

# Soothing the Five Senses

Soothing the five senses is a relaxation technique that is used in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT). DBT is a cognitive behavioral treatment developed by Marsha Linehan, PhD, ABPP. “Dialectic” means weighing and integrating contradictory facts or ideas with a view to resolving contradictions, in DBT the dialectics are acceptance and change. Relaxation techniques assist with stress relief and can help your body relax by lowering your heart rate and blood pressure. When your body is relaxed, your mind can function better. This worksheet explains how to use each of the five senses to relax.



## Self-soothing using your sense of vision

*We process so much of our surroundings through sight. Some images can make us feel bad, or good. Try to identify some things that you find nice to look at:*

- Look through a photo album or through pictures on your phone or camera of loved ones or places you enjoy.
- Draw or paint a picture that is pleasing to you.
- Have books in your room that are nice to look through.
- Decorate your room with photographs or posters that you enjoy looking at.

## Self-soothing using your sense of hearing

*Certain sounds are soothing to us. Every person has a different taste. Try to identify some sounds that help you relax, or some you may be willing to try:*

- Listen to soothing music- classical, opera, pop, rap, jazz, country, folk, soul... whatever relaxes you.
- Listen to a podcast.
- Listen to peaceful sounds outside in a park or near a body of water, or listen to a recording of nature sounds.
- Listen to a white noise machine.
- Listen to a recording of a relaxation exercise.

## Self-soothing using your sense of taste

*Taste is a powerful sense and can trigger memories or feelings. If eating food is soothing to you, try some of the following suggestions:*

- Enjoy your favorite meal, eating slowly and savoring the way it tastes.
- Chew gum or suck on a hard candy.
- Drink a hot beverage, like coffee, tea, or hot chocolate.
- Savor a food that soothes you, like ice cream or chocolate.

## Self-soothing using your sense of touch

*Your sense of touch is powerful. Different tactile sensations can be very positive. Try to find something you like or try something new:*

- Take a hot or cold shower.
- Rub lotion onto your skin.
- Get a massage or give yourself a massage.
- Play with a pet.
- Wear soft and comfortable clothes, like sweatpants and a sweatshirt

## Self-soothing using your sense of smell

*Smell is one of the senses that can trigger memories, both bad and good. If using your sense of smell is soothing to you, try to identify some smells that may make you feel good or might want to try:*

- Wear scented perfumes or cologne that make you feel happy, confident, or sexy.
- Go somewhere with a pleasing scent, like a bakery or restaurant.
- Bake something that smells good to you, like chocolate chip cookies.
- Buy fresh-cut flowers for yourself or a friend.

McKay, M., Wood, J. C., & Brantley, J. (2007). *The dialectical behavioral therapy skills workbook: Practical DBT exercises for learning mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation & distress tolerance*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.