



# CBT SKILLS HANDOUT PACKAGE

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## One Breath Skill

The act of taking a deep breath can sometimes produce feelings of tightness and discomfort in the chest. When we are feeling tense or anxious, we may hold our breath. In this situation, inhaling deeply to relax may be unhelpful, and may increase the experience of anxiety. One simple step may help: before breathing in, **breathe out**.

To practice this skill, you can:

- Slowly and gently, breathe out.  
Breathing out through the mouth can help to slow down the process.
- As you breathe out, let your shoulders and upper body relax downward.
- At the end of the breath, breathe in, slowly and gently, through the nose.
- Finally, exhale again, slowly and gently, through the mouth.

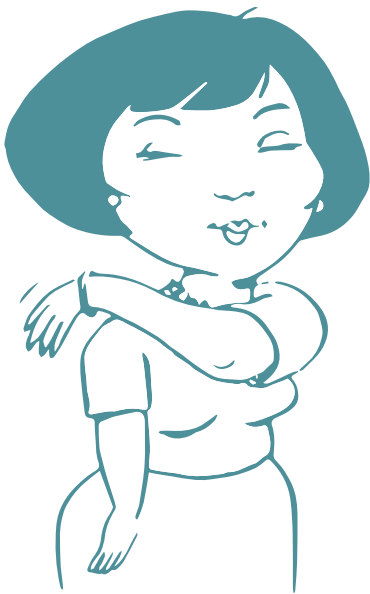
*Sometimes, noticing our breath can make us more anxious. If this feeling is true for you, you may want to start with a different skill until you build more comfort around noticing the breath.*

If it's helpful, you can name your breath (grounding, soothing, quieting, helpful, or calming, for example) and think of this name as you breathe out. If you want, you can also consider adding a subtle half-smile at the end of this one-breath and notice with curiosity how it affects your experience.

This skill does not require counting. The breath is always there with you, and is always available. Just take one breath whenever you think of it, multiple times each day.

Take time each day to congratulate yourself for achieving small, everyday goals.

What did you achieve today that required your time, energy, or effort?



*Give Yourself A Pat On The Back!*

## 'Good for Me's'

We have evolved to survive, rather than to be happy or calm. Therefore, our brains naturally focus on all the potential problems that may need solving to help us survive, rather than focusing on what is going well. We call this conditioning the **negativity bias**.

'Good for Me's' allow us to correct this negative bias by focusing on and appreciating the moments in which we invest time, energy, or effort, even if that investment feels small. When we focus on baby steps and congratulate ourselves for making an effort, no matter how small, we build momentum and confidence. We can remind our brains intentionally of the steps we are taking that move us forward, creating an overall assessment of ourselves that is more balanced.

When we are experiencing a tough time with mental health challenges, everything can take more effort. Our tendency is to compare our efforts to what we could accomplish when we were feeling better, which can make us feel even worse and less excited to work on our goals.

We can work toward noticing and giving ourselves credit for ANYTHING we do that takes energy, effort, or time, even if it is a task that we must do. For example, brushing your teeth still takes time and effort. Practice acknowledging these wins to yourself.

Choose a time of day when you can reflect, such as before bed, to list roughly five things you did recently that required effort, or that you spent time on. Remember to include things that took mental effort. Examples include doing chores, attending an appointment, meditating, allowing your emotions, gardening, or calling a friend. Any effort, no matter how small, is worthy of a 'Good for Me'.

In this way, we can practice being supportive and encouraging, even for small achievements, as you would for a friend.

Practice. Like building any new habit, it works best if you do it daily.

If you have trouble identifying what works for you, imagine how you would treat the pain of a loved one in the same situation.



## Kristin Neff's Three Steps to Self-Compassion

Self-compassion recognizes that, like all humans, we experience physical and emotional pain. While we may feel comfortable treating our physical pain with tenderness and care (such as bandaging a wound or resting a sore knee), we can learn to extend that same mindful attention and kindness toward our emotional pain with self-compassion.

### Examples of self-compassionate thoughts:

- It is hard to be in this situation. Anyone would feel this way.
- I am learning and growing; I cannot know or do anything that I have not practiced before.
- I am a work in progress, just like everyone else.
- How can I show myself the same love that I imagine my ancestors would give me in this moment?

### Three steps to self-compassion:

- 1 Practice mindfulness by being aware that you are suffering or struggling WHEN you are suffering or struggling. "This is a moment of suffering." "Ouch, this hurts." As best as you can, observe and label your thoughts or the situation mindfully, without judging them as good or bad. In this moment, we can practice allowing the emotion without resisting or trying to change it.
- 2 Recognize that these thoughts and feelings are common human experiences, and that suffering is a normal part of life. "Other people feel this way. I'm not alone." "We all struggle in our lives."
- 3 Extend kindness or tenderness toward yourself, and be your own best friend in this moment. Experiment with what expression of kindness is the best fit for you:
  - Offering kind words to yourself
  - Gentle touch
  - Offering yourself a hot bath
  - A moment to yourself/cup of tea
  - Offering yourself time in nature
  - Prayer



## Thinking Traps

Thinking traps or cognitive distortions are patterns of thinking that occur often, especially in states of anxiety or depression. They are the brain's attempt to create a shortcut to be more efficient at making sense of the world around us. However, they can result in viewing a situation in an extreme way. These patterns turn into traps if they become rigid, self-defeating patterns or if they are used in every situation without looking at the context.

Thinking Trap	Definition	Tips to Untangle Yourself	Example	Alternative
<b>ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING</b>	Focusing on situations in terms of extremes (good/bad, success/failure); ignoring that most people and situations are complex.	Find a thought in the middle ground between the two extremes.	"I lost my keys. I'm disorganized and incompetent."	"Sometimes my actions are organized and sometimes my actions are disorganized, just like everyone else."
<b>OVER-GENERALIZING</b>	Drawing a general conclusion about something based on only one piece of evidence.  Using 'everything,' 'nothing,' 'always' and 'never'.	Check the facts!  Search for other instances or pieces of evidence that do not support that conclusion.	"I pronounced another word wrong in language class. I'm never going to make the Elders proud!"	"I feel embarrassed I can't pronounce certain words correctly, which shows that learning my language is important and I just haven't mastered it yet. I know the Elders are proud of my efforts, even if it's not perfect."
<b>MENTAL FILTER</b>	Only noticing evidence that confirms existing beliefs.	Check the facts!  Actively search for other examples that you may not have been noticing.	"I yelled at my partner today. Just another reason I'm a horrible partner!"	"Today was hard. I was impatient and yelled at my partner, but I also took the time to listen to them talk about their day."



## Thinking Traps

Thinking Trap	Definition	Tips to Untangle Yourself	Example	Alternative
<b>DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE</b>	Saying that the positive things you have done or experienced are less valuable or unimportant. This is an example of negativity bias: paying more attention to what is going wrong than to what is working well.	Ask yourself, "If someone else were observing the situation, would they be able to point out something positive?"  Try practicing a 'Good for Me'.	"My room looks so sloppy since I left my clean laundry piled up on the chair."	"I did laundry, which is still an accomplishment because it required effort and time. It's okay if I was too tired to fold the clean clothes."
<b>JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS</b>	<i>Mind Reading:</i> imagining that we can read other peoples' minds.  <i>Fortune telling:</i> predicting the future.	Check the facts!  Look for evidence that might give you a different conclusion.  Acknowledge that there might be some uncertainty about the outcome.	"People at work think I'm stupid."  "I will not have fun at game night with my friends."	"No one at work has ever said that I am stupid. In fact, most people ask for my advice."  "I feel worried that I may lose every game, but I'm going to this event to see my loved ones, not to win."
<b>CATASTROPHIZING</b>	Predicting that the worst-case scenario is going to happen, without considering other possible outcomes and underestimating your ability to cope if it does occur.	Check the facts about the danger!  Think about how you would cope, even if something bad did happen.	"I am late to meet my friend. They will be upset, and will never want to interact with me again. I will lose the friendship."	"I have a reasonable explanation for being late and have sent a message about it. My friend is a reasonable person. If they are upset, I will apologize and plan properly in the future so that I am not late again."



## Thinking Traps

Thinking Trap	Definition	Tips to Untangle Yourself	Example	Alternative
<b>MINIMIZATION</b>	Pretending something is less important than it is to avoid uncomfortable feelings about it.	Check the facts!  Ask yourself, "Is there something I am trying not to notice, or that I'm shrinking in importance?"	"My partner insulted me in front of our friends, but it's not a big deal."	"It hurt my feelings when they did that."
<b>EMOTIONAL REASONING</b>	Believing that if you feel something strongly, it must be true.	Check the facts!  Label our feelings and notice the thoughts associated with each feeling. Although the feeling is real, check whether the associated thought is realistic.	"No one cares about me."	"I feel lonely right now, but that doesn't mean that no one cares about me, or that no one likes me. This feeling will pass."
<b>SHOULD AND MUSTS</b>	Telling yourself how you should or must feel/ behave.  Making up rules to make things more certain, or to motivate yourself or others.	Notice the feelings this thought brings up in yourself (guilt, anxiety, or disappointment) and when applied to others (anger or resentment).  Change the words to 'could' or 'would like'.  Examine if the thought is helpful, and consider the advantages and disadvantages of believing it.	"I dropped and broke a plate. I should never be this clumsy."	"I would like never to be clumsy, but that's not possible. Asking myself to do everything perfectly is making me feel exhausted."





## Thinking Traps

Thinking Trap	Definition	Tips to Untangle Yourself	Example	Alternative
<b>LABELLING</b>	Assigning negative words to ourselves, to others, or to things.	Ask yourself which behavior or error is creating problems. Try isolating that issue rather than applying a label to the whole situation.  Describe the specific situation and the context in which a person did a particular thing.	"I am a mess."	"I am often too tired to complete household chores after work, but that does not mean I am a mess. I am not defined by the chores I cannot finish today. I can try again tomorrow."
<b>PERSONALIZATION</b>	Blaming yourself or others unfairly.	Check the facts!  Ask yourself what is within your control and responsibility, and what belongs to others. Determine what is unknown or uncontrollable.	"Shirin hasn't contacted me in a while. I must have done something wrong."	"I don't know why Shirin has not contacted me. There could be many reasons, although I hope it was not something I did. I could ask them about it."

**!** **Note: Do not attempt this exercise while driving.**

## Grounding 5-4-3-2-1 Skill

Grounding is a calming and centering method that helps you to become more focused on both your body and the present moment. This skill gives you an opportunity to remember your resources and ability to cope in the present.

The same object, sound, or feeling can be used more than once in a row. The exercise can be done in silence or out loud, and as often as you need.

### Exercise:

- Name five things that you see.  
Say, "I see \_\_\_\_, I see \_\_\_\_, etc."
  - Name five things that you hear.  
Say, "I hear \_\_\_\_, I hear \_\_\_\_, etc."
  - Name five things that you sense/touch (e.g., the temperature of the air on your skin, your heart beating, your temperature).  
Say, "I sense \_\_\_\_, I sense \_\_\_\_, etc."
  - Name four things that you see.
  - Name four things you hear.
  - Name four things that you sense/touch
- Name three things that you see.
  - Name three things you hear.
  - Name three things that you sense/touch.
  - Name two things that you see.
  - Name two things you hear.
  - Name two things that you sense/touch.
  - Name one thing that you see.
  - Name one thing you can hear.
  - Name one thing that you sense/touch.



## 3-3-3 Skill

- Name three things you see.
- Name three things you hear.
- Name three things you sense.

## Anxiety Equation

The following equation is a useful tool when feeling anxious, nervous, or fearful. This skill is based on the fact that anxiety often arises out of exaggerating danger and underestimating our ability to cope.

$$\frac{\text{belief that bad stuff will happen}}{\text{belief that I will be able to handle it}} = \text{ANXIETY}$$

In autopilot, we tend to catastrophize or jump to conclusions about potential dangers, which leads to a large value on the top of the equation. We also tend to ignore or underestimate our resources and ability to cope, which leads to a small value on the bottom of the equation. Consequently, these tendencies lead to high anxiety.

When we investigate, we seek to shift this equation in order to minimize the top, and to maximize the bottom.

### **Top: Minimize fear by estimating the danger in a realistic way.**

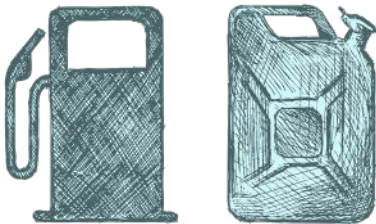
- What's fact? What's exaggerated? Can you challenge it? Can you make it more realistic?
- What could you say to yourself to decrease the fear?
- Notice what you are saying to yourself that magnifies the fear. Notice the Thinking Traps you might be experiencing.

### **Bottom: Maximize coping by increasing coping resources.**

- Identify your internal and external coping resources, past and present, which could include your strengths (for example, your curiosity or determination), your support network, and much more.
- Remind yourself that you have coped with other difficult situations.
- Use coping statements, problem solving, healthy distraction, spiritual practices, and relaxation.

Remember, coping means muddling through somehow, not doing it perfectly or escaping without a scratch.

Refuel your energy:  
fill up your tank.



## Energy Budget

Every day, we wake up with **resources** available to use that day. These resources include energy, time, motivation, and a sense of wellbeing. The amount available to us will change from day to day, and even over the course of the day.

If we spend more resources than we have, we end up feeling drained. The lower our mood, or more stressed we are feeling, the fewer resources we tend to have. For example, if you have the flu, you will not feel like you have the same amount of energy to do everyday tasks. Similarly, if you are experiencing a stressful event that is constantly on your mind and is using brain energy, you will not feel like you have the same amount of energy as usual to deal with your other commitments.

We need to be aware of the actual resources we have at any given time, so that we can figure out what is reasonable for us to accomplish. It is important to start with where we are—not with where we used to be, nor where we would like to be. We can't build effectively for the future unless we start from where we are in the present.

When we get a little more energy, the temptation is to spend it all, which can lead to a crash and burn cycle. We need to keep a little in reserve.

Try doing a task, then giving yourself a break! Resting or doing something nourishing to take care of yourself is a way of replenishing the budget.

Begin with small steps or goals to avoid feeling overwhelmed.



## Baby Steps

When we are feeling stuck in our patterns and behaviours but overwhelmed at the thought of changing them, it is important to begin with small steps or goals to move forward. Completing even one small thing can help us to feel a little better in the moment, and can improve our motivation to do more.

### Select a small goal:

- Choose a small task, and pick a time to do it. Choose a task that is easy to complete (even if you feel very sad or tired).
- Be specific about what you are going to do, and when and how you are going to do it. For example, a goal might be **'to read one section of a book this Thursday evening'**, rather than simply **'read a book'**.

If you don't complete the goal, don't give up. Choose another time, or break your goal into smaller parts. For example: **'select a few pages of a book you'd like to read this Thursday evening'**.

It is easier to know when you have reached goals involving actions and thoughts than those involving emotions, so focus on these types of goals. When you meet your goal, give yourself a 'Good for Me'. Even if you don't meet your goal as you define it, give yourself credit for the effort you made, and notice what new information you gained through your efforts.



Break tasks into time chunks, then make it a goal to work on one 'chunk'.

## Chunk the Day

If you're finding it hard to meet your goals, try setting your goal in terms of *time* rather than *task*. We call this **chunking the day**.

- Decide on the smallest amount of time that you think you might be able to spend on a task. Ten minutes? One hour?
- Decide when you will do the chunk of time. Tell yourself, "I only have to keep going for this chunk, then I can stop."
- When the chunk is over, you can decide to rest, continue with what you were doing, or do something different. You can complete your whole day in chunks.

When we must do activities that deplete us, chunking them can help to prevent procrastination, or overdoing it and depleting our energy budget.



There are no right or wrong values. This exercise merely asks you to identify which values are most important to you.



## Values

Values describe how we want to be in the world. They are guiding principles that lead and motivate us as we move through life.

Values are different from goals. When we prioritize a handful of values that resonate with us, we can refer to these values as we make decisions and goals. Just as a plant requires sunshine to grow, you can shine a light on the parts of yourself you want to acknowledge and continue to grow within you. You can pick two or three values that you would like to highlight through your actions and words this week. Below is a list of some values. You can find more in the *Workbook* in Chapter 7. Please be aware that there are no right or wrong values, and that this list offers only a sampling of potential values. We invite you to create other values that are meaningful to you that are not on the list.

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Adventure:</b>                  | to be adventurous, and to actively explore novel or stimulating experiences                     |
| <b>Authenticity:</b>               | to be genuine, real, and true to myself   |
| <b>Collectivism:</b>               | To consider and attend to the needs of others, and to contribute to the benefit of my community |
| <b>Compassion/self-compassion:</b> | to act kindly toward myself and to others who are in pain                                       |
| <b>Connection:</b>                 | to engage fully in whatever I'm doing, and to be fully present with others                      |
| <b>Creativity:</b>                 | to be creative or innovative  |
| <b>Curiosity:</b>                  | to be curious, open-minded, and interested; to explore and discover                             |
| <b>Encouragement:</b>              | to encourage and reward behaviour that I value in myself or others                              |
| <b>Fairness and justice:</b>       | to be fair and just to myself and others  |
| <b>Freedom and independence:</b>   | to choose how I live and help others to do likewise   |
| <b>Fun and humour:</b>             | to be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities                          |

# CBT Skills: GOING WHERE YOU WANT TO GO

Feel free to add and identify your own value words to this list.

<b>Gratitude:</b>	to be grateful for and appreciative of myself, others, and life
<b>Honesty:</b>	to be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others
<b>Humility:</b>	To acknowledge not knowing, and to approach the world as a learner
<b>Industry:</b>	to be industrious, hardworking, and dedicated
<b>Inclusion:</b>	To build a culture of belonging everywhere I go
<b>Intimacy:</b>	to open up, reveal, and share myself emotionally or physically
<b>Love:</b>	to act lovingly or affectionately toward myself and others
<b>Order:</b>	to be orderly and organized
<b>Persistence and commitment:</b>	to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties
<b>Recognition:</b>	to be recognized, admired, and appreciated by others
<b>Respect/self-respect:</b>	to treat myself and others with care and consideration
<b>Responsibility:</b>	to be responsible and accountable for my actions
<b>Safety and protection:</b>	to secure, protect, or ensure my own safety and the safety of others
<b>Sensuality and pleasure:</b>	to create or enjoy pleasurable and sensual experiences
<b>Skillfulness:</b>	to practice and improve my skills continually, and to apply myself completely
<b>Spirituality:</b>	to contemplate and explore my connection to the sacred, and to engage in spiritual practices
<b>Trust:</b>	to be trustworthy, loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable
<b>Other:</b>	_____
<b>Other:</b>	_____
<b>Other:</b>	_____



## Setting Value-based SMART Goals

Use the SMART acronym to help you make goals that are manageable and noticeable. SMART goals will help you to build confidence and momentum as you move intentionally in the direction of a value that is important to you at this time.

### SMART goals are:

**Specific:** Specify the actions you will take, when and where you will take them, and who or what is involved.

**Measurable:** Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress. Write the goal in a way that you can tick off the action when it is finished.

**Attainable:** Make sure your goal is realistic and attainable. Rate how confident you are that you can accomplish the goal (1–10). If your confidence is less than eight, break the goal into several smaller, more attainable goals.

**Relevant:** Is your goal guided genuinely by a personal value that is important right now? What is that value? Are you motivated to achieve your goal at this moment?

**Time-bound:** Set a realistic date and time for completion of the goal that feels possible to accomplish and that will be a helpful motivator.

For example, if you value connection, a SMART goal might be, 'I will connect with one person whom I care about by this Sunday. I am 80 per cent confident that I can make this connection happen.'

Once you have set a SMART goal, take committed action, and remember to give yourself credit for your efforts, regardless of the outcome. Try to learn from what doesn't go well, and celebrate your successes. Whenever we set a SMART goal, we get either the outcome that we want or the lesson that we need.

Once the deadline for your goal has passed, check in with yourself. How did it go? Did you move in the direction of your value? Do you want to revise your goal, set another goal related to this value, or work with a different value?





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