

Emotion Regulation Checklist (DBT Skills)

Checklist · 60 items · 12 sections

Emotion regulation is the core skill set from Marsha Linehan's Dialectical Behavior Therapy. This checklist walks through the standard DBT skills: identifying and naming the emotion, checking the facts, opposite action, problem solving, accumulating positives, building mastery, coping ahead, and PLEASE (treating physical illness, balanced eating, avoiding mood-altering substances, balanced sleep, exercise). Use it as a self-practice worksheet, not a substitute for working with a trained DBT clinician.

Open the editable, AI-powered version online:

<https://genechecklist.com/checklist/emotion-regulation-checklist>

IDENTIFY THE EMOTION

- Notice the emotion as it rises, before it spikes
HIGH
- Name it specifically: sadness, anger, fear, shame, guilt, jealousy, envy, love, joy
HIGH
- Describe the prompting event in one sentence (what happened, who was there)
HIGH
- Note the interpretation: what you told yourself about the event
HIGH
- Scan body sensations: chest, throat, stomach, shoulders, jaw
- Rate intensity 0 to 100 to track how the skill shifts it
- Identify the action urge the emotion is pushing (avoid, attack, hide, withdraw)
HIGH

CHECK THE FACTS

- Ask: does the emotion fit the facts of the situation?
HIGH
- Separate the event from your interpretation of the event
HIGH
- List other possible interpretations beyond your first one
HIGH
- Estimate the realistic probability of the threat or catastrophe

- Ask what you could cope with even if the worst happened
- Re-rate the emotion intensity after checking the facts

OPPOSITE ACTION

- If the emotion does not fit the facts, plan opposite action
HIGH
- Fear: approach what you avoid, in small doses
HIGH
- Sadness: get active, engage, build mastery rather than withdraw
HIGH
- Anger: gently avoid, do something kind for the target, take a timeout
HIGH
- Shame: if you did nothing wrong, tell the secret to safe people
HIGH
- Guilt (justified): repair and move on, do not over-apologize
HIGH
- Act all the way: posture, voice, facial expression, thoughts
- Repeat opposite action until the urge drops below 30

PROBLEM SOLVING

- If the emotion fits the facts, switch to problem solving
HIGH
- Define the problem clearly in one sentence
HIGH
- Brainstorm at least five possible solutions before evaluating any
HIGH
- Pick the option with the best fit between effort and outcome
HIGH
- Run the first step today, even if it is small
HIGH

ACCUMULATE POSITIVES SHORT TERM

- Plan one positive activity from the Adult Pleasant Events list today
HIGH
- Be mindful of the positive experience while it is happening
HIGH
- Do not contaminate the moment with worries about it ending

ACCUMULATE POSITIVES LONG TERM

- Identify your top three values (relationships, work, health, creativity)

HIGH

- Set one specific goal that moves a value forward this quarter

HIGH

- Break the goal into a small weekly action that fits real life

HIGH

BUILD MASTERY

- Do one thing each day that builds competence (skill, study, practice)

HIGH

- Make it challenging but possible, not crushing

- Track wins so the brain registers progress

COPE AHEAD

- Name the upcoming stressful situation in writing

HIGH

- Imagine yourself in the situation in vivid detail

HIGH

- Rehearse the exact coping skills you will use, step by step

HIGH

- Plan for what to do if the situation goes worse than expected

PLEASE SKILLS

- Treat physical illness: take prescribed meds, see the doctor when needed

HIGH

- Eat balanced meals: do not skip, do not overeat to numb

HIGH

- Avoid mood-altering substances unless prescribed

HIGH

- Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep at consistent times

HIGH

- Get exercise: twenty minutes most days moves the dial

HIGH

CRISIS SKILLS

- Use STOP when you notice an action urge you might regret
HIGH
- Stop. Take a step back. Observe. Proceed mindfully
HIGH
- Use TIPP for emotion spikes above 70: temperature, intense exercise, paced breathing, paired muscle relaxation
HIGH
- Splash cold water on the face for thirty seconds to trigger the dive reflex
- Breathe out longer than you breathe in (4 in, 6 out) for two minutes
- Use Wise Mind ACCEPTS to distract when you cannot solve the problem now
- Activities, Contributing, Comparisons, Emotions, Pushing away, Thoughts, Sensations
- Self-soothe through the five senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, smell
- Use IMPROVE the moment: imagery, meaning, prayer, relaxation, one thing at a time
- Practice radical acceptance for what cannot be changed right now
HIGH
- Notice fighting reality is its own suffering on top of pain

TRACK PROGRESS

- Use a diary card to log emotions and skills used for one week
- Review the card weekly: which skills worked, which did not

SAFETY

- If urges to self-harm or suicide rise, contact crisis line 988 or your clinician
HIGH
- Keep a written safety plan with three coping skills and three contacts
HIGH
- Work with a DBT-trained clinician if you are practicing alongside therapy
HIGH