

DBT Self-Soothe Skill Worksheet

Use the five senses to make a painful moment more manageable

When to use Self-Soothe

Self-Soothe is a DBT distress-tolerance skill that uses safe, intentional sensory experiences to make a painful moment more bearable. It does not deny the problem. It helps you reduce added suffering and avoid impulsive actions while the emotion rises and falls.

Build a personal sensory menu

Sense	Ideas to test	My safe options
Vision	Natural light, a calming image, organised space, colours, watching clouds or leaves.	
Hearing	Music, nature sounds, quiet, a familiar voice, a steady rhythm.	
Smell	Fresh air, tea, soap, herbs or a familiar scent.	
Taste	A mindful sip or bite, mint, tea, cool water or a nourishing snack.	
Touch	Soft fabric, warm shower, cool cloth, holding a mug, stretching, self-massage or weighted pressure only if safe.	

Choose sensory input carefully

Use options that are safe, affordable, non-intoxicating and not linked to allergy, trauma, compulsive behaviour, disordered eating, sensory overload or another harmful pattern. A skill should reduce vulnerability, not create a new problem.

Self-Soothe practice

What happened? What emotion and urge am I trying to ride out without making things worse?

Before practice	0-10
Emotional intensity	
Urge intensity	
Body tension	

Which one or two senses will I use? Describe the exact objects, place or activity.

How will I practise mindfully? What will I notice in detail instead of rushing or multitasking?

What might make this option unsafe, triggering or ineffective? What is my backup option?

After 5-10 minutes	Rating / notes
Emotional intensity (0-10)	
Urge intensity (0-10)	
What helped, and what should I change next time?	

Portable Self-Soothe kit

List small, practical items or digital resources I can keep available for difficult moments.

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.