



# Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

## Distress Tolerance

## TIPP Skill

adapted from: Linehan, (2015). 'DBT Skills Training Manual, 2nd ed.'

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## What is Distress Tolerance?

- Distress Tolerance refers to a skill set from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). It teaches skills to help ride the wave of intense & overwhelming emotional distress. The distress can be so intense that it runs the risk of leading to destructive urges/behaviours. Distress Tolerance is defined as:
- Accepting yourself & the current situation in a nonjudgmental way.
- Accepting your environment without demanding that it be different.
- The ability to experience your emotions without trying to change them.
- The ability to observe your own thoughts & behaviours without trying to stop or control them.

## When to use Distress Tolerance?

When emotional distress becomes overwhelming.

When you are having intense pain that cannot be helped quickly.

When you are having extreme distress but the problem can't be solved immediately.

When you are feeling overwhelmed but need to do something important/urgent.

When you want to act in emotion mind & that would make things worse.

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adapted from Linehan, (2015) 'DBT Skills Training Manual, 2nd ed.'

# TIPP

## Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Distress Tolerance: Crisis Survival Skill

T

**Temperature:** submerging your head in an ice cold bucket of water while holding your breathe will induce the dive reflex (this could take 15-30 seconds). This will trigger the parasympathetic nervous system to redirect blood to the heart & brain, reducing your body's level of arousal. You can vary this strategy using cold flannels, ice packs, ice cold showers etc. !\*Caution: temperature <10C can hurt & those with heart problems should avoid this strategy.

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**Intense Physical Exercise:** 20-30m of intense activity will improve mood & help with rumination. Exercise changes your body's chemistry to help reduce arousal.

P

**Paced Breathing:** slow down the pace of your breathing to 5-6 cycles per minute, breathing from the abdomen. Breathing out should be slower than breathing in.

P

**Paired Muscle Relaxation:** tense each muscle group & focus on the sensations, starting for 5-10 seconds at the toes, then release for 5-10 seconds while breathing out and saying the word 'relax' out loud. Move up through each muscle group. Its like training your body to let go of tension.

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# BENEFITS OF TIPP

- They work fast. Within seconds/minutes.
- They change your body's chemistry to rapidly bring down arousal.
- They work as well as self destructive behaviours (e.g. drinking, eating, etc.) without the negative consequences.
- They act like fast-acting medications without the risks.
- They are easy to use and don't require a lot of planning or thinking.
- Some TIPP skills can be used discreetly in public (e.g. paced breathing, paired muscle relaxation).

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