

# Introduction to This Book

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

## **How This Book Is Organized**

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

### ***General Skills: Orientation and Analyzing Behavior***

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

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

### ***Mindfulness Skills***

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

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

### ***Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills***

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

### ***Emotion Regulation Skills***

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

### ***Distress Tolerance Skills***

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

### ***Numbering of Handouts and Worksheets***

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

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

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

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

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