**DBT Worksheet: Emotional Regulation - The "Tightrope Walker" Technique**

**Purpose:**

In Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), emotional regulation is a skill designed to help you balance intense feelings without allowing them to take control. One of the core goals of DBT is learning how to experience emotions without letting them dictate your actions, thoughts, or behavior. This requires learning how to "balance" emotions, much like walking on a tightrope. You need to keep your feet firmly planted, remain focused, and avoid tipping too far into extreme emotional reactions. In other words, emotional regulation is about finding a middle ground between suppressing emotions and being controlled by them.

The "Tightrope Walker" technique helps you understand the importance of staying balanced when it comes to emotional intensity. Emotions can feel like a storm inside you, pulling you in different directions, and it can seem as though you have no control. However, with DBT skills, you can learn to steady yourself on the tightrope, even when your emotions try to knock you off course. The purpose of this worksheet is to help you develop skills to identify, label, and manage emotional intensity. You’ll practice ways to stabilize your emotional "balance" and move forward without allowing emotions to overpower you.

**Instructions:**

1. **Identifying Emotional Triggers**  
   Start by thinking about a time when you felt an intense emotion (anger, sadness, fear, etc.). What triggered this emotion? Was it an event, a person, or a thought? Write it below.

**Trigger/Event:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Name the Emotion**  
   Next, identify the emotion(s) you felt. Is it anger, sadness, anxiety, frustration, or something else? Be specific, and try not to generalize.

**Emotion(s) Felt:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Rate the Intensity**  
   On a scale of 1-10, how intense was the emotion when it occurred? (1 = barely noticeable, 10 = overwhelming).

**Intensity Rating (1-10):** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **What’s at Risk if You Lose Balance?**  
   Just like walking a tightrope, when we lose emotional balance, we risk falling into extreme reactions. What would happen if you didn’t manage this emotion well? What might you do or say in a moment of imbalance that you could regret later?

**What’s at risk? (Relationship, career, health, etc.):** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Mindfulness Check-In**  
   Before reacting to intense emotions, pause for a moment. Take a few deep breaths. Observe your thoughts and feelings without judgment. What is your body telling you right now?

**Physical Sensations (heart rate, tense muscles, etc.):** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Regulate with Skills**  
   Now, reflect on how you can use DBT skills to regain your balance. Here are some examples of DBT strategies:
   * **Self-soothing:** Engage your senses (e.g., listen to calming music, hold a soft object, take a warm bath).
   * **Reframing:** Change the way you think about the situation (e.g., “This isn’t permanent; I can handle it”).
   * **Mindful Breathing:** Breathe in for four counts, hold for four counts, exhale for four counts.
   * **Radical Acceptance:** Acknowledge the situation as it is, without resistance or judgment.

**Skill(s) You’ll Use to Regain Balance:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Reflecting on Outcomes**  
   After using one or more skills, reflect on how your emotional state changed. Did you feel more balanced? Did your reaction change? How do you feel now?

**Reflection:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Summary:**

Remember, emotional regulation takes practice. Much like a tightrope walker learning how to balance, it may take time for you to get comfortable with managing your emotions. Don’t be discouraged by missteps or moments of imbalance. Each time you practice, you are strengthening your ability to stay grounded and focused, and eventually, you’ll develop greater resilience to emotional intensity. The more you practice mindfulness and emotional regulation skills, the better you'll become at finding balance when life’s emotions try to pull you off course.