

ACCEPTS

In the moment, distressing emotions may seem impossible to overcome. However, over time, these emotions will lessen in intensity, and eventually fade away. The acronym **ACCEPTS** outlines seven techniques for distracting yourself from distressing emotions until they pass.

Activities

Do an activity that requires thought and concentration.

- Read a book.
- Write in a journal.
- Do a work project or school assignment.
- Play a sport.

Contributing

Do something that allows you to focus on another person.

- Ask a friend about their day.
- Make a gift for a loved one.
- Volunteer.
- Send a thoughtful card.

Comparisons

Put your situation in perspective by comparing it to something more painful or distressing.

- Think of a time when you were in more distress and realize how things are not as bad right now.
- Realize how resilient you are by thinking of someone who is coping less well than you are.

Emotions

Do something to create a new emotion that will compete with your distressing emotion.

- Sad? Watch a happy movie.
- Anxious? Practice deep breathing.
- Angry? Go for a walk.

Pushing away

Avoid a painful situation or block it from your mind using a technique such as imagery.

- Try to delay harmful urges for one hour. If the urge doesn't pass, put it off for another hour.
- Imagine putting your negative thoughts in a box, taping it shut, and putting it in the back of your closet.

Thoughts

Use a mental strategy or an activity to shift your thoughts to something neutral.

- Starting with the letter "A," name objects around you that start with each letter of the alphabet.
- Count a specific object around you (e.g. bricks, trees...) • Sing a song out loud or recite it in your head.

Sensations

Find safe physical sensations to distract you from distressing emotions.

- Hold an ice cube in your hand.
- Eat something sour or spicy.
- Take a cold shower.

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Instructions: Respond to the following prompts to create your own **ACCEPTS** plan for tolerating distress. Give responses that you would be likely to use.

What is a distressing emotion you would like to manage with **ACCEPTS**? _____

Activities: List activities requiring concentration that would distract from your distressing emotion.

Contributing: List activities that allow you to focus on others, instead of your distressing emotion.

Comparisons: Describe a time when you struggled with your distressing emotion, but showed resilience. Recall this experience when faced with the emotion again.

Emotions: How can you create a new emotion that competes with your distressing emotion?

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Pushing away: What can you do to avoid thoughts and situations that create the distressing emotion?

Thoughts: List mental strategies or activities that would distract you from your distressing emotion.

Sensations: How can you create a safe physical sensation to distract from your distressing emotion?

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