

## The Diary Card

According to the research conducted for the DBT Skills Training Manual (Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT® skills training manual* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press), tracking our mood and the behaviours associated with how we feel, helps to build accountability, and motivation in any type of behaviour change program. I know for me; this has always been an important part of the work as without it I tend to get distracted and veer away from my goals quite easily. Whether this is tracking my progress in a weight loss or fitness program, or building an understanding for the thoughts and feelings that influence my behaviours, my positive outcomes increase dramatically when I am successful in my use of some kind of tracker. In Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), the Diary card is introduced at the very beginning of the process for this exact reason.

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**“The part of our personality that is reacting to an urge, is attempting to soothe the vulnerable child that’s present to the emotional experience in our system.”**

~Steven Morris RP.

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The Diary Card itself can take on many different formats, usually depending on the type of program you are participating in. However, it usually follows a similar look and feel that basically covers the mood we were in for the majority of the day, whether there were any urges or impulses to take action in response to this mood, and what we did when we experienced this need to act, regardless of whether it was an effective or ineffective behaviour pattern. When we look at this from a Multiplicitic Personality perspective, as per the principles of Schema Therapy, the part of our personality that is reacting to an urge, is attempting to soothe the vulnerable child that’s present to the emotional experience in our system. Every time we allow this part to complete its own version of self-soothing, we strengthen the belief that this part knows what to do, and we increase its rigidity to the belief that the action is not only right, but also the only thing to do.

It is highly recommended that participants of the DBT Skills Training program complete a Diary Card every single day and submit it to the program facilitator in whatever format is required. The intention is for this to accomplish 2 things. First, it adds accountability to the process, as it shows the participant is doing the work needed to build awareness for our ineffective behaviours. Second, it gives the participant and the facilitator an idea of what they need to be focus on as they progress through the program. This is absolutely essential in DBT Skills Training, and in my opinion, essential in any type of behaviour change process. Without it, we can lose direction and end up in the mindless vortex of cyclical behaviour, without an idea of what we need to do to change things.

On the following page is an example of a DBT Skills Diary card that I have adapted from the DBT Skills Training Manual. Take some time to go over this, try adding it to your daily routine, and use it to direct the work you are completing with your coach, counsellor, therapist, or support worker. Effective use of the Diary Card will only increase the possibility of Living the Life you Want to Live.

### Diary Card

Day/Date	Emotion – Feeling – Mood								Behaviour – Urge		
	Happiness/Joy 0-10	Compassion 0-10	Acceptance 0-10	Empathy 0-10	Anger/Resentment 0-10	Fear/Anxiety 0-10	Sadness/Depression 0-10	Guilt/Shame 0-10	Were there any Urges or impulses to act out? Yes/No	What Action was Taken? (What did you do?)	Ineffective Behaviour Substance or Process Unhealthy Self-Soothing (List type & Amount Used)
Monday _____											
Tuesday _____											
Wednesday _____											
Thursday _____											
Friday _____											
Saturday _____											
Sunday _____											

**Diary Card**

If there were Urges to act and the ineffective or unhealthy Self Soothing action was not taken, list the healthy actions you did take to help you get through the situation. Be mindful of the parts that helped you to do these things.

Date	Urge – Impulse	Alternate Action	Helpful Yes/No