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DBT Skills *Cheat Sheet*

The four skill modules of dialectical behavior therapy on one page - what each skill is for, in plain language.

1 SKIM THE FOUR MODULES · 2 STAR THE SKILLS YOU NEED · 3 PRACTICE WHILE CALM

1 Mindfulness

THE FOUNDATION · NOTICING WITHOUT JUDGING

WISE MIND
Find the overlap between emotion mind and logic mind, and act from there.

OBSERVE & DESCRIBE
Notice what is actually happening. Put words on facts, not judgments.

PARTICIPATE
Throw yourself into one activity completely, right now.

ONE-MINDFULLY
Do one thing at a time. When your mind wanders, walk it back gently.

NON-JUDGMENTALLY
Catch the "good/bad" labels and let them drop. Stick to what is.

2 Distress Tolerance

SURVIVING THE SPIKE WITHOUT MAKING IT WORSE

TIPP
Temperature, Intense exercise, Paced breathing, Paired muscle relaxation - drop the body's alarm fast.

STOP
Stop. Take a step back. Observe. Proceed mindfully.

ACCEPTS
Distract on purpose: Activities, Contributing, Comparisons, Emotions, Pushing away, Thoughts, Sensations.

SELF-SOOTHE
Comfort each of your five senses, one at a time, on purpose.

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE
Stop fighting what you cannot change. Pain fades faster when you stop feeding it.

3 Emotion Regulation

TURNING THE VOLUME DOWN BEFORE IT PEAKS

NAME THE EMOTION
Label it precisely: "disappointed," not "bad." Naming turns intensity down.

CHECK THE FACTS
Is the emotion the right size for what actually happened?

OPPOSITE ACTION
When the urge would make things worse, do its opposite, all the way.

PLEASE
Protect the basics: treat illness, eat regularly, avoid substances, sleep, move your body.

BUILD POSITIVES
Schedule small good moments daily. Steadier emotions need supplies.

4 Interpersonal Effectiveness

ASKING, REFUSING, AND KEEPING YOUR SELF-RESPECT

VALIDATE FIRST
Say the true part of the other person's view out loud before your ask.

DEAR MAN
Describe, Express, Assert, Reinforce - stay Mindful, Appear confident, Negotiate.

GIVE
Protect the relationship: be Gentle, act Interested, Validate, keep an Easy manner.

FAST
Protect self-respect: be Fair, no over-Apologizing, Stick to your values, be Truthful.

A plain-language summary of standard DBT skills for educational use. DBT itself is a full therapy program - this page is a map, not the territory.