

Effective Rethinking & Paired Relaxation: Step By Step

WHAT IS EFFECTIVE RETHINKING?

Effective rethinking is a distress tolerance skill in DBT whose aim is to help you evaluate and adjust your emotional reactions to distressing events. The goal is to understand where the distressing emotions are coming from, and from there presenting yourself with alternative viewpoints to help ease the distress. Pairing it with focused & intentional breathing and muscle relaxation can increase its effectiveness in practice.



STEP BY STEP:

STEP ONE: In this step, all we are looking to do is examine the prompting event. What triggered the distressing emotions? Describe it in detail.

For example: if you are struggling with your body image, an event that may trigger distressing emotions could be outgrowing a favorite pair of pants. When that happens you could feel shame, embarrassment, sadness, lowered self worth, etc.

STEP TWO: This step is all about self reflection. Here we are going to examine where those distressing emotions may be coming from. What thoughts and interpretations do you have around the prompting event that is causing this distress? Write these thoughts down.

For example: *what about not fitting into your favorite pair of pants anymore triggers that distress? What interpretations do you have over this situation? If you are struggling with your body image, not fitting into clothes that give you confidence can trigger that self consciousness, make you feel like you have failed, or that your body isn't "right" any more.*

STEP THREE: This step is where we rethink those immediate reactions. What other meanings can be attached to the situation you're experiencing? Remember that your interpretation is just one of many. Feelings give us valuable information about our minds, but they are not necessarily fact. Remind yourself of that as you brainstorm & rethink. Write down as many new or alternate interpretations of the situation that you can think of.

For example: *"My body changed, and that's okay. Just like my life changes, and my mind changes, my body should be given the freedom to change with my circumstances." "There is no right way to have a body, a body just is." "The size pants I wear has no bearing on my value or self worth." "My lifestyle has changed and my body has changed along with it. It is not a failure, just an adjustment to new circumstances."*

STEP FOUR: This step is practice. When you have left the stressful or triggering situation, give yourself to reflect on it. Imagine it has happened again. As you imagine it:

1. Breathe in deeply. As you breathe in, choose one of the challenging effective self statements you came up with in step three. Say it to yourself as you breathe.
2. Breathe out slowly. Say "Relax" as you breathe out, and focus your attention on relaxing all of the muscles in your body.

In order to maximize this strategy's effectiveness, make time to practice it as much as possible. Keep practicing until you feel you have mastered it. Then, when you find yourself back in the stressful situation, practice it in action.

"EFFECTIVE SELF STATEMENT"



(breathing in...)

"SO..."

"RELAX"



(breathing out...)

YOUR TURN: PRACTICE EFFECTIVE RETHINKING & PAIRED RELAXATION

Use the following space in the workbook to practice Effective Rethinking and Paired Relaxation, step by step.

DESCRIBE THE SITUATION:

What triggered the distressing emotion? What is the distressing emotion? Why does this situation create distressing emotions/reactions for you?

EXAMINE YOUR REACTIONS:

*Ask yourself: what am I telling **myself** about this situation, and how is that causing my emotional reaction?*

BRAINSTORM ALTERNATE INTERPRETATIONS:

What is an alternate way to interpret what is happening? How might someone else see the situation? How can I rethink it?