

DBT Distress Tolerance Skills List

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) distress tolerance skills are designed to help individuals manage intense emotions and difficult situations without making impulsive or harmful choices.

DBT Distress Tolerance Skills

1. **Distracting Skills:** These skills involve redirecting your attention away from distressing thoughts or emotions. Examples include engaging in an activity you enjoy, watching a movie, reading a book, or doing a puzzle.
2. **Self-Soothing Skills:** Self-soothing techniques aim to create a sense of comfort and calm. Activities like taking a warm bath, using aromatherapy, or wrapping yourself in a cozy blanket can help to ease distress.
3. **Improving the Moment:** This skill involves finding ways to make the current moment more bearable. You might use imagery to mentally transport yourself to a more pleasant place, focus on the positive aspects of the situation, or use affirmations to help you cope.
4. **Thinking of Pros and Cons:** This involves weighing the pros and cons of engaging in impulsive or unhealthy behaviors in response to distress. It encourages you to consider the potential consequences before acting.
5. **Radical Acceptance:** Radical acceptance means acknowledging reality as it is without judgment or resistance. It's about accepting things you cannot change and finding ways to cope with the distress they might bring.
6. **ACCEPTS:** This acronym stands for Activities, Contributing, Comparisons, Emotions, Pushing Away, Thoughts, and Sensations. These are various strategies to help distract from or cope with distressing emotions.
7. **Self-Soothe with the Five Senses:** Engaging each of your five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell) in pleasurable ways can help you ground yourself in the present moment and reduce emotional distress.
8. **Urge Surfing:** This skill involves riding out urges and cravings without acting on them. You acknowledge the intensity of the urge and observe it without judgment, allowing it to naturally subside over time.
9. **Crisis Survival Strategies:** These are more extreme methods to use when the distress is overwhelming, such as holding ice, snapping a rubber band, or taking a cold shower. They are meant to create a physical sensation that can temporarily interrupt emotional distress.
10. **Half-Smile:** Physically smiling, even if it's just a slight half-smile, can trigger a positive response in the brain and help reduce distress.
11. **Turning the Mind:** This skill involves actively making a choice to accept the current situation rather than fighting it. It's about letting go of the struggle against reality.
12. **Willingness:** Willingness involves accepting the reality of a situation and being open to experiencing the associated discomfort. It's about embracing challenges and moving through them.

Additional notes