

Distress Tolerance

DBT skills

Radical Acceptance

When you face problems out of your control, it's natural to think "This isn't fair" or "I shouldn't have to deal with this." But these ways of thinking only make the pain worse and add frustration.

Radical acceptance means accepting something fully, both mentally and emotionally. It does not require liking or approving of something. You're just accepting the facts of the situation.

Learning to accept problems that are out of your control softens their emotional impact.

Situation	Typical thinking	Radical acceptance
You didn't get a job you wanted.	"This isn't fair—I did everything right. I was the best candidate for the job."	"I'm frustrated, but there's nothing I can do now. They felt someone else was a better fit."
You receive an untreatable medical diagnosis.	"I'm too young for this. Everyone else gets to go about their lives and I have to deal with this."	"I have to play the cards I'm dealt. This is awful, but I'll push forward."

Self-Soothe with Senses

Imagine spending an hour in a room that's too bright, hot, loud, and smelly. It wouldn't be long before it grates on your nerves! Unpleasant sensory experiences have a direct impact on mood.

It might be less obvious, but the reverse is also true. You can **self-soothe with your senses** by finding pleasurable ways to engage them. Doing so will help soothe your distressing emotions.

Vision	Go for a walk somewhere nice and pay attention to the sights.
Hearing	Listen to something enjoyable such as music or nature.
Touch	Take a warm bath or get a massage.
Taste	Have a small treat—it doesn't have to be a full meal.
Smell	Find some flowers or spray a perfume or cologne you like.

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Distraction (ACCEPTS)

In the moment, it might feel like a painful emotion will never pass. But given time, emotions lessen in intensity until they disappear. Sometimes you just need to get through the next few minutes or hours.

Distractions help you buy time and make it through an emotional downswing. The acronym ACCEPTS offers tips for how to do this.

A	Activities Engage in activities that require thought and concentration. This could be a hobby, a project, work, or school.
C	Contributing Focus on someone or something other than yourself. For example, you can volunteer or do a good deed.
C	Comparisons Look at your situation in comparison to something worse. Remember a time you were in more pain, or when someone else was going through something more difficult.
E	Emotions Do something that will create a competing emotion. Feeling sad? Watch a funny movie. Feeling nervous? Listen to soothing music.
P	Pushing away Push negative thoughts out of your mind. Imagine writing your problem on a piece of paper, crumpling it up, and throwing it away. Refuse to think about the situation until a better time.
T	Thoughts Occupy your mind so you don't have room to dwell on painful feelings. Count backwards from 1,000 by 7, recite a poem in your head, or read a book.
S	Sensations Find safe physical sensations to distract you from negative emotions. Wear a rubber band and snap it on your wrist, hold an ice cube in your hand, or eat something sour like a lime.