



10 Benefits of Diary Card Completion

1. Recall.

A lot can happen during the course of one week or in the span of day for that matter. When a diary card is completed on a daily basis, it can serve as a memory aid so you won't have to expend extra energy trying to recall everything that happened during the week. When a completed diary card is brought into group or individual session, you can spend less time trying to remember and more time moving toward a life that you feel is worth living.

2. Time for current topics.

When a person does not come to group or individual session they will likely find that the facilitator or therapist will either have them complete a diary card right then and there or they will spend time troubleshooting how that person can make sure that they have a complete diary card in the future. Each of these activities takes time away from discussing more interesting topics that both you and your therapist/facilitator would rather address. Having a diary card ready for session will help ensure that there will be time to discuss the issues that are important to you.

3. Notice behavior patterns.

Have you ever heard the phrase "humans are creatures of habit?" People often do things repeatedly without even realizing it. Completing a diary card helps people identify the unhealthy behavior patterns in their life that lead to emotions they do not want to feel and actions they regret. Once these patterns are identified they become more easily changed.

4. Increase self-awareness.

Have you ever heard someone say, "I don't know how I feel" or "I don't know why I did that"? Have you ever found yourself saying similar things? Completing a diary card helps you to practice looking at yourself and your behavior to find the answers to these types of questions.

5. Skill recognition.

Even before DBT you were already using some of these skills. In group, you may be learning names for those that you have been using and some new skills you haven't heard of before. Either way, take credit for the skills you are using, give yourself a "pat on the back" for being skillful and acknowledge the work you are doing by circling what you've used on your diary card.

6. Skills recall.

Looking at a diary card on a daily basis helps to keep skills in the forefront of your mind and increases the likelihood that you will use them. The more you look at and familiarize yourself with skills, the more opportunities you will find to use them. You may even begin to find them “popping” into your mind when stressful situations come up.

7. Trigger identification.

Completing your diary card will help you identify how people, places and things affect you (both positively and negatively) on day-to-day basis. Once you identify triggers you can make changes in your life so that undesirable experiences occur less often and desirable experiences will occur again.

8. Mindfulness.

People are often their own “toughest critic”. They might even begin to keep a tally of things that are “going wrong” or “mistakes” they make. Completing a diary card helps people to look at what they did well over the week and recognize that not everything is “bad”. Something may have brought you to smile, laugh or feel “good” and those things deserve some attention too.

9. Self-validation.

At times it can be very difficult to validate yourself and at the same time, self-validation is extremely important in building a life worth living. As you complete your diary card, you will become more aware of the healthy behaviors and skills you are using and in turn, validation of self becomes easier.

10. Progress recognition.

If you complete your diary card each day, you will have a visual representation of the changes you are making in your life. As the weeks and months pass, you can actually look back at your emotion, urge and action ratings to see how they have changed due to your hard work. You can also track the ways in which the skills you are using have increased over time.