Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Coping Skills

Mindfulness

Wise Mind: Balance emotional mind and reasonable mind; ask, "What does my wise mind know?"

Observe: Notice thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and surroundings without trying to change them.

Describe: Put words to what you notice, sticking to the facts.

Participate: Fully engage in what you are doing.

Nonjudgmentally: Notice without labeling things as good, bad, right, or wrong.

One-Mindfully: Focus on one thing at a time.

Effectively: Focus on what works and helps you reach your goals.

Tolerating Upset or Big Feelings

STOP

- **S – Stop:** Don't react immediately.
- **T – Take a step back:** Pause and create some space.
- **O – Observe:** Notice what is happening inside and around you.
- **P – Proceed mindfully:** Choose what to do rather than reacting automatically.

TIPP

- **T – Temperature:** Change your body temperature, such as using cold water.
- **I – Intense Exercise:** Briefly use physical activity to release intense energy.
- **P – Paced Breathing:** Slow your breathing, especially your exhale.
- **P – Paired Muscle Relaxation:** Tense and relax muscles while breathing slowly.

ACCEPTS

- **A – Activities:** Do something that occupies your attention.
- **C – Contributing:** Help someone or do something useful.
- **C – Comparisons:** Gain perspective by comparing your situation with other times or circumstances.
- **E – Emotions:** Create a different emotion through music, media, humor, or another activity.
- **P – Pushing Away:** Temporarily set the problem aside.
- **T – Thoughts:** Fill your attention with other thoughts.
- **S – Sensations:** Use strong or noticeable physical sensations to redirect attention.

IMPROVE

- **I – Imagery:** Imagine a calming, safe, or effective scene.
- **M – Meaning:** Look for meaning or purpose in the experience.
- **P – Prayer:** Connect with spirituality, reflection, or something larger than yourself.
- **R – Relaxation:** Help your body release tension.
- **O – One Thing in the Moment:** Focus only on what is happening right now.
- **V – Vacation:** Take a brief mental or physical break.
- **E – Encouragement:** Use supportive and encouraging self-talk.

Self-Soothe: Use sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch to comfort yourself.

Pros and Cons: Compare the consequences of acting on the urge versus using a skill.

Radical Acceptance: Acknowledge reality as it is, even when you do not like or approve of it.

Turning the Mind: Notice when you are fighting reality and repeatedly choose to move toward acceptance.

Urge Surfing: Notice an urge rise, peak, and fall without acting on it.

Grounding: Use your senses and surroundings to reconnect with the present moment.

In Conflict or With Others

DEAR MAN

- **D – Describe:** State the facts of the situation.
- **E – Express:** Explain your feelings or opinions.
- **A – Assert:** Clearly ask for what you want or say no.
- **R – Reinforce:** Explain the benefit of respecting your request or boundary.
- **M – Mindful:** Stay focused on your goal.
- **A – Appear Confident:** Use a steady voice and confident body language.
- **N – Negotiate:** Be willing to problem-solve or find another workable option.

GIVE

- **G – Gentle:** Be respectful and avoid attacks or threats.
- **I – Interested:** Listen and show genuine attention.
- **V – Validate:** Communicate that the other person's feelings or perspective make sense.
- **E – Easy Manner:** Use warmth, humor, or a relaxed approach when appropriate.

FAST

- **F – Fair:** Be fair to yourself and the other person.
- **A – No Unnecessary Apologies:** Do not apologize simply for having needs, opinions, or boundaries.
- **S – Stick to Values:** Stay consistent with what matters to you.
- **T – Truthful:** Be honest and avoid exaggerating or making excuses.

Validate: Show that another person's feelings or perspective are understandable.

Set a Boundary: Clearly state your limit and what you will do if the situation continues.

Ask Directly: Clearly state what you want or need instead of hoping the other person will guess.

Say No: Be clear and brief without unnecessary over-explaining.

Broken Record: Calmly repeat your request, answer, or boundary without getting pulled into an argument.

Emotion Regulation

Check the Facts: Ask whether your interpretation and emotional response fit what is actually happening.

Opposite Action: When an emotion or urge does not fit the facts or is not helpful, intentionally act opposite to the urge.

Problem Solving: Define the problem, identify possible solutions, and choose a next step.

PLEASE

- **PL – Treat Physical Illness:** Take care of physical health problems.
- **E – Balance Eating:** Eat regularly and support your body's nutritional needs.
- **A – Avoid Mood-Altering Substances:** Be mindful of substances that can intensify emotional vulnerability.
- **S – Balance Sleep:** Support consistent and adequate sleep.
- **E – Get Exercise:** Include regular physical movement.

Build Mastery: Do something that creates a sense of accomplishment, competence, or growth.

Positive Experiences: Intentionally plan enjoyable or meaningful activities.

Cope Ahead: Imagine a difficult situation in advance and rehearse how you will respond effectively.

Name the Emotion: Identify the emotion, its intensity, body sensations, thoughts, and action urge.

Mindfulness of Emotion: Notice and allow an emotion to be present without immediately acting on it or trying to get rid of it.

Additional Skills

Meditation: Notice your breath, body, thoughts, or surroundings and gently return your attention when your mind wanders.

Guided Imagery: Picture a calming or supportive place or scene in detail.

Muscle Relaxation: Intentionally tense and release different muscle groups.

Self-Validation: Acknowledge that your feelings and reactions make sense in the context of your experience.

Compassionate Self-Talk: Speak to yourself with the patience and understanding you would offer someone you care about.

Values-Based Action: Take a small action that reflects the kind of person you want to be or what matters to you.

Behavioral Activation: Complete a planned or meaningful activity even when motivation is low.

Reach Out: Contact a trusted support person or provider rather than managing everything alone.



