

MY NIGHTLY DBT JOURNAL

Growth Through Awareness

A calming bedtime companion for teens practising DBT skills and Life Navigation.

Each evening, reflect on your day with kindness, awareness, and practical tools that help you build a life worth living.

GLENBROOK PRACTICE

DBT-STEP-UPP • Glenbrook Press

For teens aged 13–18 • Use alongside your DBT skills training or independently

Welcome to Your Nightly Journal

Dear Teen,

You have taken a powerful step by choosing to end each day with awareness. This journal is your private space to reflect, celebrate small wins, notice what was difficult, and gently prepare for tomorrow.

It draws on the same DBT skills you are learning in DBT-STEP-UPP or in individual skills coaching — Mindfulness, Distress Tolerance, Emotion Regulation, Interpersonal Effectiveness — and weaves them together with practical Life Navigation tools (goal setting, self-care, time awareness).

There is no right or wrong way to use this journal. Some evenings you will write a lot. Some evenings just a few words or a drawing will be enough. The most important thing is showing up for yourself with curiosity and self-compassion.

Remember: Growth happens through awareness, not perfection.

You are already building a life worth living, one evening at a time.

*"You are not defined by your emotions.
You can remain true to yourself while building a life that is worth living."*

— DBT wisdom for teens

With warmth and belief in you,

Jonathan Mitchell

Facilitator, Glenbrook Practice

Growth Through Awareness

How to Use This Journal

1. Choose a consistent bedtime ritual

Try to journal at roughly the same time each night. Even 5–10 minutes helps your brain wind down.

2. Be kind to yourself

If you missed a day, just start again tonight. No guilt. Awareness, not perfection.

3. Use the Skill Spotlights

When a prompt asks about a DBT skill, flip to the coloured reference pages at the front for quick reminders.

4. Mix writing and drawing

Some nights words flow easily. Other nights a quick doodle, colour, or symbol says enough.

5. Celebrate small wins

Life Navigation is about noticing tiny progress — sending one message, drinking water, choosing sleep over scrolling.

6. Share if you want to

This journal is private, but you can choose to show parts to your facilitator, parent, or therapist if it helps.

7. Keep it beside your bed

Having it visible makes it easier to build the habit. Many teens keep a pen clipped inside.

You are doing important work simply by showing up for yourself each night.

This journal is here to support you — not to judge you.

Sweet dreams and gentle awareness.

MINDFULNESS BEFORE BED

Why it helps at night

- Brings you out of racing thoughts and into the present moment
- Helps the nervous system settle before sleep
- Strengthens your Wise Mind muscle

Quick 3-Minute Practice

1. Sit or lie comfortably. Close your eyes if you like.
2. Notice 5 things you can hear, 4 you can feel, 3 you can see (if eyes open).
3. Follow your breath for 10 slow counts.
4. If your mind wanders (it will!), gently bring it back. No judgment.

OBSERVE & DESCRIBE YOUR DAY

The skill

- Observe = just notice facts (what happened, what you felt in your body)
- Describe = put words to it without adding judgment or story

Bedtime prompt example

Instead of: 'I completely messed up that test, I'm so stupid'

Try: 'I felt my stomach tighten when I saw the questions. My thoughts got loud.

I noticed the urge to give up. I took three breaths and kept going.'

This reduces emotional intensity and builds self-awareness.

SELF-VALIDATION & SELF-COMPASSION

Why it matters for teens

- Many of us are very hard on ourselves at the end of the day
- Validation does not mean 'it's okay to stay stuck' — it means 'what I'm feeling makes sense given what happened'

Quick self-validation phrases

- 'It makes sense that I felt overwhelmed today.'
- 'I'm doing the best I can with what I have right now.'
- 'It's okay to have a hard day. Tomorrow is a new chance.'
- 'I am allowed to rest without earning it.'

LIFE NAVIGATION – SMALL WINS & TOMORROW

What is Life Navigation?

Practical skills that bridge DBT with real life: goal setting, time awareness, financial literacy basics, self-care planning, and preparing for adulthood.

Tonight's focus

- What was one small win today (even brushing teeth or sending a message)?
- What is one tiny thing I can do tomorrow that future-me will thank me for?
- How can I make tomorrow's 'getting ready for bed' 1% easier?

Day 1

Date: _____

One word for today:

Mood right now (1-10):

_____ How does it feel in my body?

★ One thing that went well today or made me smile (even a small thing):

◆ Something challenging happened today. I noticed / I felt:

(Try to describe without judging – this is Observe & Describe from Mindfulness)

◆ Which DBT skill or Life Navigation tool did I use or could I have tried?

(Wise Mind, Check the Facts, Opposite Action, Self-Validation, Radical Acceptance, etc.)

♥ One thing I am grateful for tonight / One thing I am proud of myself for:

◇ Before I sleep, I am choosing to let go of... | Tomorrow I will bring awareness to...

Free space for thoughts, doodles, or anything else on your mind tonight...

Take 3 slow breaths before turning off the light. You did enough today.

Day 2

Date: _____

One word for today:

Mood right now (1-10):

_____ How does it feel in my body?

★ One thing that went well today or made me smile (even a small thing):

◆ Something challenging happened today. I noticed / I felt:

(Try to describe without judging – this is Observe & Describe from Mindfulness)

◆ Which DBT skill or Life Navigation tool did I use or could I have tried?

(Wise Mind, Check the Facts, Opposite Action, Self-Validation, Radical Acceptance, etc.)

♥ One thing I am grateful for tonight / One thing I am proud of myself for:

◇ Before I sleep, I am choosing to let go of... | Tomorrow I will bring awareness to...

Free space for thoughts, doodles, or anything else on your mind tonight...

Take 3 slow breaths before turning off the light. You did enough today.

Day 3

Date: _____

One word for today:

Mood right now (1-10):

_____ How does it feel in my body?

★ One thing that went well today or made me smile (even a small thing):

◆ Something challenging happened today. I noticed / I felt:

(Try to describe without judging – this is Observe & Describe from Mindfulness)

◆ Which DBT skill or Life Navigation tool did I use or could I have tried?

(Wise Mind, Check the Facts, Opposite Action, Self-Validation, Radical Acceptance, etc.)

♥ One thing I am grateful for tonight / One thing I am proud of myself for:

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Free space for thoughts, doodles, or anything else on your mind tonight...

Take 3 slow breaths before turning off the light. You did enough today.

Day 4

Date: _____

One word for today:

Mood right now (1-10):

_____ How does it feel in my body?

★ One thing that went well today or made me smile (even a small thing):

◆ Something challenging happened today. I noticed / I felt:

(Try to describe without judging – this is Observe & Describe from Mindfulness)

◆ Which DBT skill or Life Navigation tool did I use or could I have tried?

(Wise Mind, Check the Facts, Opposite Action, Self-Validation, Radical Acceptance, etc.)

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Free space for thoughts, doodles, or anything else on your mind tonight...

Take 3 slow breaths before turning off the light. You did enough today.

Day 5

Date: _____

One word for today:

Mood right now (1-10):

_____ How does it feel in my body?

★ One thing that went well today or made me smile (even a small thing):

◆ Something challenging happened today. I noticed / I felt:

(Try to describe without judging – this is Observe & Describe from Mindfulness)

◆ Which DBT skill or Life Navigation tool did I use or could I have tried?

(Wise Mind, Check the Facts, Opposite Action, Self-Validation, Radical Acceptance, etc.)

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Free space for thoughts, doodles, or anything else on your mind tonight...

Take 3 slow breaths before turning off the light. You did enough today.

Day 6

Date: _____

One word for today:

Mood right now (1-10):

_____ How does it feel in my body?

★ One thing that went well today or made me smile (even a small thing):

◆ Something challenging happened today. I noticed / I felt:

(Try to describe without judging – this is Observe & Describe from Mindfulness)

◆ Which DBT skill or Life Navigation tool did I use or could I have tried?

(Wise Mind, Check the Facts, Opposite Action, Self-Validation, Radical Acceptance, etc.)

♥ One thing I am grateful for tonight / One thing I am proud of myself for:

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Free space for thoughts, doodles, or anything else on your mind tonight...

Take 3 slow breaths before turning off the light. You did enough today.

Day 7

Date: _____

One word for today:

Mood right now (1-10):

_____ How does it feel in my body?

★ One thing that went well today or made me smile (even a small thing):

◆ Something challenging happened today. I noticed / I felt:

(Try to describe without judging – this is Observe & Describe from Mindfulness)

◆ Which DBT skill or Life Navigation tool did I use or could I have tried?

(Wise Mind, Check the Facts, Opposite Action, Self-Validation, Radical Acceptance, etc.)

♥ One thing I am grateful for tonight / One thing I am proud of myself for:

◇ Before I sleep, I am choosing to let go of... | Tomorrow I will bring awareness to...

Free space for thoughts, doodles, or anything else on your mind tonight...

Take 3 slow breaths before turning off the light. You did enough today.

Week 1 Reflection

Look back over the past 7 evenings with kindness and curiosity.

What patterns did I notice in my mood or energy this week?

Which DBT skill or Life Navigation tool did I use most often?

What am I most proud of from this week?

What was the hardest moment, and what did I learn from it?

One small change I want to experiment with next week:

How did my sleep and wind-down routine feel this week?

Progress is rarely a straight line. Noticing your patterns is already growth.

Be proud of the awareness you are building, one night at a time.

You Are Already Growing

Every time you open this journal, you are practising Mindfulness, self-compassion, and the courage to look honestly at your day.

That is real DBT work. That is real Life Navigation.

You do not need to have perfect days.
You only need to keep coming back to awareness.

Keep going. You are building something beautiful.

Published by Glenbrook Press

Original DBT-informed resources for teens, adults, parents & professionals

Part of Glenbrook Practice's mission to make skills accessible
and culturally relevant in the South African context.

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This journal is intended as a supportive tool alongside professional DBT skills training.

It is not a substitute for therapy. If you are struggling, please reach out to your facilitator, a trusted adult, or a helpline.