The Pause Room

DBT-informed skills for the next moment

Strong feelings can be real without deciding your next action. Practice creating space between an urge and a response.

1

S / Stop

Pause your action if safe. Put down the phone or stop speaking for a moment. Relax your hands.

2

T / Take a step back

Pause mentally or give yourself physical space. Take a few comfortable breaths without forcing or holding them.

3

O / Observe

Notice thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and surroundings. What are the facts? What do you feel an urge to do?

4

P / Proceed mindfully

Choose one next step that fits your values, your goal, and safety. If you remain overwhelmed, pause longer and seek support.

TRY IT IN REAL LIFE

An upsetting message arrives. You notice hurt and an urge to argue. Set the phone down, feel your feet, and separate the words you received from the meaning you added. Choose whether to ask a clear question later.

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Your practice page / Write, speak, or reflect privately

Find your wise mind

Ask: What am I feeling? What facts matter? What would be effective now? Try naming three things you see, two sounds, and one comfortable sensation. Adapt or stop if grounding increases distress.

01 My early body cue

02 The feeling and urge I notice

03 The facts I can observe

04 My pause phrase

05 My safe next step / support person

One thing I learned / One adjustment I will try

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Keep-close cards / Support, sources, and a next step

PAUSE

Stop. Step back. Observe. Proceed mindfully.

GROUND

Notice 3 things you see, 2 sounds, and 1 comfortable sensation.

WISE MIND

What am I feeling? What facts matter? What would help?

REPAIR

Own the action. Name its impact. Choose a specific change.

CARE & SAFETY

Safety comes before completing a skill. Keep children safely supervised during a break. If there are threats or abuse, prioritize safety and private professional support. This guide is not a complete DBT treatment program.

SOURCES & SCOPE

Linehan, DBT Skills Training Manual and Handouts (Guilford); VA DBT resources (va.gov); VA Tobacco & Nicotine Treatment Group Counseling Toolkit (mentalhealth.va.gov). Original educational paraphrases.

Original educational guide. Not therapy, a diagnosis, a detox plan, or a substitute for individualized care. Adapt practice with a qualified clinician. Reviewed for this collection: November 2026.