

When you can't escape from a distressing situation, distract yourself from it. But distracting yourself doesn't mean avoiding it. You can't just sit back and watch TV until the day has gone. You have to come back to the problem and approach it rationally. Distraction requires you to return by choosing a better way to respond to it.

Many people respond to difficult situations with extreme anger or sadness. They may even use tantrums and other harmful behaviors to get away with it. But that's neither healthy nor effective. The key to managing distress is by identifying what works best for you and using healthy coping skills in daily life.

ACCEPTS is an acronym based on skills that offers you options to reduce distress and improve your ability to cope. Each of the following components of the skill allows you to distract yourself from distress, manage negative emotions, and improve your overall well-being.

1. **Activities:** Choose activities that can take your mind off a situation and keep you engaged. E.g., cooking, gardening, fishing, and so on. Make a list of activities and choose what sounds good.
2. **Contributing:** Choose an activity that can be of service to others. This helps improve mood and develop a sense of purpose. E.g., volunteering, surprises, or donations.
3. **Comparisons :** Think of a time when you felt different from what you're feeling right now. Think of others who're living with more difficult emotions than yours.
4. **Emotions :** Chase a different emotion than what you're having right now. E.g., If you're feeling sad, then watch a comedy show.
5. **Pushing Away:** Chase away a negative thought you can't deal with right now. Tell it to go away. Put it in a locked box.
6. **Thoughts:** Engage yourself to think of something (other than what's bothering you). E.g. Count 1 to 10, pick a color and look for it outside, and so on.
7. **Sensations :** Engage with a strong physical sensation. E.g., Hold an ice, feel a texture on the wall, and so on.

The following worksheet requires you to write down activities that you performed against each ACCEPTS skill. Then rate 1-5 based on how effective the particular skill was in helping you cope with the situation.

Remember that not every skill may work for you. So, here's how we suggest you to use the ACCEPTS skill worksheet:

- Tailor activities based on what best resonates with you.
- Experiment with different activities within each skill.
- Combine at least 2 to 3 components to help tolerate a situation.
- Incorporate these skills as part of your regular self-care routine.
- Make sure to measure their effectiveness over set time (weekly or monthly).

DESCRIBE A DISTRESSING SITUATION THAT HAPPENED TO YOU. MENTION WHO, WHAT, WHEN, AND WHERE?

Skill	What did I do to practice this skill?	(Rate 1 to 5) <i>How effective was the skill in helping me tolerate my distress?</i>
<p><u>A</u>ctivities</p> <p><i>(What diverts my attention away from distressing thoughts/emotions?)</i></p>		
<p><u>C</u>ontributions</p> <p><i>(Doing something for others)</i></p>		
<p><u>C</u>omparisons</p> <p><i>(Gain perspective by considering others' challenges)</i></p>		
<p><u>E</u>motions</p> <p><i>(Intentionally evoke positive or neutral emotions)</i></p>		
<p><u>P</u>ushing Away</p> <p><i>(Mentally set aside distressing thoughts for a while)</i></p>		
<p><u>T</u>houghts</p> <p><i>(Occupy the mind with absorbing activities like reading or puzzles)</i></p>		

Skill	What did I do to practice this skill?	(Rate 1 to 5) <i>How effective was the skill in helping me tolerate my distress?</i>
<p>Sensations</p> <p><i>(Use sensory experiences to cope with distress)</i></p>		

Rate effectiveness of a skill: (1: "I couldn't stand the situation at all," 3: "I was somewhat able to stand the situation," 5: "I could use the skill and tolerate the situation pretty well.")

FOLLOWING ARE THE LIST OF BEHAVIORS YOU CAN PURSUE TO PRACTICE THE ACCEPTS SKILL:

ACTIVITIES

- o Journal your thoughts and feelings on paper.
- o Meditate for relaxation.
- o Solve puzzles (crossword or Sudoku).
- o Play a video game.
- o Tend to the plants.
- o Attend a social gathering.
- o Learn a new skill online.
- o Write e-mails.
- o Visit a museum.
- o Clean your room in the house.

CONTRIBUTIONS

- o Bake something for a family member.
- o Create handmade items to give as gifts.
- o Teach a skill and share it with others.
- o Express gratitude/appreciation to someone.
- o Write a thoughtful letter/email to someone.
- o Volunteer at your local charity or community.
- o Offer to help a neighbor with chores.
- o Offer support to someone in tough time.
- o Donate blood.
- o Surprise someone with something.

COMPARISONS

- Think of people going through something similar as you.
- Compare yourself with someone less fortunate.
- Read stories of resilience and triumph.
- Connect with someone who have overcome something similar.
- Acknowledge your progress by comparing your present self with past self.
- Reflect on challenges that you've already passed.

EMOTIONS

- Listen to emotional music.
- Read books that bring joy, sadness, laughter, etc.
- Practice gratitude by counting things you're thankful for.
- Surround yourself with positive influences.
- Perform activities that bring a sense of accomplishment.
- Create a list of happy memories to revisit when depressed.
- Connect with loved ones who offer support.
- Find joy in simple pleasures.

PUSHING AWAY

- Put distressing thoughts on paper and set it aside
- Think of leaves (negative thoughts) floating away in a river stream.
- Think of balloons (negative thoughts) drifting away.
- Imagine placing worries in a bubble and watch them float away.
- Refuse to think about painful situations.
- Leave the situation mentally.
- Deny the problem for the day.
- Yell "Stop!" to negative thoughts.
- Imagine putting the pain on the shelf and box it away.

THOUGHTS

- Engage in thought-provoking conversations.
- Challenge your mind with quizzes & puzzles.
- Write a journal to explore your thoughts.
- Learn something new through online courses.
- Distract yourself with a hobby.
- Listen to podcast that captures your interest.
- Detach from persistent thoughts.
- Count to 10.
- Spot a color when taking a walk outdoors.
- Repeats words of your favorite song.

SENSATIONS

- Take a hot or a cold shower.
- Hold and squeeze a soft ball.
- Go out in a sunny weather.
- Listen to a loud music.
- Explore textures through touching soft fabrics.
- Go outside and feel natural elements.
- Taste your favorite food mindfully.
- Participate in yoga or dancing.
- Enjoy a relaxing massage.
- Experiment with different aroma (e.g., scented candles).