeatedly or when it isn't warranted, what can you do instead?

Exercise: Putting It All Together: Incorporating the FAST Skills *continued*

- c. Stick to your values. If you are asked to do something inconsistent with your morals, or feel a desire to hide specific values or beliefs, how can you handle this in a way that is true to yourself?
 - d. Be Truthful. If you feel an urge to lie or exaggerate, practice Opposite Action and be honest instead.
5. Write out your DEAR script, keeping in mind the level of intensity and the MAN, GIVE, and FAST skills you have decided to use.
 6. Practice! Role-play the conversation with someone, practice in front of a mirror or while recording yourself, or close your eyes and imagine yourself having the conversation.

Until now, you have practiced the MAN, GIVE, and FAST skills separately. In most situations, however, it will be important to incorporate and balance skills from each of these categories. Ideally you will be able to achieve your objective, relationship goal, and self-respect goal! Additionally, each area of effectiveness can impact the others. For example, keeping the other person liking you is often helpful in getting what you want (“you catch more flies with honey than vinegar”); getting what you want can improve your self-respect; and in the long-term, acting in a way that enhances your self-respect can also enhance your relationships.

continued

Exercise: Putting It All Together: Incorporating the FAST Skills *continued*

GOALS AND PRIORITIES		
SITUATION: _____		
OBJECTIVE: _____		
RELATIONSHIP GOAL: _____		
SELF-RESPECT GOAL: _____		
<i>Rank your order of priorities.</i>		
1. First priority (circle one):		
OBJECTIVE	RELATIONSHIP GOAL	SELF-RESPECT GOAL
2. Second priority (circle one):		
OBJECTIVE	RELATIONSHIP GOAL	SELF-RESPECT GOAL
3. Third priority (circle one):		
OBJECTIVE	RELATIONSHIP GOAL	SELF-RESPECT GOAL
How might my goals conflict with one another? How will I act based on my Wise Mind priorities if this occurs?		

INTENSITY
Effective level of intensity (with adjustments for Wise Mind): _____

Exercise: Putting It All Together: Incorporating the FAST Skills *continued*

MAN, GIVE, AND FAST
Which MAN skills will I use and how? _____

Which GIVE skills will I use and how? _____

Which FAST skills will I use and how? _____

DEAR SCRIPT
DESCRIBE: _____

EXPRESS: _____

ASSERT: _____

REINFORCE: _____
