

Finding Wise Mind

I am sure by now, you are beginning to realize that, in my opinion, mindfulness is a really important aspect of any DBT skills training program. This opinion was formulated through my own experience of living the DBT lifestyle, which has helped me to develop my ability to Live the Life I Want to Live. Mindfulness is the fundamental practice that underpins everything else in the skills training process. We are not able to access the skills available through DBT training without the ability to practice things mindfully, as this is how we build our self awareness.

Self awareness is something that many people think they have, but as I found out myself when I was personally put to the test, most people, like me, are sadly lacking in this area. I have come to know my own Self awareness as a sense of inner wisdom, to know what I am thinking, what I am feeling, what my body is experiencing, and what beliefs I may be creating about what's happening around me, without the judgement associated with the stories I have formed over time about these external, and internal things.

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~Steven Morris RP.

It is a primary assumption of DBT, that each person has this innate inner wisdom at their core, this wisdom is known in the skills training program as Wise Mind. If you are used to working with different styles of therapy that also adopt a mindfulness approach, you will find many similarities with their way of looking at this internal sense of wisdom. For example, with Internal Family Systems, Wise Mind is similar to their use of Self with a capital S. In Schema Therapy, it is equivalent to their “Healthy Adult” mode, and in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, there are a lot of comparisons that can be drawn between a state of Wise Mind and their Observing Self.

When we develop our ability to access this inner wisdom, we can say that we are in a state of Wise Mind. This inner wisdom is a space that we have to get to, so that we can acknowledge, accept, and integrate the polar opposites that exist within our personality system. These polarizations are known in DBT as the experience of being stuck in a state of Reason Mind, or a state of Emotion Mind. For me, this involves us acknowledging that these states are simply a representation of the many different parts of your personality that have been activated by the situation we are in. Some of these parts are emotional by nature, and so they exist in our Emotion Mind, and some of them are reasonable by nature, so they exist in our Reason Mind. When activated, they are simply doing what they think they have to do to survive, or just to cope with their current unique experience of “reality.”

When you are in a wise mind state, you are open to experiencing this reality exactly as it is, accepting that there are parts of you that have been triggered and not making these parts of you wrong for the way they see the world. In the Wise Mind state, you are not reacting to the parts of you that are communicating from emotion mind, or buying in to what the parts of you that are coming from a state of reason mind are trying to get you to buy into. You are able to be in the moment, noticing what's happening around you, accepting what's happening within you, and educating your parts on what is so in "actuality" rather than what they are creating in their own personal version of a subjective reality.

Accepting the thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations associated with these parts gives us the ability to use the skills available to us in any basic DBT skills training program, and allows us to apply our knowledge, experience, and a general common sense to the situation at hand. For some people, accessing and applying their own inner wisdom is easy. For others, it's a very difficult thing to do, but everyone has the capacity for their own inner wisdom. Everyone has a wise mind experience within, even if you can't access it at this particular point in time, it's important that you accept the concept that this is a possibility for you. Wise Mind is a state of being that is often deep within us, so accessing it can take time and practice. We have to develop our ability to walk ourselves into a space of relaxation that allows us to simply be in the moment, a level of internal awareness that only comes where the fear of what is happening in the external world is no longer present. So, how do we access this wise mind state, what's the process we go through to get into this elevated state of being?

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Sometimes it happens naturally, without our knowledge of even being there. This is often referred to as “Being in the Zone” which is something that many people who participate in sports, artistic and musical activities report an intricate experience of from time to time. We have to know what it feels like in order to recognize when we are there, and the only way I know of walking myself into a space of Wise Mind is through guided meditation, as following a guided meditation practice helps develop our ability to get into this space. In the following pages there are some guided meditation scripts, as well as some links to recorded versions of these scripts to help you develop your ability to enter a state of Wise Mind.