

**DBT Skills for Couples** ...referenced to *The High Conflict Couple: A DBT Guide to Finding Peace, Intimacy and Validation* by Alan Fruzzetti, PhD

1. SELF MONITOR...moving into the Red Zone, destructive emotions and behaviors, and conflict patterns, and other behaviors that take us away from the relationship we value. Remember our relationship values & goals! (Ch. 1)
2. OBSERVE & DESCRIBE to INTERRUPT ANGER or JUDGING CYCLE: Mindfully describe situation, our reactions, validate these reactions when valid, soothe emotions and reduce arousal, effectively respond. (Ch. 2)
3. MINDFULNESS of PARTNER. Observe and describe what you perceive. Curious, Open, Accepting and Loving. Notice the caring things your partner does, their efforts, their vulnerable places. (Ch. 2)
4. STOP MAKING THINGS WORSE. What is your "one liner" that will effectively communicate your caring and constructive intentions when either of you are entering the Red Zone? What is your plan to observe what triggers you and then to "surf the urge," interrupt the negative reaction and move toward being the partner you want to be (your values, goals and constructive actions). (Ch. 3)
5. RECONDITION PLACE OR OBJECT. To increase positive feelings toward partner, to self soothe, to remember your priorities, values and goals, to prepare a constructive/loving response. (Ch. 4)
6. CULTIVATE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES. With your partner, initiate closeness. Savor the feeling. Notice the positive experiences and describe them. (Ch. 4)
7. RECHARGING TIME. Do activities as "a couple." Share your ideas, your spiritual sides, your creative sides, your sensual sides, and your insides. Give an appreciation today and... (Ch. 5)
8. USING TIME OUTs. When needed, take a break, a pause, a breather. Use all 3 Steps of Proposing a Time Out, Using that time to deescalate and plan, and Returning with willingness to effectively engage. (Ch. 6)
9. CATCH YOUR INACCURATE EXPRESSION. Nonjudgmentally observe when you are expressing the secondary emotion instead of primary, judging instead of describing, and being indirect instead of directly communicating. (Ch. 6)
10. APPLY EFFECTIVE METHODS. Soothe arousal for each of you to reduce defensiveness and increase openness. Get partner's acknowledgement or consent to discuss difficult topic. Communicate when your partner can really attend without too much fatigue or distraction. Start on a positive note, from your commitment to the relationship, your respect and caring for him/her. Are you being the kind of partner that you really want to be? (Ch. 6)
11. VALIDATE FEELINGS, WANTS, BELIEFS, ACTIONS, AND SUFFERING. Let partner know how their experience makes sense and your desire to understand. Remember, to validate does NOT mean to agree. We can sincerely validate without having to agree (we are *different* people who care about each other). (Ch. 7)
12. VALIDATION STRATEGIES. DRLR or Drop, Relax, Look, and Respond...Acknowledge partner's experience...Clarify with questions...Remember the context of the big picture (we care about this person), past history, and current circumstances...Making sense of their behavior as common to many people in the same situation...and meeting their vulnerability with your own. (Ch. 8)
13. VALIDATE WITH YOUR ACTIONS. Describe the facts (who, what, where, when) of the situation you observe, Identify what your partner needs, Respond effectively in a way that does not harm you. (Ch. 8)
14. SIX STRATEGIES TO BREAK CYCLE OF INVALIDATION. Validate yourself, Soothe yourself, Remember LT goals with partner, Apply mindfulness of partner to increase empathy and validating, Accept things as they currently are, Validate 3x when faced with hostility. (Ch. 9)
15. MAKING A REPAIR. Apply the Six Strategies. Remember a repair fits with your values, it will support more constructive interactions, and it will restore your self-respect. Acknowledge your desire to fix your mistakes, to express the facts of what you did and the effect on your partner's pain, commit to not repeat this behavior, and continue to validate your partner even if s/he blames you or withdraws from you (until they are ready to respond to your efforts to repair). (Ch. 9)
16. PROBLEM ANALYSIS (when possible). Define problem as specifically as possible using chain analysis worksheet. Validate each link or behavior. (Ch. 10)
17. SOLUTION ANALYSIS (when possible). FENCE. Focus on one topic at a time. Explore possible solutions. Negotiate an agreement. Commit to your agreement. Evaluate and fine-tune. (Ch. 10)
18. ACCEPTANCE OF WHAT IS (partner's behaviors we experience as a problem which are not changing). For a limited time, cease all efforts at change and choose a new approach of Active Acceptance. Manage Disappointment. Let Go of Frustration and Anger. Observe any Unnecessary Suffering. Let Go. (Ch.11)