

DBT IMPROVE the Moment

Ways to make a painful moment more bearable when the situation cannot be changed immediately

I — Imagery

Use calming, coping, or safe-place imagery. Keep it grounded and stop if imagery is destabilizing.

M — Meaning

Connect the moment with a personally chosen value or purpose without forcing a “silver lining.”

P — Prayer

If consistent with your beliefs, use prayer, reflection, or connection with something larger than the immediate crisis.

R — Relaxation

Use safe relaxation such as paced breathing, unclenching muscles, gentle movement, or warmth.

O — One thing in the moment

Bring attention to this breath, this step, this task, or this sensory detail.

V — Vacation

Take a brief, safe mental or physical break from the stressor when possible.

E — Encouragement

Use realistic coping statements: “This is hard and temporary,” “I can take one next step,” or your own credible phrase.

DBT IMPROVE the Moment — Practice

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

1. Painful moment

What is happening that you cannot change immediately?

2. Choose IMPROVE skills

Which two or three options fit your needs, beliefs, and safety?

3. Write your plan

Describe exactly how you will use them for the next 10–20 minutes.

4. Encouragement statement

Write one phrase you can genuinely believe and repeat.

5. Reflection

What became more bearable? What still needs support, problem-solving, or professional help?

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.