DBT Skills: Introduction to Emotion Regulation

Objective
To learn the DBT skill of identifying feelings, then observing and naming them as a way of helping you to regulate your emotions.

You Should Know
Most of us go through the day experiencing a range of emotions—from pleasant to unpleasant, some of which are in our awareness and others are out of our awareness. Sometimes the emotions that happen outside of our awareness can cause us to make poor decisions, say things we regret, or take actions that cause us or others harm.

You can learn specific skills that can help with “emotion regulation,” that is, controlling your emotions and keeping them more in balance rather than shifting between extremes. In this worksheet, you will learn about the range of emotions and then practice simply observing and naming your own.

What to Do
In order to manage an emotion, you need to know what it is. The first step in learning emotion regulation is to become familiar with the range of emotions that we can experience. Read the following list of pleasant and unpleasant emotions.

Pleasant
- affectionate
- amused
- appreciative
- calm
- caring
- comfortable
- confident
- curious
- delighted
- empowered
- encouraged
- excited
- friendly
- fulfilled
- grateful
- hopeful
- joyful
- loving

Unpleasant
- agitated
- ambivalent
- angry
- annoyed
- anxious
- apprehensive
- ashamed
- bad
- bored
- confused
- contemptuous
- depressed
- disappointed
- disconnected
- discouraged
- disgusted
- disheartened
- edgy
- embarrassed
enraged  
insecure  
scared
exasperated  
irritated  
selconscious
exhausted  
lonely  
suspicious
frightened  
needy  
tense
frustrated  
nervous  
terrified
furious  
overwhelmed  
tired
guarded  
remorseful  
uncomfortable
guilty  
resentful  
unhappy
helpless  
restless  
upset
impatient  
sad  
vulnerable

Are these feelings all familiar to you? Which ones are? Which ones aren’t? Write some reflections on the lines below the list.
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______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
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Now, note down a few situations or experiences in which you become aware of (notice) your feelings in the coming week. By labeling your feelings, you can use the power of your mind to take a step back and assess (mindfulness), then, over time, learn how to make a good choice about what to do next.

Start with PLEASANT or UNPLEASANT. Then try to identify the general feeling you notice, such as HAPPY, SAD, ANGRY, SCARED. Then, if you feel ready, try to be more specific. Use the above list of feelings as a guide, but feel free to use different words for feelings that come to mind that might not appear on this list.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Situation/experience when you noticed a feeling</th>
<th>Pleasant or unpleasant?</th>
<th>General (happy, sad, angry, scared)</th>
<th>Specific (see list)</th>
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Reflections on This Exercise

1. What emotions did you become aware of that you weren’t previously aware of?

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2. What was the main obstacle you encountered in identifying your emotions?

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3. What was easy about it? What would you like to do to continue the practice of naming and noticing your emotions? Be specific.

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How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

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