**Crisis Intervention Skills**

*Peninsula Health Mental Health Service*

Acknowledgements

Much of this workbook is adapted from Linehan,M. (2014). DBT Skills Training Manual and Linehan,M. (2014). DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets.

**What are Crisis Intervention Skills?**

Crises can be highly stressful situations with the potential for very negative outcomes. Crises can create intense pressure for quick resolution by either triggering strong urges to cope by engaging in destructive behaviour (such as take drugs, self-harm, strike out in anger or quit a job) or shutting down and avoiding problems. This is when crisis intervention skills are needed.

The crisis intervention skills are practical skills to use in a crisis situation when the problems cannot be changed right away.

The skills include methods for short-circuiting or coping with overwhelming difficult emotions and intolerable situations.

The skills are not a cure for one’s problems or life. Beneficial effects may only be temporary and will need to done over and over again. The aim is to temporarily help you to re-direct painful thoughts and feelings toward helpful coping strategies.

Crisis intervention skills are designed to be used only in the short term. It is really important to try and resolve problems in the long term.



Overview of Crisis Intervention Skills

These are skills for tolerating painful events, urges, and emotions when you cannot make things better right away.

Overview of the STOP Skill

Improve the Moment

Problem Solving

Self-Soothe with the Five Senses

Body Scan; Sensory Awareness

Distract with Wise Mind ACCEPTS

TIP Your Body Chemistry

Pros and Cons

The STOP Skill

* When emotion is high, you may find that you can act impulsively without thinking.
* When you react impulsively, you do not have time to use your skills.
* To be able to use your skills, you may need to first stop yourself from reacting.
* To help you stay in control, use the STOP skill.





**Stop** Do not just react. Freeze! Do not move a muscle! Your emotions may try to make you act without thinking. Stay in control!

**Take a step back** Take a step back from the situation. Take a break. Let go. Take a deep breath. Do not let your feelings make you act impulsively.

**Observe** Notice what is going on inside and outside you. What is the situation? What are your thoughts and feelings? What are the others saying or doing?

**Proceed mindfully** Act with awareness. In deciding what to do, consider your thoughts and feelings, the situation, and other people’s thoughts and feelings. Think about your goals. What actions will make it better or worse?

**Practising the STOP Skill-Worksheet**

**Try to find situations where you can practise your STOP Skill**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Situation** | **Which part of the STOP skill did you practise?**   * **STOP** * **Take a step back** * **Observe** * **Proceed mindfully** | **Rate level of distress tolerance before/after skill**  **(0=I can’t stand it; 5=I can definitely survive)** |
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**PROS AND CONS**

When you have to make a decision between two choices, doing Pros and Cons can be very important in helping you make a wise choice. All of us need to use Pros and Cons some of the time. Sometimes Pros and Cons are very quickly done in our head e.g. let’s say you wake up late on the DBT group day and feel really tired and think “Oh it would feel so good to stay in bed” and then you think “ Oh! If I stay in bed, I will miss my group and I have committed to being there!”

Thinking about the pros and cons is especially helpful when faced with an urge in a crisis when it is very strong and when acting on the urge will make things *worse* in the long term.

At other times, it can be really helpful to write down the pros and cons.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | PROS | CONS |
| **Acting on crisis urges** | **Pros of acting on impulsive urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.** | **Cons of acting on impulsive urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.** |
| Example | “I get support” “I feel better” “It gets me out of a crisis” | “I feel angry with myself for giving in” “It means I can’t get to work for a couple of days” “my partner gets sick of my behaviour” |
| **Resisting crisis urges** | **Pros of resisting impulsive urges, doing what needs to be done and not giving up.** | **Cons of resisting impulsive urges, doing what needs to be done and not giving up.** |
| Example | “I feel proud of not giving into the urge”  My family can relax instead of being worried” | “It feels really bad, almost impossible to bear”  “I can’t get out of it quickly” “People don’t realise that I need help” |

**Pros and Cons of Acting on Crisis Urges Worksheet**

* Make a list of the pros and cons of *acting on crisis urges* - These might be to engage in dangerous, addictive, or harmful behaviours, or they might be to give in, give up, or avoid doing what is necessary to build a life you want to live..
  + Remember what has happened in the past when you have acted impulsively to escape the moment.
  + Consider short term relief versus long term effects
* Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages (Pros and Cons) of *resisting crisis urges*.
  + Think of the positive consequences of tolerating the distress. Imagine in your mind how good you will feel if you achieve your goals, if you don’t act impulsively.
  + Focus on long-term goals, the light at the end of the tunnel. Remember times when pain has ended

Describe the problem behaviour you are trying to stop\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **PROS** | **CONS** |
| **Acting on crisis urges** |  |  |
| **Resisting crisis urges** |  |  |

**TIP Your Body Chemistry**

**Skills for Managing Extreme Arousal**

**TIP Skills: Changing Your Body Chemistry**

* TIP skills change your body chemistry to reduce high emotional arousal and feelings of being overwhelmed
* TIP skills work very fast, within seconds to minutes, to bring down emotional arousal
* TIP skills are as effective as behaviours you might use that have problematic consequences (e.g. drinking, using drugs, self-harm, over-eating) without the short and long-term negative results
* TIP skills work like fast-acting medications, but without the cost of medications or the side effects that some medications cause
* TIP skills are easy to use and don’t require a lot of thinking
* Some TIP skills can be used in public without others’ knowing that you are using the skills

**How the TIP Skills work**

The TIP skills are designed to activate the human body’s physiological nervous system for decreasing arousal. The nervous system consists of two parts: a sympathetic nervous system and a parasympathetic nervous system. These two systems work in opposite directions.

The sympathetic system activates the fight-or-flight syndrome and increases arousal. The parasympathetic system increases emotion regulations, which is associated with decreases in emotional arousal. All of the TIP skills regulate emotions by increasing activity of the parasympathetic nervous system.



**TIP Skills: Changing Your Body Chemistry**

To reduce extreme emotion mind *fast*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| T | **TIP THE TEMPERATURE of your face with COLD WATER\***  **(to calm down fast)**   * Holding your breath, put your face in a bowl of cold water, or hold a cold pack (or zip-lock bag of cold water) on your eyes an cheeks. * Hold for 30 seconds. Keep water above 10**°** C. |
| I | **INTENSE EXERCISE\***  (to calm down your body when it is revved up by emotion)   * Engage in intense exercise, if only for a short while. * Expend your body’s stored up physical energy by running, walking fast, jumping, playing basketball, lifting weights, etc. |
| P | **PACED BREATHING**  (pace your breathing by slowing it down)   * Breathe deeply into your belly * Slow your pace of inhaling and exhaling way down (on average, five to six breaths per minute) * Breathe ***out*** more slowly than you breathe ***in*** (for example, 5 seconds in and 7 seconds out) |
| **PARIED MUSCLE RELAXATION**  (to calm down by pairing muscle relaxation with breathing out)   * While breathing into your belly deeply tense your body muscles (not so much as to cause a cramp) * Notice the tension in your body * While breathing out, say the word “RELAX” in your mind * Let go of the tension * Notice the difference in your body |

\*Caution: Very cold water decreases your heart rate rapidly. Intense exercise will increase heart rate. Consult your G.P. before using these skills if you have a heart or medical condition, a lowered base heart rate due to medications, take a beta-blocker, are allergic to cold, or have an eating disorder.

**Using Cold Water, Step by Step**

COLD WATER CAN WORK WONDERS\*

When you put your full face into cold water…or your put a zip-lock bag with cold water on your eyes and upper cheeks, and hold your breath it tells your brain you are diving underwater. Splashing cold water on your face may be sufficient.

This causes the “dive response” to occur. (it may take 15-30 seconds to start)

Your heart slows down, blood flow to nonessential organs is reduced, and blood flow is redirected to the brain and heart.

This response can actually help regulate your emotions.

This will be useful as a distress tolerance strategy when you are having a very strong, distressing emotion, or when you are having very strong urges to engage in unhelpful or dangerous behaviours.

**This strategy works best when you are sitting quietly**

**TRY IT OUT**

\*Caution: Very cold water decreases your heart rate rapidly. If you have a heart or medical condition, a lowered base heart rate due to medications, or take a beta-blocker, consult your G.P. before using these skills. Avoid ice water if you are allergic to the cold.

**Changing Body Chemistry with TIP Skills Worksheet**

Describe the situation you were in when you chose to practice each skill. Rate both your emotional arousal and distress tolerance before and after using the TIP skill. Describe what you actually did.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| T | **CHANGING MY FACIAL TERMPERATURE**  Used cold water to change emotions  Situation:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Arousal (0-10) Before:\_\_\_\_ After:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Distress tolerance (0=I can’t stand it; 10=I can definitely survive Before:\_\_\_\_ After:\_\_\_\_  What did you do?  (describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| I | **INTENSE EXERCISE**  Situation:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Arousal (0-10) Before:\_\_\_\_ After:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Distress tolerance (0=I can’t stand it; 10=I can definitely survive Before:\_\_\_\_ After:\_\_\_\_  What did you do?  (describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| P | **PACED BREATHING**  Situation:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Arousal (0-10) Before:\_\_\_\_ After:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Distress tolerance (0=I can’t stand it; 10=I can definitely survive Before:\_\_\_\_ After:\_\_\_\_  What did you do?  (describe): |
|  |

**Paired Muscle Relaxation, Step by Step**

**Paired Muscle Relaxation, Step by Step**

Paired muscle relaxation, is the pairing of muscles relaxing with breathing out. It teaches you to notice tension and then relax muscles.

* Tensing and then relaxing muscles groups cause your muscles to become more relaxed than they were in the beginning, and more relaxed than you can ordinarily achieve by trying to relax without first tensing.
* Pairing letting go of tension with saying the word “RELAX” in your mind while exhaling conditions your body to let go of tension and relax in the future.

Note: Tensing and relaxing muscles may not result in relaxation straight away as learning to relax involves practise. The important part of the exercise is to learn awareness of body tension.



**Paired Muscle Relaxation, Step by Step**

**When you are starting**, practice in a quiet room alone where you will not be disturbed and have enough time. In time, you will be able to relax effectively in many different kinds of places.

**Get comfortable**, either lie on a bed, on the floor, or sit in a comfortable armchair. Loosen off any tight clothing.

**Now that you are ready to begin…..**

* For each area of the body listed below, gather the tension by tightening muscles, Focus on the tightness in and around that area. Hold the tension as you inhale for 5-6 seconds, then release and breathe out.
* As you release, say in your mind very slowly the word “RELAX”
* Observe the changes in sensations as you relax for 10-15 seconds then move on to the next muscle.
* Start first with all the muscles, then practise with groups of muscles until you are good at tensing your whole body at once.
* By practising pairing exhaling and the word “RELAX” with relaxing your muscles, you will eventually be able to relax just by letting go and saying the word “RELAX”

1. Hands and wrists: Make fists with both hands and pull fists up on the wrists.
2. Lower and upper arms: Make fists and bend both arms up to touch your shoulders,
3. Shoulders: Pull both shoulders up to your ears
4. Forehead: Pull both shoulders up to your ears
5. Eyes: Shut eyes tightly
6. Lips and lower face: Press lips together
7. Tongue and mouth: Teeth together; tongue pushing on upper mouth
8. Neck: Push chin down to chest
9. Chest: Take a deep breath and hold it
10. Back: Arch back, bringing shoulder blades together
11. Stomach: Hold stomach in tightly
12. Buttocks: Squeeze buttocks together
13. Upper legs and thighs: Legs out; tense thighs
14. Calves: Legs out; point toes down
15. Ankles: Legs out; point toes together, heels out, toes curled under

Remember, paired relaxation is a skill. It takes time to develop.

**Paired Muscle Relaxation Worksheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Average level of relaxation before/after (0-10)** | **Check which muscles you tensed and relaxed (check more than one if necessary)** | **Did you use the skill when tense or overwhelmed or just for practise?** |
|  | **/** | ☐ Individual muscles  ☐ Groups  ☐ All at once |  |
|  | **/** | ☐ Individual muscles  ☐ Groups  ☐ All at once |  |
|  | **/** | ☐ Individual muscles  ☐ Groups  ☐ All at once |  |
|  | **/** | ☐ Individual muscles  ☐ Groups  ☐ All at once |  |
|  | **/** | ☐ Individual muscles  ☐ Groups  ☐ All at once |  |
|  | **/** | ☐ Individual muscles  ☐ Groups  ☐ All at once |  |
|  | **/** | ☐ Individual muscles  ☐ Groups  ☐ All at once |  |

**Effective Rethinking and Paired relaxation, Step by Step**

**Effective Rethinking and Paired relaxation, Step by Step**

The combination of effective rethinking with paired relaxation is a method of using both more helpful self-statements and progressive muscle relaxation to bring down arousal rapidly in moments of high stress.

What I tell myself

Emotional arousal

**Step 1.** Write own the **prompting event** that is often related to distressing emotions.

**Step 2. Ask:** “What must I be telling myself (that is, what are my interpretations and thoughts) about the event that causes such distress and arousal?” Write these down. Examples: “He hates me,” “I can’t stand this”. “I can’t do this”, “I’ll never make it”, “I am out of control”.

**Step 3. Rethink** the situation and its meaning in a way that counteracts the thoughts and interpretations producing stress and distressing emotions. As you rethink the situation, write down as many effective thoughts as you can to replace the stressful thoughts.

**Step 4.** When you are not in the stressful prompting event, practise imagining saying the helpful response while breathing in and when breathing out, say “RELAX” and relax all your muscles.

Examples:

* (Breathe in)-“ “I may not like this, but I can stand it…..so… (Breathe out)-””RELAX”
* (Breathe in)-“ “I’m in control…….so….(Breathe out)-””RELAX”

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Effective Thinking and Relaxation Worksheet**  While breathing in, say to yourself an effective self-statement.  When breathing out, say “RELAX” and let the tension go from your muscles | | |
| **Situation associated with distressing emotions** | **Unhelpful Thought** | **Effective self-statement** |
|  |  |  |

**Distraction Techniques**

**Distraction Techniques**

The Distraction handouts have list of some of the strategies that have been found to help people survive painful situations or emotions.

Often it takes using a few different distraction strategies to help get through the moment.

The aim is to temporarily stop you thinking about your pain, and give you time to find an appropriate coping response (is different to avoiding).



**Distraction Techniques**

**Distract your thoughts**

* Remember events from your past that were pleasant, fun, or exciting. Try to remember as many details as possible about these happy memories. What did you do? Who were you with? What happened?
* Look outside at the natural world around you. Observe the flowers, trees, sky, and landscape as closely as you can. Observe any animals that are around. Listen to the sounds that they make. Or if you live in a city without much nature around you, do your best to observe what you can or close your eyes and imaging a scene you’ve observed in the past.

**Distract yourself by** doing something for someone else:

* Call your friends and ask it they need help doing something such as a chore, grocery shopping, or housecleaning
* Ask a family member if you can help them with something. Tell them you’re bored and looking for something to do.
* Call someone you know and offer to have lunch with them – go out or make something at home
* If you can plan ahead for moments like this when you’re overwhelmed, call your local volunteer organization, soup kitchen, homeless shelter
* Plan to participate in activities that help other people
* Join a local environmental group, political activities group, or other organization, and get involved helping other people



**Distraction Techniques continued**

**Take your attention off yourself:**

* Go to a local shop, shopping centre, bookstore, or park. Just sit and watch other people or walk around among them. Watch what they do, observe how they dress, listen to their conversations.
* Observe as many details about these other people as you can. Count the number of people with blue eyes versus the number of people with brown eyes.
* When your thinking returns to your own pain, refocus on the details of the people you are watching.

**Think of someone you care about:**

* It could be your partner, parent, children, or friend, or someone else you admire such as Mother Teresa, Ghandi, Jesus, the Dalai Lama, Ganesha, and so on. It could even be a movie star, an athlete, or someone you’ve never met.
* Keep a picture of them in your wallet or purse
* When you’re feeling distressed, take out the picture and imagine a healing, peaceful conversation you would have with that person if you could talk to them at the moment when you’re feeling hurt. What would they say to you that would help make you feel better? Imagine them saying those words to you.

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**Distraction Techniques continued**

* Imagine yourself as a hero correcting some past or future event in your life. How would you do it? What would people say?
* Imaging yourself getting praise from someone whose opinion matters to you. What did you do? What does this person say to you? Why does this person’s opinion matter to you?
* Keep a copy of your favourite saying or favourite prayer with you. Then, when you feel distressed, pull it out and read it to yourself. Imagine the words calming and soothing you. Use imagery (such as white light coming down from the universe or heaven) that soothes you as you read the words.



**Distract yourself by leaving**

* Sometimes the best think you can do is leave. If you’re in a very painful situation with someone and you recognize that your emotions are going to overwhelm you and possibly make the situation worse than it is already, then it’s often better to just leave. Remember, if you’re already overwhelmed by your emotions, it will be harder for you to think of a healthy resolution to your problem.
* Maybe it’s best to put some distance between you and the situation in order to give yourself time to calm your emotions and think of what to do next. Just walk away if that’s the best you can do. It will be better than adding fuel to the emotion fire.

**Distraction Techniques continued**

**Distract yourself with tasks and chores**

Many people don’t schedule enough time to take care of themselves or their living environments. As a result, tasks and chores go uncompleted. Here, then, is the perfect opportunity to do something to take care of yourself and your environment. The next time you’re in a situation in which your emotions become too painful, temporarily distract yourself by engaging in one of the following activities.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Wash the dishes | Wash the dirty clothes |
| Make a phone call you have put off | Do your homework |
| Clean your bedroom | Clean your shoes |
| Clean the garage | Clean the bathtub |
| Clean out your wardrobe | Water your plants or |
| Mow the lawn | Pay the bills |
| Reorganize a room | Clean your jewellery |
| Organize your books, CDs, DVDs | Weed the garden |

**Distract yourself by counting**

* Counting is a simple skill that can really keep your mind busy and help you focus on something other than your pain. Here are some examples. Tick the ones you’re willing to do, and then add any activities you can think of.

**Count your breaths.**

* Sit in a comfortable chair, put one hand on your stomach, and count your breaths

**Count anything else**

* If you’re too distracted by your emotions, simply count the different sounds that you’re hearing.
* **Count or subtract by sevens (or any other number as long as it’s not too easy)**

**Distraction Techniques continued**

**Distract yourself with pleasurable activities**

* Sometimes doing something that makes you feel good is the best way to distract yourself from painful emotions.
* Remember, you don’t have to wait until you feel overwhelmed by painful emotions to do an activity. It’s helpful to engage in these types of activities on a regular basis. In fact, you should try to do something pleasurable every day.
* Exercise is also especially important because not only is it good for your overall physical health, it’s also been shown to be an effective treatment for depression in some cases. Plus, exercise makes you feel good almost immediately by releasing natural painkillers in your body called endorphins.



**List of Pleasurable Activities**

**Tick the ones you’re willing to do and then add any activities that you can think of:**

* Talk to a friend on the phone
* Go out and visit a friend
* Invite a friend to come to your home
* Text message your friends
* Organise a party
* Exercise
* Lift weights
* Do yoga, tai chi, pilates, or take a class to learn
* Stretch your muscles
* Go to your local playground and watch a game being played, or join in
* Play something you can do by yourself if no-one else is around, hitting a tennis ball against a wall, handball, mini-golf, billiards/pool
* Go for a long walk in a park or somewhere that’s peaceful
* Go outside and watch the clouds
* Go for a run
* Ride your bike
* Go for a swim
* Go hiking
* Get a massage; this can also help soothe your emotions
* Get out of the house, even if you just sit outside
* Go for a drive in your car, or go somewhere on public transport
* Plan a trip to a place you have never been before (your local park, another suburb, a country town)
* Sleep or have a nap
* Cook your favourite dish or meal
* Cook a recipe you’ve never tried before
* Take a cooking class
* Go out for something to eat
* Borrow a friend’s dog and take it to the park
* Give your pet a bath
* Go outside and watch the birds and other animals
* Find something funny to do, like read the comics

**List of Pleasurable Activities**

* Watch a funny move, start a funny movie collection
* Go to the movies
* Watch TV
* Listen to the radio
* Go to a sporting event, like football, cricket, basketball (choose a local club to follow?)
* Play a game with a friend
* Play solitaire
* Play video games
* Go online to chat
* Visit your favourite web sites
* Create your own online blog
* Sell something you don’t want on the internet
* Buy something on the internet
* Do a puzzle with a lot of pieces
* Call a crisis hotline and talk to someone
* Go shopping
* Get a haircut
* Go to a spa
* Go to a library
* Go to your favourite café for a coffee or tea
* Visit a museum or the local art gallery
* Go to the mall or park, and watch other people; try to imagine what they’re thinking
* Meditate or pray
* Go to your church, synagogue, temple, or other place of worship
* Join a group at your place of worship
* Write a letter to god
* Call a family member you haven’t spoken to for a long time
* Learn a new language
* Sing, or learn how to sing
* Play a musical instrument, or learn how to play one
* Write a song
* Listen to some happy, upbeat music (start collecting happy songs for when you are overwhelmed)
* Turn on some loud music and dance in your room
* Memorise lines from your favourite movie, song, or play

**List of Pleasurable Activities**

* Make a movie or video with your phone or other recorder
* Take photographs
* Join a public speaking group and write a speech
* Participate in a local theatre group
* Sing in a local choir
* Join a club
* Plant a garden
* Work outside
* Knit, crochet, or sew - or learn how
* Make a scrapbook with pictures
* Paint your nails
* Change your hair colour
* Take a bubble bath or shower
* Work on your car, truck, motorbike or bicycle
* Sign up for a class that excites you at the local community centre, TAFE, or U3A
* Read your favourite book, magazine, paper, or poem
* Read a trashy celebrity magazine
* Write a letter to a friend or family member
* Write a poem, story, movie, or play about your life or someone else’s life
* Write in your journal or diary about what happened to you today
* Write a loving letter to yourself when you’re feeling good, and keep it to read when you’re feeling upset
* Make a list of ten things you’re good at or that you like about yourself, and keep it to read when you’re feeling upset
* Draw a picture
* Paint a picture with a brush or your fingers
* Make a list of the people you admire and want to be like – it can be anyone real or fictional throughout history. Describe what you admire about these people
* Write a story about the craziest or funniest thing that has ever happened to you
* Make a list of ten things you would like to do before you die
* Make a list of ten celebrities you would like to be friends with, and describe why
* Write a letter to someone who has made your life better and tell them why (you don’t have to send it)

**Create your own distraction plan**

Identify the distraction skills that you’re willing to use the next time you’re in a situation that’s causing you pain and discomfort. These chosen skills will make up your distraction plan. Remember, these are the first steps you will use in your plan to distract, relax, and cope. Write your chosen distraction techniques below. You might want to write them on a small note card or sticky note to keep in your wallet. The next time you’re in a distressing situation, you can pull out the card to remind yourself of your distraction plan.

**My Distraction Plan:**

1 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_



**Daily Skills Practice**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Using distraction techniques** | **Rate your level of achievement in practising this skill 0/5** |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |

**Self-soothing Skills**

**SELF-SOOTHING**

**Why self-soothe?**

Some people have difficulties with self-soothing and may believe that they do not deserve soothing, kindness, and gentleness; they may feel guilty when they self-soothe. Others believe that they should get soothing from others.

Self-soothing has to do with comforting, nurturing, and being gentle and kind to oneself. A way to remember these skills is to think of soothing each of the five senses: smell, vision, taste, touch, hearing.

**Self-Soothing Strategies**

**S**elf-soothing strategies have been found to help people when they are feeling distressed, sad or anxious. You may need to try a more than one as it may take using a few different self-soothing strategies to help get through the moment.



**Self-Soothing continued**

**Self-soothing using your sense of smell**

Smell is a very powerful sense that can often trigger memories and make you feel a certain way. Therefore, it’s very important that you identify smells that make you feel good, not bad. Here are some ideas. Tick the ones you’re willing to do, and then add any activities that you can think of.

* Burn scented candles or incense in your room or house. Find a scent that’s pleasing to you
* Wear scented oils, perfume, or cologne that makes you feel happy or confident
* Spray perfume on a test card in a department store, and carry it with you in your handbag or wallet
* Go to a place where the scent is pleasing to you, like a bakery or restaurant
* Bake your own food that has a pleasing smell
* Lie down in your local park and smell the grass and outdoor smells
* Buy some flowers, or pick some from your garden; smell some flowers growing in your neighbourhood
* Other ideas?

****

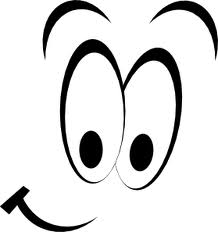
**Self-Soothing continued**

**Self-soothing using your sense of vision**

Vision is very important to humans. The things you can look at can often have very powerful effects on you, for better or for worse.

That’s why it’s important to find images that have a very soothing effect on you. And again, for each person, it comes down to individual taste and preference. Here are some ideas. Tick the ones you’re willing to do, and then add any activities that you can think of.

* Go through magazines and books to cut out pictures that you like. Make a collage of them to hang on your all or keep some of them with you in your handbag or wallet to look at when you’re away from home
* Find a place that’s soothing for you to look at, like a park or a museum. Or find a picture of a place that’s soothing for you to look at
* Go to the bookstore and find a collection of photographs or paintings that you find relaxing
* Draw or paint your own picture that’s pleasing to you
* Carry a picture or photo of someone you love, or someone you admire
* Find a postcard with a soothing picture and keep it in your bag
* Other ideas:



**Self-Soothing continued**

**Self-soothing using your sense of taste**

Taste is also a very powerful sense, that can trigger memories and feelings, so again, it’s important that you find the tastes that are pleasing to you. If eating is a problem for you, or might make you upset or nervous, use your other senses to calm yourself. If food soothes you, try some of these suggestions. Tick the ones you’re willing to do, and then add any activities that you can think of.

* Enjoy your favourite meal, whatever it is. Eat it slowly, so you can enjoy the way it tastes
* Drink something soothing like tea, coffee, or hot chocolate. Practice drinking it slowly so you can enjoy the way it tastes
* Eat a soothing food, like ice-cream, chocolate, pudding, or something else that makes you feel good.
* Keep some chewing gum or a lolly pop in your bag
* Suck on an ice cube or icy pole, especially if you’re feeling warm; enjoy the taste as it melts in your mouth
* Buy a piece of ripe, juicy fruit, and then eat it slowly
* Other ideas:



**Self-Soothing continued**

**Self-soothing using your sense of touch**

We often forget about our sense of touch, and yet we’re always touching something, such as the clothes we’re wearing or the chair we’re sitting on. Some things we touch can be really pleasing, such as patting a soft dog/cat. Other sensations are irritating or painful, and these often have a protective function (eg accidentally touching something hot). Each of us prefers different sensations. You have to find the ones that are most pleasing for you. Here are some suggestions. Tick the ones you’re willing to do, and then add any activities that you can think of.

* Carry something soft or velvety (like a piece of cloth) in your pocket or bag, to touch when you need to
* Have a hot or cold shower, and enjoy the feeling of the water falling on your skin
* Have a bath with bubble bath or scented oils, and enjoy the soothing sensations on your skin
* Get a massage (if you feel comfortable). Sometimes a shoulder and neck, or foot massage can be very relaxing
* Massage yourself. Sometimes rubbing your own sore or tense muscles is very soothing
* Play with your pet. If you don’t have a pet, visit a friend who does.
* Wear your most comfortable clothes, like your favourite t-shirt, baggy windcheater, or old jeans
* Other ideas:



**Self-Soothing continued**

**Self-soothing using your sense of hearing**

Certain sounds can soothe us. Listening to gently music, for example, may be relaxing. However, each one of us has our own tastes. You have to find what works best for you. Use these examples to find sounds that help you relax. Tick the ones you’re willing to do, and then add any activities that you can think of.

* Listen to soothing music. It might be music with singing or without. Listen to music online. Listen to music when you’re away from home.
* Listen to books on disc. Many public libraries will have audio books, sometimes just listening to the sound of someone talking can be relaxing.
* Turn on the TV or radio and just listen. Find a show that’s boring. Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down, and then close your eyes and just listen.
* Open your window or go outside and listen to the sounds. You might like to go to a park and listen.
* Listen to a recording of nature sounds such as birds or other wildlife.
* Listen to a recording of a relaxation exercise. Exercises such as these will help you imagine yourself relaxing in many different ways. There are free recordings available online;
* Listen to the sound of rushing or trickling water. Maybe there is a local fountain or waterfall, or you may be able to borrow a recording of water sounds from the library.
* Other ideas:



**Create your own self-soothing plan**

Now that you have read the suggestions to help you relax and soothe yourself using your five senses, make a list of techniques you are willing to use. For ideas, review the activities you ticked. Be specific about what you’re going to do. Make a list of ideas to try at home and a list of ideas you can take with you when you’re away from home.

**Self-soothing skills to use at home:**

You might want to put this list in a place you will see it, such as on the fridge, on the bathroom mirror, or near your bed, so that you remind yourself to relax as often as possible.

1.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Self-soothing skills to away from home:**

You might want to copy this list on to a small card to keep with you in your car or in your wallet or handbag. Make sure you have the items you need with you eg radio, pictures, so that you can also relax away from home.

1.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Daily Skills Practice**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Using Self-soothing skills** | **Rate your level of achievement in practising this skill 0/5** |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |

**Body Scan Meditation and Sensory Awareness,**

**Step by Step**

**Self-Soothing with a Body Scan Meditation**

Another option for self-soothing is a more focused attention to body sensations called the body scan. The idea is to settle the mind by letting go of thoughts about the past and the future and focus the mind on the present experiences of your breath and your body.

Sit on a chair, or lie on your back on the floor with legs uncrossed. Put your arms in a comfortable position by your side, on your abdomen, or (if sitting) put them on your thighs palms up. Open your eyes partially to let light in. Imagine your breath flowing to each part of your body as your attention gently moves up your body. Adopt a mind of curiosity and interest as you focus on each part of your body.

Don’t worry if you notice that thoughts, sounds, or other sensations come into your awareness. Just notice them and then gently refocus your mind. Don’t worry if your mind has been drawn away from the object of your attention and you find yourself thinking about something else (it nearly always happens). Just calmly, gently, but with resolution, turn your mind back to the part of the body you’ve reached.

You may need to bring your attention back over and over. You are not alone in this. It is this bringing of your attention back over and over and over, without judgment or harshness, that is the essential element of meditation.



**Body Scan Meditation Step by Step**

* Focus on your breathing. Notice how the air moves in and out of your body.
* Take three slow breaths
* Direct your attention to the toes of your left foot
* Notice the sensations in that part of your body while remaining aware of your breathing
* Imagine each breath flowing to your toes
* Looking with curiosity, ask, “what am I feeling in this part of my body”
* Focus on your left toes for several minutes
* Then move your focus to the arch and heel of your left foot, and hold it there for a minute or two while continuing to pay attention to your breathing
* Notice the sensations on your skin of warmth or coldness; notice the weight of your foot on the floor
* Imagine your breath flowing to the arch and heel of your left foot
* Ask “what am I feeling in this part of my body”
* Follow the same procedure as you move to your left ankle, calf, knee, upper legs, and thigh
* Repeat with the right leg, starting with your toes
* Then move through your lower back and around to your stomach
* Focus on the rising and falling of your abdomen as your breath goes in and out
* Then go on to your chest; left hand, arm, and shoulder; right hand, arm, and shoulder, neck, chin, tongue, mouth, lips, and lower face; and nose
* Notice your breath as it comes in and out of your nostrils
* Then focus on your upper cheeks, eyes, forehead, and scalp
* Finally, focus on the very top of your hair
* Then let go of tension in your body altogether

**Sensory Awareness, Step by Step**

Sensory awareness is aimed at centering oneself to enhance a sense of calmness and peace. It involves focusing attention on various sensation that one might have.

Find a comfortable position and close your eyes or look down. Staying in this position, think about the questions below, waiting for your imagination to give a response.

* Can you feel your hair touching your head?
* Can you feel your stomach rising and falling as you breathe?
* Can you feel the distance between your ears?
* Can you feel your breath touching the back of your eyes while you inhale?
* Can you notice your arms touching your body?
* Can you imagine a beautiful day at the beach?
* Can you notice the position of your tongue in your mouth?
* Can you feel how one arm is heavier than the other?
* Can you feel a tingling or numbness in one hand?
* Can you feel a change in the room temperature?
* Can you feel how your left arm is warmer than the right?
* Can you imagine how it would feel to be a rag doll?
* Can you notice any tightness in your left forearm?
* Can you imagine what it would be like to float on a cloud?
* Can you imagine what it would feel like to be stuck in golden syrup?
* Can you feel heaviness in your legs?
* Can you imagine floating in warm water?
* Can you allow yourself to drift lazily?
* Can you feel your face getting soft?
* Can you imagine a beautiful flower?
* Can you feel how one arm and leg are heavier than the other?

**Body Scan Meditation and Sensory Awareness, Step by Step. Worksheet**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Which skill did you use?** | **Rate level of distress tolerance before/after skill**  **(0=I can’t stand it; 10=I can definitely survive)** | **Did you use the skill when tense or overwhelmed?** |
|  |  | **/** |  |
|  |  | **/** |  |
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**Improve the Moment**

**Improve the Moment**

**What does ‘Improve the Moment’ mean?**

Improving the moment is responding to immediate difficult and painful events with helpful responses. Some strategies include changing the view of yourself through encouragement, or bringing meaning to the situation. Some strategies involve changing body responses through relaxation. Using mindful awareness or prayer can help with acceptance and letting go.

The crisis survival strategies are concerned with tolerating and surviving crises. Sometimes it can be helpful to change the way we respond to situations and the skills used to improve the moment may help in replacing immediate negative events with more positive ones.

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**Improve the Moment**

Improving the moment is replacing immediate negative events with more positive ones by making the moment more positive and easier to tolerate. Some strategies involve changing ideas of oneself or the situation. Some involve changing body responses to events. Prayer and focusing on one thing in the moment have to do with acceptance and letting go.

**With Imagery: Using imagery can create a safe place to go to.**

* Imagine very relaxing scenes.
* Imagine a secret room within yourself, seeing how it is decorated. Go into the room whenever you feel threatened. Close the door on anything that can hurt you.
* Imagine everything going well; imagine coping well.
* Make up a fantasy world that is calming and beautiful and let your mind go with it.
* Imagine hurtful emotions draining out of you like water out of a pipe.

**With Meaning: This is like making lemonade out of lemons**

* Find or create some purpose, meaning, or value in the pain.
* Remember, listen to, or read about spiritual values.
* Focus on whatever positive aspects of a painful situation you can find. Repeat them over and over in your mind.
* Make lemonade out of lemons.

**With Prayer:**

* Whether you believe in one God, many gods, a divine universe, or the goodness that exists within each human being, having faith in something bigger and more powerful than yourself can often make you feel empowered, safe, and calm.
* Open your heart to a supreme being, greater wisdom, God, your own wise mind.
* Ask for strength to bear the pain in this moment; turn things over to God or a high being.

**Improve the Moment continued**

**With One Thing in the Moment:**

* Focus your entire attention on just what you are doing right now.
* Focus your entire attention on physical sensations that accompany non-mental tasks (eg walking, washing, doing dishes, cleaning, fixing). Be aware of how your body moves during each task.



**With Self-Encouragement:**

There are times in life when we need to hear some encouraging words to keep us motivated or help us to endure the pain we are experiencing.

* Consider making a list of your own coping thoughts, and write your favourites on a small card to keep in your wallet
* Examples of coping thoughts:
  + I’m doing the best I can
  + This situation won’t last forever
  + I can be anxious and still deal with the situation
  + It’s OK to feel sad/anxious/afraid sometimes



**Improve the Moment continued**

**With a Brief Holiday:**

* Give yourself a brief holiday. Get in bed and pull the covers up over your head for 20 minutes.
* Ask you roommate to bring you coffee in bed or make you dinner (offer to reciprocate).
* Get a trashy magazine or newspaper, get in bed with chocolates, and read it.
* Make yourself some toast, bundle up in a chair and eat it slowly.
* Take a blanket to the park and sit on it for a whole afternoon.
* Unplug your phone for a day or let your answering machine screen your calls.
* Take a 1 hour breather from hard work that must be done.



**Daily Skills Practice**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Using Improve the Moment skills** | **Rate your level of achievement in practising this skill 0/5** |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |

**PROBLEM SOLVING**

**Options for Solving Any Problem**

When life presents you with problems, what are your options?

1. **SOLVE THE PROBLEM**

Find a solution-change the situation …..or leave, or get out of the situation for good.

1. **FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE PROBLEM**

Change (or regulate) your emotional response to the problem.

1. **TOLERATE THE PROBLEM**

Accept and tolerate both the problem and your responses to the problem with crisis intervention skills.

1. **STAY MISERABLE**

Or possibly make it worse!

**PROBLEM SOLVING TECHNIQUE**

Identify all current problems in a clear concise manner in a written list

A range of possible solutions that will lead to the achievement of the realistic goal should be written down. This may require 'lateral thinking' or novel ways of coping with difficulties and finding solutions.

One solution that appears to be the 'best' most feasible and be associated with the most positive outcome should be chosen.

The chosen solution should be broken down into a series of simple achievable steps and each step and the process of carrying out of each step should be rehearsed in imagination.



**PROBLEM SOLVING WORKSHEET**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **BRAINSTORM**  **SOLUTIONS**  **What can I do?** | **ADVANTAGES**  **OF POSSIBLE SOLUTION** | **DISADVANTAGES**  **OF POSSIBLE SOLUTION** | **Rating 0-5** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**1. Define the problem**

**2. Brainstorm possible solutions/options (do not evaluate, be creative)**

**3. Evaluate each solution/option as a realistic possibility (rate out of 5)**

**4. Pick a solution and agree to trial a solution**

**Problem Definition:…………………………………………………………………………….**