40 DBT Journal Prompts

One prompt, a few honest sentences. If writing turns into going over the same painful loop, stop and switch to a distress tolerance prompt.

Mindfulness Prompts

1. Describe the last hour using only observable facts — no interpretations, no judgments. What would a camera have recorded?
2. What is one emotion present in you right now? Where do you feel it in your body, and what is its intensity from 0 to 10?
3. Write about a recent decision. Was it made from emotion mind, reasonable mind, or wise mind? How can you tell?
4. Pick one routine activity from today (eating, walking, a shower). Describe doing it "one-mindfully," with full attention. What did you notice that you usually miss?
5. Catch a judgment you made today ("that was stupid," "I'm a failure"). Rewrite it as a non-judgmental description of the facts plus the consequence.
6. What is one thing you're avoiding noticing right now? Describe it plainly, without trying to fix it.
7. Write down five things you can see, four you can hear, three you can feel, two you can smell, one you can taste. Then describe how your state shifted, if at all.
8. When did your mind last pull you into the past or future today? What was happening in the actual present that you stepped away from?
9. Describe a strong emotion as if it were weather — its shape, intensity, and whether it's arriving, peaking, or passing.
10. What does "wise mind" feel like for you, specifically? Recall a moment you were in it.

Distress Tolerance Prompts

11. Recall the last time you had a strong urge to do something you'd regret. What did you do instead, and what helped?
12. Make your personal crisis-survival list: five things that reliably bring your intensity down even a little. Be specific.
13. Write about something painful you've been fighting against in your mind. What would it mean to radically accept it — not approve of it, just accept that it is real?
14. Describe a time you survived an emotion you were sure you couldn't survive. What does that tell you about the current one?
15. What does your body do when distress peaks? Plan one physical TIPP response (cold, movement, breathing) you could use next time.
16. List the pros and cons of acting on a current urge versus tolerating it. Be honest about both columns.
17. What are you telling yourself the distress means? Is that interpretation a fact or a fear?
18. Write a short, kind message to yourself for the next time you're in crisis — something you'd actually believe in that moment.
19. Distract on purpose: list activities that fully absorb your attention. Which is realistic to reach for tonight?
20. Describe the difference, for you, between solving a problem and surviving one. When have you confused the two?

Emotion Regulation Prompts

21. Pick a recent intense emotion. Describe the prompting event, your interpretation, the body sensations, the urge, and what you actually did.
22. Check the facts on a current worry: what's the observable evidence, what's the interpretation, and does your intensity match the facts?
23. What emotion are you having an urge to act on right now? What would opposite action look like?
24. Rate yesterday's sleep, food, movement, and physical health. How might each have changed your emotional baseline today?
25. Describe one thing you did this week that built a sense of mastery or accomplishment, however small.
26. What's one positive experience you could schedule this week, on purpose, to bank against future low days?
27. Name an emotion you tend to judge yourself for feeling. Write why it makes sense that you feel it.
28. When did an emotion give you useful information recently? What was it telling you?
29. Describe a recurring emotional pattern (a time, a person, a situation that reliably sets you off). What's the earliest signal you could catch next time?
30. Write about a feeling you've been numbing or avoiding. What might it be asking for?

Interpersonal Effectiveness Prompts

31. Think of a request you've been avoiding. Draft it using DEAR MAN: Describe, Express, Assert, Reinforce, stay Mindful, Appear confident, Negotiate.
32. Recall a recent conflict. Which mattered more in that moment — the outcome, the relationship, or your self-respect? Did you act accordingly?
33. Where in your life do you say yes when you mean no? What's the cost of that, over time?
34. Write about a boundary you'd like to set. What's the fear stopping you, and is it a fact or a prediction?
35. Describe a relationship where you tend to disappear. What's one small way you could show up more honestly?
36. Recall a time you handled a difficult conversation well. What did you do that worked?
37. Who do you need to validate more — including yourself? Write one specific validating statement.
38. Think of a recent apology you made (or avoided). Was it FAST — fair, no over-apologizing, sticking to values, truthful?
39. Describe what you actually want from a strained relationship. Is it realistic, and have you asked for it directly?
40. Write about the difference between being effective and being right in your last disagreement. Which were you going for?

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Rate your emotions, log the skills you used and add a short note each day on your DBT Pal diary card. Free for iPhone and Android: dbtpal.app/get?c=pdf-journal-prompts