

Making It Through a Crisis: DBT Distress Tolerance Skills

Nicole Bosse, PsyD

Shannon Jensen, LISW-S

Distress Tolerance Skills



- Perceive the environment without placing demands on it
- Experience emotions without attempting to change them
- Observe thoughts without attempting to stop or control them

You **NEED** Crisis Survival Skills when:

- There is a real crisis and the situation is:
 - Highly stressful, painful
 - Short-term
 - There is a pressure to resolve RIGHT NOW
- The crisis can't be resolved in the short-term
- You can't afford to make the situation worse than it already is

The goal of Crisis Survival Skills:

- Stay alive
- Carry on
- Stay Functional
- **AVOID MAKING THINGS WORSE**



STOP

Step back, stop moving, stay in control

Take a breath, take a moment

Observe and notice your thoughts and feelings

Proceed Mindfully, act with awareness, think about your goal and actions, ask Wise Mind

TIP Skills

Reduce Emotion Mind QUICKLY by changing your body chemistry:

Temperature- Ice/ Warmth



Intensely Exercise- release of revved up emotion

Paced Breathing- Paired Muscle Relaxation - mindful tension release

Pros and Cons

- **Advantages** for tolerating/resisting
- **Disadvantages** for tolerating/resisting
- **Advantages** for keeping problem behavior/emotion
- **Disadvantages** for keeping problem behavior/emotion

❖ **Check the Facts!**

Effective Rethinking & Paired Relaxation

- Step 1. Prompting Event
- Step 2. Ask- Interpretations, Assumptions
- Step 3. Rethink- effective thoughts
- Step 4. Practice Imagining- breathing in/out
- Step 5. Keep Practicing!
- Step 6. When stressful situation occurs-

“I’m in control....so....Relax”

Distraction with Wise Mind **ACCEPTS-** a skill not a life-style

Activities

Contributing

Comparisons

Opposite Emotion

Pushing Away

Other Thoughts

Other Sensations

Self-Soothe

- Reduce vulnerability to emotion mind
- Increase resistance to temptation
- Use of the **Five** senses:

Vision

Hearing

Smell

Taste

Touch

- Build a Self-Soothe kit



IMPROVE the Moment

- **I**magery- visualization
- **M**eaning- purpose, positives, values
- **P**rayer- Higher power, God, own Wise Mind
- **R**elaxing actions- body, mind, soul
- **O**ne thing in the moment- intent, present, aware
- **V**acation- brief, break, time-out
- **E**ncouragement- self talk, cheerlead

Reality Acceptance Skills

Dealing with trauma and pain

Radical Acceptance

- “It is What it Is”
- Freedom from suffering= Acceptance of what is
- Entering into reality as it is
- It is **NOT**- approval, passivity, compassion, love
- Rejecting reality does **NOT** change reality
- Requires accepting the facts of reality

Turning the Mind

A Fork in the Road

- Act of CHOICE- to accept reality as it is
- Commitment= turning towards the path of acceptance
- Turn your mind- over and over again
- Towards acceptance-path away from rejecting
- LET GO- of discouragement
- LET GO- of shame, guilt, or refusal



Willingness vs. Willfulness

**Willingness
is- ready to
do just
what is
needed**

- Voluntarily
- Without reservation
- Acting from Wise Mind
- Fully aware of reality
- NOT “sitting on your hands”
- NOT giving up
- Not tolerating the moment
- NOT insisting on being in control

Allowing the Mind: Mindfulness of Current Thought

- Observe your thoughts- mindfully
- Practice allowing thoughts- as **waves**, not judging
- You are NOT your thoughts- do not have to act
- With bothersome, returning thoughts-
 - Repeat out loud
 - Sing, shout, play
 - Imagery

Half-Smile

- Relax your face
- Let both corners of lips go up slightly
- Try to adopt serene facial expression
- Use Willing Hands



THANK YOU

- Resource: Dr. Marsha . Linehan, PhD, ABPP.
Developer of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy.

KEEP RIDING
THOSE WAVES

