

# 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.