

ACCEPTS

distress tolerance skills

In the moment, it might feel like a painful emotion will never pass. But given time, emotions lessen in intensity, eventually fading away. The acronym **ACCEPTS** outlines seven techniques for tolerating distressing emotions until they pass.

A	Activities Do an activity that requires thought and concentration. <i>Read a book. Write in a journal. Do a work or school assignment. Play a sport.</i>
C	Contributing Focus on someone or something other than yourself. <i>Ask a friend about their day. Make a gift for someone. Write a thoughtful card.</i>
C	Comparisons Put your situation into perspective by comparing it to something worse. <i>Remember a time when you were in more pain, or think about someone who has it worse.</i>
E	Emotions Do something to create a new emotion that competes with your distressing emotion. <i>Sad? Watch a funny movie. Anxious? Listen to soothing music. Angry? Go for a walk.</i>
P	Pushing away Visualize your emotion as separate from you. <i>Imagine putting what bothers you into a box, taping it shut, and burying it in the ground.</i>
T	Thoughts Keep your mind busy so you don't have room to dwell on painful feelings. <i>Count backwards from 1,000 by 7. Name as many animals as you can, starting with "A."</i>
S	Sensations Create safe physical sensations to distract you from upsetting emotions. <i>Hold an ice cube in your hand. Eat something sour or spicy. Snap a rubber band on your wrist.</i>

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Instructions: Create your own ACCEPTS plan for coping with an emotion you find distressing.

Activities: Write down an activity requiring concentration that will distract you from your emotion.

Contributing: Come up with a way to focus on others rather than on your emotion.

Comparisons: Describe a time when this emotion was more intense, but you endured.

Emotions: Name something you can do to create a competing emotion.

Pushing away: Decide how you'll visualize your emotion as separate from you (put it in a box, throw it into a deep lake, watch it float by like a cloud).

Thoughts: Come up with a mental game or challenge to keep your mind busy (count backwards, name as many countries as you can, recite the words of a poem or song).

Sensations: Name a safe physical sensation that can distract you from your emotion.