

Distress Tolerance Skills

ACCEPTS	SELF-SOOTHE (Relax)	IMPROVE
Activities Contributing Comparison Emotions Pushing Away Thoughts Sensations (Stimulates)	Sight Sound Smell Touch Taste	Imagery Meaning Prayer Relaxing Actions One Thing in the Moment Vacation Encouragement
Activities engage you physically, and/or mentally. Neutral activities or behaviors that are opposite to negative emotions can reduce distress and impulsive urges. They distract attention and fill short-term memory with non-crisis-oriented thoughts, feelings, body sensations and images. (See list)	Sight: Notice the details of what is around you. Look at pictures or take photos. Be mindful of what is visually pleasing to you. Look at the sky, sun, moon, stars. Watch a candle or fire.	Imagery is a powerful tool in feeling better and more relaxed and can be used to distract, soothe, or add confidence. Imagine a wall between yourself and the situation, or imagine a peaceful, happy, secure place. Imagine the details of what it looks like, soothing smells, sounds, and sensations.
Contributing creates connections and positive feelings. Refocuses attention from yourself to what you can do for someone else. It can help one forget their own problems or give meaning in life. Smile, give compliments, hold a door, do a favor, listen, volunteer	Sound: Listen to comforting sounds or notice the silence. Close your eyes, be still, and hear what is happening in your environment.	Meaning can help identify learning or lessons in problems and help find purpose in your life to endure suffering. "If you can find a why, you can tolerate almost any how."-Victor Frankl
Comparison brings perspective to our present situation and refocuses attention from oneself to others. Distract yourself by thinking about problems that you don't have or no longer have. Focus on something that someone else is struggling with. Read an article about a problem that doesn't apply to you. Think how you are better off now than you were in the past.	Smell: Put on a favorite cologne or perfume. Smell clean laundry. Use incense or essential oils. Close your eyes and breathe it in choosing to linger on the smell. Inhale the smell of cooking or baking and your food before eating it or without eating it.	Prayer can provide strength and peace by opening yourself to the moment, to peace and serenity. Alternatively, "talk" to someone important to you (deceased relative, a person you admire) or your own wise mind.
Emotions can be influenced by what we do and/or think about. Generate different emotions to distract from the current negative emotion. Count backwards from 100. Make a shopping list. Describe objects in front of you. Listen to music that creates emotions. Watch a favorite show or movie.	Touch: Rub or stroke your neck or shoulders. Put oils or lotions on your skin. Pet a dog, cat or other animal. Wear comfortable clothing. Notice your body in connection to the chair, floor, earth, clothing. Get under a warm blanket or clean sheets.	Relaxing Actions can be anything that calms you. Muscle relaxation, meditation, breathing exercises, self-soothe skills, a body scan, or yoga practice. Engage in relaxing activities every day.
Push Away distress by leaving it physically or blocking it in your mind. Mentally locking it in a box or placing it on a shelf. Write it down and put it in a drawer or box. Put it off for 5 minutes.	Taste: Eat or drink with your full attention. Pretend it is the last time you will eat something and savor each morsel or sip.	One Thing in the Moment helps to focus "one-mindfully" on the most important priority or a problem that you have the most resources to manage distress. The only pain one has to survive is "just this moment" without worrying about the past or future.
Thoughts can help turn our mind from distress to peace. Fill short-term memory to deactivate negative thoughts or emotions. Name your task, "I'm brushing my teeth and repeat over and over." Count to 100. Do a crossword or sudoku puzzle. Read a book. State inspirational quotes or sayings.	Multi-sensory: Spend time outside noticing each sense. Make a special meal with nice dishes, relaxing music, candles. Notice how each sense can create a complementary total experience. Get yourself some hot cocoa, coffee, soda, juice or water. Mindfully drink your beverage. Focus on the sensations of taste, smell, and touch. Balance self-soothe with working on a task or focusing on what is required. Do a body scan of sensations	Vacation means taking a break when we are distressed or before we are in distress. Step outside, take a short walk, breathe, talk with a friend, plan "ME" time. Make time for yourself part of your daily or weekly routine. Encouragement helps improve our mood by cheerleading yourself and rethinking situations. Be mindful of self-talk and make it positive. Validate your feelings and encourage yourself like you would a good friend.
Sensations awake your senses and stimulate your body and refocuses attention away from emotional distress. Engage your senses with loud music, bold colors, strong tastes or smells, hot or cold bath/shower, hold an ice cube in your hand. Focus on the intense sensations.		

Distress Tolerance Skills

TIP	STOP	PROS & CONS
Temperature Intense Exercise Paced Breathing Paired Muscle Relaxation	STOP Take a Step Back Observe Proceed Mindfully	Make a list of the pros and cons of acting on your urges and resisting urges.
Temperature of your face with cold water or ice to activate the nervous system using the dive reflex, decreasing heart rate. Changes your body chemistry and is used to calm down fast. Heart slows, blood flow to non-essential organs is reduced, blood flow is redirected to the brain and heart. (May take 15-30 seconds to start)	STOP: Do not just react. Stop, freeze. Do not move. Stay in control. Emotions may cause you to act without thinking	Use any time you need to decide between two courses of action.
	TAKE A STEP BACK: Take a break from the situation. Let go. Take a deep breath. Do not let feelings cause you to react impulsively.	Make a list of the pros and cons of acting on your urges and resisting urges. Carry it with you.
Hold your breath and put your face into a bowl of cold water for 30-60 seconds.	OBSERVE: Notice what is going on inside and outside of you. What is the situation? What are your thoughts and feelings? What are others saying or doing?	PROs of acting on impulsive urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.
Hold an ice pack over eyes and upper cheeks, holding your breath for 30-60 seconds.		
Splash cold water on eyes and cheeks, holding breath for 30-60 seconds.	PROCEED MINDFULLY: Act with awareness. Check the facts. Consider thoughts and feelings, the situation. Think about your goals and priorities. Ask in Wise Mind: Which actions will make it better or worse?	PROs of resisting impulsive urges, doing what needs to be done, and not giving up.
Intense Exercise: Engage in aerobic exercise for at least 20 minutes. This can re-regulate the body by increasing heart rate.		
Paced Breathing: Slow down the pace of your breathing to 5-6 breath cycles a minute from the abdomen. Breathe in more slowly (5 seconds) than you breathe out (7 seconds).		CONs of acting on impulsive urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.
Paired Muscle Relaxation: Tense muscles during an inhale. Notice the tension in your body. Release tension on the exhale while saying “relax” in your mind. Notice the difference.		CONs of resisting impulsive urges, doing what needs to be done, and not giving up. Review pros and cons. Imagine consequences. Read it often.

Distress Tolerance Skills

PRACTICE EXERCISE

ACCEPTS	Self-Soothe	IMPROVE the Moment	TIPP	STOP	PROs & CONs
Activities Contributing Comparison Emotions Pushing Away Thoughts Sensations	Sight Sound Smell Touch Taste	Imagery Meaning Prayer Relaxing Actions One Thing in the Moment Vacation Encouragement	Temperature Intense Exercise Paced Breathing Paired Muscle Relaxation	STOP Take a Step Back Observe Proceed Mindfully	Make a list of the pros and cons of acting on your urges and resisting urges

Rank the level of distress before and after using the Distress Skill

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
None		Mild		Moderate		Strong			Extreme	

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Distress Tolerance Skills

ACTIVITIES

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| 1. Dress up or down | 26. Hike | 54. Listen to old records |
| 2. Play board or card games | 27. Feed or watch the birds | 55. Compose music or lyrics |
| 3. Mindfully eat a snack | 28. Boat | 56. Enjoy perfume/cologne |
| 4. Appreciate a favorite actor | 29. Fish | 57. Cook |
| 5. Act | 30. Blog or visit Blogs/Vlogs | 58. Play on a computer |
| 5. Read a religious text | 31. Bowl | 59. Crochet or knit |
| 6. Advocate for a cause | 32. Start or join a fantasy league | 60. Cross-stitch |
| 7. Look at the sky, stargaze | 33. Play checkers | 61. Quilt |
| 8. Read about animals | 34. Help the disabled | 62. Do a crossword puzzle |
| 9. Visit the zoo or pet store | 35. Contribute at a food pantry | 63. Dance |
| 10. Play badminton | 36. Bake a cake and decorate it | 64. Play darts |
| 11. Rearrange furniture | 37. Geocache | 65. Look at your collectibles |
| 12. Join a group | 38. Write calligraphy | 66. Visit a museum |
| 13. Have a conversation with a friend or stranger | 39. Camp | 67. Daydream |
| 14. Watch or play baseball or softball | 40. Make candles | 68. Join a bowling league |
| 15. Make a craft | 41. Canoe or kayak | 69. Play dominoes |
| 16. Build a model airplane | 42. Have a picnic | 70. Juggle |
| 17. Watch or play basketball | 43. Read about cars or go for a drive | 71. Draw |
| 18. Shower or bathe mindfully | 44. Cheerlead | 72. Eat out or fix a special meal |
| 19. Relax or imagine you are at the beach; look for shells or clean the beach | 45. Nap | 73. Take a class at a community college on a new topic |
| 20. Do beadwork or embroider | 46. Mindfully watch TV | 74. Tinker with electronics |
| 21. Beatbox, rap, or sing | 47. Window shop | 75. Tell jokes |
| 22. Write a poem or short story | 48. Play chess | 76. Exercise |
| 23. Ring a bell | 49. Worship | 77. Watch or play football |
| 24. Breathe mindfully | 50. Watch clouds | 78. Go four-wheeling |
| 25. Bike | 51. Make a sand castle | 79. Paint a wall |
| | 52. Collect coins | 80. Enjoy or maintain an aquarium |
| | 53. Browse an antique shop | 81. Play frisbee or disc golf |

Distress Tolerance Skills

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| 82. Sew | 113. Write your life story | 143. Plant an herb garden |
| 83. Have a debate | 114. Do home repair | 144. Mountain bike |
| 84. Join a club | 115. Breathe in fresh air | 145. Grow a chia pet |
| 85. Garden | 116. Find an activity on this list that is listed more than once | 146. Make a root beer float |
| 86. Swim | 117. Binge watch a show/series | 147. Make a milkshake |
| 87. Hug someone | 118. Ride a horse | 148. Eat ice cream |
| 88. Visit garage sales | 119. Ride a motorcycle | 149. Lie in the grass or snow |
| 89. Be intimate | 120. Write a thank you letter | 150. Jump in a pile of leaves |
| 90. Be a mentor | 121. Hunt | 151. Make a clothing item |
| 91. Build a bird house | 122. Surf | 152. Sew on a button |
| 92. Do family history | 123. Surf the internet | 153. Read reviews on a topic |
| 93. Interview an older adult | 124. Make jewelry | 154. Scrapbook |
| 94. Walk a dog | 125. Browse your favorite store | 155. Do origami |
| 95. Go to the movies | 126. Put together a puzzle | 156. Make a paper airplane |
| 96. Golf | 127. Build a blanket fort | 157. Play a trivia game |
| 97. Practice putting | 128. Pray | 158. Clean out a closet |
| 98. Give yourself a facial | 129. Build or fly a kite | 159. Donate unused items |
| 99. Give a loved one a facial | 130. Tie Knots | 160. Plan a movie marathon |
| 100. Watch funny videos | 131. Sing a silly song | 161. Join a chat room |
| 101. Go go-kart racing | 132. Pick flowers | 162. Go to a water park |
| 102. Play cribbage | 133. Learn something new | 163. Play laser tag or paint ball |
| 103. Volunteer at a shelter | 134. Learn a new language | 164. Go to a video arcade |
| 104. Write a letter to an editor | 135. Learn an instrument | 165. Visit a library or bookstore |
| 105. Make a video | 136. Macrame | 166. Swing at a playground |
| 106. Light a candle | 137. Color | 167. Indulge in a guilty pleasure |
| 107. Play video games | 138. Smile at someone | 168. Email friends and family |
| 108. Scrapbook | 139. Be affectionate | 169. Plan a vacation |
| 109. Become a pen pal | 140. Text a silly GIF to a friend | 170. Snorkel or scuba dive |
| 110. Support a cause | 141. Teach a child something | 171. Walk around the mall |
| 111. Play guitar | 142. Build models | 172. Do a scavenger hunt |
| 112. Write a handwritten letter | | 173. Visit an escape room |

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| 174. Try a new recipe | 204. Go people watching | 230. Go to a performance |
| 175. Make a collage | 205. Sit in the lobby of a beautiful hotel | 231. Burn incense |
| 176. Paint your nails | 206. Listen to nature sounds | 232. Use essential oils |
| 177. Sit by a body of water | 207. Hum a soothing tune | 233. Listen to traffic |
| 178. Organize a neighborhood garden | 208. Whistle | 234. Listen to soothing music |
| 179. Participate in a race | 209. Put lemon oil on your furniture (as directed) | 235. Make a playlist |
| 180. Ski or snowboard | 210. Boil cinnamon | 236. Take a bubble bath |
| 181. Groom a pet | 211. Bake cookies, bread or pie | 237. use your favorite soap, shampoo, aftershave, cologne or lotion |
| 182. Take a child on an outing | 212. Make popcorn | 238. Build a fire |
| 183. Watch a sunrise or sunset | 213. Smell the roses | 239. Roast marshmallows |
| 184. Learn about plants | 214. Walk in the woods and breathe the fresh smells | 240. Cook on a barbeque |
| 185. Take a walk | 215. Open the window and smell the air | 241. Make homemade chili |
| 186. Go to a health club | 216. Drink your favorite soothing drink, cocoa, latte or smoothie | 242. Participate in yoga |
| 187. Relax in a sauna or hot tub | 217. Treat yourself to dessert | 243. Meditate |
| 188. Go to a coffee shop | 218. Eat a comfort food | 244. Find hidden objects |
| 189. Hang out with a friend | 219. Eat a meal from childhood | 245. Get or give a massage |
| 190. Go for a drive | 220. Sample ice cream flavors | 246. Visit a waterfall |
| 191. Go river rafting | 221. Soak your feet | 247. Ice or roller skate |
| 192. Visit a National Park | 222. Drive with windows down | 248. Sleep outside |
| 193. Make your bed | 223. Chew gum | 249. Go rock climbing |
| 194. Wash your car | 224. Suck on candy | 250. Go to a comedy club |
| 195. Bury your feet in the sand | 225. Buy a special favorite food | 251. Throw hatchets |
| 196. Read the lyrics to music | 226. Drink fresh squeezed juice | 252. Go to a shooting range |
| 197. Volunteer at a school | 226. Make jam | 253. Make pizza |
| 198. Pick up trash by the road | 227. Wrap up in a blanket | 254. Plant flowers |
| 199. Plant a tree | 228. Put clean sheets on a bed | 255. Celebrate a success |
| 200. Text a friend a compliment | 229. Notice soothing touch | 256. Read a poem |
| 201. Look at pictures in a book | | 257. Get or give a manicure |
| 202. Buy one beautiful flower | | 258. Download a new app |
| 203. Make a space in a room pleasing to look at | | |