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DIALETIC BEHAVIOR THERAPY (DBT) SKILLS

Difficult people and situations can trigger strong emotional reactions and impulsive responses. This handout provides examples of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills you can use to stay grounded, manage emotions, and communicate effectively. Each skill offers a structured way to slow down, think clearly, and choose responses that align with your goals and values.

1. **STOP Skill (When I Feel Triggered)**

Use this the moment I feel defensive, angry, or overwhelmed.

S – STOP. Pause. Do nothing for 5–10 seconds.

T – TAKE A BREATH. Slow inhale through nose → slow exhale through mouth (2–3 times).

O – OBSERVE. Ask myself:

- What am I feeling right now?
- What urge do I have? (argue, explain, shut down)

P – PROCEED MINDFULLY. Choose my next step instead of reacting automatically.

👉 *Reminder:* I don't have to respond immediately.

2. **Emotion Regulation: Name It to Tame It**

When emotions feel intense:

- "I am feeling angry / hurt / anxious / overwhelmed."
- "This feeling makes sense based on what just happened."
- "I don't need to fix it or act on it right now."

👉 Naming emotions helps calm my nervous system.

3. **PLEASE Skills (Lower Emotional Vulnerability)**

When I'm run down, I'm more reactive.

P – Physical health: follow up on medical needs

L – Lower substances: avoid emotional conversations if alcohol is involved

E – Eat regularly: don't skip meals

A – Avoid sleep deprivation: protect sleep

S – Stay balanced: small routines > big plans

E – Exercise gently: movement helps emotional release

👉 If I'm tired or stressed, I plan shorter visits or fewer conversations.

4. DEAR MAN (Setting Boundaries Clearly)

Use short, calm statements. No over-explaining.

D – Describe: “When comments are made about me personally...”

E – Express: “...I feel hurt and shut down.”

A – Assert: “I’m not going to stay in conversations where I’m spoken to that way.”

R – Reinforce: “This helps me stay connected without resentment.”

M – Mindful: Repeat boundary if needed. Don’t debate.

A – Appear confident: Calm voice, steady posture.

N – Negotiate (optional): “We can talk later or take a break.”

5. FAST Skills (Protecting My Self-Respect)

Use these when guilt or self-doubt shows up.

F – Fair: Be fair to *myself*, not just others

A – Apologies: Don’t apologize for having boundaries

S – Stick to values: Emotional safety matters

T – Truthful: No minimizing or sugar-coating

👉 Boundaries are not mean. They are necessary.

6. GIVE Skills (If I Want to Keep Things Civil)

Only use if I feel emotionally safe.

G – Gentle: calm tone, simple words

I – Interested: listen, don’t fix

V – Validate: “I hear you” (not “I agree”)

E – Easy manner: light, brief, exit early if needed

👉 I can be kind without tolerating disrespect.

7. Opposite Action (When I Want to React)

If the urge is to:

- Argue → Pause and disengage
- Explain myself → Say less
- Defend → Restate boundary once
- Chase approval → Step back

👉 I choose behavior that supports my long-term peace.

8. After an Interaction: Quick Reset

Ask:

- What went well?
- What skill did I try?
- What do I want to do differently next time?

Then:

- Ground (walk, stretch, breathe)
- Journal one paragraph max
- Let it go for now

Final Reminder

I cannot control other people’s behavior, including family.

I can control my boundaries, responses, and self-respect.

That is real power.