

Distress Tolerance Skills

Cheat Sheet



For the moments when emotion spikes past what you can think through. Ride the wave without doing anything that makes tomorrow harder.

1 LEARN TIPP FIRST

2 PICK ONE SKILL PER WAVE

3 PRACTICE WHILE CALM

FEATURED SKILL

TIPP

When distress hits 8 out of 10 and no thinking skill will land, change your body chemistry first. Each one works in minutes.



T Temperature

Hold your breath and dip your face into cold water for 15 to 30 seconds, or press ice to your cheeks. Cold on the face slows a racing heart fast.



I Intense exercise

Burn off the adrenaline: 60 seconds of jumping jacks, fast stairs, or running in place until out of breath. Then let your breathing settle on its own.

P Paced breathing

Make each exhale longer than the inhale: in through the nose for 4, out slowly for 6 to 8. Six rounds signals that the emergency is over.

P Paired muscle relaxation

Tense one muscle group as you inhale, release it fully as you exhale, thinking the word "relax." Work from fists to shoulders to jaw.

STOP

BEFORE YOU ACT ON THE URGE

S STOP

Freeze for one beat. Do not move, speak, or hit send. One still second breaks the autopilot.

T TAKE A STEP BACK

Leave the situation for a moment, physically or in your head, and take one slow breath.

O OBSERVE

Name what is happening inside you and around you. Stick to facts, not the storyline.

P PROCEED MINDFULLY

Ask what action actually serves your goals here, then choose it on purpose, not on impulse.

ACCEPTS

DISTRACT ON PURPOSE · SET AN END TIME

A Activities · a task with steps: cook, tidy one drawer.

C Contributing · send a kind text, help with a small chore.

C Comparisons · recall a hard moment you already survived.

E Emotions · cue a new feeling: a funny clip, upbeat music.

P Pushing away · shelve it on purpose: "Not now, at 7pm."

T Thoughts · give the mind a job: count back from 100 by 7s.

S Sensations · sour candy, a cold shower, a stress ball.

Self-Soothe

KIND INPUT FOR THE FIVE SENSES



SIGHT · Watch the sky for a minute, light a candle, open a photo album you love.

SOUND · Rain audio, one favorite album played low, the hum of a fan, a purring cat.

SMELL · Fresh coffee, lavender, clean laundry, cold air through an open window.

TASTE · Warm tea sipped slowly, one square of chocolate, something sharp and minty.

TOUCH · A hot shower, a weighted blanket, a pet's fur, a warm mug in both hands.

Radical Acceptance

FOR PAIN YOU CANNOT FIX RIGHT NOW



Fighting a fact adds suffering on top of pain. Let reality be what it is, fully, so your energy is free for what comes next.

"This is what happened. I do not have to like it to handle it."

Let the body accept too: unclench the jaw, drop the shoulders, open the hands. Accept again each time the mind re-argues.

WHAT IT IS NOT: APPROVAL

Accepting that something happened is not approving of it, forgiving anyone, or giving up. You can accept reality and still work to change what comes next.