

DBT ACCEPTS Skill

Short-term distraction for surviving intense distress without making things worse

A — Activities

Choose a safe activity that occupies attention: walking, tidying, a puzzle, music, a task, or another absorbing activity.

C — Contributing

Do something helpful or kind that is appropriate to the situation and within your capacity.

C — Comparisons

Use perspective carefully. Compare with your own past coping or a broader context without invalidating your current pain.

E — Emotions

Briefly shift emotion with safe, opposite-tone content such as comedy, music, or a calming story.

P — Pushing away

Temporarily set the problem aside when you cannot solve it now. This is a pause, not denial.

T — Thoughts

Redirect attention to neutral mental tasks such as counting, word games, or detailed observation.

S — Sensations

Use safe, non-harmful sensory input such as a cool cloth, warm shower, strong mint, stretching, or textured objects.

DBT ACCEPTS Skill — Practice

Use one real situation. Write brief, concrete observations rather than perfect answers.

1. Crisis or urge

What distress, urge, or situation are you trying to get through without making it worse?

2. Choose two ACCEPTS options

Which two strategies fit this moment and are safe for you?

3. Plan the next 10–30 minutes

What exactly will you do, where, and for how long?

4. Re-rate distress

Before: ____/10 After: ____/10. What changed, even slightly?

5. Next step

Once the crisis intensity drops, what problem-solving, support, or values-based action is needed?

Evidence & safety note

Based on DBT skills training as described by Marsha M. Linehan and Behavioral Tech. A worksheet supports practice but is not comprehensive DBT. If the exercise increases distress, pause and seek appropriate support. In immediate danger or crisis, use local emergency or crisis services.