

Mindfulness

DBT “what” and “how” skills



Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment, without judging or trying to change it. Practicing mindfulness can help you manage uncomfortable emotions and improve your relationships.



“What” and “how” skills are the components of mindfulness. “What” skills refer to what you actually do to be mindful, while “how” skills refer to the mindset you bring to these actions.

“WHAT” SKILLS



1 OBSERVE



What it is

Noticing your surroundings and internal experience (thoughts, emotions, and sensations)



What it's not

Thinking about the past or worrying about the future—anything that takes you out of the present moment



PRACTICE

Choose an everyday activity, such as washing the dishes, and attend to every aspect of the experience.



Example: In an argument with your partner, you look at and listen to them. You notice their tone of voice and posture. You pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and sensations.



2 DESCRIBE



What it is

Putting your present experience into words, focusing on the facts



What it's not

Making predictions about the future or assumptions about what other people think, rather than focusing on facts



PRACTICE

View your experience as if from a distance and describe it using the phrase, “I notice that...”

For example: “I notice that the sun feels warm on my skin, I’m walking fast, and I feel excited



Example: In an argument with your partner, you look at and listen to them. You notice their tone of voice and posture. You pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and sensations.



3 PARTICIPATE



What it is

Committing to your experience, being totally engaged, and going with the flow of the moment



What it's not

Being on “autopilot,” distracted, and out of tune with your experience



PRACTICE

Immerse yourself in an activity and give it your full attention. Let yourself fully feel any emotion that comes up.



Example: You turn off the TV so you can focus. You take deep breaths. You want to stop arguing and mend the relationship, so you listen calmly and give your opinion respectfully.