



Cultivating Awareness: Take-Home Mindfulness Skills for DBT

Life will pull you in many directions. You multitask, worry about the future, and ruminate on the past. Often, you may find yourself on autopilot rather than fully present. Practicing mindfulness - purposeful, non-judgmental awareness of the present moment - brings many benefits. Research shows it can boost mood, lower stress, improve focus, and strengthen relationships. Let's explore mindfulness skills from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) that you can weave into your daily life.

Observe Your Senses

Tune into your five senses to anchor yourself in the present:

Sight - Notice colors, shapes, and textures around you. Study an object closely. Watch leaves blow in the wind.

Sound - Listen to noises near and far without labeling them. Chimes, vehicles, birds, voices.

What do you hear?

Smell - Inhale gently and explore scents. Food, flowers, pine trees, rain, soap. Savor aromas.

Taste - Slowly eat something, detecting sweet, sour, salty, bitter, savory. Appreciate flavors.

Touch - Stroke a soft blanket or pet. Splash cool water on your face. Squeeze a stress ball.

Observing through your senses combats mind wandering. You can do this while in motion or sitting still.

Focus On Your Breath

Breath awareness is central to mindfulness. Take slow, deep breaths:

- Inhale slowly through your nose, allowing your belly to expand.
- Exhale fully through your mouth, pulling your navel in.
- Repeat for 1-5 minutes whenever you need an anchor.

Place a hand on your belly to feel it rise and fall. Focusing on breaths blocks distracting thoughts. You can do this with your eyes open or closed.

Observe Your Thoughts

Picture your mind is like a clear, blue sky and your thoughts are like passing clouds. Notice ideas without latching onto them. If you get carried away in thought, gently return your focus to your breath. Thoughts will keep appearing - simply observe them, then let them float away. This builds distance between your mind and unhelpful rumination.

Stay Present During Activities

Bring full awareness to your actions by using these techniques:

- Mindful eating - Tune into flavors and textures without multitasking.



- Mindful walking - Feel the earth beneath your feet. Notice surroundings.
- Mindful chores - Fully focus on washing dishes or folding laundry.
- Mindful conversation - Listen intently to others without planning responses.

Even boring tasks become engaging when you infuse presence. Reduce distractions to stay grounded in the moment.

Non-judgement and Acceptance

Mindfulness requires non-judgemental observation - watching thoughts and feelings without criticism. Avoid labeling experiences as good or bad. Simply observe with curiosity and acceptance. Aim for equanimity in the face of pleasant or unpleasant states.

Practice Loving-Kindness

Loving-kindness meditation strengthens feelings of compassion. Try this 5-minute practice:

- Recall someone you naturally feel warmth for.
- Silently wish them happiness using phrases like “May you be safe, healthy, peaceful.”
- Visualize them receiving your kind intentions.
- Next, extend well-wishes to yourself. Finally, broaden loving-kindness to all beings.

Regularly practicing mindfulness trains your mind to respond thoughtfully rather than react reflexively. Make it part of your self-care routine for greater resilience and joy. You’ve got this!