

Check the Facts

DBT: Emotion Regulation Skills

In Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), we often check if our emotions “fit the facts.” When an emotion fits the facts, it means that the emotion makes sense for the situation. This worksheet will review the facts (like a threat to your safety) that prompt a matching emotion (like fear), as well as urges (like an urge to escape) that make sense for the situation.

The **facts** of the situation... prompt an **emotion**... which creates an **urge** to...

| | | |
|--|----------|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A threat to your* life, safety, health, wellbeing, or reputation | fear | escape or hide |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Someone threatens, attacks, insults, or offends you Something keeps you from reaching a goal | anger | fight or defend |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Something could make you sick Someone’s influence or thinking could harm you Someone you dislike is touching you | disgust | recoil or get away |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You lose (or might lose) someone or something you care about forever Things do not turn out the way you hoped | sadness | slow down and grieve |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You do something (or have qualities) that <i>others</i> may think is wrong if they find out about it | shame | hide, shrink, withdraw |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You do something (or have qualities) that go against <i>your</i> values, morals, or ethics | guilt | fix the problem, apologize |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Someone else has something you want or need | envy | work harder to get what you want, or attack or criticize |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Something might damage or destroy a relationship or object you care about | jealousy | try to control, accuse, question, or cling to the person or object |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Someone makes your life better and brighter Someone does something admirable or helps you reach your goals | love | get closer, express yourself, share time or experiences |

*In many cases, “you” can be replaced with “you (or people you care about)” above

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It can take a little practice to apply what you know about the “facts” to your own life. Sometimes things are not immediately clear. To practice, take a look at the six example scenarios below. Draw a line from each scenario to the matching set of facts and corresponding emotion.

Rob’s new neighbor seems really outgoing. He seems to know everyone in the neighborhood already. Rob has found it hard to make new friends at this stage of life.

1

Val prefers to lead her team at work with calm discussion. However, after a very difficult day, she finds herself yelling orders, to the surprise of her employees.

2

Joy is telling a story, and ends with an edgy joke. When she gets to the punchline, her audience’s expressions change from smiles to frowns, furrowed eyebrows, or shock.

3

Cal notices her partner Tia has been texting a coworker a lot lately. Tia has seemed a little down until recently, and says she and her coworker have a ton in common.

4

Bruno has been studying hard for his certification test. When he’s finally ready to take it, he finds he can’t get time off from work to take the test for weeks.

5

Lina’s boyfriend is out biking on a busy roads. She notices the weather has worsened in the past hour. She gets a text from him that says, “Had an accident, at urgent care.”

6

A

You acted against your values
guilt

B

Blocked from reaching a goal
anger

C

A threat to life, safety, health
fear

D

Something might damage your relationship
jealousy

E

You acted against others’ values
shame

F

Someone else has something you want
envy

Answers: 1=F, 2=A, 3=C, 4=D, 5=E, 6=B

Important note:

Many of us see guilt and shame as very similar to each other, as well as envy and jealousy. Here’s what they mean in the context of DBT:

- We feel **guilt** when we violate *our own* values; **shame** when we violate *others’* values
- **Envy** is *wanting* something someone else has; **jealousy** happens when there’s a risk someone else will take something or someone of yours (as in the phrase “jealously guarding”)

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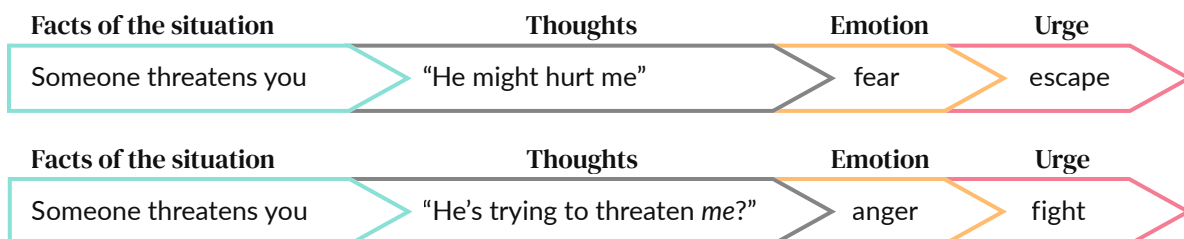
DBT: Emotion Regulation Skills

What about thoughts?

So far, we've explored how the facts of a situation influence our emotions, which influence our behavior urges. For example:



However, our **thoughts**, or how we interpret a situation, can strongly influence how we feel as well:



Facing the exact same situation, different people might have entirely different thoughts, interpretations, or perceptions based on the context, their identity, or their past experiences.

In the table below, take a guess at the emotion each person might feel as a result of their thoughts about the same situation. See our worksheet for [examples of emotions](#).

| Facts of the situation | Thoughts | Emotion |
|--|--|---------|
| You're on a break at work talking about your favorite hobby. A coworker scoffs and rolls her eyes at your enthusiasm. | Person 1: "She seems grumpy today!" | 1. |
| | Person 2: "Is my hobby embarrassing??" | 2. |
| You're trying to repair something at home when your family member comes over. He tells you not to worry about it and that he should fix it, not you. | Person 1: "He must think I can't do it." | 3. |
| | Person 2: "He's trying to help me out." | 4. |
| You're meeting a friend for coffee. When you enter the shop, you notice she's having a fun, lively conversation with someone else in line. | Person 1: "How nice! She's so friendly." | 5. |
| | Person 2: "I'll never be that outgoing..." | 6. |

There are no perfect answers for this exercise, but here are some potential emotions: 1: neutral, amused; 2: ashamed, embarrassed; 3: frustrated, insulted; 4: appreciative, relieved; 5: happy, pleasant; 6: envious, disappointed.

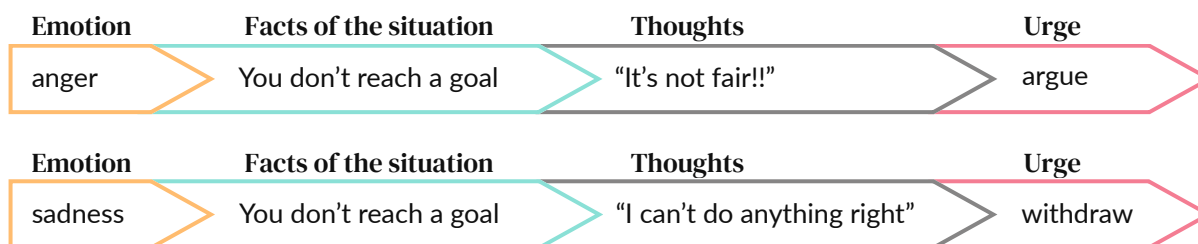
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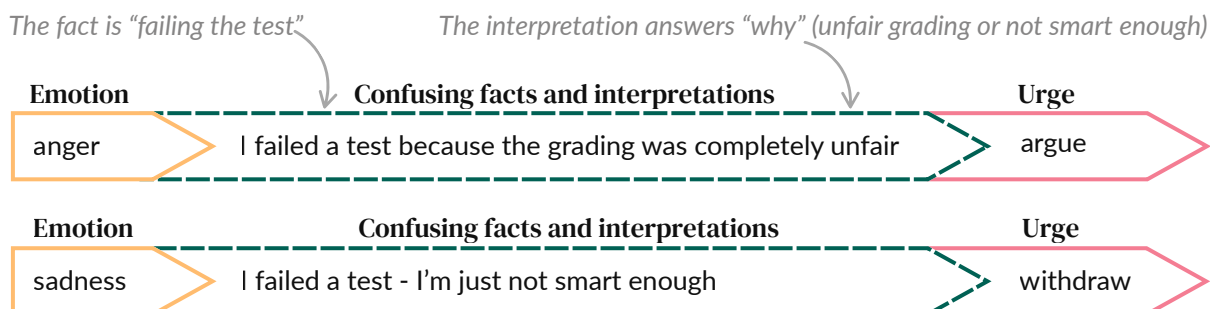
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Our **emotions** can also influence how we think - especially if we feel an emotion or are in a strong mood *before* a situation occurs:



What is especially tricky is that we can sometimes think our **interpretations** are the same thing as the **facts of the situation**. This mistake is very common! But it can cause problems. Let's see how that might look with the same examples as above:



If the real reason someone fails a test is because they did not study, it's not likely they will effectively solve the problem (by studying more or getting help) as a result of either emotion, interpretation, or urge.

Part of the goal in DBT is to get everything untangled:

- ➔ Figure out what emotion you're feeling and if it makes sense for the situation
- ➔ Figure out if the *facts* of the situation or your *interpretation* of the situation is causing distress
- ➔ Change your thoughts if they are not helpful or do not fit the facts
- ➔ Figure out if you should act on your emotion urge or not
- ➔ Make effective choices so you can solve problems and feel better

We can start doing that on the next page by **checking the facts**.



Check the Facts

DBT: Emotion Regulation Skills

Here's how to see if your emotions fit the facts

The goal of fitting the facts is figuring out what the facts of the situation *actually are* - so you can tell if the situation is causing your difficult emotion, or if your thoughts are. Let's go step by step. We've provided an example on these 4 pages and the next 4 are blank.

1 Name the emotion

Emotion: Sadness Intensity (1-10): 8

2 Describe the situation prompting your emotion

What happened? What is problematic or difficult about the situation? Describe in detail.

My relationship with my friend is totally ruined. We usually agree on everything, but last night we were talking about the news and I shared my opinion on something. She must have been so offended because she looked surprised and said, "I didn't know you thought that." I never should have spoken up - clearly she thinks I'm a terrible person and not worth being friends with. It's over.

3 Re-read what you just wrote and check the facts

Does your description include any extremes or judgments? These might look like:

- extreme or absolute words like always, never, completely, totally, everyone, worst, must
- jumping to conclusions, thinking in all or nothing terms, or other cognitive distortions

- totally ruined - must have been so offended (jump to conclusions?) - clearly she thinks
- terrible person - It's over (all or nothing thinking?)

Re-write the facts if you need to by removing extremes or judgments. Focus on describing what you observed: the who, what, where, and when of the situation.

My relationship with my friend could be ruined. We usually agree on everything, but last night we were talking about the news and I shared my opinion on something. She might have been offended because she looked surprised and said, "I didn't know you thought that." I never should have spoken up - she might think I'm a not a good person and not worth being friends with. I'm worried.

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4 Check your interpretations about the facts

Are you making any assumptions? Are you adding your own interpretations (making guesses about the “why” of the situation) to your description of the facts?

I'm assuming that my friendship is ruined and over

I'm assuming that because she looked surprised, she was offended

I'm assuming she thinks I'm not a good person and not worth being friends with

5 Brainstorm other interpretations

What are other interpretations you can think of? How would someone else interpret the situation? How would you interpret the situation if you felt a very different emotion?

Maybe she just didn't expect me to have that opinion?

Maybe it doesn't matter to her as much as I think it does?

Maybe she's never talked about this kind of stuff with friends before?

Maybe if I offended her enough to end a friendship, she would tell me, or yell, or leave immediately?

6 Re-write the facts if you need to

Remove interpretations if you can. If you can't, try to focus on an interpretation that is most likely to be true.

I shared my opinion about something in the news with my friend. She looked surprised and said, “I didn't know you thought that.” I was worried I offended her and the friendship is over, but now I'm not so sure.



7 Are you assuming there is a threat?

Are you making an assumption (maybe even without realizing it) that there is a threat? As a reminder, here are the threats that make sense for each emotion:

Threat of:

- danger to your life, health, safety, wellbeing, reputation - fear
- being attacked or your goals being blocked - anger
- illness, contamination (physical, mental, emotional) - disgust
- loss or disappointment - sadness
- rejection by people around you - shame
- violating your own values - guilt
- not getting what you want or need - envy
- losing something or someone you value to someone else - jealousy
- Other:

8 Brainstorm other outcomes

What else might happen, besides the threat you selected above? Try to think of many possible outcomes.

She might want a break from me? Maybe we'll just become less close?

She might want to talk more about it if she thinks my opinion is problematic?

Maybe she was surprised but it's fine?

9 Re-write the facts if you need to

Try to remove expectations that are really unlikely.

I shared my opinion about something in the news with my friend. She looked surprised and said, "I didn't know you thought that." It's unlikely our friendship is over, but maybe she'll want to talk more about our opinions.

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10 Does it seem like the situation is catastrophic?

What if the threat you picked for #7 actually happens? What would be the worst that is *likely* to happen?

If she's really rejecting me, I'll lose a friendship. She's really not the kind of person to badmouth other people or start drama in the friend group, so that's not likely.

What would you do to cope?

I'd probably get some support from my other friends and family. I could talk the situation through with them, or just spend more time with them.

11 Does my emotion fit the facts?

Original emotion: Sadness

Intensity (1-10): 8

The facts:

I shared my opinion about something in the news with my friend. She looked surprised and said, "I didn't know you thought that." It's unlikely our friendship is over, but maybe she'll want to talk more about our opinions.

Does the emotion (and its intensity) fit the facts?

Yes → see the next page

No → see the next page

Not sure → continue to check the facts

Why or why not?

Being sad would fit the facts if there were a true threat to my friendship, and if she were really offended and rejecting me. That seems a lot less realistic and likely now.

Emotion now: Sadness

Intensity (1-10): 5

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Emotion: Intensity (1-10):

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What happened? What is problematic or difficult about the situation? Describe in detail.

.....

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5 Brainstorm other interpretations

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6 Re-write the facts if you need to

Remove interpretations if you can. If you can't, try to focus on an interpretation that is most likely to be true.

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What if the threat you picked for #7 actually happens? What would be the worst that is *likely* to happen?

What would you do to cope?

11 Does my emotion fit the facts?

Original emotion: _____ Intensity (1-10): _____

The facts:

Does the emotion (and its intensity) fit the facts?

Yes → see the next page

No → see the next page

Not sure → continue to check the facts

Why or why not?

Emotion now: _____ Intensity (1-10): _____

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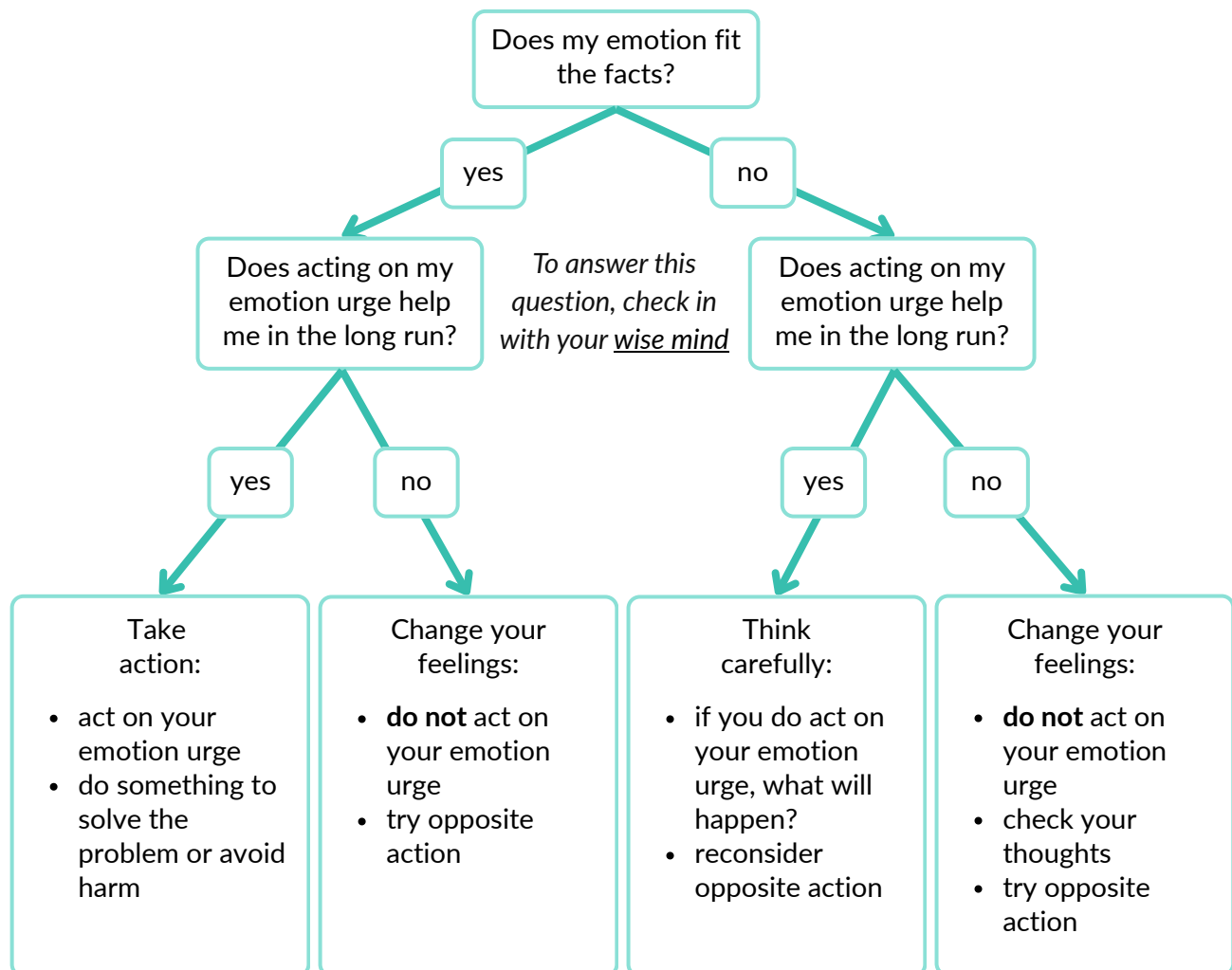
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Why should we check if our emotions fit the facts?

Checking whether emotions fit the facts is the first step in figuring out what to *do* with our emotions. When dealing with intense, overwhelming feelings, this can be hard, and people might:

- act before thinking things through, which can cause them problems later
- freeze and get stuck, unable to decide what to do next or how to regulate their emotions
- judge themselves harshly for having feelings at all

DBT provides a flowchart with ideas about deciding what to do with our feelings before we act, and it all starts with whether or not your feelings fit the facts.



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Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



325+
Companies Reviewed



3,625+
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,545+
Data Points Analyzed



[Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



[Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

[Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://www.ChoosingTherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

[Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



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Search our collection of therapy worksheets by mental health topic, therapy modality, or demographic group. Our free, psychologist-developed worksheets make therapy exercises understandable and relevant to daily life. Find worksheets for help with ADHD, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, and other common mental health challenges.