

Distress Tolerance

Finding balance in difficult moments with DBT



When facing problems beyond your control, it's common to think, "This isn't fair" or "I shouldn't have to deal with this." However, these reactions often make the pain more intense and add frustration.

Embracing Acceptance

Acceptance is about recognizing the reality of a situation without judgment or resistance. It doesn't mean you have to like it; rather, it's acknowledging, "This is how things are right now." When we accept a tough situation, it can soften its emotional impact, making it easier to focus on what we can control.

Example: Your travel plans get canceled at the last minute due to weather.

- **Without Acceptance:** "This ruins everything. My trip was supposed to be perfect!"
 - **With Acceptance:** "It's frustrating, but I can't control the weather. I'll make new plans."
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Calming the Senses

Imagine being in a stressful environment, like a crowded, chaotic waiting room. It can feel overwhelming. Positive sensory experiences, however, can calm the mind. When you engage your senses in soothing ways, you can help ease the weight of difficult emotions.

Sensory Soothing Ideas:

- **Sight:** Look at a calming photo, like a beach or forest, or watch the clouds pass by.
 - **Sound:** Put on a favorite playlist or listen to nature sounds, like rain or birdsong.
 - **Touch:** Hold a soft blanket, stretch gently, or pet an animal if one is nearby.
 - **Taste:** Savor a comforting drink like herbal tea or hot chocolate.
 - **Smell:** Light a candle with a scent you enjoy or use essential oils for a quick refresher.
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Using ACCEPTS to Distract and Refocus

In moments of high emotion, taking a break to distract yourself can reduce the feeling's intensity. The ACCEPTS method offers a series of quick distractions:

A	Activities Keep busy with something absorbing, like cooking a simple recipe, organizing a drawer, or doing a puzzle.
C	Contributing Brighten someone's day with a small favor, write a thoughtful message, or share a kind word with someone who needs it.
C	Comparisons Think of past challenges you've overcome or recall times you grew stronger through adversity.
E	Emotions Bring in a new feeling to counterbalance the current one—watch a favorite comedy if you're sad, or listen to a calming song if you're feeling tense.
P	Pushing Away Picture setting your worries aside, like closing a book, and decide to revisit them later when you're ready.
T	Thoughts Engage your mind with something stimulating, like a math problem, a riddle, or listing as many colors or animals as you can.
S	Sensations Try a safe, grounding sensation like squeezing a stress ball, splashing water on your face, or wrapping yourself in a cozy sweater.