

LEARNING TO NOTICE YOURSELF

“What am I feeling right now, and how do I know?”

This DBT-influenced exercise helps you slow down and notice the different parts of an emotional experience (what happened, what you felt, what you thought, and how you responded). The goal is solely to build awareness without judgment.

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STEP 1: WHAT HAPPENED?

Start with the facts. Imagine that a camera was recording the situation. What would the camera have actually seen or heard?

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STEP 2: WHAT HAPPENED IN MY PHYSICAL BODY?

Pause and notice sensations. Did you experience: Tightness in your chest? A knot/heaviness in your stomach? Clenching in your jaw? A racing heart?

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STEP 3: WHAT EMOTIONS WAS I FEELING?

Now try to name the emotion underneath the reaction. You might have felt: angry; hurt; disappointed; rejected; afraid; lonely; embarrassed; etc.

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STEP 4: WHAT DID MY MIND TELL ME?

Notice the story your mind created to explain what happened. You don't need to decide whether it's true or false; simply observe the thoughts.

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STEP 5: WHAT DID I WANT TO DO?

Notice the immediate urge that came with your emotions, whether you wanted to react, fix, explain, withdraw, or seek reassurance.

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STEP 6: WHAT DID I ACTUALLY DO?

Notice how you responded in the moment and what happened afterward. Consider the actions you took without judging them.

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STEP 7: WHAT DO I MAKE OF THIS?

Reflect on the whole experience with curiosity. What do you notice about your feelings, thoughts, urges, and response? How might this help you?