

# Distress Tolerance: **ACCEPTS**

adapted from a concept by Marsha Linehan

Distress Tolerance doesn't necessarily mean controlling your emotions. There is no such thing as a "wrong" or a "bad" feeling. You feel what you feel. What may be less productive and can lead to problems is how we choose to respond to our emotions.

Distress Tolerance skills teach us to understand our emotions, how we become more vulnerable to those emotions, and what we can do about it to avoid crisis situations.

ACCEPTS can be used as a response to overwhelming emotions. Review the information on what each letter of ACCEPTS stands for using the outline below, then go on to the next page to list some of your own Distress Tolerance skills.

When you find yourself overwhelmed by emotions in Emotional Mind, go down your list and try each of the things you've written down until you are able to return to Wise Mind.

**A**ctivities - Distract with simple, healthy, pleasurable activities like taking a walk, watching a movie, gardening, or playing a sport.

**C**ontributions - Help others when feeling distressed.

**C**omparisons - Refocus attention from oneself to others, but in a different way. In this case the situation of others - those coping in the same way or less well, or the less fortunate in general- are used to recast one's own situation in a more positive light. Compare yourself to people coping the same as you or less well than you or compare yourself to those less fortunate than you.

**E**ngage in activities that are opposite to current negative emotion (e.g., listening to happy music when sad)

**P**ushing Away - Take a "planned vacation" by focusing your mind on something pleasant that is unrelated to the current distressing situation. This is different than problematic dissociation. In this instance, the individual is exerting control over her thoughts as she disengages from the immediate environment and focusing only on positive imagery and memories.

**T**houghts - Distract with neutral thoughts like counting the number of tiles in the room, reading the titles of all the books on your bookshelf, etc...

**S**ensations - Distract with physical sensations. Some individuals hold ice cubes or take warm showers and focus on the resulting physical sensations. You may also find it helpful to engage in the Body Scan meditation or the Three Minute Breather.

# ACCEPTS Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

<b>A</b>	List some simple, healthy, pleasurable activities you enjoy below.
<b>C</b>	List some contributions you could make below.
<b>C</b>	List some positive comparisons below.
<b>E</b>	List some activities that are opposite to your current negative emotion below.
<b>P</b>	List some positive imagery and memories you can focus on below.
<b>T</b>	List some neutral thoughts that don't have any emotional content below.
<b>S</b>	List some physical sensations you could engage in below.