

DBT-Based Distress Tolerance Worksheet

Step 1: Identify Your Distress Level

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your current distress level (1 = completely calm, 10 = highest distress possible):

My distress level right now: _____

Step 2: STOP Skill (Linehan, 2014)

Use the STOP skill to prevent impulsive reactions. Follow these steps and record your observations:

- **Stop:** Pause and do not act on your initial reaction. What thoughts are running through your mind?

My thoughts: _____

- **Take a step back:** Remove yourself from the triggering situation, if possible. What physical sensations are you experiencing?

Physical sensations: _____

- **Observe:** Notice what is happening inside and around you without judgment. What do you see, hear, and feel?

Observations: _____

- **Proceed mindfully:** Choose how to respond. What action will you take next?

Next steps: _____

Step 3: Choose a Distress Tolerance Skill

Select one or more of the following distress tolerance techniques and actively engage with them for at least 5 minutes. Research supports that distress tolerance skills increase resilience and reduce avoidance behaviors (McMain et al., 2018).

1. TIPP (Temperature, Intense Exercise, Paced Breathing, Progressive Relaxation)

- **What it is:** TIPP is a set of rapid techniques that help regulate physiological distress. Changing body temperature, engaging in movement, and controlling breathing can shift your emotional state quickly.
- **Activity:** Choose one: hold an ice cube, splash cold water on your face, do 10 jumping jacks, try 4-7-8 breathing (inhale for 4 sec, hold for 7 sec, exhale for 8 sec), or practice progressive muscle relaxation.

○ **What I did:** _____

○ **Effectiveness (1-10):** _____

○ **Reflection:** Did you notice a shift in your body or emotions?

My experience: _____

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2. Self-Soothe Using the Five Senses

- **What it is:** This skill involves engaging your five senses to create a calming experience. It can help ground you in the present and shift focus from distressing thoughts.
- **Activity:** Choose a sensory activity: listen to a favorite song, light a scented candle, hold a soft object, sip herbal tea, or look at calming images.
- **What I did:** _____
- **Effectiveness (1-10):** _____
- **Reflection:** How did engaging your senses affect your mood?
My experience: _____

3. Distraction with ACCEPTS (Activities, Contributing, Comparisons, Emotions, Pushing away, Thoughts, Sensations)

- **What it is:** ACCEPTS is a collection of strategies designed to distract from distress by engaging in meaningful, enjoyable, or thought-shifting activities. This method is particularly helpful for tolerating distress when immediate change is not possible.
- **Activity:** Choose a distraction technique: clean a room, write a thank-you note, recall a time when you overcame a challenge, watch an uplifting video, or do a puzzle.
- **What I did:** _____
- **Effectiveness (1-10):** _____
- **Reflection:** Did this technique help you shift focus?
My experience: _____

Step 4: Reflect and Evaluate

After using a distress tolerance skill, reflect on your experience. Answer the following questions:

- How did my distress level change after using this skill? **Before:** _____ → **After:** _____
- What did I learn about my ability to tolerate distress?
Insights: _____
- What distress tolerance skill was most effective for me?
Best technique: _____

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- What will I do differently next time I experience high distress?

Action plan: _____

Adapted from Linehan, M. M. (2014). DBT Skills Training Manual (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

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