

Distress Tolerance Skills

Distress Tolerance Week 1



Goals of Mindfulness Practice

REDUCE SUFFERING AND INCREASE HAPPINESS

☐ Reduce pain, tension, and stress.

☐ Other: _____

INCREASE CONTROL OF YOUR MIND

☐ Stop letting your mind be in control of you.

☐ Other: _____

EXPERIENCE REALITY AS IT IS

☐ Live life with your eyes wide open.

☐ Experience the reality of your . . .

- connection to the universe.
- essential “goodness.”
- essential validity.

☐ Other: _____

Mindfulness Definitions

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

- **Intentionally living with awareness in the present moment.**
(Waking up from automatic or rote behaviors to participate and be present to our own lives.)
- **Without judging or rejecting the moment.**
(Noticing consequences, discerning helpfulness and harmfulness—but letting go of evaluating, avoiding, suppressing, or blocking the present moment.)
- **Without attachment to the moment.**
(Attending to the experience of each new moment, rather than ignoring the present by clinging to the past or grabbing for the future.)

WHAT ARE MINDFULNESS SKILLS?

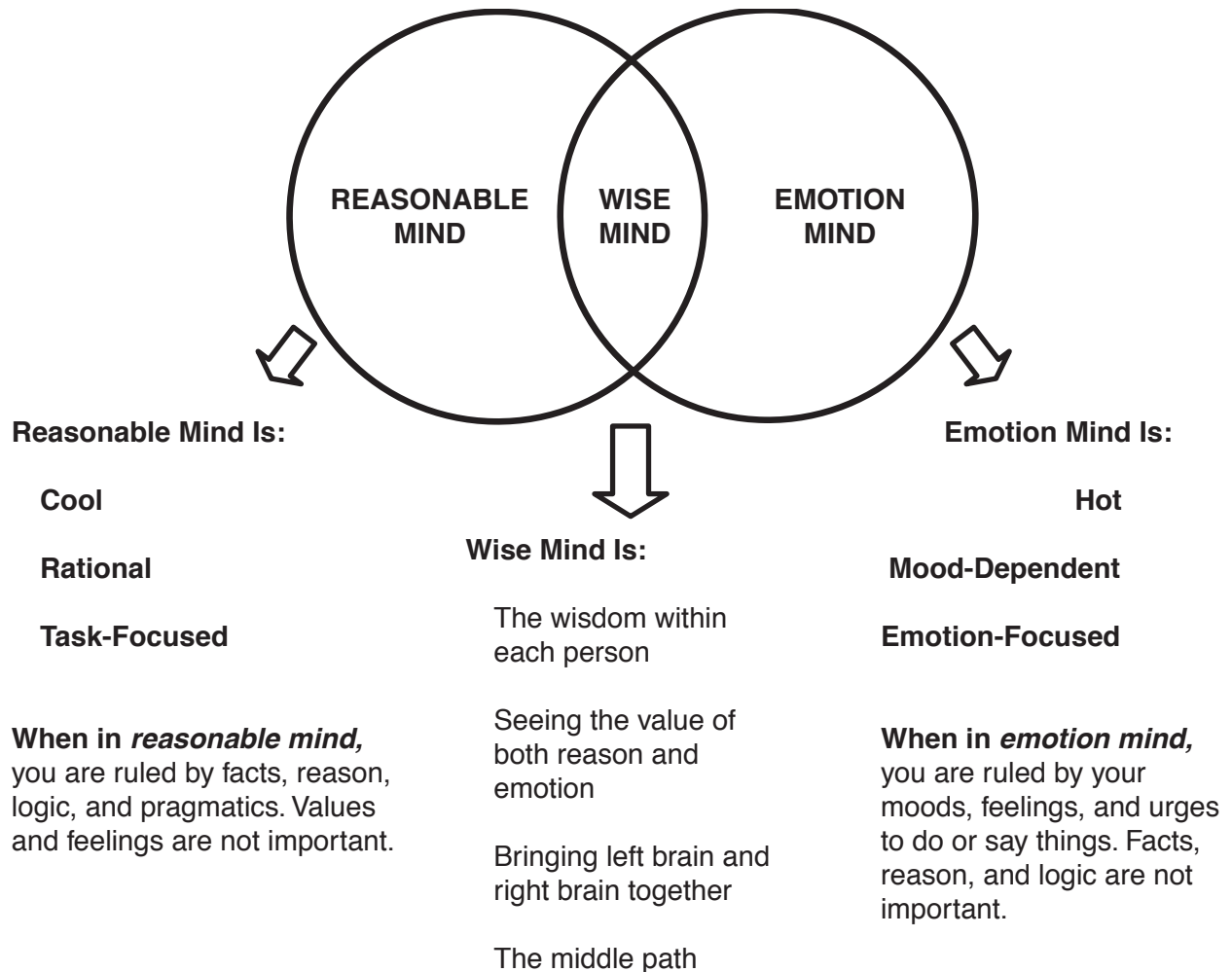
- Mindfulness skills are the specific behaviors to practice that, when put together, make up mindfulness.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS PRACTICE?

- **Mindfulness and mindfulness skills** can be practiced at any time, anywhere, while doing anything. Intentionally paying attention to the moment, without judging it or holding on to it, is all that is needed.
- **Meditation** is practicing mindfulness and mindfulness skills while sitting, standing, or lying quietly for a predetermined period of time. When meditating, we *focus* the mind (for example, we *focus* on body sensations, emotions, thoughts, or our breath), or we *open* the mind (paying attention to whatever comes into our awareness). There are many forms of meditation that differ mostly by whether we are opening the mind or focusing the mind—and, if focusing, depending on what is the focus of our attention.
- **Contemplative prayer** (such as Christian centering prayer, the rosary, Jewish Shema, Islamic Sufi practice, or Hindu raja yoga) is a spiritual mindfulness practice.
- **Mindfulness movement** also has many forms. Examples include yoga, martial arts (such as Qigong, tai chi, aikido, and karate), and spiritual dancing. Hiking, horseback riding, and walking can also be ways to practice mindfulness.



Wise Mind: States of Mind



Ideas for Practicing Wise Mind

The mindfulness skills often require a *lot* of practice. As with any new skill, it is important to first practice when you don't need the skill. If you practice in easier situations, the skill will become automatic, and you will have the skill when you need it. Practice with your eyes closed and with your eyes open.

1. ☐ **Stone flake on the lake.** Imagine that you are by a clear blue lake on a beautiful sunny day. Then imagine that you are a small flake of stone, flat and light. Imagine that you have been tossed out onto the lake and are now gently, slowly, floating through the calm, clear blue water to the lake's smooth, sandy bottom.
 - Notice what you see, what you feel as you float down, perhaps in slow circles, floating toward the bottom. As you reach the bottom of the lake, settle your attention there within yourself.
 - Notice the serenity of the lake; become aware of the calmness and quiet deep within.
 - As you reach the center of your self, settle your attention there.
2. ☐ **Walking down the spiral stairs.** Imagine that within you is a spiral staircase, winding down to your very center. Starting at the top walk very slowly down the staircase, going deeper and deeper within yourself.
 - Notice the sensations. Rest by sitting on a step, or turn on lights on the way down if you wish. Do not force yourself further than you want to go. Notice the quiet. As you reach the center of your self, settle your attention there — perhaps in your gut or your abdomen.
3. ☐ **Breathing “Wise” in, “Mind” out.** Breathing in, say to yourself, “Wise”; breathing out, say “Mind.”
 - Focus your entire attention on the word “wise,” then, focus it again entirely on the word “mind.”
 - Continue until you sense that you have settled into Wise Mind.
4. ☐ **Asking Wise Mind a question.** Breathing in, silently ask Wise Mind a question.
 - Breathing out, listen for the answer.
 - Listen, but do not give yourself the answer. Do not tell yourself the answer; listen for it.
 - Continue asking on each in-breath for some time. If no answer comes, try again another time.

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5. ☐ **Asking is this Wise Mind?** Breathing in, ask yourself, “Is this (action, thought, plan, etc.) Wise Mind?”
- Breathing out, listen for the answer.
 - Listen, but do not give yourself the answer. Do not tell yourself the answer; listen for it.
 - Continue asking on each in-breath for some time. If no answer comes, try again another time.
6. ☐ **Attending to your breath coming in and out, let your attention settle into your center.**
- Breathing in completely, notice and follow the sensations of your breath coming in.
 - Let your attention settle into your center, at the bottom of your breath, at your solar plexus— *or*
 - Let your attention settle in the center of your forehead, your “third eye,” at the top of your breath.
 - Keeping your attention at your center, exhale, breathing normally, maintaining attention.
 - Settle into Wise Mind.
7. ☐ **Expanding awareness.** Breathing in, focus your awareness on your center.
- Breathing out, stay aware of your center, but expand awareness to the space you are in now.
 - Continue on in the moment.
8. ☐ **Dropping into the pauses between inhaling and exhaling.**
- Breathing in, notice the pause after inhaling (top of breath).
 - Breathing out, notice the pause after exhaling (bottom of breath).
 - At each pause, let yourself “fall into” the center space within the pause.

9. ☐ **Other Wise Mind practice ideas:** _____



Taking Hold of Your Mind: “What” Skills

OBSERVE

- ☐ **Notice your body sensations** (coming through your eyes, ears, nose, skin, and tongue).
- ☐ **Pay attention** on purpose, to the present moment.
- ☐ **Control your attention**, but not what you see. Push away nothing. Cling to nothing.
- ☐ **Practice wordless watching:** Watch thoughts come into your mind and let them slip right by like clouds in the sky. Notice each feeling, rising and falling, like waves in the ocean.
- ☐ **Observe both inside and outside yourself.**

DESCRIBE

- ☐ **Put words on the experience.** When a feeling or thought arises, or you do something, acknowledge it. For example, say in your mind, “Sadness has just enveloped me,” or “Stomach muscles tightening,” or “A thought ‘I can’t do this’ has come into my mind.”
- ☐ **Label what you observe.** Put a name on your feelings. Label a thought as just a thought, a feeling as just a feeling, an action as just an action.
- ☐ **Unglue your interpretations and opinions** from the facts. Describe the “who, what, when, and where” that you observe. Just the facts.
- ☐ Remember, **If you can’t observe it through your senses, you can’t describe it.**

PARTICIPATE

- ☐ **Throw yourself completely into activities of the current moment.** Do not separate yourself from what is going on in the moment (dancing, cleaning, talking to a friend, feeling happy or feeling sad).
- ☐ **Become one with whatever you are doing**, completely forgetting yourself. Throw your attention to the moment.
- ☐ **Act intuitively from Wise Mind.** Do just what is needed in each situation—a skillful dancer on the dance floor, one with the music and your partner, neither willful nor sitting on your hands.
- ☐ **Go with the flow.** Respond with spontaneity.

Ideas for Practicing Observing

BY COMING BACK TO YOUR SENSES

Remember: Observing is bringing your mind back to the sensations of your body and mind.

Observe with your eyes:

1. ☐ Lie on the ground and watch the clouds in the sky.
2. ☐ Walking slowly, stopping somewhere with a view, notice flowers, trees, and nature itself.
3. ☐ Sit outside. Watch who and what go by in front of you, without following them with your head or your eyes.
4. ☐ Notice the facial expression and movements of another person. Refrain from labeling the person's emotions, thoughts, or interests.
5. ☐ Notice just the eyes, lips, or hands of another person (or just one feature of an animal).
6. ☐ Pick up a leaf, a flower, or a pebble. Look at it closely, trying to see each detail.
7. ☐ Find something beautiful to look at, and spend a few minutes contemplating it.
8. Other: _____

Observe sounds:

9. ☐ Stop for a moment and just listen. Listen to the texture and shape of the sounds around you. Listen to the silences between the sounds.
10. ☐ If someone is talking, listen to the pitch of the voice, to the smoothness or roughness of the sounds, to the clarity or the mumbling of the speech, to the pauses between the words.
11. ☐ Listen to music, observing each note as it comes and the spaces between the notes. Try breathing the sounds into your body and letting them flow out again on your out breath.
12. Other: _____

Observe smells around you:

13. ☐ Breathing in, notice any smells around you. Bring something close to your nose, and notice the smells. Take it away, and then notice the smells again. Do they linger?
14. ☐ When eating, notice the aroma of the food; when cooking, notice the aroma of the spices or other ingredients; when bathing, smell the soap or shampoo; when walking outside, notice the aroma of the air; when near flowers, bend down and “smell the roses.”
15. Other: _____

Observe taste and the act of eating:

16. ☐ Putting something in your mouth, pay attention to the taste. Keep it in your mouth, and notice all the taste sensations.
17. ☐ Lick a lollipop or something else. Notice just the sensation of taste.
18. ☐ Eat a meal, or even a part of a meal, paying attention to the taste of each mouthful.
19. Other: _____

Observe urges to do something:

When you are feeling an urge to do something impulsive,

20. ☐ “Urge-surf” by imagining that your urges are a surfboard and you are standing on the board, riding the waves.
21. ☐ Notice any urge to avoid someone or something.
22. ☐ Scan your entire body, and notice the sensations. Where in the body is the urge?
23. ☐ When you are chewing your food, notice when you have the urge to swallow.
24. Other: _____

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Observe sensations of touch on your skin:

25. ☐ Stroke your upper lip with your fingernail.
- Stop stroking, and notice how long it takes before you can't sense your upper lip at all.
26. ☐ When walking, notice the sensations of walking—your feet hitting the ground and rising up and down. Sometimes walk very slowly and notice. Sometimes walk very fast and notice.
27. ☐ When sitting, notice your thighs on the chair. Notice the curve of your knees and your back.
28. ☐ Pay attention to anything touching you.
- Try to feel your feet in your shoes, your body touching your clothes.
 - Feel your arms touching a chair.
 - Notice the sensations of your hands.
29. ☐ Touch something—the wall, a fabric, a table top, a pet, a piece of fruit, a person.
- Notice the texture of what you feel, notice the sensations on your skin.
 - Try it again with another part of your body.
 - Notice the sensations again.
30. ☐ Focus your attention on the sensations in your chest, your stomach, or your shoulders.
31. ☐ Focus your attention on the place in your body where you feel tight or tense.
32. ☐ Focus your attention on the space between your eyes.
33. Other: _____

Observe your breath: *Breathe evenly and gently, focusing your attention on:*

34. ☐ The movement of your stomach.
- As you begin to breathe in, allow your belly to rise in order to bring air into the lower half of your lungs.
 - As the upper halves of your lungs begin to fill with air, your chest begins to rise.
 - As you breathe out, notice your belly, then notice your chest. Don't tire yourself.
35. ☐ The pauses in your breathing.
- As you breathe in, notice the brief pause when your lungs have filled with air.
 - As you breathe out, notice the brief pause when you have expelled all the air.
36. ☐ The sensations in your nose as you breathe in and as you breathe out.
- As you breathe, close your mouth and breathe in through your nose, noticing the sensations traveling up and down your nostrils.
37. ☐ Your breath while walking slowly. Breathe normally.
- Determine the length of your breath—the exhalation and the inhalation—by the number of your footsteps. Continue for a few minutes.
 - Begin to lengthen your exhalation by one step. Do not force a longer inhalation. Let it be natural.
 - Watch your inhalation carefully to see whether there is a desire to lengthen it. Now lengthen the exhalation by one more footstep.
 - Watch to see whether the inhalation also lengthens by one step or not.
 - Only lengthen the inhalation when you feel that it will be comfortable.
 - After 20 breaths, return your breath to normal.
38. ☐ Your breath while listening to a piece of music.
- Breathe long, light, and even breaths.
 - Follow your breath; be master of it, while remaining aware of the movement and sentiments of the music.
 - Do not get lost in the music, but continue to be master of your breath and yourself.
39. ☐ Your breath while listening to a friend's words and your own replies. Continue as with music.
40. Other: _____

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Observe thoughts coming in and out of your mind:

41. ☐ Notice thoughts as they come into your mind.
 - Ask, "Where do thoughts come from?"
 - Then watch them to see if you can see where they come into your mind.
42. ☐ As you notice thoughts in your mind, notice the pauses between each thought.
43. ☐ Imagine that your mind is the sky and that thoughts are clouds.
 - Notice each thought-cloud as it drifts by, letting it drift in and out of your mind.
 - Imagine thoughts as leaves on water flowing down a stream, as boats drifting by on the lake, or as train cars rolling by you.
44. ☐ When worries go round and round in your mind, move your attention to the sensations in your body (those most intense right now). Then, keeping your attention on your body sensations, notice how long it takes for the worries to ooze away.
45. ☐ Step back from your mind, as if you are on top of a mountain and your mind is just a boulder down below.
 - Gaze at your mind, watching what thoughts come up when you are watching it.
 - Come back into your mind before you stop.
46. ☐ Watch for the first two thoughts that come into your mind.
47. Other: _____

Imagine that your mind is a:

48. ☐ Conveyor belt, and that thoughts and feelings are coming down the belt.
 - Put each thought or feeling in a box, and then put it on the conveyor belt and let it go by.
49. ☐ Conveyor belt, and that you are sorting thoughts and feelings as they come down the belt.
 - Label the types of thoughts or feelings coming by (e.g., worry thoughts, thoughts about my past, thoughts about my mother, planning-what-to-do thoughts, angry feeling, sad feelings).
 - Put them in boxes nearby for another time.
50. ☐ River, and that thoughts and feelings are boats going down the river.
 - Imagine sitting on the grass, watching the boats go by.
 - Describe or label each boat as it goes by.
 - Try not to jump on the boat.
51. ☐ Railroad track, and that thoughts and feelings are train cars going by.
 - Describe or label each as it goes by. Try not to jump on the train.
52. Other: _____

Observe by expanding awareness:

53. ☐ Breathing in, notice your breath. Then, keeping your breath in your awareness, on the next breath notice your hands. Then, keeping both in your awareness, on the next breath expand your awareness to sounds.
 - Continue holding all three in awareness at the same time.
 - Practice this awareness of threes at other times, selecting other things to be aware of.
54. ☐ Keeping your focus on what you are currently doing, gently expand your awareness to include the space around you.
55. ☐ Go hug a tree, and feel the sensations of the embrace.
 - Attend to the embrace of the sheets and blankets or comforters around you as you lie in bed.
 - Do this when you feel lonely and want to be loved or to love.
56. Other: _____

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Open your mind to your senses:

57. ☐ Practice walking with your senses as wide open as you can make them.
- Notice what you hear, see, and feel.
 - Notice what you feel when shifting your weight between each step.
 - Notice your body experience as you turn.
58. ☐ For one mouthful in a meal, pause with a spoonful or forkful of food.
- Look at what you are going to eat, smell it, and listen to it. Then, when you are ready, put it in your mouth.
 - Note the taste, texture, temperature, and even the sound your teeth make in chewing your mouthful slowly.
 - Note the changes in its taste, texture, temperature, and sound as you chew it to completion.
59. ☐ Focus your mind on paying attention to each sensation that comes into your mind.
- Attend to sensations of sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste, or to the thoughts generated by your brain.
 - Notice sensations as they arise, and notice them as they fall away.
 - Let your mind focus on each sensation as it arises.
 - Notice each sensation with curiosity, allowing it to be. Examine the uniqueness of each sensation.
60. ☐ Be here. Be in the present now.
- Take a moment to notice every sense you are aware of.
 - To yourself, make a statement, about each sense: “I feel the chair; the chair feels me.” “I hear the heater; the heater hears me.” “I see the wall; the wall sees me.” “I hear a stomach growl; it hears me.”
61. ☐ When a feeling arises within you, notice it—saying, for example, “A feeling of sadness is arising within me.”
62. ☐ When a thought arises within you, notice it—saying, for example, “The thought ‘It is hot in here’ is arising within me.”
63. ☐ Take just a moment of your time, and practice “nothing-to-do” mind.
- Let yourself become completely aware of your present experience, noticing sensations and the space around you.
64. ☐ Find a small object, one you can hold in your hand. Place it in front of you on a table or in your lap. Observe it closely—first not moving it, and then picking it up and turning it over and around, gazing at it from different angles and in different lights. Just notice shapes, colors, sizes, and other characteristics that are visible.
- Then change your focus to your fingers and hands touching the object. Notice the sensations of touching the object; notice the texture, temperature, and feel of the object.
 - Put the object down. Close your eyes, and inhale and exhale deeply and slowly.
 - Then, with beginner’s mind, open your eyes. With new vision, once again notice the object. With beginner’s mind, open to feeling new textures and sensations, explore the object with your fingers and hands.
 - Put down the object, and once again focus your mind on inhaling and exhaling once.
65. Other: _____

MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 4B

([Mindfulness Worksheets 2–2c](#), [4–4b](#))

Ideas for Practicing Describing

Practice describing what you see outside of yourself:

1. ☐ Lie on the ground and watch the clouds in the sky. Find and describe cloud patterns that you see.
2. ☐ Sit on a bench on a busy street or at a park. Describe one thing about each person who walks by you.
3. ☐ Find things in nature—a leaf, a drop of water, a pet or other animal. Describe each thing in as much detail as you can.
4. ☐ Describe as accurately as you can what a person has just said to you. Check to see if you are correct.
5. ☐ Describe a person's face when the person seems angry, afraid, or sad. Notice and describe the shape, movement, and placement of the forehead, eyebrows, and eyes; the lips and mouth; the cheeks; and so on.
6. ☐ Describe what a person has done or is doing now. Be very specific. Avoid describing intentions or outcomes of the behavior that you do not directly observe. Avoid judgmental language.
7. Other: _____

Practice describing thoughts and feelings:

8. ☐ Describe your feelings as they arise within you: “A feeling of anger is arising within me.”
9. ☐ Describe your thoughts when you feel a strong emotion: “I feel X, and my thoughts are Y.”
10. ☐ Describe your feelings after someone else does or says something: “When you do X, I feel Y.”
11. ☐ Describe thoughts, feelings, and what you observed others do: “When you do X, I feel Y, and my thoughts are Z.” “When X occurs, I feel Y, and my thoughts are Z.”
12. ☐ Describe as many of your thoughts as you can while feeling a strong emotion.
13. Other: _____

Practice describing your breathing:

14. ☐ Each time you inhale and exhale, as you inhale, be aware that “I am inhaling, 1.” When you exhale, be aware that “I am exhaling, 1.” Remember to breathe from the stomach. When beginning the second inhalation, be aware that “I am inhaling, 2.” And, slowly exhaling, be aware that “I am exhaling, 2.” Continue on up through 10. After you have reached 10, return to 1. Whenever you lose count, return to 1.
15. ☐ Begin to inhale gently and normally (from the stomach), describing in your mind that “I am inhaling normally.” Exhale in awareness, “I am exhaling normally.” Continue for three breaths. On the fourth breath, extend the inhalation, describing in your mind that “I am breathing in a long inhalation.” Exhale in awareness, “I am breathing out a long exhalation.” Continue for three breaths.
16. ☐ Follow the entrance and exit of air. Say to yourself, “I am inhaling and following the inhalation from its beginning to its end. I am exhaling and following the exhalation from its beginning to its end.”
17. Other: _____

MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 4C

([Mindfulness Worksheets 2–2c](#), [4–4b](#))

Ideas for Practicing Participating

Participate with awareness of connection to the universe:

1. ☐ Focus your attention on where your body touches an object (floor or ground, air molecules, a chair or armrest, your bed sheets and covers, your clothes, etc.). Try to see all the ways you are connected to and accepted by that object. Consider the function of that object with relation to you. That is, consider what the object does for you. Consider its kindness in doing that. Experience the sensation of touching the object, and focus your entire attention on that kindness until a sense of being connected or loved or cared for arises in your heart.

Examples: Focus your attention on your feet touching the ground. Consider the kindness of the ground holding you up, providing a path for you to get to other things, not letting you fall away from everything else. Focus your attention on your body touching the chair you sit in. Consider how the chair accepts you totally, holds you up, supports your back, and keeps you from falling down on the floor. Focus your attention on the sheets and covers on your bed. Consider the touch of the sheets and covers holding you, surrounding and keeping you warm and comfortable. Consider the walls in the room. They keep out the wind and the cold and the rain. Think of how the walls are connected to you via the floor and the air in the room. Experience your connection to the walls that provide you with a secure place to do things. Go hug a tree. Think of how you and the tree are connected. Life is in you and in the tree and both of you are warmed by the sun, held by the air and supported by the earth. Try and experience the tree loving you by providing something to lean on, or by shading you.

2. ☐ Dance to music.
3. ☐ Sing along with music you are listening to.
4. ☐ Sing in the shower.
5. ☐ Sing and dance while watching TV.
6. ☐ Jump out of bed and dance, or sing before getting dressed.
7. ☐ Go to a church that sings, and join in the singing.
8. ☐ Play karaoke with friends or at a karaoke club or bar.
9. ☐ Throw yourself into what another person is saying.
10. ☐ Go running, focusing only on running.
11. ☐ Play a sport and throw yourself into playing.
12. ☐ Become the count of the breath, becoming only “one” when you count 1, becoming only “two” when you count 2, and so on.
13. ☐ Become a word as you slowly say the word over and over and over.
14. ☐ Take a class in improvisational acting.
15. ☐ Take a dance class.
16. Other: _____

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Taking Hold of Your Mind: “How” Skills

NONJUDGMENTALLY

- ☐ **See, but don’t evaluate as good or bad.** Just the facts.
- ☐ **Accept each moment like a blanket spread out on the lawn**, accepting both the rain and the sun and each leaf that falls upon it.
- ☐ **Acknowledge** the difference between the helpful and the harmful, the safe and the dangerous, **but don’t judge them.**
- ☐ **Acknowledge** your values, your wishes, your emotional reactions, **but don’t judge them.**
- ☐ When you find yourself judging, **don’t judge your judging.**

ONE-MINDFULLY

- ☐ **Rivet yourself to now.** Be completely present to this one moment.
- ☐ **Do one thing at a time.** Notice the desire to be half-present, to be somewhere else, to go somewhere else in your mind, to do something else, to multitask—and then come back to one thing at a time.
 - When you are eating, eat.
 - When you are walking, walk.
 - When you are worrying, worry.
 - When you are planning, plan.
 - When you are remembering, remember.
- ☐ **Let go of distractions.** If other actions, or other thoughts, or strong feelings distract you, go back to what you are doing—again, and again, and again.
- ☐ **Concentrate your mind.** If you find you are doing two things at once, stop—go back to one thing at a time (the opposite of multitasking!).

EFFECTIVELY

- ☐ **Be mindful of your goals in the situation**, and do what is necessary to achieve them.
- ☐ **Focus on what works.** (Don’t let emotion mind get in the way of being effective.)
- ☐ **Play by the rules.**
- ☐ **Act as skillfully as you can.** Do what is needed for the situation you are in—not the situation you wish you were in; not the one that is fair; not the one that is more comfortable.
- ☐ **Let go of willfulness and sitting on your hands.**

MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 5A

([Mindfulness Worksheets 2–2c](#), [5–5c](#))

Ideas for Practicing Nonjudgmentalness

Leaving out comparisons, judgments, and assumptions:

1. ☐ Practice observing judgmental thoughts and statements, saying in your mind, **“A judgmental thought arose in my mind.”**
2. ☐ **Count judgmental thoughts and statements** (by moving objects or pieces of paper from one pocket to another, by clicking a sports counter, or by marking a piece of paper).
3. ☐ Replace judgmental thoughts and statements with nonjudgmental thoughts and statements.

Tips for replacing judgment by stating the facts:

1. **Describe the facts** of the event or situation — *only* what is observed with your senses.
2. **Describe the consequences** of the event. Keep to the facts.
3. **Describe your own feelings** in response to the facts (remember, emotions are not judgments).
4. ☐ **Observe your judgmental facial expressions, postures, and voice tones** (including voice tones in your head).
5. ☐ **Change judgmental expressions, postures, and voice tones.**
6. ☐ Tell someone what you did today nonjudgmentally, or about an event that occurred. Stay very concrete; only relate what you observed directly.
7. ☐ **Write out a nonjudgmental description** of an event that prompted an emotion.
8. ☐ Write out a nonjudgmental blow-by-blow account of a particularly important episode in your day. Describe both what happened in your environment and what your thoughts, feelings, and actions were. Leave out any analysis of why something happened, or why you thought, felt, or acted as you did. Stick to the facts that you observed.
9. ☐ Imagine a person you are angry with. Bring to mind what the person has done that has caused so much anger. Try to become that person, seeing life from that person’s point of view. Imagine that person’s feelings, thoughts, fears, hopes, and wishes. Imagine that person’s history and what has happened in his or her history. Imagine understanding that person.
10. ☐ When judgmental, **practice half-smiling and/or willing hands.** (See Distress Tolerance Handout 14: Half-Smiling and Willing Hands.)
11. Other: _____

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MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 5B

([Mindfulness Worksheets 2–2c](#), [5–5c](#))

Ideas for Practicing One-Mindfulness

1. ☐ **Awareness while making tea or coffee.** Prepare a pot of tea or coffee to serve a guest or to drink by yourself. Do each movement slowly, in awareness. Do not let one detail of your movements go by without being aware of it. Know that your hand lifts the pot by its handle. Know that you are pouring the fragrant, warm tea or coffee into the cup. Follow each step in awareness. Breathe gently and more deeply than usual. Take hold of your breath if your mind strays.
2. ☐ **Awareness while washing the dishes.** Wash the dishes consciously, as though each bowl is an object of contemplation. Consider each bowl sacred. Follow your breath to prevent your mind from straying. Do not try to hurry to get the job over with. Consider washing the dishes the most important thing in life.
3. ☐ **Awareness while hand-washing clothes.** Do not wash too many clothes at one time. Select only three or four articles of clothing. Find the most comfortable position to sit or stand, so as to prevent a backache. Scrub the clothes consciously. Hold your attention on every movement of your hands and arms. Pay attention to the soap and water. When you have finished scrubbing and rinsing, your mind and body will feel as clean and fresh as your clothes. Remember to maintain a half-smile and take hold of your breath whenever your mind wanders.
4. ☐ **Awareness while cleaning house.** Divide your work into stages: straightening things and putting away books, scrubbing the toilet, scrubbing the bathroom, sweeping the floors, and dusting. Allow a good length of time for each task. Move slowly, three times more slowly than usual. Focus your attention fully on each task. For example, while placing a book on the shelf, look at the book; be aware of what book it is; know that you are in the process of placing it on the shelf; and know that you intend to put it in that specific place. Know that your hand reaches for the book and picks it up. Avoid any abrupt or harsh movement. Maintain awareness of the breath, especially when your thoughts wander.
5. ☐ **Awareness while taking a slow-motion bath.** Allow yourself 30–45 minutes to take a bath. Don't hurry for even a second. From the moment you prepare the bath water to the moment you put on clean clothes, let every motion be light and slow. Be attentive of every movement. Place your attention on every part of your body, without discrimination or fear. Be aware of each stream of water on your body. By the time you've finished, your mind will feel as peaceful and light as your body. Follow your breath. Think of yourself as being in a clean and fragrant lotus pond in the summer.
6. ☐ **Awareness with meditation.** Sit comfortably on the floor with your back straight, on the floor or in a chair with both feet touching the floor. Close your eyes all the way, or open them slightly and gaze at something near. With each breath, say to yourself, quietly and gently, the word "One." As you inhale, say the word "One." As you exhale, say the word "One," calmly and slowly. Try to collect your whole mind and put it into this one word. When your mind strays, return gently to saying "One." If you start wanting to move, try not to move. Just gently observe wanting to move. Continue practicing a little past wanting to stop. Just gently observe wanting to stop.
7. Other: _____

Note. Adapted from *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (pp. 84–87) by Thich Nhat Hanh. Copyright 1975, 1976 by Thich Nhat Hanh. Preface and English translation copyright 1975, 1976, 1987 by Mobi Ho. Adapted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston.

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MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 5C

([Mindfulness Worksheets 2–2c](#), [5–5c](#))

Ideas for Practicing Effectiveness

1. ☐ Observe when you begin to get angry or hostile with someone. Ask yourself, “Is this effective?”
2. ☐ Observe yourself when you start wanting to be “right” instead of effective. Give up being “right” and switch to trying to be effective.
3. ☐ Notice willfulness in yourself. Ask yourself, “Is this effective?”
4. ☐ Drop willfulness, and practice acting effectively instead. Notice the difference.
5. ☐ When feeling angry or hostile or like you're about to do something ineffective, practice willing hands.
6. Other: _____

MINDFULNESS WORKSHEET 2

(Mindfulness Handouts 2–5c)

Mindfulness Core Skills Practice

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

Describe the situations that prompted you to practice mindfulness.

SITUATION 1

Situation (who, what, when, where):

- ☐ Wise Mind
- ☐ Observe
- ☐ Describe
- ☐ Participate
- ☐ Nonjudgmentally
- ☐ One-mindfully
- ☐ Effectively

At left, check the skills you used, and describe your use of them here.

Describe experience of using the skill:

Check if practicing this mindfulness skill has influenced any of the following, *even a little bit*:

___ Reduced suffering	___ Increased happiness	___ Increased ability to focus
___ Decreased reactivity	___ Increased wisdom	___ Increased experiencing the
___ Increased connection	___ Increased sense of personal validity	present

SITUATION 2

Situation (who, what, when, where):

- ☐ Wise Mind
- ☐ Observe
- ☐ Describe
- ☐ Participate
- ☐ Nonjudgmentally
- ☐ One-mindfully
- ☐ Effectively

At left, check the skills you used, and describe your use of them here.

Describe experience of using the skill:

Check if practicing this mindfulness skill has influenced any of the following, *even a little bit*:

___ Reduced suffering	___ Increased happiness	___ Increased ability to focus
___ Decreased reactivity	___ Increased wisdom	___ Increased experiencing the
___ Increased connection	___ Increased sense of personal validity	present

List any and all wise things you did this week. _____

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Distress Tolerance Week 2

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 2

([Distress Tolerance Worksheets 1–7b](#))

Overview: Crisis Survival Skills

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

The STOP Skill

Pros and Cons

TIP Your Body Chemistry

Distract with Wise Mind ACCEPTS

Self-Soothe with the Five Senses

Improve the Moment

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When to Use Crisis Survival Skills

YOU ARE IN A CRISIS when the situation is:

- Highly stressful.
- Short-term (that is, it won't last a long time).
- Creates intense pressure to resolve the crisis *now*.

USE CRISIS SURVIVAL SKILLS when:

1. You have intense pain that cannot be helped quickly.
2. You want to act on your emotions, but it will only make things worse.
3. Emotion mind threatens to overwhelm you, and you need to stay skillful.
4. You are overwhelmed, yet demands must be met.
5. Arousal is extreme, but problems can't be solved immediately.

DON'T USE CRISIS SURVIVAL SKILLS for:

- Everyday problems.
- Solving all your life problems.
- Making your life worth living.



STOP Skill



S_{top}

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

T_{ake 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.

O_{bserve}

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

P_{roceed 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. Ask Wise Mind: Which actions will make it better or worse?

Note. Adapted from an unpublished worksheet by Francheska Pereplechikova and Seth Axelrod, with their permission.

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 5



([Distress Tolerance Worksheets 3](#), [3a](#))

Pros and Cons

Use pros and cons any time you have to decide between two courses of action.

- ☐ An urge is a crisis when it is very strong and when acting on the urge will make things *worse* in the long term.
- ☐ Make a list of the pros *and* cons of acting on your crisis urges. These might be to engage in dangerous, addictive, or harmful behaviors, or they might be to give in, give up, or avoid doing what is necessary to build a life you want to live.
- ☐ Make another list of the pros and cons of resisting crisis urges—that is, tolerating the distress and not giving in to the urges.
- ☐ Use the grid below to evaluate both sets of pros and cons (this type of grid is also used in Distress Tolerance Worksheet 3). Or you can use the type of grid seen in Distress Tolerance Worksheet 3a and in the pros-and-cons worksheets for other modules.

	PROS	CONS
Acting on crisis urges	<p>Pros of acting on impulsive urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Cons of acting on impulsive urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Resisting crisis urges	<p>Pros of resisting impulsive urges, doing what needs to be done, and not giving up.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Cons of resisting impulsive urges, doing what needs to be done, and not giving up.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Before an overwhelming crisis urge hits:

Write out your pros and cons; carry them with you.
Rehearse your pros and cons over and over.

When an overwhelming crisis urge hits:

Review your pros and cons. Get out your list and read it over again.

- Imagine the positive consequences of resisting the urge.
- Think of the negative consequences of giving in to crisis behaviors.
- Remember past consequences when you have acted on crisis urges.

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TIP Skills: Changing Your Body Chemistry

To reduce extreme emotion mind *fast*.

Remember these as **TIP** skills:

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 and cheeks.
- Hold for 30 seconds. Keep water above 50°F.

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).

PAIRED 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 health care provider 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.

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 6A

([Distress Tolerance Worksheet 4](#))

Using Cold Water, Step by Step

COLD WATER CAN WORK WONDERS*

When you put your full face into cold water . . . **or** you 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.

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 dangerous behaviors**.

(This strategy works best when you are sitting quietly—activity and distraction may make it less effective.)

TRY IT OUT!

***Caution:** Very cold water decreases your heart rate. If you have any heart or medical condition, have a lowered base heart rate due to medications, or are on a beta-blocker, consult your health care provider before using these skills. Avoid ice water if you are allergic to the cold.

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 6B

([Distress Tolerance Worksheet 4a](#))

Paired Muscle Relaxation, Step by Step

If you have decided to practice **paired muscle relaxation**, it can be very helpful to practice relaxing each of your muscles first.

When you are starting, practice in a quiet place to reduce distractions, and make sure that you have enough time. As you improve with practice, you will want to practice in many different kinds of places, so that you can relax effectively when you most need to.

Remember that effectiveness improves with practice. If judgments arise, observe them, let them go, and return to your practice. If you become anxious, try focusing on breathing *in* to the count of 5 and *out* to the count of 7 (or the counts you have already determined for paced breathing), breathing all the while into your belly until you can return to relaxation exercises.

Now that you are ready to begin . . .

1. Get your body into a comfortable position in which you can relax. Loosen tight clothing. Lie or sit down, with all body parts uncrossed and no body part supporting any others.
2. For each area of the body listed below, gather tension by tightening muscles. Focus on the sensation of tightness in and around that area. Hold the tension as you inhale for 5–6 seconds, then release and breathe out.
3. As you release, say in your mind very slowly the word “Relax.”
4. Observe the changes in sensations as you relax for 10–15 seconds then move on to the next muscle.

Start first with each of the 16 muscle groups.

Once you can do that, practice with medium groups of muscles and then large groups.

Once you are good at that, practice tensing your entire body at once.

When you tense your entire body, you are like a robot—stiff, nothing moving.

When you relax your entire body, you are like a rag doll—all muscles drooping down.

Once you can relax all your muscles, practice three or four times a day until you can routinely relax your entire body rapidly.

By practicing 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.”

Large
Medium
Small

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| { | { | 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 eyebrows close together, wrinkling forehead. |
| | | 5. Eyes: Shut eyes tightly. |
| | | 6. Nose and upper cheeks: Scrunch up nose; bring upper lips and cheeks up toward eyes. |
| { | { | 7. Lips and lower face: Press lips together; bring edges of lips back toward ears. |
| | | 8. Tongue and mouth: Teeth together; tongue pushing on upper mouth. |
| { | { | 9. Neck: Push head back into chair, floor, or bed, or push chin down to chest. |
| | | 10. Chest: Take deep breath and hold it. |
| { | { | 11. Back: Arch back, bringing shoulder blades together. |
| | | 12. Stomach: Hold stomach in tightly. |
| { | { | 13. Buttocks: Squeeze buttocks together. |
| | | 14. Upper legs and thighs: Legs out; tense thighs. |
| { | { | 15. Calves: Legs out; point toes down. |
| | | 16. Ankles: Legs out; point toes together, heels out, toes curled under. |

Remember, paired relaxation is a skill. It takes time to develop. With practice, you will notice the benefits.

Note. Adapted from Smith, R. E. (1980). Development of an integrated coping response through cognitive–affective stress management training. In I. G. Sarason & C. D. Spielberger (Eds.), *Stress and anxiety* (Vol. 7, pp. 265–280). Washington, DC: Hemisphere. Copyright 1980 by Hemisphere Publishing Corporation. Adapted by permission.

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE WORKSHEET 2

([Distress Tolerance Handout 4](#))

Practicing the STOP Skill

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

Describe two crisis situations that happened to you. Then describe your use of the STOP skill.

CRISIS EVENT 1: Rate level of distress (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____

Prompting event for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

Behavior you are trying to stop: _____

- ☐ **Stop**
- ☐ **Take a step back**
- ☐ **Observe**
- ☐ **Proceed mindfully**

At left, check the steps you used, and describe what you did here:

Describe the outcome of using skills:

Circle a number to indicate how effective the skill was in helping you tolerate the distress and cope with the situation (keeping you from doing something to make the situation worse). Use the following scale:

*I still couldn't stand
the situation, even
for one more minute.*

1

2

*I was able to cope somewhat,
at least for a little while.
It helped somewhat.*

3

4

*I could use skills,
tolerated distress, and
resisted problem urges.*

5

CRISIS EVENT 2: Rate level of distress (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____

Prompting event for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

Behavior you are trying to stop: _____

- ☐ **Stop**
- ☐ **Take a step back**
- ☐ **Observe**
- ☐ **Proceed mindfully**

At left, check the steps you used, and describe what you did here:

Describe the outcome of using the skills:

Circle effectiveness of the skill:

*I still couldn't stand
the situation, even
for one more minute.*

1

2

*I was able to cope somewhat,
at least for a little while.
It helped somewhat.*

3

4

*I could use skills,
tolerated distress, and
resisted problem urges.*

5

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE WORKSHEET 3

(Distress Tolerance Handout 5)

Pros and Cons of Acting on Crisis Urges

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

1. Describe the *problem behavior* you are trying to stop: _____
2. List pros and cons for acting on crisis urges (including urges to act and urges to quit), and create a separate list for resisting crisis behavior by tolerating distress and using skills. Use the back of this sheet if you need more room.
3. Read the pros and cons when an urge toward the problem behavior occurs.

Problem behavior	PROS	CONS
Acting on crisis urges	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.
Resisting crisis urges	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.

Identify which pros and cons are short-term (just for today) or long-term (beyond today). Then ask your Wise Mind: Would you rather have a good day or a good life? Make a mindful choice about your behavior.

If this worksheet helps you choose skillful behavior over crisis behavior, be sure to keep it where you can find it and review it again when you are in crisis.

Adapted from an unpublished worksheet by Seth Axelrod, with his permission.

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE WORKSHEET 4

(Distress Tolerance Handouts 6, 6a, 6b)

Changing Body Chemistry with TIP Skills

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

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. Use the back of this sheet if necessary.

T { **CHANGING MY FACIAL TEMPERATURE**
Used cold water to change emotions
Situation: _____
Arousal (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____
Distress tolerance (0 = I can't stand it; 100 = I can definitely survive) Before: _____ After: _____
What I did (describe): _____

I { **INTENSE EXERCISE**
Situation: _____
Arousal (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____
Distress tolerance (0 = I can't stand it; 100 = I can definitely survive) Before: _____ After: _____
What I did (describe): _____

P { **PACED BREATHING**
Situation: _____
Arousal (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____
Distress tolerance (0 = I can't stand it; 100 = I can definitely survive) Before: _____ After: _____
What I did (describe): _____

P { **PAIRED MUSCLE RELAXATION**
Situation: _____
Arousal (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____
Distress tolerance (0 = I can't stand it; 100 = I can definitely survive) Before: _____ After: _____
What I did (describe): _____

Distress Tolerance Week 3

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 7



([Distress Tolerance Worksheets 5–5b](#))

Distracting

A way to remember these skills is the phrase “**Wise Mind ACCEPTS.**”

With Activities:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus attention on a task you need to get done. | <input type="checkbox"/> Go out for a meal or eat a favorite food. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rent movies; watch TV. | <input type="checkbox"/> Call or go out with a friend. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean a room in your house. | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to your iPod; download music. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Find an event to go to. | <input type="checkbox"/> Build something. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play computer games. | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with your children. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go walking. Exercise. | <input type="checkbox"/> Play cards. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surf the Internet. Write e-mails. | <input type="checkbox"/> Read magazines, books, comics. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play sports. | <input type="checkbox"/> Do crossword puzzles or Sudoku. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With Contributing:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Find volunteer work to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> Call or send an instant message encouraging someone or just saying hi. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help a friend or family member. | <input type="checkbox"/> Make something nice for someone else. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surprise someone with something nice (a card, a favor, a hug). | <input type="checkbox"/> Do something thoughtful. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give away things you don't need. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With Comparisons:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compare how you are feeling now to a time when you felt different. | <input type="checkbox"/> Compare yourself to those less fortunate. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Think about people coping the same as you or less well than you. | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch reality shows about others' troubles; read about disasters, others' suffering. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With different Emotions:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read emotional books or stories, old letters. | <i>Ideas:</i> Scary movies, joke books, comedies, funny records, religious music, soothing music or music that fires you up, going to a store and reading funny greeting cards. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch emotional TV shows; go to emotional movies. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to emotional music.
(<i>Be sure the event creates different emotions.</i>) | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With Pushing away:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Push the situation away by leaving it for a while. | <input type="checkbox"/> Notice ruminating: Yell “No!” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leave the situation mentally. | <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to think about the painful situations. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Build an imaginary wall between yourself and the situation. | <input type="checkbox"/> Put the pain on a shelf. Box it up and put it away for a while. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Block thoughts and images from your mind. | <input type="checkbox"/> Deny the problem for the moment. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With other Thoughts:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Count to 10; count colors in a painting or poster or out the window; count anything. | <input type="checkbox"/> Work puzzles. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat words to a song in your mind. | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch TV or read. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With other Sensations:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Squeeze a rubber ball very hard. | <input type="checkbox"/> Go out in the rain or snow. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to very loud music. | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a hot or cold shower. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hold ice in your hand or mouth. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 8



([Distress Tolerance Worksheet 6–6b](#))

Self-Soothing

A way to remember these skills is to think of soothing each of your **FIVE SENSES**.

With Vision:

- ☐ Look at the stars at night.
- ☐ Look at pictures you like in a book.
- ☐ Buy one beautiful flower.
- ☐ Make one space in a room pleasing to look at.
- ☐ Light a candle and watch the flame.
- ☐ Set a pretty place at the table using your best things.
- ☐ Go people-watching or window-shopping.
- ☐ Go to a museum or poster shop with beautiful art.
- ☐ Sit in the lobby of a beautiful old hotel.
- ☐ Look at nature around you.
- ☐ Walk in a pretty part of town.
- ☐ Watch a sunrise or a sunset.
- ☐ Go to a dance performance, or watch it on TV.
- ☐ Be mindful of each sight that passes in front of you.
- ☐ Take a walk in a park or a scenic hike.
- ☐ Browse through stores looking at things.
- ☐ Other: _____

With Hearing:

- ☐ Listen to soothing or invigorating music.
- ☐ Pay attention to sounds of nature (waves, birds, rainfall, leaves rustling).
- ☐ Pay attention to the sounds of the city (traffic, horns, city music).
- ☐ Sing to your favorite songs.
- ☐ Hum a soothing tune.
- ☐ Learn to play an instrument.
- ☐ Burn a CD or make an iPod mix with music that will get you through tough times. Turn it on.
- ☐ Be mindful of any sounds that come your way, letting them go in one ear and out the other.
- ☐ Turn on the radio.
- ☐ Other: _____

With Smell:

- ☐ Use your favorite soap, shampoo, aftershave, cologne, or lotions, or try them on in the store.
- ☐ Burn incense or light a scented candle.
- ☐ Open a package of coffee and inhale the aroma.
- ☐ Put lemon oil on your furniture.
- ☐ Put potpourri or eucalyptus oil in a bowl in your room.
- ☐ Sit in a new car and breathe the aroma.
- ☐ Boil cinnamon. Make cookies, bread, or popcorn.
- ☐ Smell the roses.
- ☐ Walk in a wooded area and mindfully breathe in the fresh smells of nature.
- ☐ Open the window and smell the air.
- ☐ Other: _____

With Taste:

- ☐ Eat some of your favorite foods.
- ☐ Drink your favorite soothing drink, such as herbal tea, hot chocolate, a latté, or a smoothie.
- ☐ Treat yourself to a dessert.
- ☐ Eat macaroni and cheese or another favorite childhood food.
- ☐ Sample flavors in an ice cream store.
- ☐ Suck on a piece of peppermint candy.
- ☐ Chew your favorite gum.
- ☐ Get a little bit of a special food you don't usually spend the money on, such as fresh-squeezed orange juice or your favorite candy.
- ☐ Really taste the food you eat. Eat one thing mindfully.
- ☐ Other: _____

With Touch:

- ☐ Take a long hot bath or shower.
- ☐ Pet your dog or cat.
- ☐ Have a massage. Soak your feet.
- ☐ Put creamy lotion on your whole body.
- ☐ Put a cold compress on your forehead.
- ☐ Sink into a comfortable chair in your home.
- ☐ Put on a blouse or shirt that has a pleasant feel.
- ☐ Take a drive with the car windows rolled down.
- ☐ Run your hand along smooth wood or leather.
- ☐ Hug someone.
- ☐ Put clean sheets on the bed.
- ☐ Wrap up in a blanket.
- ☐ Notice touch that is soothing.
- ☐ Other: _____

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 9



(Distress Tolerance Worksheets 7, 7a, 7b)

Improving the Moment

A way to remember these skills is the word **IMPROVE**.

With Imagery:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Imagine very relaxing scenes. | <input type="checkbox"/> Imagine hurtful emotions draining out of you like water out of a pipe. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Imagine a secret room within yourself. Furnish it the way you like. Close and lock the door on anything that can hurt you. | <input type="checkbox"/> Remember a happy time and imagine yourself in it again; play out the time in your mind again. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Imagine everything going well. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make up a calming fantasy world. | |

With Meaning:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Find purpose or meaning in a painful situation. | <input type="checkbox"/> Remember, listen to, or read about spiritual values. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on whatever positive aspects of a painful situation you can find. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat these positive aspects in your mind. | |

With Prayer:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open your heart to a supreme being, God, or your own Wise Mind. | <input type="checkbox"/> Turn things over to God or a higher being. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for strength to bear the pain. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With Relaxing actions:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a hot bath or sit in a hot tub. | <input type="checkbox"/> Breathe deeply. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drink hot milk. | <input type="checkbox"/> Change your facial expression. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Massage your neck and scalp. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice yoga or other stretching. | |

With One thing in the moment:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus your entire attention on just what you are doing. | <input type="checkbox"/> Focus your entire attention on the physical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keep yourself in the moment. | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to a sensory awareness recording (or use Distress Tolerance Handout 9a) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Put your mind in the present. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With a brief Vacation:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give yourself a brief vacation. | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a blanket to the park and sit on it for a whole afternoon. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get in bed; pull the covers up over your head. | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a 1-hour breather from hard work. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to the beach or the woods for the day. | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a brief vacation from responsibility. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get a magazine and read it with chocolates. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn off your phone for a day. | |

With self-Encouragement and rethinking the situation:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerlead yourself: "You go, girl!" "You da man!" | <input type="checkbox"/> "This too shall pass." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "I will make it out of this." | <input type="checkbox"/> "I will be OK." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "I'm doing the best I can." | <input type="checkbox"/> "It won't last forever." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat over and over: "I can stand it." | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

List (and then practice) rethoughts that are particularly important in your crisis situations (e.g., "The fact that he did not pick me up doesn't mean he doesn't love me"):

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE WORKSHEET 5

([Distress Tolerance Handout 7](#))

Distracting with Wise Mind ACCEPTS

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

Describe two crisis situations that happened to you. Then describe your use of the ACCEPTS skills.

CRISIS EVENT 1: Rate level of distress (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____

Prompting event for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

- ☐ **A**ctivities
- ☐ **C**ontributions
- ☐ **C**omparisons
- ☐ **E**motions
- ☐ **P**ushing away
- ☐ **T**houghts
- ☐ **S**ensations

At left, check the skills you used, and describe here:

Describe the outcome of using skills:

Circle a number to indicate how effective the skills were in helping you tolerate the distress and cope with the situation (keeping you from doing something to make the situation worse). Use the following scale:

*I still couldn't stand
the situation, even
for one more minute.*

1

2

*I was able to cope somewhat,
at least for a little while.
It helped somewhat.*

3

4

*I could use skills,
tolerated distress, and
resisted problem urges.*

5

CRISIS EVENT 2: Rate level of distress (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____

Prompting event for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

- ☐ **A**ctivities
- ☐ **C**ontributions
- ☐ **C**omparisons
- ☐ **E**motions
- ☐ **P**ushing away
- ☐ **T**houghts
- ☐ **S**ensations

At left, check the skills you used, and describe here:

Describe the outcome of using skills:

Circle effectiveness of skills:

*I still couldn't stand
the situation, even
for one more minute.*

1

2

*I was able to cope somewhat,
at least for a little while.
It helped somewhat.*

3

4

*I could use skills,
tolerated distress, and
resisted problem urges.*

5

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE WORKSHEET 6

([Distress Tolerance Handout 8](#))

Self-Soothing

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

Describe two crisis situations that happened to you. Then describe your use of the self-soothing skills.

CRISIS EVENT 1: Rate level of distress (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____

Prompting event for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

- ☐ Vision
- ☐ Hearing
- ☐ Smell
- ☐ Taste
- ☐ Touch

At left, check the skills you used, and describe here:

Describe the outcome of using skills:

Circle a number to indicate how effective the skills were in helping you tolerate the distress and cope with the situation (keeping you from doing something to make the situation worse). Use the following scale:

*I still couldn't stand
the situation, even
for one more minute.*

1

2

*I was able to cope somewhat,
at least for a little while.
It helped somewhat.*

3

4

*I could use skills,
tolerated distress, and
resisted problem urges.*

5

CRISIS EVENT 2: Rate level of distress (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____

Prompting event for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

- ☐ Vision
- ☐ Hearing
- ☐ Smell
- ☐ Taste
- ☐ Touch

At left, check the skills you used, and describe here:

Describe the outcome of using skills:

Circle effectiveness of skills:

*I still couldn't stand
the situation, even
for one more minute.*

1

2

*I was able to cope somewhat,
at least for a little while.
It helped somewhat.*

3

4

*I could use skills,
tolerated distress, and
resisted problem urges.*

5

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DISTRESS TOLERANCE WORKSHEET 7

([Distress Tolerance Handout 9](#))

IMPROVE the Moment

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

Describe two crisis situations that happened to you. Then describe your use of the IMPROVE skills.

CRISIS EVENT 1: Rate level of distress (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____

Prompting event for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

- ☐ **I**magery
- ☐ **M**eaning
- ☐ **P**rayer
- ☐ **R**elaxation
- ☐ **O**ne thing
- ☐ **V**acation
- ☐ **E**ncouragement

At left, check the skills you used, and describe here:

Describe the outcome of using skills:

Circle a number to indicate how effective the skills were in helping you tolerate the distress and cope with the situation (keeping you from doing something to make the situation worse). Use the following scale:

*I still couldn't stand
the situation, even
for one more minute.*

1

2

*I was able to cope somewhat,
at least for a little while.
It helped somewhat.*

3

4

*I could use skills,
tolerated distress, and
resisted problem urges.*

5

CRISIS EVENT 2: Rate level of distress (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____

Prompting event for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

- ☐ **I**magery
- ☐ **M**eaning
- ☐ **P**rayer
- ☐ **R**elaxation
- ☐ **O**ne thing
- ☐ **V**acation
- ☐ **E**ncouragement

At left, check the skills you used, and describe here:

Describe the outcome of using skills:

Circle effectiveness of skills:

*I still couldn't stand
the situation, even
for one more minute.*

1

2

*I was able to cope somewhat,
at least for a little while.
It helped somewhat.*

3

4

*I could use skills,
tolerated distress, and
resisted problem urges.*

5

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Distress Tolerance Week 4



Radical Acceptance

(When you cannot keep painful events and emotions from coming your way.)

WHAT IS RADICAL ACCEPTANCE?

1. Radical means *all the way*, complete and total.
2. It is accepting in your mind, your heart, and your body.
3. It's when you stop fighting reality, stop throwing tantrums because reality is not the way you want it, and let go of bitterness.

WHAT HAS TO BE ACCEPTED?

1. Reality is as it is (the facts about the past and the present are the facts, even if you don't like them).
2. There are limitations on the future for everyone (but only realistic limitations need to be accepted).
3. Everything has a cause (including events and situations that cause you pain and suffering).
4. Life can be worth living even with painful events in it.

WHY ACCEPT REALITY?

1. Rejecting reality does not change reality.
2. Changing reality requires first accepting reality.
3. Pain can't be avoided; it is nature's way of signaling that something is wrong.
4. Rejecting reality turns pain into suffering.
5. Refusing to accept reality can keep you stuck in unhappiness, bitterness, anger, sadness, shame, or other painful emotions.
6. Acceptance may lead to sadness, but deep calmness usually follows.
7. The path out of hell is through misery. By refusing to accept the misery that is part of climbing out of hell, you fall back into hell.

Radical Acceptance: Factors That Interfere

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE IS NOT:

Approval, compassion, love, passivity, or against change.

FACTORS THAT INTERFERE WITH ACCEPTANCE

- ☐ 1. You don't have the skills for acceptance; you do not know how to accept really painful events and facts.
- ☐ 2. You believe that if you accept a painful event, you are making light of it or are approving of the facts, and that nothing will be done to change or prevent future painful events.
- ☐ 3. Emotions get in the way (unbearable sadness; anger at the person or group that caused the painful event; rage at the injustice of the world; overwhelming shame about who you are; guilt about your own behavior).
- ☐ Other: _____

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 11B

([Distress Tolerance Worksheets 9, 9a](#))

Practicing Radical Acceptance Step by Step

- ☐ Observe that you are questioning or fighting reality (“It shouldn’t be this way”).
- ☐ Remind yourself that the unpleasant reality is just as it is and cannot be changed (“This is what happened”).
- ☐ Remind yourself that there are causes for the reality. Acknowledge that some sort of history led up to this very moment. Consider how people’s lives have been shaped by a series of factors. Notice that given these causal factors and how history led up to this moment, this reality had to occur just this way (“This is how things happened”).
- ☐ Practice accepting with the whole self (mind, body, and spirit). Be creative in finding ways to involve your whole self. Use accepting self-talk—but also consider using relaxation; mindfulness of your breath; half-smiling and willing hands while thinking about what feels unacceptable; prayer; going to a place that helps bring you to acceptance; or imagery.
- ☐ Practice opposite action. List all the behaviors you would do if you did accept the facts. Then act as if you have already accepted the facts. Engage in the behaviors that you would do if you really had accepted.
- ☐ Cope ahead with events that seem unacceptable. Imagine (in your mind’s eye) believing what you don’t want to accept. Rehearse in your mind what you would do if you accepted what seems unacceptable.
- ☐ Attend to body sensations as you think about what you need to accept.
- ☐ Allow disappointment, sadness, or grief to arise within you.
- ☐ Acknowledge that life can be worth living even when there is pain.
- ☐ Do pros and cons if you find yourself resisting practicing acceptance.

DISTRESS TOLERANCE WORKSHEET 9

([Distress Tolerance Handouts 11](#), [11a](#), [11b](#))

Radical Acceptance

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU NEED TO RADICALLY ACCEPT

1. Make a list of two **very important** things in your life right now that you need to radically accept. Then give each one a number indicating how much you accept this part of yourself or your life: from 0 (no acceptance, I am in complete denial and/or rebellion) to 5 (complete acceptance, I am at peace with this). *Note:* if you have already completed this section, you don't need to do it again unless things have changed.

What I need to accept (Acceptance, 0–5)

1. _____ (____)
2. _____ (____)

2. Make a list of two **less important** things in your life you are having trouble accepting this week. Then rate your acceptance just as you did above.

What I need to accept (Acceptance, 0–5)

1. _____ (____)
2. _____ (____)

REFINE YOUR LIST

3. Review your two lists above. **Check the facts.** Check for interpretations and opinions. Make sure that what you are trying to accept is in fact the case. **Check for judgments.** Avoid “good,” “bad,” and judgmental language. Rewrite any items above if needed so that they are **factual and nonjudgmental**.

PRACTICE RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

4. Choose one item from the very important list and one item from the less important list to practice on.

1. _____
2. _____

5. Focus your mind on each of these facts or events separately, allowing your Wise Mind to radically accept that these *are* facts of your life. *Check off* any of the following exercises that you did.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Observed that I was questioning or fighting reality. | <input type="checkbox"/> Attended to my body sensations as I thought about what I need to accept. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reminded myself that reality is what it is. | <input type="checkbox"/> Allowed myself to experience disappointment, sadness, or grief. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Considered the causes of the reality, and nonjudgmentally accepted that causes exist. | <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledged that life can be worth living even when there is pain. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practiced accepting all the way with my whole being (mind, body, spirit). | <input type="checkbox"/> Did pros and cons of accepting versus denial and rejection. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practiced opposite action. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coped ahead with events that seemed unacceptable. | _____ |

6. Rate your degree of acceptance after practicing radical acceptance (0–5): _____

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