

# Distress Tolerance

Distress tolerance skills are techniques you can use to navigate conflict and stress. Such techniques are designed to help you reduce the high running emotions you are experiencing in these circumstances, *not* eliminate them. Reducing high running emotions assist you in making better decisions.

Think of an example of time you were in conflict, stress or crisis. What skill did you use to reduce your emotions?

Listed are 5 Distress Tolerance techniques you can use when you find yourself in circumstances where your emotions are running high. These are quick skills you can use to reduce your emotions in the moment.

Using a scale of 1-10, 10 being the highest, the following techniques are capable of lowering levels scaled at 10 to 8, 6 or even 4!

## Rhythmic Breathing

*Rhythmic Breathing* is a deep breathing technique and great way to reduce stress and anger levels. 4 Square breathing is a great example of rhythmic breathing.

How To: Breathe in for 4s, hold for 4s, breathe out for 4s and hold for 4s.

## 5-4-3-2-1

*5-4-3-2-1* is a sensory distraction technique. Sensory distraction is a great way to reduce stress and refocus attention when in circumstances of conflict or stress.

How To: Using all 5 senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste), hold up your hand to count down environmental stimuli.

Ex. Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you hear, 3 things you can touch (actually touch), 2 things you can smell and one thing you can taste.

## Mindful Touch & Mindful Taste

*Mindful Touch* is a mindful technique and a great trick to refocus, maintain focus or reduce anxiety. This technique tasks you to intensely focus attention on the sense of touch.

How To: Take an object, close or avert your eyes and explore the object with your fingers

- Touch the object to all four fingers & thumb; is hard or is soft?
- Using concentric circles, rub the object to the palm and back of hand;
- Touch all the surfaces, corners and curves of the object; are they smooth, ridged or sharp?

How To: Treat your senses to a treat!

- Look at it, take in the shape, color and smell.
- Place it in your mouth without chewing for 10s.
- Explore the treat with your tongue
- Chew 10-15x very slowly
- Focus on the taste

## Affirmation Positive

*Affirmation Positive* is a positive self-talk technique. This technique is great for reducing anxiety, improving your mood and challenging intrusive thoughts.

How To: Using your thumb, touch it to each finger and recite a positive fact, feature or characteristic about yourself.

Ex. "I am a good person."  
"I have a beautiful smile."  
"I love my pet."

### Mindful Counting

*Mindful Counting* is an imagery distraction technique. Imagery distraction is a great way to reduce conflict and stress.

How To: Take your mind to a happy, fun or calm place (beach, amusement park, ect.). Once there, count 10 things you can see, do, or eat while there.

### Jumping Jacks

*Jumping Jacks* are an active reset technique and useful in reducing anger, stress and intrusive thoughts. Because performing a jumping jack requires your brain to coordinate four limbs working in unison and in opposite of one another, to do so, the brain must focus on the task. This redirection of focus essentially erases any other thoughts in your head. An added bonus is the release of endorphins once you've reached

How To: Do 15-25 Jumping Jacks

### Pause

*Pause* is a fair fighting technique which inserts a "time out" into an argument. The time out is to remove the element of hostility, allow each person to calm down and return to the argument with lowered defenses. During the time out, each person retreats to a different room to take an aggression break, reflection break or both.

An *Aggression Break* is time taken to express and work through anger.

- yell, jump up & down, run
- write down all the mean things you want to say but should not say.

A *Reflection Break* is time taken to think and write down one's own perspective of the event. The writing includes:

- describing the event in terms of what happened, what went right and what went wrong
- why you are in disagreement with the other person
- how the event made you feel
- how the disagreement of the other person makes you feel
- how the other person can help or support you when you are feeling this way
- describing how you would have liked things to happen
- how you could have behaved differently
- how you will try to prevent disagreements like this in the future