

DBT Pros and Cons Skill Worksheet

Compare the short- and long-term effects of acting on a crisis urge

When to use Pros and Cons

Use this DBT distress-tolerance skill when you feel pulled toward an impulsive, avoidant or harmful action. Compare both immediate and delayed consequences of acting on the urge versus using skills and not acting on it. Complete the worksheet before a crisis when possible, then keep it easy to access.

Name one target urge

The specific urge or crisis behaviour I am evaluating is:

What usually triggers this urge? What emotion, thought, body sensation or situation comes first?

Four-way comparison

Choice	Possible benefits / relief	Possible costs / risks
Act on the urge	Short-term: Long-term:	Short-term: Long-term:
Do not act; use skills instead	Short-term: Long-term:	Short-term: Long-term:

Look beyond the immediate moment

Area to consider	If I act on the urge	If I use skills instead
Safety and health		
Relationships and trust		
Work, study, money or legal effects		
Self-respect and values		
How I may feel tomorrow / next week		

Which consequences matter most to me when the emotion is lower?

Write a short crisis reminder in your own words: "When the urge is high, remember..."

Which skills, people, places or barriers can help me delay action for the next 10-30 minutes?

Use the comparison to guide action

The goal is not to pretend that resisting an urge has no cost. It may feel difficult, uncomfortable or unfair in the short term. The question is which choice is more effective for safety, values and long-term goals.

Use this worksheet safely

This worksheet is for education and skills practice. It does not replace assessment, diagnosis, crisis support or individual treatment. If you may harm yourself or someone else, cannot stay safe, or have a medical emergency, contact local emergency services or a qualified crisis resource now.

Research and source notes: Linehan, M. M. (2025). *DBT Skills Training Manual*, Revised Edition. Guilford Press. Linehan, M. M. (2025). *DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets*, Revised Edition. Guilford Press. Lee, R. K., Harms, C. A., & Jeffery, S. E. (2022). The contribution of skills to the effectiveness of dialectical behavioral therapy. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 78(12), 2396-2409. This is an original CounselorAid worksheet and does not reproduce proprietary DBT handouts.