

Building My Own DBT House (Floor by Floor)

A DBT handout and worksheet

Inspired by the DBT goal of building a life worth living, this worksheet uses the metaphor of a house to help you reflect on the values, relationships, skills, boundaries and coping strategies that support a meaningful life. A house is built one layer at a time. In the same way, a meaningful life develops through small, consistent actions aligned with your values.

Building a Life Worth Living

One of the central goals of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is building a life worth living. DBT recognizes that painful emotions are part of being human. Rather than waiting until life feels perfect before living fully, DBT encourages us to gradually create a life that feels meaningful while learning skills to manage emotional suffering. Building a life worth living involves increasing behaviours that move us toward our values while reducing behaviours that move us away from the life we want.

Foundation: What Matters Most

Values are the directions we choose to move toward. Unlike goals, values are never finished. They guide everyday decisions, even during difficult moments.

- What kind of person do I want to be?

- What matters most to me?

- What values do I want my life to reflect?

First Floor: My Support System

DBT recognizes that people heal in relationships. Consider the people who support your growth and the relationships you would like to strengthen.

- Who helps me feel safe?

- Who encourages me to become my best self?

- Who can I reach out to more often?

- What boundaries may be needed?

Second Floor: Skills and Strengths

DBT assumes we are doing the best we can while also recognizing that we can learn new skills. Skills strengthen our house.

- What personal strengths already help me?

- Which DBT skills would I like to practise more?

- When have I handled something better than I expected?

Windows: Perspective and Wise Mind

Windows allow us to see the world. Wise Mind helps us balance emotion and reason.

- What thoughts show up when I am overwhelmed?

- What might Wise Mind say instead?

Front Door: Effective Boundaries

A house needs a door that can open and close. Boundaries help protect relationships and wellbeing.

- What boundaries would strengthen my house?

- Where do I need to say yes?

- Where do I need to say no?

Roof: Crisis Survival

Storms are unavoidable. DBT teaches distress tolerance skills to help us get through crises without making things worse.

- Which distress tolerance skills help me most? (STOP, TIPP, ACCEPTS, Self-Soothe, IMPROVE, Pros & Cons, Radical Acceptance)

- What are my warning signs?

- Who will I contact if I need support?

Build My DBT House

Draw your own house below or on a separate sheet of paper. You can make your house look like anything you want. Maybe it's a modern house or a traditional Victorian house.

Start by labeling the foundation with your values, the first floor with supportive people, the second floor with strengths and skills, the windows with Wise Mind perspectives, and so on.



One Small Step This Week

DBT emphasizes small, consistent behavioural change.

One value I will live by this week:

One skill I will intentionally practise:

One relationship I will strengthen:

One action that moves me toward a life worth living:

Final Reflection

Building a life worth living is an ongoing practice, not a destination. Every time you practise a skill, tolerate distress without making things worse, repair a relationship, act from Wise Mind, or choose a behaviour that aligns with your values, you add another brick to your house! Small, consistent changes create meaningful change over time.

Need Additional Support?

If completing this worksheet highlighted areas where you feel stuck or overwhelmed, remember that you do not have to build your house alone. At KALM Psychology, we support adolescents and adults using evidence-based therapies, including Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), to strengthen emotional regulation, relationships, resilience, and build lives that feel meaningful and aligned with personal values.