

# Implementing DBT Diary Cards in Therapy

This handout is intended to support therapists in integrating DBT diary cards into their practice, enhancing their understanding of clients' behaviors and emotions, and guiding effective therapeutic interventions. With this handout, clinicians may obtain an overview of this helpful tool.

DBT diary cards can help therapists track and understand clients' emotional responses and behaviors, especially those involving intense emotions. This handout aims to help therapists in using diary cards for client self-reporting and subsequent therapeutic analysis.

## Using DBT Diary Cards

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Diary cards are structured tools for clients to report feelings, urges, and behaviors, often rated on a scale. These assessments enable therapists to identify patterns or areas of concern swiftly. For instance, a spike in a client's rating for a specific urge or behavior can highlight an incident or issue that requires attention. Through diary card analysis, therapists can connect emotional incidents to behavioral responses, fostering focused discussions, even when clients may initially be reluctant to engage.

## Tailoring Diary Cards

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Creating a diary card should be a collaborative process between the therapist and the client. Personalizing these cards, possibly with unique labels, ensures the tracking aligns with the client's specific needs and preferences. For example, a client tracking suicidal urges and actions might set goals around experiencing high urges without engaging in harmful behaviors, indicating progress and improved emotional regulation.

## DBT Skills Application

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Therapists guide clients in applying DBT skills to manage intense emotions. It's important to remember there isn't a universal DBT skill for every situation. Clients learn various skills to handle different challenges, selecting the most suitable one for each scenario.

## Therapeutic Stance in DBT

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### 1 Balancing Seriousness and Approachability

Effective DBT requires a balance between conveying the seriousness of issues like suicidal urges and being approachable. Therapists should maintain a genuine conversational demeanor, making serious discussions relatable and grounded.

### 2 Personalizing the Therapeutic Approach

While DBT is structured, personalizing the approach is essential. Therapists should avoid rigid adherence to manuals, instead developing their unique style that aligns with DBT principles. This ensures authenticity and effectiveness in therapeutic interactions.

## Key Points

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- Leverage diary cards to track client behaviors and emotions, facilitating focused therapeutic discussions.
- Collaborate with clients to tailor diary cards to their needs, enhancing engagement and relevance.
- Adopt a balanced approach that combines seriousness with approachability, personalizing the therapy to align with DBT principles.