

Distress Tolerance Skills

Distraction (A.C.C.E.P.T.S.)

Over time negative feelings usually subside, or even dissolve. It is of great value to distract yourself with positive and adaptive thoughts and behaviors until those emotions subside. The acronym A.C.C.E.P.T.S. is a reminder to utilize of this technique. You can fill the form out on the next page on a computer, tablet, or phone, or print it out. This concept is based upon a Dialectical Behavior Therapy intervention and technique (Linehan, 1993).

A ctivities	Engage in an activity (any activity!) to get moving, and temporarily distract yourself from your negative feelings. These activities can be as simple as making the bed, organizing your closet, painting a picture, writing in your journal, anything you want. When you feel overwhelmed with negative emotions, you may not feel motivated to get up and do something, but it is often an impactful and immediate strategy.
C ontributing	When those negative emotions take over, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by them, or even that they encompass your entire universe! In these moments, it's important to contribute to something outside yourself. Focus on someone or something other than yourself. You can volunteer, do a good deed – big or small, or anything that contributes to someone else.
C omparisons	When you get caught up in yourself and your emotions, you need to take a step back and recognize and express gratitude for what you have. Perhaps you compare yourself to someone residing in poverty, in war, someone who is sick, etc. In these moments, you can write in a gratitude journal and consider what you do have, when your emotions or situations feel unmanageable.
E motions	When caught up in the moment of strong emotion, you may use Opposite Emotion as a tool. This technique encourages you to engage in the opposite action. For example: Feeling angry? Watch a funny movie. Feeling sad? Listen to upbeat music. Alternatively, the behaviors can be more active, for example, if you're lying in bed feeling down and lethargic? Get up and take a walk around the block.
P ushing Away	When you become emotionally activated, there is often a desire to hold on to stressful or activating thoughts. Visualize your anger and stress drifting away or you setting it aside or in a jar for later. You can also take action by writing your negative thoughts down and crumpling, ripping or shredding them up. These activities help you demonstrate that you're capable of pushing away the thoughts that don't serve a positive purpose while validating their existence.
T houghts	When you're in an intense emotional state, your perceptions are distorted by your emotions. Focus on your thoughts. Count to 10, recite a poem, have a passage to read, recall a go-to phrase, or a feel-good thought saved to memory.
S ensations	Physical sensations can provide great relief when you're overcome with emotion. Splash cold water on your face, smell a soothing scent, eat something sour like a lime or lemon, apply hand or face cream, etc. This tool acts to "bring us back to our senses!"

Distress Tolerance Skills Worksheet

For each of the letters below, write in you're A.C.C.E.P.T.S. adaptive and healthy strategy you can utilize.

A ctivities	
C ontributing	
C omparisons	
E motions	
P ushing Away	
T houghts	
S ensations	

Be well and learn more great strategies through my videos at <https://www.youtube.com/c/DrDanielFox> or on my website at www.drdfox.com.