

Half-Smiling and Willing Hands

DBT: Distress Tolerance Skills

Half-smiling and willing hands are distress tolerance skills from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) that help us weather stress. This worksheet describes each skill and helps you track your practice.

Our emotions and bodies are connected

We know our emotions can change our body posture and facial expressions (for example, when we're angry, we frown and clench our hands). But it also works the other way around - our bodies can influence our emotions. Half-smiling and willing hands are ways to use our posture and expressions to **nudge our emotions towards calm**. You can try this technique using the instructions below.

Half-Smiling

- Relax the muscles in your face. Let the tension go in your jaw, forehead, temples, eyes, brows, cheeks, mouth, and tongue. Let your upper and lower teeth separate a little.
- Raise the corners of your lips *just a little*. Your half-smile doesn't have to be apparent to anyone else. Just enough for you to feel.
- Try to embody relaxation and serenity. "Fake it till you make it."



Willing Hands

- Relax the muscles in your upper body. Let the tension go in your neck, shoulders, torso, and arms.
- Unclench your hands and turn your palms up. Your thumbs should point out and your fingers should be relaxed.
- Keep your open hands at your sides if you're standing or laying down and on your lap if you're sitting.
- Try to embody calm and openness. "Fake it till you make it."

Times to practice half-smiling and/or willing hands

Practicing when you're feeling calm helps you solidify this skill - like an athlete practicing a move before a big game. Try practicing:

- When you first wake up in the morning
- While looking at a pleasant scene
- When listening to music
- On a walk
- Before you fall asleep

Half-smiling and willing hands can be subtle but effective techniques when you're feeling stressed or irritated. You might try practicing:

- During your commute (if you're a passenger)
- While in a frustrating meeting
- During a difficult phone call
- When interacting with (or thinking about) someone you dislike

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*





Use this page to record your practice of the Half-Smiling and Willing Hands Skills.

Describe the situation. Are you practicing when calm or stressed?	Which skill did you try?	Rate the effectiveness of the skill	Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Half-smiling <input type="checkbox"/> Willing hands	☆☆☆☆☆	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Half-smiling <input type="checkbox"/> Willing hands	☆☆☆☆☆	
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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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