

# DBT

# Holiday Antidotes

## DBT Top Ten Holiday Antidotes

10. The holidays can be rough going, so let's begin by planning some small, doable, positive and pleasurable experiences. *Do them.* Mindfully notice the positives in your life. Each day note something for which you genuinely feel gratitude. Find one meaningful thing to do today.

9. All things in moderation. Use the PLEASE skills to lessen your emotional vulnerability—which only get more intense when negative Emotion Mind meets alcohol, non-mindful eating (under-control and over-control) and other old, unwise attempts to deal with stress.

8. The holidays are a great time to use the “contributing” skill to distract and interrupt increasing depression or anxiety by visiting or helping those in need, perhaps as close as a next-door neighbor.

7. Have access to music, a symbolic object, a photo, a pleasant smell, a comforting taste or touch. Also some quiet time with a hot bath, a good book, a loving animal, a kind human, or your compassionate, wise mind can provide some self-soothing when the holidays get tense.

6. Observe that emotions come and emotions go. The holidays often amplify the intensity of negative emotions. When you find your sadness, anger or fear rising and approaching the “red zone,” try taking a walk to get a working distance from the situation, remember your goals, and be sure to give yourself some validation. If possible, grab a trusted loved one to go with you.

5. Holidays are also prime viewing time to observe our negative thoughts, such as catastrophizing, all-or-nothing, and “should” thoughts. Getting hooked by our “twisted thinking” leads to unneeded suffering. Let's use this time as an opportunity to practice “letting go” or “not buying” negative thinking or ruminating on past grievances. Instead, let's participate in the present moment as it is.

4. Steer clear of holiday regrets by listening to wise mind and effectively responding to difficult family members. What does my wise mind say now? Listen. Cultivate a “mindful gap” in a tense, reactive situation. Walk away knowing you have successfully “surfed the urge” and sidestepped a potential round of conflict. Apply DEAR with GIVE or FAST when you can.

3. Communicate! Invite your curiosity to the conversation. Clarify your priorities in the interaction: making progress on an objective or task, maintaining a relationship, or standing up for yourself. Express or ask for what you need. Say “no” when you need to. Say “yes” when you choose.

2. Observe the judgmental thoughts. Re-describe in a non-judgmental way. What would you say to a close friend in the same situation? Help yourself to accept this moment as it is and to accept yourself as you are. Some wisdom with a good dose of compassion.

And the #1 Antidote... Mindfully Breathe 3x... mindfully... ahh... Repeat, as needed.

# Holiday Antidotes Worksheet



Which skills have been useful during past holidays?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Which of the above skills would be useful to do this holiday season?



Which of the other skills or holiday antidotes do you want to use this year?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

And what will help you to willingly use these skills, especially when you are becoming distressed and could be heading into the Red Zone?

