

DBT Skills for Mindfulness: Wise Mind and One-Mindfully

Objective

To quiet your mind and body through practicing Wise Mind and One-Mindfully.

You Should Know

Mindfulness refers to being in the present moment with acceptance and without judgment. This is easier said than done. The concept of Wise Mind, as developed by Marsha Linehan, PhD, who created Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), is about finding the balance between thinking and feeling in our lives.

Wise Mind is the combination of your Rational (or Reasonable) Mind and your Emotion Mind. The Rational Mind is when your brain is in control. It is able to assess, judge, decide, determine, delay gratification, tolerate frustration, and understand complex ideas and situations without emotional interference. We all need that part of our mind in order to function in the world. The Emotion Mind is when your heart is in control. It tends to react impulsively, jump to conclusions, act in ways that might hurt ourselves or others, or otherwise distort the reality of a situation.

When you have access to your Wise Mind, you can find a balance between feeling your true feelings and acting with wisdom in response to them. You can see the “gray” area instead of black and white. You can make healthy, informed decisions about your work, your relationships, and all the complexities that life presents.

The term “One-Mindfully” in DBT refers to focusing on one thing in the moment. Doing one thing at a time and attending to it fully can help us be more effective in our lives. People often celebrate their ability to multi-task. But that can have negative effects. With One-Mindfully skills, you eat when you are eating. You listen deeply when someone is talking. You stay present with your body and whatever sensations you are feeling.

What to Do

These two mindfulness skills take practice and repetition. You might not feel any different at first, but keep trying. You are building a new mental muscle, a way to cope better with difficulties.

Wise Mind

How would you describe yourself in terms of the balance of Rational Mind and Emotion Mind? Which one is more active and available? Which one tends to hide in the background?

Describe a situation when your Rational Mind helped you to overcome a difficult emotion?

Describe a situation when your Emotion Mind overwhelmed your Rational Mind.

Now, sit in a relaxing position and close your eyes. Calm your body by relaxing your muscle groups one at time, from head to toe. As you feel your mind and body relax, think about the situation above, when your Emotion Mind overwhelmed your Rational Mind. Notice how you feel in your body. Take a deep breath and send compassion and care to yourself. Ask yourself how you might have handled that situation differently. What would your Wise Mind (your “gut intuition,” maybe) tell you? How would it guide you to a safe, reasonable response? Write down your reflections below:

One-Mindfully

Make a plan to practice acting One-Mindfully in the next week. You might want to focus completely on one meal. Go for a walk without listening to music or talking on the phone. Do a chore or task such as dishwashing or laundry with your full attention on what is happening from moment to moment. Just do one thing at a time.

What are three activities that you will commit to doing in the next week or so?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

After you have completed your activities, write down what you noticed while you tried to do just one thing at a time. Were you able to focus? For how long? What distracted you? What did you like about it? What was challenging about it?

Activity 1:

Activity 2:

Activity 3:

Reflections on This Exercise

What did you discover about yourself from reflecting on the relationship of your Rational Mind to your Emotion Mind?

What area would you like to work on specifically in helping you to access and utilize your Wise Mind more often?

What did you notice from doing the One-Mindfully exercise? What practice(s) would you like to continue doing to improve that skill?

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?
