DBT STOP Skill

Create a pause between a strong emotion and an action you may regret.

S - Stop

- Do not act immediately. Pause your words, movement, message, purchase, or decision.

T - Take a step back

- Create physical or mental space. Breathe, put down the phone, step away briefly, or count slowly.

O - Observe

- Notice thoughts, emotions, urges, body sensations, and what is actually happening around you. Separate facts from assumptions.

P - Proceed mindfully

- Choose what serves your goals and values. Consider short- and long-term consequences, then take the next effective step.

A brief example

- You receive a message that feels rejecting. Instead of replying immediately, you stop, set the phone down, notice hurt and an urge to attack, check what the message actually says, and decide to ask for clarification later.

Practice worksheet

Situation and strongest urge:

How I can take a step back:

Facts I can observe / assumptions my mind is making:

My goal in this situation:

The next effective action:

This handout is educational and is not a substitute for individualized assessment or treatment. If you are in immediate danger, call 911. In the United States, call or text 988 for crisis support.

Attribution: STOP is a DBT skill developed by Marsha M. Linehan. See Linehan, M. M. (2015), *DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets* (2nd ed.). Summary, example, and worksheet wording © 2026 ThisLife Counseling, LLC.