

# Skills Handbook:

## Your Path to Resiliency & Recovery

### Welcome!

We want to welcome you and your family. We understand this may be a difficult time. You might not have expected to be here, and life may feel very different right now. We are here to support you by listening, explaining and working together as a team to help you on your path to resiliency and recovery.

### What you will learn

While you are with us, you will learn special skills to help you feel better and handle tough emotions. These skills come from two important types of advanced treatment:

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** Helps you understand how your thoughts, feelings, and actions are connected. When we change the way we think, we can change how we feel and act in healthier ways.
- **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT):** Teaches skills to manage strong emotions, handle stress, and improve relationships. DBT balances accepting yourself with making changes to feel better.

We also focus on helping you find your own path to resilience and recovery and supporting you to make healthy choices to live your best life.

### How can learning these skills help?

**These skills** help you:

- Notice unhelpful positive or negative thoughts and behaviors that make you feel out of control
- Practice new ways of thinking that focus on wellness and healthy choices
- Understand and manage your feelings
- Deal with stress and tough moments without making things worse
- Build stronger, healthier relationships with others

### The Four Main Skills You Will Learn

1. Mindfulness – Paying attention to the present moment without judgment.

2. Emotional Regulation— Learning how to manage strong emotions in a healthy way.
3. Interpersonal Effectiveness— Communicating clearly, building healthy relationships and setting healthy boundaries with others.
4. Distress Tolerance – Getting through hard times without making things worse.

These skills won't fix every problem, but they will give you important tools to feel better and handle life's challenges. Sometimes you will use more than one skill at the same time.

## Why Learn New Skills?

These skills will help you learn how to live your life in a way that works better for you. Without tools, we often repeat the same actions that don't help and can even hurt us. Learning these skills gives you better choices, helps you feel more in control, and builds your strength to face problems with confidence.

## What You Can Expect

People come to the hospital for many reasons—feeling anxious, sad or scared, mood changes, or hearing and seeing things that trouble them. Everyone's treatment is different because everyone's needs are different. Your stay here will be based on what you need to heal.

It's important not to compare yourself to others. Your journey is your own.

## Practice is Key

Like learning any new skill, these take time and practice. The more you practice, the easier it becomes to use these skills when you need them most.

## How Families Can Help

Families play an important role in your resilience and recovery. We encourage families to learn about these skills too, so they can support you at home and beyond.

## The Goal

The goal is to help you:

- Feel less pain and suffering
- Choose healthy ways to respond to your thoughts and feelings

- Build strength to handle challenging emotions
- Create a life that has meaning and purpose

## Mindfulness

### What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means paying attention on purpose to what is happening right now. It means:

- Being aware of the present moment
- Not judging or saying something is good or bad
- Not trying to hold on to or push away what is happening
- Accepting what is happening just as it is

### Why Practice Mindfulness?

Mindfulness helps you:

- Feel less stress and more happiness
- Take control of your thoughts and feelings
- See things clearly as they really are

Where your attention goes, that's where your life is at that moment.

### Why Learn Mindfulness Skills?

Most people find it hard to stay focused on what is happening right now. We often get stuck worrying about the past or the future. Mindfulness helps you notice your thoughts, feelings, and body without judging them. It helps you stay calm and think clearly when things are hard. Practicing mindfulness helps you make better choices instead of just reacting without thinking.

### Learning to Practice Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is a skill you can learn—just like riding a bike or cooking.
- Start with easy things and work your way up to harder ones.
- Some days you'll feel like you're getting better, other days it might feel hard.
- Keep practicing and focusing on one thing at a time, and you will get better.

## Mindfulness Skills We Teach

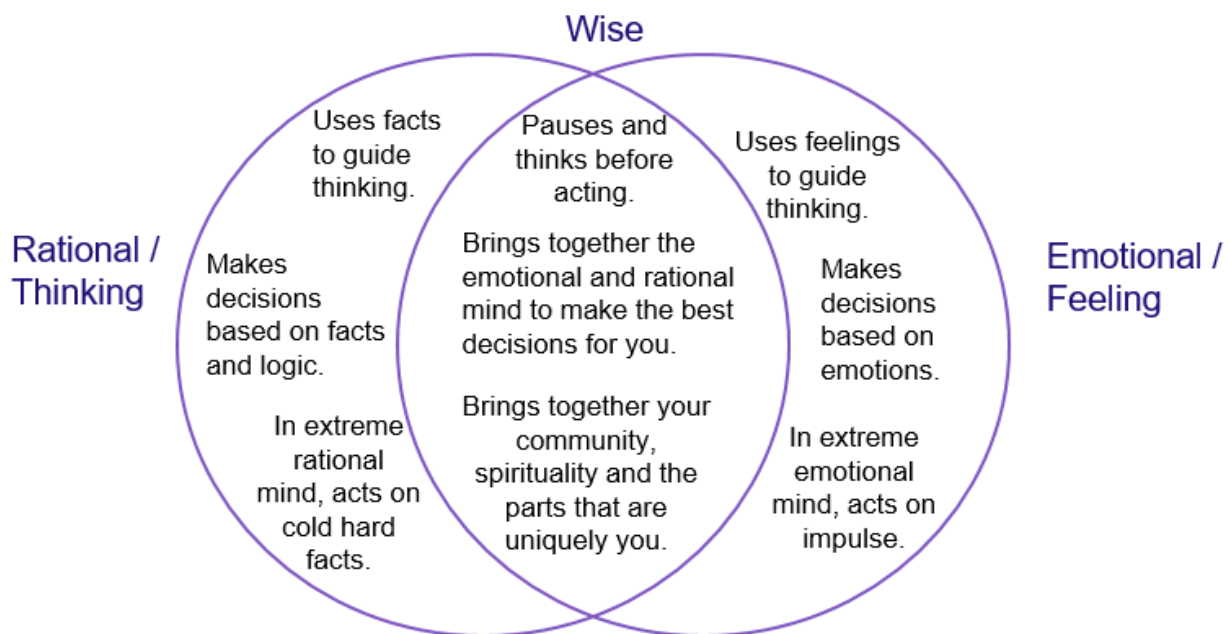
In our program, you will learn these mindfulness skills:

### 1) Three States of Mind

We all think and feel in three ways:

- **Rational or Thinking Mind:** logical, and focused on tasks, not acknowledging emotions
- **Emotional or Feeling Mind:** Strong feelings that can take over
- **Wise Mind:** A balance of reason and emotion — your inner wisdom

Ask yourself: *Which mind am I using right now?*



### 2) “What” and “How” Skills

Mindfulness includes “What” you do and “How” you do it.

**“What” Skills — What to do:**

- **Observe:** Notice what you feel in your body and what you see or hear around you.
- **Describe:** Put words to what you notice. Say the facts without adding opinions
- **Participate:** Join fully in what you’re doing right now. Be part of the moment.

## “How” Skills — How to do it:

- **Non-judgmentally:** Don't decide if things are good or bad. Just notice the facts.
- **One-Mindfully:** Focus on one thing at a time. Let go of distractions.
- **Effectively:** Pay attention to what works best in the situation. Do what helps you reach your goals.

Mindfulness helps you accept yourself and what is happening, so you can respond in healthy ways — even when things are tough.

## Emotional Regulation Skills

### What Does Managing Your Feelings and Emotions Mean?

Managing your feelings means noticing, understanding, and managing your feelings and emotions in healthy ways. It's about:

- Being aware of your feelings and emotions when they show up.
- Accepting your feelings and emotions without judging yourself.
- Using strategies to calm down or handle strong feelings and emotions so they don't control your actions.

When you regulate your feelings and emotions, you make better decisions, build stronger relationships, and feel more balanced overall.

### Why Learn to Manage your Feelings and Emotions?

Feelings and emotions are important because:

- They motivate us to act and help us handle challenges.
- They help us communicate with others through facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice.
- They warn us when something is wrong or needs our attention.

But strong feelings and emotions can take over and make it hard to think clearly or make good choices.

- Trauma or painful experiences can make feelings and emotions feel even more intense and harder to control.
- When this happens, it may feel like life is a roller coaster of quick, powerful emotions.

If we don't manage these feelings and emotions, we might:

- Lose focus or forget what we truly want.
- React on impulse instead of thinking about consequences.
- Turn to harmful behaviors (like drugs, risky activities, or avoidance) just to escape how we feel.

Feelings and emotions are a normal part of life. You shouldn't judge yourself for having them, but it's important to learn how to regain control when they feel overwhelming.

## What Makes It Hard to Manage Feelings and Emotions?

- **Biology:** Breathing patterns, heart rate, or blood sugar levels can affect feelings and emotions.
- **Food:** Certain foods and beverages can affect feelings and emotions.
- **Reinforcement:** Environments or people around you may reward emotions and behaviors that don't support healthy choices.
- **Myths:** Believing unhelpful ideas like:
  - *"There's only one right way to feel."*
  - *"Being emotional means being out of control."*
  - *"Feelings are stupid or define who I am."*

## Goals of Emotional Regulation

- Reduce emotional pain and suffering.
- Learn how to change your response to a feeling or emotion, even if you can't stop the first feeling or emotion from showing up.
- Lower your vulnerability to painful feelings and emotions.
- Build emotional resilience so you can bounce back from difficult situations.

## Skills to Manage your Feelings and Emotions

### 1) Identify and Name Feelings and Emotions

Being able to **recognize and name your feelings and emotions** is a key skill to support healthy choices.). When you know what emotion you're feeling, you can understand:

- What you need in that moment.
- What may have triggered your feelings or emotions.
- How your emotions affect your actions.

This awareness helps you stay in control, avoid reacting too quickly, and make better choices.

**Why this matters:**

- Feelings and emotions give you important information about what's going on inside you.
- They help you share your needs with others.
- Knowing your feelings and emotions helps you manage them and avoid getting stuck in negative feelings.

## 2) Use a Scale to Evaluate your Emotions

In this skill, you use a scale of 1-10 to decide how upset or joyful you are feeling.

The **1–10 Scale** helps you measure how strong your emotions are right now—whether you feel upset or joyful. It helps you notice your emotions and choose the right way to manage them.

- The scale goes from 0 to 10.
- 0 means you feel calm or have no upset or joy.
- 10 means you feel as upset or as joyful as you can imagine.

**How to Use the 1–10 Scale:**

1. **Pause and check in** with yourself.
2. **Pick a number from 0 to 10** that shows how upset or joyful you feel right now.
3. **Use skills to manage your feelings** based on your number:
  - If your number is low, try simple calming or grounding techniques.
  - If your number is high, celebrate your joy or use stronger skills to manage intense upset emotions.

**Goal:** Notice your emotions and practice skills to feel better or stay balanced.

**Remember:** If your emotions—whether joy or upset—feel too strong or last too long, it's okay to ask for help.

**Build Positive Experiences**

- Do things that make you feel good.

- This can be small, like enjoying a hobby, spending time with friends, or going outside.
- Doing positive activities helps balance out hard or negative feelings.
- When you feel good, your mind and body get a break from stress or upset emotions.
- Try to do at least one small positive thing each day, even if it feels hard.
- Building more good moments can help you feel stronger and happier over time.

## Interpersonal Effectiveness

### What are Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills?

Healthy Relationship Skills are skills to build and keep healthy relationships while also taking care of your own needs and values. These skills help you ask for what you want, say “no” when you need to, and keep your self-respect when talking with others. It also helps you set limits and handle conflicts in a way that is kind and clear. The goal is to communicate better, avoid misunderstandings, and stay calm.

### Why Use Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills?

Using these skills helps you reach your goals in relationships. You learn how to ask for what you need, say “no” to things you don’t want, and handle arguments without breaking the relationship or losing respect for yourself. If problems in relationships are ignored, it takes longer to fix them later.

### The Goal of Interpersonal Relationship Skills

The goal is to balance three important parts:

1. Getting what you need.
2. Keeping or improving your relationships.
3. Keeping respect for yourself.

When you practice these skills, you can speak clearly and kindly, even when things are hard. This leads to stronger, healthier, and happier relationships.

### Learning Healthy Relationship Skills

In our program, we teach skills that help you communicate better, set boundaries, and keep healthy relationships. Two of the main tools are **FAST** and **GIVE**.

#### 1) FAST – Maintaining Self Respect



The FAST skill helps you stand up for yourself and keep your self-respect when asking for something or saying “no.”

- **F – Fair:** Be fair to yourself and the other person.
- **A – No Apologies:** Don’t apologize for having needs, feelings, or opinions.
- **S – Stick to Values:** Stay true to what you believe is right. Don’t give up your values for unimportant reasons.
- **T – Truthful:** Be honest. Don’t lie, act helpless, or make excuses.

## 2) GIVE – Building and Keeping Relationships

The GIVE skill helps you stay kind and connected while talking with others.

- **G – Gentle:** Be respectful. Avoid attacking, threatening, or judging.
- **I – Interested:** Listen and show you care about what the other person is saying. Don’t interrupt.
- **V – Validate:** Let the other person know you understand their feelings, wants, or struggles.
- **E – Easy Manner:** Keep a calm, friendly tone. Smile or use light humor when appropriate.

These skills can help you every day. When you are aware of your body and feelings, you feel stronger and more in control. With practice and focus, you can use these skills to help you heal and reach your hopes and dreams. Like anything important, it takes time and effort to get better at it.

## Distress Tolerance Skills

In our program, we teach many ways to handle tough emotions. These skills help you get through hard times without making things worse. Three that we teach are called **IMPROVE the Moment**, **Pros and Cons**, and **T.I.P.P.**

## 1) IMPROVE the Moment

This skill helps you replace a negative moment with something more positive.

**IMPROVE** stands for:

- **Imagery:** Picture a safe or peaceful place in your mind that feels different from where you are now.
- **Meaning:** Look for a positive lesson or purpose in the situation, even if it's painful.
- **Prayer:** Open your heart to a higher power or inner wisdom, asking for strength and acceptance.
- **Relaxation:** Tense and relax your muscles from your feet up to your head to calm your body.
- **One thing in the moment:** Focus fully on what you are doing right now. Just get through this moment.
- **Vacation:** Take a short mental or physical break. Stay in bed for a few extra minutes or sit quietly in a peaceful spot.
- **Encouragement:** Be kind to yourself. Repeat phrases like, *"I'm doing the best I can."*

## 2) Pros and Cons

This skill helps you look at the good and bad sides of dealing with hard feelings.

- Make a list of the pros (good things) and cons (bad things) of staying with the tough feelings without trying to escape.
- Make another list of the pros and cons of avoiding or running from the feelings.
- Compare the lists and think about which choice will help you reach your long-term goals.
- Picture how proud and relieved you'll feel when you don't act on strong urges and instead make choices that move you toward your goals.

## 3) Use T.I.P.P.

This skill helps calm your body fast when emotions feel too big. It works by changing how your body reacts.

**T = Temperature:** Quickly change your body temperature. Splash cold water on your face or hold ice. This can help calm your nervous system.

**I = Intense Exercise:** Do a quick burst of exercise like jumping jacks or running in place. This burns off energy and helps reduce strong feelings.

**P = Paced Breathing:** Breathe slowly and deeply. Try breathing in for 4 counts and out for 6 counts to calm down. **P = Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Tighten and then slowly relax your muscles one group at a time. This helps your body relax.

T.I.P.P. is great when you feel really upset and need quick relief so you don't act on impulse.

As you move through our program, you will learn important skills that support emotional regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, distress tolerance and recovery-oriented thinking. These skills are key to helping you feel more stable and to support your long-term health. We are here to offer a safe, healing environment where you can learn, grow, and move forward with hope.

We are glad you are here. Together, we will help you learn these skills, support your growth, and help you find your way to a happier, healthier life.

*Your Behavioral Health Care Team*

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”

Lao-tzu (604 BCE – 531 BCE)