

ACT for BFRBs Guide

Acceptance, urge awareness, and values-based responding for picking, pulling, biting, and related behaviors.

How to use this resource

BFRB work is most effective when it is compassionate and specific. Track sensory, emotional, cognitive, motor, and environmental cues without shame.

Understanding BFRBs Through ACT

Body-focused repetitive behaviors often serve a function. Picking, pulling, biting, or scanning may reduce tension, create a sense of completion, regulate emotion, or respond to sensory discomfort. Shame rarely helps because the behavior is not simply a willpower problem.

- Urges are signals, not commands.
- The goal is to respond differently to urges, not attack yourself.
- Recovery includes awareness, competing responses, environmental support, and self-compassion.
- Your worth is not measured by whether an episode happened today.

Mapping the Pattern

Where does the behavior usually happen?

What sensations or textures tend to pull my attention?

What emotions usually show up before the behavior?

What thoughts give the behavior permission?

What is the short-term payoff?

What is the longer-term cost?

Urge Surfing

Urges rise, peak, and fall. Urge surfing means observing the wave without automatically acting on it.

- Pause and name the urge.
- Rate the urge from 0 to 10.
- Locate the sensation in the body.
- Describe the sensation precisely.
- Take five slow breaths while keeping hands supported.
- Re-rate the urge after two minutes.

Defusion from Hook Thoughts

- I'm having the thought that I need to fix this spot.
- Thanks, mind. You are trying to get relief.
- This is an urge, not an emergency.
- I can let this sensation be unfinished and choose my next action.

Values-Based Replacement

If this behavior had less power, I would spend more time on:

A relationship I want to protect from shame or avoidance is:

A competing response I can practice is:

One environmental support I can set up today is:
