

Distress Tolerance Skill: ACCEPTS

Overwhelming emotions can feel insurmountable in moments of acute distress. Yet, with time, their intensity naturally diminishes, eventually subsiding. The Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) skill known as ACCEPTS provides seven practical techniques for temporarily distracting yourself from distressing emotions, allowing them space to pass.



Activities

Engage in an activity that demands focus and mental engagement. For example, tidy a space, play a game, take a leisurely walk, savour your favourite meal, listen to uplifting music, or browse the internet.



Contributions

Shift your attention outward by doing something helpful for others. This could include volunteering your time, assisting a friend, donating to a cause, crafting a gift for someone special, or sending a thoughtful note or card.



Comparisons

Gain perspective on your current situation by contrasting it with something even more challenging or painful. Reflect on your resilience, perhaps by considering someone else struggling more and not handling it as effectively.



Emotions

Intentionally generate a competing emotion to counteract the distressing one. If you're feeling sad, watch an uplifting movie; if anxious, try deep breathing exercises; if angry, step out for a brisk walk.



Pushing Away

Mentally block out a painful circumstance or thought temporarily. Use visualisation techniques, such as imagining your negative thoughts sealed inside a box, securely taped, and stored away from reach.



Thoughts

Redirect your mind using a cognitive exercise or activity to focus on neutral content. For instance, begin with the letter "A" and systematically name objects in your surroundings that start with each subsequent letter of the alphabet.



Sensations

Distract from emotional turmoil by seeking out safe, intense physical sensations. Try holding ice cubes in your hand, taking a refreshing shower or bath, or consuming something with a strong sour or spicy flavour.

